

## [Pope Francis's Vision for Civic and Political Love in the Context of Care for our Common Home](#)

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The theme “Love and the City” has come up time and time again throughout our COVID-19 lockdown. From Augustine, Dante, the *Book of Kells*, *The Mission* and many other sources. Lastly, we got to explore how this theme pertains to section five, chapter six of *Laudato Si*: “Civic and Political Love.” The Pope’s vision for civic and political love in the context of “Care for our Common Home” starts off with “universal fraternity.” Universal fraternity to me means everyone living together in harmony from the smallest creatures to the biggest. Whether they are your enemies or not, Pope Francis wants everyone to live a peaceful life. He wrote “being good and decent are worth it” (*Laudato Si* 229), meaning choosing right and choosing others is worth it and makes the world a better place. He has a vision of a way better world, things that don't really matter do us do us no good. He talks about how “It is time to acknowledge that light-hearted superficiality has done us no good” (*Laudato Si* 229). An example in our world now of light-hearted superficiality are things that have little importance like social media influencers who created their “job” because they can. Influencers are superficial because it’s a created position to substitute as a real job. With all of this said, our world

has started to mistreat life in all its forms. With technology our world is changing everyday and things are becoming dramatized. Through his letter, Pope Francis is inspiring us to think of our common home and that we live together in a community. To love the earth means to also love the people who we share this common home with. Pope Francis believes love is at the center of our world. He argues that with civic and political love we can build a better common home together as brothers and sisters.

Pope Francis' main focus is around the idea of love and care which is in his Christian vision. He wants us to care for others even if it's good, bad, unpopular, or incorrect. To build a better world we can start with being more social and not getting caught up in the things that don't matter. If we can stop being self absorbed and start doing things for others this could be a start to becoming a better world. Francis wrote "Saint Therese of Lisieux invites us to practice the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship" (*Laudato Si* 230). He challenges us to make gestures whether they are big or small because they matter. Every action seeks to build a better world. We need to start being the people who do things for others without seeking anything in return and learn it still benefits you inside. To tie it into our world today, there are many people doing their civic duty like never before. People are making masks, feeding the poor, caring for the front line workers, and shopping for the elderly or high risk neighbors. Doing things for others without being asked but because there is a need. Pope Francis from the very beginning always wanted to give back to the less fortunate, and he is never going to stop doing good for other people. By doing this we will be able to appreciate and love the little

things we have. His vision also talks about how it is possible to love our enemies and these gestures will bring us closer to God. The common good is to love society in a civic or political sense so we can benefit our society and make the best decisions for it and us. As well as showing concern for the natural environment. If we can only convince ourselves “good begets good,” meaning if we do good more good will follow. I found his proposals and insights very compelling, it made me think about how I fit in love and care into the things I do in my daily life. He argues how much we need other people in our lives, and to love all of our brothers and sisters around us through our Lord. I think all citizens forget that we need to work together as a community to succeed. Our world depends on us to make it better and with social love we can start to do that.

This said by Pope Francis I think relates a lot to what happened in *The Mission*. He wrote, “Fraternal love can only be gratuitous; it can never be a means of repaying others for what they have done or will do for us. That is why it is possible to love our enemies. This same gratuitousness inspires us to love and accept the wind, the sun and the clouds, even though we cannot control them. In this sense, we can speak of a “universal fraternity”( *Laudato Si* 228). In *The Mission*, Robert De Niro plays Rodrigo, a reformed slave trader seeking redemption. Rodrigo had no love in his heart, killed his brother and did bad things to the Guarani people. Going to live at the mission was like the last resort for him to turn himself around. He also had no purpose before the mission, he thought he had a girlfriend who loved him, his brother who was his only family betrayed him, he thought he knew what love was. However, on the mountain he has now experienced unconditional love from the people who should hate him. The

Guarani people could have easily thought of him as the enemy because of how he treated them, he sold their people to slavery and took them away from their family. However, once he came to the mission and asked for forgiveness they loved him even though he was an enemy to them at first. From the very beginning they showed only love to Rodrigo when he came up the mountain, and did they have to? No. The Guarani people did not have to show gratuitous love towards Rodrigo because he was sinner in many different ways. He represented all the bad things in their community's lives. He did awful things to their families but instead of being mad they made him a part of their family and showed him unconditional gratuitous love. There is a scene in the movie where Rodrigo thanks Father Gabriel for having him at the mission and Father says to thank the Guarani people, not him. Following that Father Gabriel says he can thank them by reading the book he then gives him. He then read out loud " If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth...So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:1-13). Being given this Corinthians passage, I think this is in a sense Father Gabriel saying let me show you the type of love the Guarani people are showing you. Later in the movie when Rodrigo was playing in the water with the children you can see that unconditional love being shown toward Rodrigo, a sense of family love.

Next, the film *The Secret of Kells* contains visions of humans in their environment that reflects the Franciscan confraternity with all creatures. The main character Brendan learns from Aisling who is a forest fairy that lives in the woods outside of Kells. The vision throughout this film is love of nature and love's faith. She teaches him to attend to the natural world. In the beginning of the film, Brother Aiden asks Brendan to help him finish writing the Book of Kells. His uncle forbid him from doing this and that there were bigger problems happening. However, Brendan was devoted to his faith and didn't give up. According to Pope Francis, "along with the importance of little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a "culture of care" which permeates all of society" (*Laudato Si*, 231). Social love is the caring for the greater things around us that have meaning to us and that we want to make sure they are here for the future generations. Parks, streams, forests, etc. Culture of care is gathering people around you to participate in "caring" for these treasures. It can "permeate all of society" endangered species of plants and animals will be a loss for future generations. We are all responsible as a community to make sure that we give these things a fighting chance at survival. There are all different forms of love and there is a great example of that in the *Corinthians*. It talks about all the different ways love can affect you and how it develops. Aisling helped Brendan find the berries which showed her form of love toward him because she knew he wanted to make this book even though it was dangerous. The book wasn't gratuitous, the book wasn't just for himself. He faced danger head on for this book so it can carry on to the future even

though he was told not to. Brother Adian was someone who everyone respected and loved, he didn't care how dangerous it was because it was for a greater love.

In *Confessions*, Augustine says the human heart “is restless until it rests in thee” (*Conf. 1.1.1*). I believe this means the heart does not rest until it brings out emotion or feelings. The heart can't be completely fulfilled until it finds what it's searching for to make it whole. Francis wrote, “no one can cultivate a sober and satisfying life without being at peace with him or herself. An adequate understanding of spirituality consists in filling out what we mean by peace, which is much more than the absence of war. Inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life” (*Laudato Si*, 225). With this being said, if you have inner peace and a balanced lifestyle you are able to have the possibilities of love. When talking about inner peace I believe this means you need to be at peace with yourself and satisfied with who you are as a person. You need to be happy with yourself, if you don't love yourself how does one expect others to love you? This can also be connected to a balanced lifestyle. A balanced lifestyle is not being consumed in work constantly, if it was life would then be out of balance. Not having enough time to socialize with friends or family means you are not enjoying life around you. This then brings up the question how can love help us recover from a “throwaway culture”? First, throwaway culture is a human society strongly influenced by consumerism. It has nothing to do with lasting a long time, it's an instinct gratification. No one has interest in longevity anymore and things that last a long time. Throwaway culture is an instinct fix

and it affects the present not the future. Francis wants to remind us that “A sober look at our world shows that the degree of human intervention, often in the service of business interests and consumerism, is actually making our earth less rich and beautiful, ever more limited and grey, even as a sober look at our world shows that the degree of human intervention, often in the service of business interests and consumerism, technological advances and consumer goods continue to abound limitlessly. We seem to think that we can substitute an irreplaceable and irretrievable beauty with something which we have created ourselves” (*Laudato Si*, 31). We don't want our world to become grey, less rich and beautiful than it already has become. Technology is a big factor in that, people are happy when they are spending money on new technology. For example, iphones are designed to have a short life so you'll buy the next model, which is called planned obsolescence. This is exactly what throwaway culture is because even though your current phone works perfectly fine you want the next model anyway. Companies want you to spend more money and to keep the economy going.

My goal in life right now as a college student is to become a teacher. Being an educator is one of the most personal relationships one can have. It's being able to invest yourself in your students and to be another role model in their life as they grow up. I believe the notion of “care” in the education profession is not only relevant but one of the main characteristics that makes a teacher great. Great teachers care about their students and a great teacher does not make it a secret that they care, they will go the extra mile to make it known. I want to become a teacher because I care about education. School never came easy to me when I was younger and to be honest it still

doesn't. However, I want to help that student who also struggles in school. Once I become a teacher I know it's not going to be just about the education but the students' education. To be able to make a lasting impact on a student is a feeling I want to feel. I want children of all ages to succeed and I want to commit to helping them achieve their goals. Showing students that they are cared about will enhance your relationship with them and will make them feel important and that can be a highly rewarding experience. This notion of "care" throughout the Pope's vision for civic and political love in the context of "Care for our Common Home" is something that teachers can teach the next generation. Pope Francis shows his love for the city everyday and he challenges us to do the same.



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