

Although *Fratelli tutti* has some strong words about our tendency to form opposing groups, Pope

Francis also says that difference and conflict are not bad things. Without difference, there would only be stifling uniformity. Our particular identities, national, cultural, ethnic and religious, are important: "Just as there can be no dialogue with 'others' without a sense of our own identity, so there can be no openness between peoples except on the basis of love for one's own land, one's own people, one's own cultural roots... I can welcome others who are different, and value the unique contribution they have to make, only if I am firmly rooted in my own people and culture" (*Fratelli tutti* 143). Conflict and opposition are not just inevitable, but sometimes necessary: we can come into conflict with others when we demand justice or oppose oppression, when we defend our rights or insist on our dignity. Opposition can sometimes be a way of pursuing the truth and holding people – including governments – to account.



CHILDREN OF THE SAME FATHER

The important thing is that, like the disciples, we encounter conflict and opposition because we are genuinely seeking the kingdom of God and the good of others, and not because we are defending the little kingdom of our own interests and attacking others as we go. Like the disciples, we too are invited to go out to encounter others, to bring them good news and healing, and we are not to be afraid of opposition.

Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**As for me, in justice I shall behold your face;
I shall be filled with the vision of your glory.**

FIRST READING Amos 7:12-15

PSALM Psalm 84

RESPONSE **Let us see, O Lord, your mercy and give us your saving help.**

1. I will hear what the Lord God has to say,
a voice that speaks of peace,
peace for his people.
His help is near for those who fear him
and his glory will dwell in our land. **R.**
2. Mercy and faithfulness have met;
justice and peace have embraced.
Faithfulness shall spring from the earth
and justice look down from heaven. **R.**
3. The Lord will make us prosper
and our earth shall yield its fruit.
Justice shall march before him
and peace shall follow his steps. **R.**

SECOND READING Ephesians 1:3-14

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!
May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
enlighten the eyes of our mind,
so that we can see what hope his call holds for
us.
Alleluia!**

GOSPEL Mark 6:7-13

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood
remains in me and I in him, says the Lord.**

Next Sunday's Readings:

Jeremiah 23:1-6
Ephesians 2:13-18
Mark 6:30-34



www.rpbooks.co.uk
rp@rpbooks.co.uk
@redemptorist

SUNDAY BULLETIN

THINKING FAITH

OPPOSITION

This Sunday's readings are about encountering opposition. The prophet Amos is told that he is not welcome in Bethel, and that he should go back home and prophesy there. Jesus, instructing his disciples as he sends them out on mission, warns that people may refuse to welcome them or to listen to what they have to say.

How do we react when we encounter opposition? Faced with people who disagree strongly with us, or attack our worldview or ideas, we can withdraw. This is only natural: most people do not enjoy engaging in controversy and argument, and we prefer to spend time with people who are like us, and sympathetic to our ideals and way of life. Many social media platforms are geared to show us what we like and what we agree with, and connect us with "people like us". But while this can be a source of enjoyment and support, Pope Francis warns that it can also be problematic: "Persons or situations we find unpleasant or disagreeable are simply deleted... a virtual circle is then created, isolating us from the real world in which we are living" (*Fratelli tutti* 47). At their worst, these bubbles can end up "favouring encounter between persons who think alike, shielding them from debate. These closed circuits facilitate the spread of fake news and false information, fomenting prejudice and hate" (*Fratelli tutti* 45). Although we are more and more connected online, we are also more and more isolated from one another, and not genuinely knowing other people makes it easier to attack them. This online "tribalism" can feed into and reinforce offline prejudice too, and the growth of antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism, and attacks on migrants and LGBT persons.

What does today's Gospel have to offer us in this situation? In one sense, the problem Pope Francis describes in *Fratelli tutti* is the result of too little opposition, rather than too much. If we fear encountering opposition, we will remain shut up in our bubbles, agreeing with one another and lashing out at others. But if we overcome our fear of others who are different from us and who may criticise or challenge us, then we can take a step forward, to encounter them and to begin a conversation. We may end up still disagreeing with them, but we have established something: a genuine human connection, and a sense of being different in a shared world.

Building a civilisation of love



Dr Theodora Hawksley, a theologian working at the London Jesuit Centre, concludes this series on Catholic social teaching, by considering how we face conflict and opposition.



11 JULY 2021

15TH SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK III

The Sunday Bulletin. Written by Dr Theodora Hawksley. Edited by Peter Edwards © Redemptorist Publications. A Registered Charity limited by guarantee. Registered in England 03261721. Mass Text: excerpts from the English translation of The Roman Missal © 2010, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation. Psalms from the Grail Psalter reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers Ltd © 1963. All rights reserved. Concordat with original Ann Blackett. Imprimatur + Peter Doyle, Bishop of Northampton 13 July 2018. Permission granted for distribution in the dioceses of Scotland.