

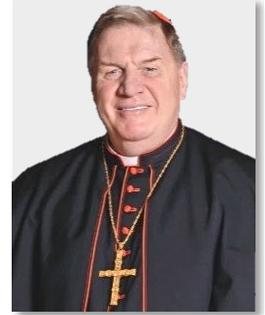


REJOICE in the LORD

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.

Archbishop of Newark

November 19, 2021. Vol. 3, No. 6



My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

In recent weeks I have used this newsletter to reflect on the encyclical of Pope Francis entitled *Fratelli Tutti* (On Fraternity and Social Friendship). Today I would like to use a brief section of Chapter Four (“A Heart Open to the Whole World”) to illustrate some important ideas surrounding the concepts of freedom, gratitude and generosity that are always important but especially prominent during this time of year as we approach the holiday season.

One brief section of the Holy Father’s fourth chapter—which I urge you to read in its entirety—uses the subheading “a gratuitousness open to others.” What does the word “gratuitous” mean and why is it a characteristic of Pope Francis’s view of social friendship? Merriam-Webster’s dictionary defines gratuitous as having two meanings. The first is “not called for by the circumstances : not necessary, appropriate, or justified: unwarranted.” The second meaning, which Pope Francis emphasizes in *Fratelli Tutti*, is “given unearned or without recompense: costing nothing : FREE: not involving a return benefit, compensation, or consideration.” As Pope Francis uses the notion of gratuitousness, it means something given freely with no strings attached and no expectation of receiving anything in return.

According to the Holy Father, “There is always the factor of “gratuitousness”: the ability to do some things simply because they are good in themselves, without concern for personal gain or recompense.” Applying this principle to the pressing concerns of immigration, the pope says, “Gratuitousness makes it possible for us to welcome the stranger, even though this brings us no immediate tangible benefit. Some countries, though, presume to accept only scientists or investors” (FT #139). To welcome strangers because they have something to offer in return may be good politics or enlightened self-interest, but it should not be confused with compassion or generosity.

In *Fratelli Tutti* #140, Pope Francis argues that there is an essential connection between freedom and hospitality (welcoming strangers):

Life without fraternal gratuitousness becomes a form of frenetic commerce in which we are constantly weighing up what we give and what we get back in return. God, on the other hand, gives freely, to the point of helping even those who are unfaithful; he “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good” (Mt 5:45).

Generous people give freely (*gratis*). They do not calculate what’s in it for them.

“We received life freely; we paid nothing for it,” the pope writes. “Consequently, all of us are able to give without expecting anything in return, to do good to others without demanding that they treat

us well in return.” And the Holy Father quotes Jesus’ words to tell his disciples: “Without cost you have received, without cost you are to give” (Mt 10:8).

Finally, Pope Francis applies the concept of gratuitousness to the way nations interact with one another:

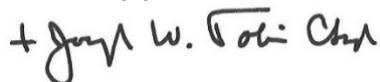
The true worth of the different countries of our world is measured by their ability to think not simply as a country but also as part of the larger human family. This is seen especially in times of crisis. Narrow forms of nationalism are an extreme expression of an inability to grasp the meaning of this gratuitousness. They err in thinking that they can develop on their own, heedless of the ruin of others, that by closing their doors to others they will be better protected. Immigrants are seen as usurpers who have nothing to offer. This leads to the simplistic belief that the poor are dangerous and useless, while the powerful are generous benefactors. Only a social and political culture that readily and “gratuitously” welcomes others will have a future (Fratelli Tutti, #141).

These are strong words linking the concept of gratuitous acceptance of others to the possibility of a safe and prosperous future. In *Fratelli Tutti’s* fourth chapter, “A Heart Open to the Whole World,” our Holy Father forcefully rejects narrow, nativist thinking and xenophobia (fear and hatred of foreigners or strangers). In fact, he believes that a generous, welcoming spirit is essential to peace, harmony and genuine productivity among nations.

At this time of year, when we in the United States of America celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday, it’s important to consider the importance of gratuitousness (gratitude, thankfulness) and to give thanks to God and to each other without expecting anything in return. The blessings we have received as individuals and as a nation are meant to be developed and shared with others. This includes those who are closest to us, of course, but it also applies to strangers, to all our sisters and brothers everywhere.

This Thanksgiving, please join me in saying “thank you” and in sharing what we have (and who we are) with others with no strings attached. Let’s take to heart this powerful admonition from Pope Francis: *Only a social and political culture that readily and “gratuitously” welcomes others will have a future.*

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,



Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin
Archbishop of Newark

Cardinal Tobin's 2021 Thanksgiving Message

My dear sisters and brothers,

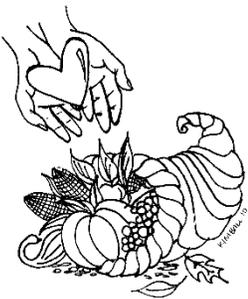
One of my brother bishops recently wrote these words in his Thanksgiving message:

Gratitude is more contagious than any pandemic. It soothes our bitterness, resentment and fear, and it opens the eyes of our hearts to see how blessed we truly are in spite of our difficulties. Simply by saying “thank you” for whatever blessings—large or small—we have received, we can find relief from whatever pain we feel in our minds, hearts or bodies.

We celebrate Thanksgiving in order to recognize the abundant blessings we've received and to thank God for them. We thank God for the gift of life itself and for the love that we share with spouses, children and friends. We also thank God for our vocation as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ, for our freedom as Americans, and for all our God-given gifts and talents. This year especially, under the pastoral leadership of Pope Francis, we thank God for the opportunity to participate in a worldwide synod process that is designed to strengthen and renew our Church—and to remind us that we are a pilgrim people walking together and dreaming of a better life for all.

Once again this year, we should add to our gratitude list all who have supported and encouraged us during the difficult days of COVID-19, including family and friends, healthcare workers, first responders, retail merchants, and all service personnel who put themselves in harm's way to provide for our basic needs. We should also be grateful for our pastors, school leaders and Church personnel who have worked hard to adapt to the challenges of this past year and to provide for our spiritual and pastoral needs.

Gratitude truly is contagious. When we say “thank you” we touch the hearts of others, and with them we embrace the healing power of God's love. When we say “thank you” we look beyond our own selfish wants and fears—acknowledging that we have been blessed by God even in life's most difficult circumstances. Giving thanks is the most effective means we have for maintaining a balanced perspective in times of adversity. It helps prevent us from sinking into depression and despair by reminding us of all the goodness we have received from those who love and care for us—in good times and in tough times.



The holidays can be a difficult time for people who are in poor health, homeless, or experiencing emotional or financial difficulties. Especially during this time of pandemic, many people, cut off from family and friends, will struggle to celebrate their blessings. Let's be sure to pray for those who are less fortunate than we are and to help them every way we can.

I am grateful for the privilege of walking with you as a fellow traveler here in the Archdiocese of Newark. I wish you a joyful and a faith-filled Thanksgiving. May God bless you and your loved ones.

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin

A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope

For us Christians, thanksgiving was the name given to the most essential Sacrament there is: the *Eucharist*. In fact, the Greek word means precisely this: *thanksgiving*. Eucharist: thanksgiving. Christians, as all believers, bless God for the gift of life. To live is above all to have received life. All of us are born because someone wanted us to have life. And this is only the first of a long series of debts that we incur by living. Debts of gratitude. During our lives, more than one person has gazed on us with pure eyes, gratuitously. Often, these people are educators, catechists, persons who carried out their roles above and beyond what was required of them. And they stirred gratitude within us. Even friendship is a gift for which we should always be grateful.



This “thank you” that we must say continually, this thanks that Christians share with everyone, grows in the encounter with Jesus. The Gospels attest that when Jesus passed by, he often stirred joy and praise to God in those who met Him. The Gospel accounts of Christmas are filled with prayerful people whose hearts are greatly moved by the coming of the Savior. And we too were called to participate in this immense jubilation.

The episode of the ten lepers who are healed in St. Luke’s Gospel (Lk 17:11–19) also suggests this. Naturally, they were all happy about having recovered their health, thus being allowed to end that unending forced quarantine that excluded them from the community. But among them, there was one who experienced an additional joy: in addition to being healed, he rejoices at the encounter with Jesus. He is not only freed from evil, but he now possesses the certainty of being loved. This is the crux: when you thank someone, you express the certainty that you are loved. And this is a huge step: to have the certainty that you are loved. It is the discovery of love as the force that governs the world. Dante would say: the Love that “moves the sun and other stars” (Paradise, XXIII, 145). We are no longer vagabonds wandering aimlessly here and there, no: we have a home, we dwell in Christ, and from that “dwelling” we contemplate the rest of the world which appears infinitely more beautiful to us. We are children of love, we are brothers and sisters of love. We are men and women of grace.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, let us seek to remain always in the joy of the encounter with Jesus. Let us cultivate joyfulness. The devil, instead, after having deluded us — with whatever temptation — always leaves us sad and alone. If we are in Christ, there is no sin and no threat that can ever prevent us from continuing our journey with joy, along with many fellow travel companions.

Above all, let us not forget to thank: if we are bearers of gratitude, the world itself will become better, even if only a little bit, but that is enough to transmit a bit of hope. The world needs hope. And with gratitude, with this attitude of thanksgiving, we transmit a bit of hope. Everything is united and everything is connected, and each one can do their part wherever they are. The path to happiness is the one that Saint Paul described at the end of one of his letters: “Pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thess

5:17-19). Do not quench the Spirit, what a beautiful project of life! Not quenching the Spirit that we have within leads us to gratitude.

(A Selection from Catechesis on Prayer #20, General Audience, December 30, 2020)

My Prayer for You

I would like to make my own this prayer of Pope Francis offered to the Blessed Virgin Mary on May 1, 2021:

Beloved Mother, make the world grow in the sense of belonging to one great family, in the awareness of the bond that unites us all, so that with a spirit of brotherhood and solidarity we may come to the aid of the many poor and destitute situations. Encourage firmness of faith, perseverance in serving, constancy in praying. Amen.

- Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin

