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2021 – Between Peril and Potential: Human Rights Advocacy in the Wake of a Global Pandemic

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Fratelli Tutti: Pope Francis and the Catholic Response to Human Rights

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On October 4, 2020, Pope Francis issued a letter to the world entitled *Fratelli Tutti, On Fraternity and Social Friendship*. The document served as a culmination of the Church's response to the global pandemic, as well as the more considerable perils of throwaway culture. This presentation will explore the specific response of the Catholic Church as it attempts to counter destructive boundaries and structure of its institution.

Pope Francis continues a tradition in pastoral response to the "signs of the times." However, can the Church respond effectively in this current world?

Or do the needed changes surpass the capability of Church doctrine?

I will primarily use *Fratelli Tutti* and its highlighted aspects of Catholic Social Teaching to demonstrate the trajectory of the Catholic Church's response to the current crisis, as well as human rights. What does it mean for a hierarchical leader, the Pope, to lead the institutional Church to welcome synods (a Church assembly for decisions) that voice those not heard from before now?

Pope Francis advocates for a Church as a field hospital, meaning he expects Christians to heal those around them rather than condemn them. Ideally, this will lead to a Church that welcomes rather than excludes, that works to protect human rights rather than discriminate. Hopefully, this will lead to a Church that reaches beyond the margins and boundaries. Pope Francis has shown us that it is time to stand in solidarity with the rest of the world.