



MIGRANTS REFUGEES

Presentation of the Holy Father's Message 105th World Day of Migrants and Refugees

Fr Fabio has explained the theme, the first 4 sub-themes, and the campaign in preparation for the next World Day of Migrants and Refugees. Noting that it is the 105th such day helps us to put concerns about human mobility in historical perspective. Migration is not an unexpected, unprecedented crisis or emergency. Human mobility, which unfortunately includes a proportion who are forced to flee for a variety of understandable reasons, is a fact of human life. The relevant question is: are governments, business, communications and civil society responding competently and responsibly? The Church's role is not a substitute. Instead, as Christians, we commit ourselves to welcome, protect, promote and integrate vulnerable people on the move.

To do so with Christian faith and Christian compassion, we reflect in the light of this year's theme, "*It is not just about migrants*". Treating them as a 'single issue', in isolation, is not helpful. Whether they are departing, passing-through, arriving, settling down, or returning, vulnerable people on the move have affinities and relationships with many others "already here" who are in need. The Holy Father invites us to encounter newcomers, accompany them, pray for them and share life with them, within our wider concern for all marginalized people, all those inhabiting "the existential peripheries" as he repeatedly calls them. Please note that this goes against the tendency in society and in popular media to ignore them, caricature them, keep them invisible or make them disappear. Rejecting this rejection, our theme "*It is not just about migrants*" stimulates our curiosity, then our concern, then our compassion, and finally our solidarity.

One obstacle is spontaneous "group interest", whatever the group might be: "Us first, me first, and then any others!" Instead, the true motto of the Christian is "The last shall be first!" (Mt 20:16). This is the logic of the Gospel, and we must put ourselves at their service. *It is not just about migrants: it is about putting the last in first place* is the fifth sub-theme. There are many unsung heroes who put vulnerable migrants and refugees in first place, before their own comfort and even safety, by helping in high seas

rescues, in offering food and shelter, and simply by listening, healing, praying with them.

Another obstacle is the fragmentation of modern, fast-paced life. Even our seniors in some kind of retirement can feel this way, let alone students preparing for adulthood and adults who are more or less participating in the economy and society. There is great pressure to ignore relationships and deeper meanings in favour of quick consumerism and the flash of an electronic screen. But thanks be to God, vulnerable migrants come along and remind us existentially that *it is about the whole person, about all people*. Their immediate need and rights are a compelling reminder of the real facts of life, namely, that we cannot be reduced to mere consumers (whether of perishable goods or of fragmentary information) but need to encounter the whole person. Moreover, full and true life cannot be assured for a few while forgetting – or much worse, depriving -- many others. Either we all develop integrally, or there's no integral development for anyone.

And the final, seventh consideration brings to mind the inspiring vision of the new Jerusalem with which our Holy Scriptures end in the Book of Revelation. “Now God’s home is with humankind ... Now I make all things new” (Rv 21:3,5). This vision, as the sub-theme states, *is about building the city of God and man*. Building “our common home” (*Laudato si'*) among all people is not easy, particularly because it must not benefit only a few while many are exploited. The vision needs instead to be based on true faith and solid values. “Who welcomes the stranger welcomes me,” Jesus says, “and who welcomes me welcomes the Father who sent me.” (cf Mt 25:35, Mt 10:40) Christian parishes and religious communities who have taken in refugee families, as Pope Francis challenged them to do,¹ often testify with great gratitude for a deeply human and deeply divine experience of Christ living in their midst.

Now the Migrants & Refugees Section looks ahead to the celebration of the 2019 *World Day of Migrants and Refugees*. For Sunday 29 September or another convenient date, we suggest preparing and celebrating a special Eucharist inviting migrants, refugees, survivors of human trafficking, and internally displaced persons, along with the organizations which serve them. This is what the Holy Father will do in St Peter's Square. Bishops and faithful of smaller dioceses can join with the Archbishop in the larger Cathedral. All these special Eucharists in a particular country could be

¹ “May every parish, every religious community, every monastery, every shrine of Europe welcome one family, beginning with my Diocese of Rome” (Angelus, 6.9.2015).

celebrated at the same time in order to give visible expression to the welcome we offer to “the stranger” in Christ and to Christ in the stranger.

“Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of the Way,” we shall join together in praying for “God’s abundant blessings on all the world’s migrants and refugees and on all those who accompany them on their journey” (2019 Message).

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