

Tutti Fratelli

Tutti Fratelli is a group of Religious Brothers resident in Rome, representatives of various Institutes, who gather regularly to exchange and promote common initiatives relevant to their respective Congregations. The group is an expression of synodality that is an essential dimension of today's Church. Our Institutes are confronted with profound ecclesial and social changes that calls for ways of living our



Charism so that it can enter into dialogue with today's reality. On the other hand, the vocation to Brotherhood is suffering from an

ongoing misunderstanding that has its roots on the underlying clericalism very present in the Church. Traditionally, Brothers have been involved in ministries that today are being offered as a social service. But at the same time new arena of mission appears. Therefore, there is an ongoing effort to make a creative and prophetic reading of our Charism to be present near the marginalized and abandoned.

The Union of Superiors Generals (USG) is a good platform to bring together different religious experiences. It is in this context, back in 2010, some Brothers in Rome felt the need to come together to reflect and promote common initiatives. On-going formation has become an essential part of our internal programs as Institutes. Congregations that have thousands of members can easily organized formation programs for their Brothers unlike smaller ones that have difficulty to manage such important events. Therefore, the first initiative of the group was to organize a formation program in 2012 for Religious Brothers from eight Institutes dedicated to education. The theme of that one-month-course was the identity of the Religious Brother and took place at the General House of the La Salle Brothers. This first experience was well appreciated among the Institutes of Brothers who participated. Since then, the group continued meeting occasionally

to share initiatives, especially related to formation.

The year 2015, year of Consecrated Life, marked another important moment in the life and growth of the group. The first Meeting of Religious Brothers residing in Rome was organized by Tutti Fratelli. On the same year, the document of the CIVCSVA "*Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church*" was published. The group of Brothers of the USG entrusted the group with the task of preparing various working materials to be offered to Religious Brothers. These two events help the group to strengthen its ties around a common task. The work produced by the group, traduced on several languages, was a useful tool for religious communities to deepen and reflect on this long-awaited document.

A further development in the consolidation of the group was in 2017 with the elaboration of the strategic three-year-plan. It helped to think and redefine the Mission and Vision of the Group as well as developing an action plan that helped to focus the objectives. All this was approved by the Group of Brothers of the General Superiors gathered on the occasion of the Assembly of the USG.

Out of this strategic plan the mission of the group was defined as: *By being a visible sign of the gift of brotherhood, we promote our vocation as religious Brothers and a common reflection on our identity and mission in the Church and in the world.* And the Vision was spelled out: *Through our reflection and activities all the Brothers are connected in a global network that promotes our common identity and mission.*

In this mission and vision emerge some aspects that deserve further reflection. Brotherhood seems to be an invisible reality in the Church, therefore we are invited to make the ministries carried out by Brothers to be known, often related to human promotion or social apostolate. Even if each one of us is a living expression of a Charism we do share a common gift as Brothers to serve the Church and society. This is to be

always developed and reflected upon to be meaningful and understandable.

The small number of Brothers in the Church often leads to isolation or underrepresentation in the local church. Connecting the Brothers from different geographical areas and ministerial contexts can help them grow in their identity and mission.

Currently the group is formed by ten Institutes approximately that participate regularly to the meetings and each congregation participates with one or two members. One of the richness of Tutti Fratelli is its inter-nationality, the group is made up of Brothers from four continents coming from small, medium and big Institutes. This carries in itself a great value in the sharing of experiences that come from a variety of cultures and ecclesiological realities.

Tutti Fratelli has three main recurrent activities:

1. **Monthly meetings** of the group. The main objective of these gatherings is to deepen themes that are interesting for all. Some topics that the group reflected upon are new community styles, new models for leadership and animation, new models of pastoral ministry and vocations. These meetings are organized in turns by the congregation that hosts the meetings.
2. **Annual gatherings** in Rome. Since 2015 the group organizes a gathering for all brothers in Rome. It has been taking place in the General House of La Salle. The attendance is between 60 and 100 brothers from different congregations. It is a great opportunity to know each other. A topic is presented, and abundant time is given for sharing in small groups. There is also a time for a common multilingual prayer.
3. **International formation programs.** There have been already two sessions of this one-month program. The program of 2012 and 2019 on relevant topics for the lives of the Brothers in general. The program that is being organized for the next month of September 2023 will be address to Brothers that accompany Brothers during their first mission experience. It will focus on the problem of Brothers leaving the congregation during their first years of religious life.

One of the objectives of the group is to foster collaboration among Brothers. A future plan is to promote the exchange with inter-congregational groups of Brothers in other countries and regions. So far, the link with similar groups has been limited.

Tutti Fratelli is answerable to the group of Brothers of the USG. It has a loose organizational structure. The continuity and consistency of the activities are guaranteed through the secretary. Each month, in turn, one of the Brothers organizes the meeting and sets up the agenda in dialogue with the secretary and the other members. This type of decentralized organisation responds well to the needs of the group and allows the realization of the planned activities. Even during the time of Covid, Tutti Fratelli managed to keep its activities through remote meetings. If there is an activity that has some cost attached, contribution of the participants is requested.

After a few years of life, the group has consolidated a valid dynamic to respond to its aim, mainly, to offer a space of reflection on the identity and vocation of the Brothers in the Church and society today. The relevance of the group could be summarized as follows:

- Opening horizons: coming together as different institutes helps to broaden viewpoints on different areas: ministries, organization and formation among others. Knowing how other Institutes do things helps us to question or relativize our own way. This is especially relevant in the field of formation and processes of reorganization.
- Reflecting on common issues: this is a time signed by important changes that deeply touch religious life and its mission and in particular the nature and relevance of the vocation of Religious Brothers in the Church and Society. There is a widespread vocational crisis of this type of life. Even if this is more accentuated in Europe, all continents give signs of a growing lack of understanding of Brotherhood.
- New fields of mission: coming together help the Brothers to discern about new fields of mission and opportunities to collaborate. There is a felt need of to rethink our religious life to respond to the changing mission