

Selected texts

Mysticism of encounter

Pope Francis

*While perhaps not the first to speak of a spirituality of 'the we', Pope Francis is the first to give it such emphasis, using expressions like: mysticism of encounter, journeying together, spirituality of fraternity, a spirituality of nearness to one another, a spirituality of 'the we', and so on. With a few broad strokes he lays out needed attitudes and their theological roots, as well as the fruits. Although only a brief synthesis, the excerpts attempt to illustrate both the measure of, and motive behind, what he is proposing. Included are three pieces from *Evangelii gaudium* (Joy of the Gospel), followed by words of the Pope in other noted contexts. Some phrases have been italicized by the editors.*

*Nota: Sarebbero ancora da uniformare gli spazi tra i diversi brani:
o sempre con un ritorno a capo (= una riga vuota) oppure sempre con 6 pt di spazio dopo il paragrafo.*

... per segnare le omissioni: ok così? Sembrano comunque un po' da uniformare.

Lasciar sottolineati i link dei siti?

"Today, when the networks and means of human communication have made unprecedented advances, we sense the challenge of finding and sharing a '*mystique*' of living together, of mingling and encounter, of embracing and supporting one another, of stepping into this flood tide which, while chaotic, can become a genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a sacred pilgrimage . . .

The Christian ideal will always be a summons to overcome suspicion, habitual mistrust, fear of losing our privacy, all the defensive attitudes which today's world imposes on us. Many try to escape from others and take refuge in the comfort of their privacy or in a small circle of close friends, renouncing the realism of the social aspect of the Gospel." [\(EG 87-88\)](#).

"We need to help others to realize that the only way is to learn how to encounter others with the right attitude, which is to accept and esteem them as companions along the way, without interior resistance. Better yet, it means learning to find Jesus in the faces of others, in their voices, in their pleas. And learning to suffer in the embrace of the crucified Jesus whenever we are unjustly attacked or meet with ingratitude, never tiring of our decision to live in fraternity. There indeed we find true healing, since the way to relate to others which truly heals instead of debilitating us, is a *mystical fraternity, a contemplative fraternity*. It is a fraternal love capable of seeing the sacred grandeur of our neighbour, of finding God in every human being, of tolerating the nuisances of life in common by clinging to the love of God, of opening the heart to divine love and seeking the happiness of others just as their heavenly Father does." (EG 91-92).

“Benedict XVI has said that ‘closing our eyes to our neighbour also blinds us to God’ [*Deus caritas est*, 16], and that love is, in the end, the *only light* which ‘can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working’ [*ibid.*]. When we live out a *spirituality of drawing nearer to others* and seeking their welfare, our hearts are opened wide to the Lord’s greatest and most beautiful gifts. Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God. Whenever our eyes are opened to acknowledge the other, we grow in the light of faith and knowledge of God. “(EG 272).

“I’ll pick up on the last thing you said, to add something to all that I’ve said . . . The ‘*mysticism of encounter*’. Encounter. The capacity for encounter. The ability to hear, to listen to other people. The ability to seek together the way, the method, so many things. This encounter. And it also means not being frightened, not being frightened of things. The good shepherd must not be frightened. Maybe he feels fear inside, but he is never really scared. He knows that the Lord comes to his aid. Encounter the people entrusted to your care as a pastor; encounter your Bishop. The encounter with your Bishop is important. It is also important that the Bishop allow himself to be met . . . I would especially like to speak of one thing: the encounter among priests, among yourselves. Priestly friendship: this is a treasure, a treasure that we must cultivate among ourselves – friendship among you, priestly friendship.”¹

“Live the *mysticism of encounter*, which entails ‘the ability to hear, to listen to other people; the ability to seek together ways and means.’ Live in the light of the loving relationship of the three divine Persons (cf. 1 Jn 4:8), the model for all interpersonal relationships.”²

“This joyful and life-giving contemplation of the face of God, revealed in Jesus Christ as a Father rich in mercy (cf. Eph 2:4), enables us to live in a liberating and responsible way the *experience* [of] *the Church as a ‘mystique’ of living together* (cf. EG 87, 272). This provides the leaven of that universal fraternity which is ‘capable of seeing the sacred grandeur of our neighbour, of finding God in every human being, of tolerating the nuisances of life in common by clinging to the love of God, of opening the heart to divine love and seeking the happiness of others just as their heavenly Father does’. It is also the source of the imperative to allow our hearts and minds to heed the cry of the earth’s poor and to give concrete expression to the social dimension of evangelization.”³

“Growth in holiness is a journey in community, side by side with others. We see this in some holy communities . . . In many holy marriages too, each spouse becomes a means used by Christ for the sanctification of the other . . . Each community is called to create a ‘God-enlightened space in which to experience *the hidden presence of the risen Lord*.’⁴ Sharing the word and celebrating the Eucharist together fosters fraternity and makes us a holy and missionary community. It also gives rise to authentic and shared mystical experiences. Such was the case with Saints Benedict and Scholastica. We can also think of the sublime spiritual experience shared by Saint Augustine and his mother, Saint Monica. “(*Gaudete et exsultate* 141-142)

“The charism of unity is a providential stimulus and a powerful support for experiencing this *evangelical mystic of ‘the we’*, that is, walking together in the history of the men and women of our time as ‘of one heart and soul’ (cf. Acts 4:32), discovering and loving concretely those ‘members of one another’ (cf. Rom 12:5). Jesus prayed to the Father for this: ‘that they may all be one as you and I are one’ (cf. Jn 17:21), and in himself he showed us the way, up to the complete gift of all in the abyssal emptying of the cross (cf. Mk 15:34; Phil 2:6-8). It is the *spirituality of ‘the we’* . . . This is the spirituality of ‘the we’ that you must carry forward, which saves us from all selfishness and all egotistical interest. The spirituality of ‘the we’ .”⁵

- ¹ *Address to Rectors and Students of the Pontifical Colleges and Residences* (12 May 2014).
- ² *Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated People on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life*, Nov. 11, 2014.
- ³ *Apostolic Constitution Veritatis gaudium*, foreword, 4a. (29 January 2018).
- ⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Exhortation Consecrated Life*, 42 (25 March 1996)
- ⁵ *Pastoral visit to Loppiano* (10 May 2018).