

Theology of mercy and culture of care
By Massimo Naro

Ten collaborators of the Pontifical Academy for Life have recently signed a few short but dense pages, significantly entitled *Rescuing Fraternity - Together*, which is a *call to faith and reflection* addressed to scholars all over the world - men and women of science and culture, believers and non-believers, whether or not belonging to any religious tradition - to invite them to create and cultivate a *spirit of intellectual fraternity* that will urge them and help them to *share a new closeness with the inhabitants of this beautiful and difficult time* we live in.

(...)

The spirit of the Good Samaritan prompts us to revive the divine inclination to be viscerally moved by the difficulties of others and to take care of those who cannot overcome their limitations, redeem themselves from their weaknesses, and heal their wounds alone.

(...)

The spirit of the Good Samaritan is precisely the sensitivity of those who feel personally affected by the pain of others, so much so as to share it and take it upon themselves. Bearing people's miseries, taking care of them, is what the Master of Nazareth did, according to the Gospel accounts that speak of him.

(...)

The relevance of this ancient "practical" teaching is extraordinary. In the global crisis we are going through, the cases of people who are violently beaten within an inch of their life, in one way or another, here or elsewhere, are multiplying. Indifference and indolence are also multiplying, as well as the concern to keep one's purity intact, be it economic, cultural or even religious purity. The mercy of the Good Samaritan, on the contrary, being theologically aware of what closeness means and of who our neighbor is, calls for renewal.

The culture of care - also described in theological terms - represents an effective renewal. This kind of culture flourishes through recording reliable information, developing truthful interpretations of the facts, duly focusing on major problems, designing realistic solutions and planning targeted interventions. In short, it is a great, complex, total effort. A theology that finally succeeds in contributing to that effort would rightly join today's *koine* of knowledge and what the Pope calls *integral ecology*.