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Women's needs vs economic survival during the COVID-19 pandemic: Navigating this tension using care and justice

ABSTRACT

Women are among the many vulnerable groups that are severely affected by the pandemic: All over the world, women have been hit harder by the pandemic, leading some to call the global recession a “shecession”. “Shecession” refers to “the disproportionate impact of a pandemic recession on working women”, which leads to greater gender inequality. Working women have been gravely affected by the pandemic, but their situation is often justified as “necessary” in helping businesses survive. We argue for a caring justice framework, using Fratelli Tutti and care ethics in navigating the tensions between the individual and the community, analysing and transforming the way in which work is structured in the Philippines at present.

1. INTRODUCTION

A just society would recognise women's work in the home and in the workplace as a valuable contribution to the common good and promote women's well-being and flourishing as individuals. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated long-standing injustices against working women, framed by the tension between balancing women's needs and the survival of business and the economy.



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This article examines the situation of working women and how they are affected by the pandemic, especially since their situations are justified as “necessary” to help businesses survive. This research investigates how *Fratelli Tutti* and Tronto’s care ethics mutually contribute to building a caring justice framework in response to the inadequate ways in which different stakeholders have responded to the issue in the Philippine context. This article argues for a caring justice framework, using *Fratelli Tutti* and care ethics in navigating the tensions between the individual and the community, analysing and transforming the way in which work is currently structured in the Philippines. Recommendations for the private and the public sectors are offered.

1.1 Women and COVID-19

Women are among the many vulnerable groups that are severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistically, most of those who lost work and were hard hit were women:

all over the world, women have been hit harder by the pandemic, leading some to call the global recession a ‘shcession’ (Punongbayan 2020).

“Shcession” refers to “the disproportionate impact of a pandemic recession on working women”, which leads to greater gender inequality (Alon *et al.* 2020).

In the US, at least one study showed that the pandemic has lowered not just women’s labour supply but also their wages – worsening already yawning gender wage gaps (Punongbayan 2020:n.p.).

UN Women, drawing from the UN Secretary General’s policy brief on COVID-19 and Women, UN Women Spotlight on Gender, COVID-19, and the SDGs, UN thematic policy briefs focused on COVID-19, and data from the UN Women’s Rapid Gender Assessment estimate that 740 million women work in the informal economy, and that, globally, they “lost an average of 60 percent of their income” (UN Women 2020:6). Industries and sectors dominated by women, particularly those in care industries, are more vulnerable to the negative impacts of the pandemic, with women’s employment being 19 per cent more at risk compared to men, and with 70 per cent of health- and social care workers being women (UN Women 2020:6).

The COVID-19 pandemic is a recent phenomenon that continues to unfold. The literature regarding how it has impacted on women, especially working women, in different parts of the world continues to grow. A

study in the United Kingdom show that, with the work-from-home set-up, heterosexual parents have increased their involvement in the household. However, the demands for childcare and schooling have also increased, and many mothers, compared to their husbands, still worked more to care for the home and their children, due to existing gender norms (Chung *et al.* 2021:5-11). Findings from another study in the United States show that the gender gap in domestic work remained. While fathers became more involved at home during the pandemic, mothers still overcompensated to adjust to the increase in parental demands in the household, child-rearing, and schooling (Dunatchik *et al.* 2021:10). Research on Bangladeshi women shows that women experience more vulnerability in the labour market and more unpaid workload during the pandemic. The study shows that feminised areas of work such as agriculture and garments are most negatively affected. Women are among the first to lose their jobs, be further relegated to the home, and experience poverty. Women struggle with a double work burden, in order to manage the demands of both paid and unpaid work during the pandemic (Sarker 2020:1-5).

These studies also highlight the gendered impact of the pandemic on women's work despite different societal contexts. While there is no published in-depth article in the Philippines yet, a similar pattern of unequal gender division negatively affecting Philippine women's work can be established based on international data and local essays or news articles. Related literature concerning women's work during the pandemic accounts for the gender dimension, but these hardly address the role of religion and the Christian response needed for working women during this crisis.

The pandemic has also affected women working for the Catholic Church, the ritual of parish life, and attendance at mass that anchor people (Reynolds 2021). Thus, the parish has had to adapt its rituals for people to participate in, not only for the good of the people, but also for the parish, as the parish relies heavily on donations, which have decreased during the pandemic (White 2021). The work of adapting to the "new normal" has fallen on the shoulders of the people, mostly women, running the parish's daily activities. "Frequently described as the backbone of parishes", women have filled many administrative roles in parishes, and the forced changes brought about by the pandemic have made the work of women more difficult, given the limited resources (Weber 2018; Simcoe 2021).

1.2 *Fratelli Tutti*

Fratelli Tutti is a social encyclical written by Pope Francis during the pandemic. A number of scholars have written about its social relevance. Laputko (2021:67, 71) lauds *Fratelli Tutti* for its focus on the absolute value of human dignity that serves as a foundation for pursuing the common good and cooperation between the Catholic Church, the state, and public organisations. Howard (2021:21-26) emphasises *Fratelli Tutti's* insistence on universal human love and its practicality in a confused world that is going through different challenges such as migration, the ecological crisis, and the pandemic. The encyclical uses the theme of *fraternity* to highlight the value for human dignity and universal love.

The encyclical reflects on the Parable of the Good Samaritan, a story in which all the main characters are male, to emphasise the importance of caring for one another beyond the boundaries people have constructed to divide and delineate themselves. For Pope Francis (2020:section 62), the significant message of the parable is this:

Love does not care if a brother or sister in need comes from one place or another. For 'love shatters the chains that keep us isolated and separate; in their place, it builds bridges. Love enables us to create one great family, where all of us can feel at home ... Love exudes compassion and dignity'.

However, the home is not always a safe space for women, and, even when love and relationality may be a family's characteristics, such a family can still be a locus for patriarchy to thrive, where women are expected to be subservient or obedient for the sake of harmony, or where women are regarded as the primary caregivers in the home.

Even though the pandemic has created new scenarios, the next section shows how women continue to struggle with inequality in both the home and the workplace.

The theme of *fraternity*, moreover, displays a fundamental irony. Despite the positive intention conveyed by the term "*fraternity*", "a love that transcends the barriers of geography and distance" (Pope Francis 2020:section 1), some scholars point out that this gendered term continues to convey an implicit bias that is exclusionary to women (Chakkalaka 2022:82). Amidst the widespread appreciation of many scholars for the encyclical, there is a lack of studies regarding it from women's perspectives. According to Clark (2020:15-16), *Fratelli Tutti* highlights our positive moral obligations and responsibility to one another; it mentions the inequality women face, but it does not incorporate women's perspectives in its discussion.

Yet, amid this, women are largely absent. The lack of full human rights for women is mentioned three times (Paragraphs 23, 121 and 136) and women as victims of violence twice (Paragraphs 24 and 227). But despite a real emphasis on inclusive humanity within the text, a gender-exclusive view remains beneath the surface: no women are cited as inspiration, used for theological reflection or given as examples.

This is also not the first document to lack the voice of women. Theologian Mulligan (2021:1199) also decries how in other documents, Pope Francis also

resorts to unfortunate clichés and stereotypes about women. His tone is paternalistic rather than empowering; his ideas largely endorse a singular notion of womanhood rather than a multi-layered, dynamic understanding based on the lived experiences of women.

Despite the encyclical's emphasis on universal and all-encompassing love and care for one another, it still lacks women's subjectivity and a sensitivity to their nuanced experiences. Nevertheless, the challenge of Jesus' parable to "Go and do likewise" (Lk. 10:37) remains relevant and compelling. In responding to the question "Who is my neighbour?", Jesus showed us that being a neighbour to anyone and everyone despite race, class, rank, gender, or religion, is what is important (Pope Francis 2020:sec. 83). Pope Francis (2020:sec. 152) gives the example of a neighbourhood where people still "experience a closeness marked by gratitude, solidarity, and reciprocity" rather than a dangerous individualism that perceives others as a threat. He also emphasises the importance of the common good and that Christians should know the core aspects of the faith, because "violence has no basis in our fundamental religious convictions, but only in their distortion" (Pope Francis 2020:sec. 282).

This turn towards doing likewise and being a neighbour to others ought to also include women's voices and experiences, as part of the neighbour who will also do likewise, as well as being the vulnerable population to whom we ought to listen. Hence, there is a need for more constructive gender perspectives to dialogue with the social encyclical, in order to address the fundamental limitations of the encyclical while supporting its positive intentions that are in line with Jesus' message. This article thus turns to care ethics as a dialogue partner with the social encyclical. It argues that the insight of a feminist ethic of caring justice can help church and society more closely reimagine and actualise an inclusive and loving community that Pope Francis seeks to express, but continues to need the help of women in successfully doing so.

1.3 Care ethics and justice

It has been several years since Gilligan (1993:18-23) proposed care ethics as an alternative to Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development that built on justice ethics. Since then, care ethics has gained traction, but justice ethics still remained mainstream. More recent scholarship views care ethics and justice ethics not as contradictory and explores how these can be combined (French & Weis 2000:125-135).

There is growing literature that integrates caring and justice. Studying Christian ethics and Theology with a sensitivity to caring can contribute to this trend. Christian social ethics and liberation theology have emphasised social justice without sufficiently connecting it to ethics of care. As such, much of the literature written about *Fratelli Tutti* focuses on dignity, rights, and justice without much discussion on the aspect of caring, even though it expresses caring within the framework of an ecological community bound by a network of relationships, that is more inclusive than merely a "fraternity". It does not wish to present caring as only women's activity, even if many women have been socialised to be more attuned to these in various societies. Instead, it builds on women's insights from how they have experienced caring to say that caring should be the concern and activity of all humanity and not merely women. Hence, focusing on the theme of caring in *Fratelli Tutti* combined with social justice is viable and relevant. It builds on women's insights from how they have experienced caring, and what it means to be neighbour in these experiences.

This paper's original contribution includes integrating women's concerns, caring justice, and *Fratelli Tutti* in the context of the Philippines within a new global pandemic that also affects women worldwide.

1.4 Significance and scope of the study

The study contributes to the field of feminist theology because it puts contemporary church teaching in dialogue with an emerging framework in ethics that enables sensitivity to women's experiences. *Fratelli Tutti* provides valuable critique against current systems that exclude the needs of the marginalised, including women, and calls for "a better kind of politics" and "dialogue and friendship" based on love. The value of care, which has often been problematically associated with women and the marginalised in political and macroeconomic discourses, also serves as a way to analyse what is lacking in present society and to imagine alternatives.

This paper focuses on the Philippine context, while recognising that Filipina women's struggles are embedded in a wider global structure. This

paper uses Pope Francis' *Fratelli Tutti* because it gives us the opportunity to reflect on the connection between social justice and care ethics. Care is often appealed to in the document even when it is not explicitly developed. This paper also uses Tronto's works, *Caring democracy* and *Moral boundaries*, because she connected care ethics with wider structural concepts such as democracy, participation, justice, and politics, with which Catholic social thought is also concerned. This paper is mainly a theological contribution that can, it is hoped, serve as a resource for those formulating strategies to improve women's situation in society, at home, and in the workforce.

2. FILIPINAS IN THE WORKFORCE

Delving into the Philippine context, Dumlao-Abadilla (2020:n.p.) mentions that

64 percent of working Filipino women reported that COVID-19 had adversely affected them, although they were less worried than their peers about the impact on their careers. Only 27 percent of working women in the country think the disruption will prevent them from progressing in their careers.

Because of this,

the COVID-19 pandemic threatens some of the progress made in achieving gender equality in the global workplace as working women are forced to take on expanded duties at home and at work at the expense of their mental and physical health (Dumlao-Abadilla 2020:n.p.).

Exacerbated by the pandemic, women have had to work from home and at home. The expectation to take care of the home and to do their job has become more prominent and taxing as women began working from home, due to the pandemic. This has contributed to women having to leave their job, due to

the extraordinary demands of childcare amid the pandemic. Parents who should otherwise be working are finding themselves having to stay at home and look after their kids — especially to oversee their kids' online education. Mothers often bear the brunt of this task. Data show that women outnumber men in the ranks of those newly not in the labour force (Punongbayan 2020:n.p.).

The double burden of having to take care of both their domestic duties and their career, because of patriarchal expectations, has been aggravated by the increase in domestic violence, correlated with the increasing isolation of being at home, with loss of income, basic needs, and social safety nets (Nikos-Rose 2021). While the pandemic has had a negative effect on many communities, the emerging research and data

reveals the extra toll this unprecedented disruption has had on women, who are traditionally expected to shoulder most, if not all, household and child care responsibilities even as they build their careers (Dumlao-Abadilla 2020:n.p.).

In response to the systemic problems caused by the pandemic, stakeholders in government, economics, and business have sought to respond to the tension between women's needs and economic interests. For instance, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), in partnership with the local government of Cagayan de Oro, endeavoured to support local women entrepreneurs, especially during the pandemic (Juan & Legaspi 2020:54-59). However, these responses have been inadequate in the Philippines for various sectors of society, including women. While the president and his allies, in response to the critics, have feigned ignorance that the pandemic could get worse or double down on their supposed success in containing the virus, other sectors in civil society and other offices within the government have sought to respond to the pandemic in more organised ways (Lalu 2021). Communities began creating community pantries, for example, in order to help people share what they could and take what they needed. Others began organising ways to buy produce from distressed farmers and donating these to the pantries or using it themselves. Such initiatives, while laudable, reflect the lack of government intervention needed in order to help those who have lost their income, due to the economic restrictions (Cabalza 2021; Cabato 2021; Suazo 2021).

Another problematic aspect of the responses is that care is undervalued, since it is primarily associated with women. This undervaluation has led to an undervaluing of women's labour and contributions to society, not only in the Philippines, but also elsewhere. Care has also been marginalised in political and macroeconomic discourses. This also serves as a way to analyse what is lacking in present society and to imagine alternatives.

Other institutions outside of the country have more robust recommendations. The UN also identified three major recommendations that ought to be included in a gender-aware response to COVID-19. There should be "investments in universal, gender-responsive social protection

systems to support women's income security"; there should be "expanded access to affordable, quality childcare services to enable women to remain in or (re)enter the workforce", and there should be a

reversal of longstanding inequalities, including unequal division of work at home, the gender pay gap, and pervasive undervaluation of work done by women (UN Women 2020:7).

These recommendations can be more fully fleshed out and implemented in the Philippines through a caring justice framework, combining *Fratelli Tutti* and Tronto's work on care ethics.

3. CARING JUSTICE

This section elaborates on how *Fratelli Tutti* and Tronto's care ethics mutually contribute to developing caring justice as a response to the inadequate ways in which different stakeholders have responded to the issue in the Philippine context.

3.1 *Fratelli Tutti*'s culture of care

Pope Francis' papacy continues to emphasise the importance of promoting a culture of care. According to Lonergan, a culture is "a set of meanings and values that inform the way of life and community". Massingale (2010:15-16) elaborates on the meaning of culture by saying that it is a "set of attitudes toward life, beliefs about reality, and assumptions about the universe shared by a human group".

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis (2015:sec. 231) talks about how

social love is the key to authentic development: 'In order to make society more human, more worthy of the human person, love in social life – political, economic and cultural – must be given renewed value, becoming the constant and highest norm for all activity'. In this framework, along with the importance of little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a 'culture of care' which permeates all of society.

In his message for the 54th World Day of Peace, Pope Francis (2021:sec. 6) emphasised the importance of the culture of care as a path to peace, with the principles of the church's social doctrine forming the basis of a culture of care: care as promotion of the dignity and rights of persons, care for the common good, care through solidarity, and care for the environment.

The culture of care thus calls for a common, supportive and inclusive commitment to protecting and promoting the dignity and good of all, a willingness to show care and compassion, to work for reconciliation and healing, and to advance mutual respect and acceptance (Pope Francis 2021:sec. 9).

Fratelli Tutti highlights the importance of care, fraternity, and social friendship as the basis of individual action and social institutions, encouraging people to be neighbours to one another as a way to manifest the values of care and social friendship. The social love found in fraternity is also an important characteristic of the Christian eschatological vision, marked by the flourishing of creation in union with God. The encyclical thus critiques current systems that exclude the needs of the marginalised, including women, as these hinder the development of universal fraternity, and calls for “a better kind of politics” and “dialogue and friendship” based on love (Pope Francis 2020:Chapters 5 and 6). Using the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the encyclical emphasises the importance of care in the context of various issues such as migration, the economy, globalisation, and politics. For Pope Francis (2020:sec. 217), it is through authentic dialogue in the context of care that one can truly have sustainable peace.

While his papacy has had an ambivalent stance on women, Pope Francis nevertheless acknowledges the importance of attending to the needs of women. In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis (2020:secs 23-24, 168, 222) is sensitive to the ways in which a patriarchal society and exclusionary economy violate women’s rights:

Similarly, the organisation of societies worldwide is still far from reflecting clearly that women possess the same dignity and identical rights as men. We say one thing with words, but our decisions and reality tell another story. Indeed, ‘doubly poor are those women who endure situations of exclusion, mistreatment and violence, since they are frequently less able to defend their rights’.

We now turn to the ethics of care articulated by Tronto. The insights from *Fratelli Tutti* can further flesh out the ethics of care in Tronto’s work, and together they can offer several recommendations through a caring justice framework in response to COVID-19’s effects on women in the workplace and in the economy.

3.2 Joan Tronto’s ethics of care

For Tronto (1993:104), the meaning of care is closely associated with its purpose or *telos*, namely “maintaining, continuing, or repairing the world”. Tronto (1993:103) defines caring as follows:

On the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web.

Care can be described in separate but connected phases of care identified by Tronto: caring about; taking care of; caregiving, and care-receiving. First, caring about "involves noting the existence of a need and making an assessment that this need should be met", not simply on an individual level but even on a social or political level (Tronto 1993:106). Secondly, the phase "taking care of" implies that someone "assum[es] some responsibility for the identified need and determin[es] how to respond to it", recognising that s/he can do something about the need (Tronto 1993:106). Thirdly, caregiving

involves [the] physical work [implementing care], and most always requires that care-givers come in contact with the objects of care (Tronto 1993:107).

Lastly, care-receiving is when the object of care responds, in order to evaluate whether the need has been met or not, and whether a new iteration of the response to the need is required (Tronto 1993:108). For Tronto (1993:126), care is crucial in evaluating whether a person or society is morally good. Her work helps us rethink care in the public sphere.

3.3 Combining *Fratelli Tutti* and care ethics within the context of justice for Philippine women's work during the pandemic

Bringing *Fratelli Tutti* and Tronto's care ethics into dialogue highlights five interconnected phases of caring, namely caring about and attentiveness; caring for or taking care of and responsibility; caregiving and competence; care-receiving and responsiveness, and caring with and solidarity. On the one hand, *Fratelli Tutti* and Catholic social thought's description of solidarity and care, as well as integral ecology expand Tronto's ethic of care that emphasises the interdependence and connectedness when practising an ethic of care – an interdependence and connectedness not only to other people, but also to the environment in caring-with and solidarity, as well as caring about and attentiveness. This has implications with regard to caring-for and responsibility, and care-giving and competence. On the other hand, *Fratelli Tutti* asserts the importance of caring about and attentiveness, caring-for and responsibility, caregiving

and competence, and caring-with and solidarity. However, there is a lack of emphasis on care-receiving and responsiveness. These insights are important to practise justice that gives one's due in line with the common good in solidarity with women, taking seriously the reality of care work and its links to women's liberation and oppression.

3.3.1 Caring about and attentiveness

But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him... (Luke 10:33a-b)

The first phase of caring entails "caring about", in other words, recognising a need that makes care necessary. Caring about something or someone means acknowledging a need and judging that it should be met (Tronto 1993:106). In order for one to "care about" anything or anyone, attentiveness is essential. Tronto (1993:127) identifies attentiveness as the first aspect of caring. It involves going beyond individual self-interest and looking from the vantage point of the one in need (Tronto 2013:34).

Tronto's description of the importance of attentiveness in caring about one another and the world coincides with Pope Francis' discussion of a culture of care in *Fratelli Tutti*. Pope Francis mentions care and the culture of care in the encyclical extensively when he describes how the Parable of the Good Samaritan can explain how people are to live their lives within the context of the contemporary complex world. Pope Francis (2020:sec. 17) reiterates that

to care for the world in which we live means to care for ourselves. Yet we need to think of ourselves more and more as a single family dwelling in a common home.

This emphasis is not simply an individual act on the part of the person, but a culture of care and neighbourly love, contrasting the "shallow, short-sighted culture that [human beings] have created, bereft of a shared vision", characterised by a throwaway culture and colonial interests that do not respect the human person nor the environment, and instead ignores them in favour of apathy or fatalism (Pope Francis 2020:secs 17-24, 78, 237).

Both Tronto and Pope Francis emphasise attentiveness in being neighbour to one another, especially to the vulnerable. Tronto recognises that needs have to be understood within structures of politics because people with different involvements in the care process have different status. Democratic processes are important, so as not to exclude the needs of "the needy" (Tronto 1993:139). Related to this, Pope Francis (2020:sec. 64) laments how this is taking place:

Let us admit that, for all the progress we have made, we are still “illiterate” when it comes to accompanying, caring for and supporting the most frail and vulnerable members of our developed societies. We have become accustomed to looking the other way, passing by, ignoring situations until they affect us directly”.

This inattentiveness and apathy described by Pope Francis coincides with Tronto's (1993:121) notion of “privileged irresponsibility”, wherein

those who are relatively privileged are granted by that privilege the opportunity simply to ignore certain forms of hardships that they do not face.

The pandemic has affected everyone differently. This phase of caring also highlights the need for society to recognise and care about the needs of all its members, especially the vulnerable, who are also part of the neighbours Pope Francis mentions in *Fratelli Tutti*. In particular, caring about children who are struggling with online learning or struggling for survival should not only be a concern of their own mothers but of society as a whole. Moreover, the “shecession” shows how the pandemic has exacerbated social and gender inequality that has long been entrenched in society. Women, who are often perceived as caregivers, find themselves in greater need for various forms of support and care.

3.3.2 Caring for (or taking care of) and responsibility

... he was moved with pity. (Luke 10:33c)

The next phase in the process of caring is “caring for” or “taking care of” the one who is cared about. This step entails taking on responsibility for the unmet need and finding ways to address it. It also involves recognising that one has the capacity to respond to the need (Tronto 1993:106). A sense of responsibility comes from interconnected social relationships where a person recognises that one has done or has failed to do something that has contributed to the needs of others; thus, the person should care (Tronto 1993:132). Concretely, caring for another from a sense of responsibility entails taking on the burden of meeting the other's unmet needs (Tronto 1993:132).

The interconnectedness, from which a sense of responsibility emerges, is akin to *Fratelli Tutti*'s notion of fraternity and neighbour, and is further enhanced by it. The culture of caring in Pope Francis' encyclical is situated within the context of universal fraternity (Kučko 2020:702-734). Hence, this culture is not merely for one's kin or nation or in-group, but it is rather meant to include all, especially the vulnerable and the wounded. This culture is

also meant to succeed with everyone's contribution, with participation at grassroots level and synergy and collaboration at the level of institutions and higher organisations (Pope Francis 2020:sec. 78).

In relation to this phase of caring, privileged irresponsibility is not only a form of ignorance, but also a form of excusing oneself from taking responsibility for caring and "going and doing likewise", as the Parable of the Good Samaritan suggests. For instance, Tronto (2013:58) gives the example of a breadwinner and head of a traditional household, usually a man, who excuses himself from the responsibility of caring for the home and doing domestic chores because he is already the provider for the family. Such an uncaring but often perceived as excusable attitude reminds one of the Priest and the Levite in the Parable of the Good Samaritan who merely pass by at the moment when caring is needed, excusing themselves of the need to care for other reasons such as their current responsibilities, in what Pope Francis (2020:sec. 73) calls "nervous indifference". This would explain why many working mothers find themselves overcompensating and taking on more household responsibilities despite some instances where working from home has become a possibility for both parents.

3.3.3 Caregiving and competence

He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. (Luke 10:34)

The third step in the caring process is caregiving, which entails working to address the unmet needs of another. This often requires physical effort and direct contact with those who need care. Unfortunately, caregiving work is often perceived as menial work (Tronto 1993; 2013:107) and is also often associated with women's roles. However, Tronto argues that this is not due to women's biological make-up or some natural reason. Instead, it comes from gender constructs such as those that conflate reproduction with nurturing. The result is unjust. According to Tronto (2013:72),

Women do disproportionate amounts of housework and child-care around the globe. The end result of these presumptions about women's greater caring nature is a highly sex-segregated workforce around the globe.

This schema was present even before the pandemic.

On the other hand, Pope Francis acknowledges and lauds ordinary people who have engaged in caregiving work and physically addressed people's needs, especially during the pandemic, as a sign of hope and of

being neighbour to one another. Contrary to negative social perceptions about caregiving, Pope Francis views caregiving work as admirable and possible for people of different genders and social status. Pope Francis clearly regards caregiving work as a collaborative effort.

However, caregiving work requires more than simply passion and dedication. Tronto (1993:133; 2013:35) insists that, for caring to be adequate and successful, it must be done competently. Competence is not only a technical requirement, but also a moral one. This means that caregivers ought not to merely fend for themselves. They ought to be empowered and equipped with the necessary skills and resources to deliver care.

3.3.4 Care-receiving and responsiveness

The fourth stage of caring is an acknowledgement that reception on the part of the object of care is important (Tronto 1993:107, 134). This stage makes the moral quality of responsiveness important in the actualisation of care. It is not as fleshed out in *Fratelli Tutti*. When a person gives care to a person, group, or object, that person, group, or object responds in various ways. Some ways can be explicit such as words of gratitude. Some responses can be less explicit such as a child becoming strong from healthy food, or a plant growing from being watered. Responsiveness entails mutuality in that the person caring must observe these responses with a sensitivity to needs that have not been met or new needs that may arise, thus continuing the process of care (Tronto 1993:136). Rather than seeking to understand the needs of others by putting oneself in their position, the kind of responsiveness Tronto describes involves considering the position of the other as expressed by the other. The caregiver engages the perspective of the care-receiver without assuming that people are the same and interchangeable (Tronto 1993:136).

The various needs that have emerged during the pandemic have called for urgent responses from governments and businesses. Tronto's caring framework is a reminder to observe the effect of one's decisions, even though these are intended to help others, and then to listen to feedback. Caring about women would, therefore, ultimately entail listening to women's voices and what they have to say about the different arrangements or possibilities presented to them during the pandemic. This is especially important if one is to take seriously the turn to "go and do likewise" in *Fratelli Tutti* that Pope Francis encourages. To be neighbour is not only to always give care to others, but also to receive and respond appropriately to such care. To form bonds of solidarity and the common good as neighbours, one must understand each other's perspectives and, as mentioned earlier, through mutuality continue the process of care by

being sensitive to how each is reacting to and processing the care given and the care received.

Moreover, Tronto (1993:136) adds that there is a “[n]eed to keep a balance between the needs of the care-giver and care-receivers”. This comment is especially relevant to mothers who are working during the pandemic. Many of them are caregivers of their children, but they also have their own needs. For women to be neighbours to others is not to solely take on double burdens without consideration of their own needs, but also to receive care from themselves or others.

3.3.5 Caring with and solidarity, plurality, communication, trust, and respect

The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise’ (Lk. 10:35-37).

Tronto’s initial listing of the phases of the process of care does not include “caring with”. She later added this stage based on the qualities, mentioned by Sevenhuijsen, that are needed for caring in a democratic society. These qualities are “plurality, communication, trust and respect”; these will enable people to see caring as a social activity and collective responsibility where everyone can be involved as receiving and giving care (Tronto 2013:35).

Caring with one another is also expressed in *Laudato Si’*, which emphasises solidarity and plurality by calling for participation and inclusion amidst diversity. Such a community includes each person’s active inclusion and participation (Pope Francis 2020:sec. 98). This culture of care also reminds society of the importance of solidarity, which,

as a moral virtue and social attitude born of personal conversion, calls for commitment on the part of those responsible for education and formation ... [this implies] ‘solidity’ born of the consciousness that we are responsible for the fragility of others as we strive to build a common future ... when we speak of the need to care for our common home, our planet, we appeal to that spark of universal consciousness and mutual concern that may still be present in people’s hearts (Francis 2020:secs 114-115, 117).

In *Fratelli Tutti*, the quality of communication is often expressed as dialogue. Dialogue and solidarity are not merely private matters; they

are also crucial in the functioning of social systems and structures (Pope Francis 2020:sec. 181).

Dialogue plays an important role in fostering a culture of care, especially in response to fear, uncertainty, and conflict.

The ability to sit down and listen to others, typical of interpersonal encounters, is paradigmatic of the welcoming attitude shown by those who transcend narcissism and accept others, caring for them and welcoming them into their lives (Francis 2020:sec. 48).

It is crucial to be able to encounter and handle conflict without withdrawing or creating violence, especially in ensuring that no one is forgotten or left behind (Pope Francis 2020:sec. 28). Dealing with fear, uncertainty, and conflict in a healthy manner is formed through an appreciation of one's own identity in relation to others – in the family, in one's local community, in social institutions, and even across borders (Pope Francis 2020:sec. 143). Mulligan (2021) also reiterates this in her work, arguing for the importance of political trust and good politics in *Fratelli Tutti*, in order for people to genuinely be neighbour to one another through a stronger common good and solidarity. The pandemic highlighted both interconnectivity and social inequality. This notion of caring as “caring with” is, therefore, very apt. In the Philippines, “caring with” and being neighbour to one another is expressed through the community pantries that began with the initiative of one Filipina, Ana Patricia Non, who could no longer stand by while so many were suffering (Cabalza 2021; Cabato 2021; Suazo 2021). However, there is the danger of merely romanticising the community pantries or the Philippine spirit of *bayanihan* without seeing the need that catalyses it. While we ought to be neighbour to one another, we should not forget to address the reason why such acts were needed in the first instance. The qualities of “caring with” also challenge society, governments, and broader institutions to recognise the need behind why these pantries become widespread and to cooperate with people and promote just social transformation.

3.4 Summary

On the one hand, *Fratelli Tutti* enhances Tronto's care framework. *Fratelli Tutti's* development of solidarity and integral ecology, as part of a wider corpus of Catholic social teachings, expands Tronto's ethic of care that emphasises the interdependence and connectedness when practising an ethic of care – an interdependence and connectedness not only to other people, but also to the environment in caring with and solidarity, and caring about and attentiveness. This has implications for the concepts of

caring for and responsibility, and caregiving and competence. Unlike in Tronto's work, wherein "caring with" was a later addition or development, *Fratelli Tutti* conveys fraternity, solidarity, and interconnectedness as a basic anthropological condition. Hence, these set a broader context for various phases of caring and do not simply come in the final phase. The basic precondition of universal fraternity further bolsters the importance of social justice in the caring discourse.

On the other hand, Tronto's care framework also enriches *Fratelli Tutti*, which asserts the importance of caring about and attentiveness, caring for and responsibility, caregiving and competence, and caring with and solidarity. Women have usually been regarded as caregivers at home and in other spaces where their caring and nurturing capacities are expanded. Care ethics along with *Fratelli Tutti*'s insistence on universal fraternity call for an expansion of the meaning of caring beyond merely a role delegated to women and more support for and collaboration with women in caregiving roles, so that caregiving can be done and shared with competence.

Parts of the Parable of the Good Samaritan that inspired Pope Francis' reflections in *Fratelli Tutti* coincide with the various aspects of care, except for care-receiving. While Pope Francis (2021:sec. 140) mentions receiving life and grace from God, there is a lack of emphasis on care-receiving and responsiveness to care received from other people, especially as part of being neighbour to one another. This is especially true for women. This observation is consistent with Clark's critique of *Fratelli Tutti*, which recognises women's needs but fails to include women's subjectivities and perspectives. It is also significant that the aspect of care-receiving and responsiveness is not evident in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The man who was half-dead might have been unconscious and unable to give an explicit response. Care-receiving is merely implied and could be gleaned from supposing that the man survived, received some relief from pain, or at least died in a humane way in an inn rather than on the side of the road. In society, many women are not unconscious but conscious, active, and vocal, and so their care-receiving could be more direct and explicit rather than merely implied.

Fratelli Tutti's recognition of women's needs coupled with Tronto's care framework lead to the insight that women should not only be caregivers, but also care-receivers and people with whom society cares. As caregivers, they need empowerment and support. As care-receivers, they ought to have an active role in determining what they need and giving feedback to those seeking to support them, such as the church, their husbands and families, and their managers. Because women are people society cares with, their various responsibilities at home and as part of the

workforce call for a restructuring of care so that caregiving work does not fall exclusively or heavily on their shoulders.

The insights gleaned from interfacing *Fratelli Tutti* and Tronto's care framework are important to the pursuit of justice. As far as justice is giving one's due in line with the common good in solidarity with women, these encourage society to take seriously the reality of care work and its connections to women's liberation and oppression. Justice is also reiterated as the broad context for caring. Tronto articulates some dangerous tendencies in caring such as maternalism/paternalism and parochialism, which Pope Francis also criticises. To address these pitfalls, Tronto (1993:170-171) states:

The only solution that I see to these two problems is to insist that care needs to be connected to a theory of justice and to be relentlessly democratic in its disposition.

While caring can be exercised in a narrow-minded way such as only caring for one's family, Pope Francis and Tronto both seek to go beyond these limited views of caring.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on both Tronto's work and *Fratelli Tutti*, this paper offers two recommendations. First, in the area of taking care of and responsibility and caregiving, organisations should practise better risk management and contingency planning. Secondly, in caring about, care-receiving, and caring with, both the private and the public sectors need to contribute, in order to properly compensate care work, particularly in legislation, changing cultural attitudes towards care work, and changing the ways in which work is structured.

First, in crafting job descriptions and work responsibilities, organisations should practise better risk management and identify who are most at risk and who are most shielded from risk, should anything happen. The company would have to consider how it would spread or mitigate that risk, so that it does not unduly burden one particular demographic. Shoring up the care infrastructure is one way of helping mitigate risk and delegating work needed to support people through crises. In China,

the neighbourhood communities which have always been part of the social infrastructure, all of a sudden stood out to be focal points of care service provision...throughout the urban and rural sectors, these neighbourhood communities not only ensured provision

of basic necessities when human mobility was restricted but also facilitated quarantine practices in a way that largely relieved family members from assuming extra care responsibilities (Ying 2021:n.p.).

Ying notes similar care structures at the local level in India and Venezuela that have helped coordinate care and quarantining in communities to avoid the spread of COVID-19.

Secondly, both the private and the public sectors need to contribute, in order to properly compensate care work. Their contributions are particularly vital in three areas: legislation for just compensation; changing cultural attitudes towards care work, and changing the ways in which work is structured. Government needs to support Filipino workers, especially women who have lost their jobs or have been discouraged from working. The pandemic also showed that, for some sectors, flexible times and working from home are possible. Home-based livelihood would indeed provide opportunities for women (Sarker 2020:6). While some advantages could come out of this, many women who work from home find themselves working more because they do household work and office work. Hence, policies must also be set in place that support work-life balance among workers such as limiting times employees have to be “on call” and granting workers’ children compensated time off. These salaries and benefits would otherwise have been used for day care during normal times (Punongbayan, 2020).

Changing cultural attitudes towards care work entails distributing and mainstreaming the phases of care to various sectors, institutions, and members of society. Care work at home should be recognised as legitimate work and would help

influence the attitude of men in the family toward women and help in unpaid care and domestic work to reduce the burden on women, make it more equitable. Moreover, changing the women’s perception of themselves plays an important role to uplift their self-esteem and to improve their image in the family and society at large (Sarker 2020:6).

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