



Papal Messages for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees



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The Church has celebrated the World Day of Migrants and Refugees each year since 1914. Below is a compilation of the Pope's statements available in English for the occasion from 1996 on. All text is from the Vatican website. Visit cliniclegal.org/cst for other resources and a companion to this document offering Spanish translations.

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Message Of His Holiness Pope Francis For The World Day Of Migrants And Refugees 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me” (Mk 9:37; cf. Mt 18:5; Lk 9:48; Jn 13:20). With these words, the Evangelists remind the Christian community of Jesus’ teaching, which both inspires and challenges. This phrase traces the sure path which leads to God; it begins with the smallest and, through the grace of our Saviour, it grows into the practice of welcoming others. To be welcoming is a necessary condition for making this journey a concrete reality: God made himself one of us. In Jesus God became a child, and the openness of faith to God, which nourishes hope, is expressed in loving proximity to the smallest and the weakest. Charity, faith and hope are all actively present in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, as we have rediscovered during the recent Extraordinary Jubilee.

But the Evangelists reflect also on the responsibility of the one who works against mercy: “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin: it is better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and be drowned in the depth of the sea” (Mt 18:6; cf. Mk 9:42; Lk 17:2). How can we ignore this severe warning when we see the exploitation carried out by unscrupulous people? Such exploitation harms young girls and boys who are led into prostitution or into the mire of pornography; who are enslaved as child labourers or soldiers; who are caught up in drug trafficking and other forms of criminality; who are forced to flee from conflict and persecution, risking isolation and abandonment.

For this reason, on the occasion of the annual World Day of Migrants and Refugees, I feel compelled to draw attention to the reality of child migrants, especially the ones who are alone. In doing so I ask everyone to take care of the young, who in a threefold way are defenceless: they are children, they are foreigners, and they have no means to protect themselves. I ask everyone to help those who, for various reasons, are forced to live far from their homeland and are separated from their families.

Migration today is not a phenomenon limited to some areas of the planet. It affects all continents and is growing into a tragic situation of global proportions. Not only does this concern those looking for dignified work or better living conditions, but also men and women, the elderly and children, who are forced to leave their homes in the hope of finding safety, peace and security. Children are the first among those to pay the heavy toll of emigration, almost always caused by violence, poverty, environmental conditions, as well as the negative aspects of globalization. The unrestrained competition for quick and easy profit brings with it the cultivation of perverse scourges such as child trafficking, the exploitation and abuse of minors and, generally, the depriving of rights intrinsic to childhood as sanctioned by the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Childhood, given its fragile nature, has unique and inalienable needs. Above all else, there is the right to a healthy and secure family environment, where a child can grow under the guidance and example of a father and a mother; then there is the right and duty to receive adequate education, primarily in the family and also in the school, where children can grow as persons and agents of their own future and the future of their respective countries. Indeed, in many areas of the world, reading, writing and the most basic arithmetic is still the privilege of only a few. All children, furthermore, have the right to recreation; in a word, they have the right to be children.

And yet among migrants, children constitute the most vulnerable group, because as they face the life ahead of them, they are invisible and voiceless: their precarious situation deprives them of documentation, hiding them from the world’s eyes; the absence of adults to accompany them prevents their voices from being raised and heard. In this way, migrant children easily end up at the lowest levels of human degradation, where illegality and violence destroy the future of too many innocents, while the network of child abuse is difficult to break up.

How should we respond to this reality?

Firstly, we need to become aware that the phenomenon of migration is not unrelated to salvation history, but rather a part of that history. One of God's commandments is connected to it: "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Ex 22:21); "Love the sojourner therefore; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (Deut 10:19). This phenomenon constitutes a sign of the times, a sign which speaks of the providential work of God in history and in the human community, with a view to universal communion. While appreciating the issues, and often the suffering and tragedy of migration, as too the difficulties connected with the demands of offering a dignified welcome to these persons, the Church nevertheless encourages us to recognize God's plan. She invites us to do this precisely amidst this phenomenon, with the certainty that no one is a stranger in the Christian community, which embraces "every nation, tribe, people and tongue" (Rev 7:9). Each person is precious; persons are more important than things, and the worth of an institution is measured by the way it treats the life and dignity of human beings, particularly when they are vulnerable, as in the case of child migrants.

Furthermore, we need to work towards protection, integration and long-term solutions.

We are primarily concerned with adopting every possible measure to guarantee the protection and safety of child migrants, because "these boys and girls often end up on the street abandoned to themselves and prey to unscrupulous exploiters who often transform them into the object of physical, moral and sexual violence" (Benedict XVI, Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2008).

Moreover, the dividing line between migration and trafficking can at times be very subtle. There are many factors which contribute to making migrants vulnerable, especially if they are children: poverty and the lack of means to survive – to which are added unrealistic expectations generated by the media; the low level of literacy; ignorance of the law, of the culture and frequently of the language of host countries. All of this renders children physically and psychologically dependent. But the most powerful force driving the exploitation and abuse of children is demand. If more rigorous and effective action is not taken against those who profit from such abuse, we will not be able to stop the multiple forms of slavery where children are the victims.

It is necessary, therefore, for immigrants to cooperate ever more closely with the communities that welcome them, for the good of their own children. We are deeply grateful to organizations and institutions, both ecclesial and civil, that commit time and resources to protect minors from various forms of abuse. It is important that evermore effective and incisive cooperation be implemented, based not only on the exchange of information, but also on the reinforcement of networks capable of assuring timely and specific intervention; and this, without underestimating the strength that ecclesial communities reveal especially when they are united in prayer and fraternal communion.

Secondly, we need to work for the integration of children and youngsters who are migrants. They depend totally on the adult community. Very often the scarcity of financial resources prevents the adoption of adequate policies aimed at assistance and inclusion. As a result, instead of favouring the social integration of child migrants, or programmes for safe and assisted repatriation, there is simply an attempt to curb the entrance of migrants, which in turn fosters illegal networks; or else immigrants are repatriated to their country of origin without any concern for their "best interests".

The condition of child migrants is worsened when their status is not regularized or when they are recruited by criminal organizations. In such cases they are usually sent to detention centres. It is not unusual for them to be arrested, and because they have no money to pay the fine or for the return journey, they can be incarcerated for long periods, exposed to various kinds of abuse and violence. In these instances, the right of states to control migratory movement and to protect the common good of the nation must be seen in conjunction with the duty to resolve and regularize the situation of child migrants, fully respecting their dignity and seeking to meet their

needs when they are alone, but also the needs of their parents, for the good of the entire family.

Of fundamental importance is the adoption of adequate national procedures and mutually agreed plans of cooperation between countries of origin and of destination, with the intention of eliminating the causes of the forced emigration of minors.

Thirdly, to all I address a heartfelt appeal that long-term solutions be sought and adopted. Since this is a complex phenomenon, the question of child migrants must be tackled at its source. Wars, human rights violations, corruption, poverty, environmental imbalance and disasters, are all causes of this problem. Children are the first to suffer, at times suffering torture and other physical violence, in addition to moral and psychological aggression, which almost always leave indelible scars.

It is absolutely necessary, therefore, to deal with the causes which trigger migrations in the countries of origin. This requires, as a first step, the commitment of the whole international community to eliminate the conflicts and violence that force people to flee. Furthermore, far-sighted perspectives are called for, capable of offering adequate programmes for areas struck by the worst injustice and instability, in order that access to authentic development can be guaranteed for all. This development should promote the good of boys and girls, who are humanity's hope.

Lastly, I wish to address a word to you, who walk alongside migrant children and young people: they need your precious help. The Church too needs you and supports you in the generous service you offer. Do not tire of courageously living the Gospel, which calls you to recognize and welcome the Lord Jesus among the smallest and most vulnerable.

I entrust all child migrants, their families, their communities, and you who are close to them, to the protection of the Holy Family of Nazareth; may they watch over and accompany each one on their journey. With my prayers, I gladly impart my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 8 September 2016

Message of the Holy Father Pope Francis (2016) 'Migrants and Refugees Challenge Us. The Response of the Gospel of Mercy'

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the Bull of indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy I noted that “at times we are called to gaze even more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father’s action in our lives” (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 3). God’s love is meant to reach out to each and every person. Those who welcome the Father’s embrace, for their part, become so many other open arms and embraces, enabling every person to feel loved like a child and “at home” as part of the one human family. God’s fatherly care extends to everyone, like the care of a shepherd for his flock, but it is particularly concerned for the needs of the sheep who are wounded, weary or ill. Jesus told us that the Father stoops to help those overcome by physical or moral poverty; the more serious their condition, the more powerfully is his divine mercy revealed.

In our time, migration is growing worldwide. Refugees and people fleeing from their homes challenge individuals and communities, and their traditional ways of life; at times they upset the cultural and social horizons which they encounter. Increasingly, the victims of violence and poverty, leaving their homelands, are exploited by human traffickers during their journey towards the dream of a better future. If they survive the abuses and hardships of the journey, they then have to face latent suspicions and fear. In the end, they frequently encounter a lack of clear and practical policies regulating the acceptance of migrants and providing for short or long term programmes of integration respectful of the rights and duties of all. Today, more than in the past, the Gospel of mercy troubles our consciences, prevents us from taking the suffering of others for granted, and points out way of responding which, grounded in the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, find practical expression in works of spiritual and corporal mercy.

In the light of these facts, I have chosen as the theme of the 2016 World Day of Migrants and Refugees: *Migrants and Refugees Challenge Us. The Response of the Gospel of Mercy*. Migration movements are now a structural reality, and our primary issue must be to deal with the present emergency phase by providing programmes which address the causes of migration and the changes it entails, including its effect on the makeup of societies and peoples. The tragic stories of millions of men and women daily confront the international community as a result of the outbreak of unacceptable humanitarian crises in different parts of the world. Indifference and silence lead to complicity whenever we stand by as people are dying of suffocation, starvation, violence and shipwreck. Whether large or small in scale, these are always tragedies, even when a single human life is lost.

Migrants are our brothers and sisters in search of a better life, far away from poverty, hunger, exploitation and the unjust distribution of the planet’s resources which are meant to be equitably shared by all. Don’t we all want a better, more decent and prosperous life to share with our loved ones?

At this moment in human history, marked by great movements of migration, identity is not a secondary issue. Those who migrate are forced to change some of their most distinctive characteristics and, whether they like or not, even those who welcome them are also forced to change. How can we experience these changes not as obstacles to genuine development, rather as opportunities for genuine human, social and spiritual growth, a growth which respects and promotes those values which make us ever more humane and help us to live a balanced relationship with God, others and creation?

The presence of migrants and refugees seriously challenges the various societies which accept them. Those societies are faced with new situations which could create serious hardship unless they are suitably motivated, managed and regulated. How can we ensure that integration will become mutual enrichment, open up positive perspectives to communities, and prevent the danger of discrimination, racism, extreme nationalism or

xenophobia?

Biblical revelation urges us to welcome the stranger; it tells us that in so doing, we open our doors to God, and that in the faces of others we see the face of Christ himself. Many institutions, associations, movements and groups, diocesan, national and international organizations are experiencing the wonder and joy of the feast of encounter, sharing and solidarity. They have heard the voice of Jesus Christ: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock” (Rev 3:20). Yet there continue to be debates about the conditions and limits to be set for the reception of migrants, not only on the level of national policies, but also in some parish communities whose traditional tranquillity seems to be threatened.

Faced with these issues, how can the Church fail to be inspired by the example and words of Jesus Christ? The answer of the Gospel is mercy.

In the first place, mercy is a gift of God the Father who is revealed in the Son. God’s mercy gives rise to joyful gratitude for the hope which opens up before us in the mystery of our redemption by Christ’s blood. Mercy nourishes and strengthens solidarity towards others as a necessary response to God’s gracious love, “which has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:5). Each of us is responsible for his or her neighbour: we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they live. Concern for fostering good relationships with others and the ability to overcome prejudice and fear are essential ingredients for promoting the culture of encounter, in which we are not only prepared to give, but also to receive from others. Hospitality, in fact, grows from both giving and receiving.

From this perspective, it is important to view migrants not only on the basis of their status as regular or irregular, but above all as people whose dignity is to be protected and who are capable of contributing to progress and the general welfare. This is especially the case when they responsibly assume their obligations towards those who receive them, gratefully respecting the material and spiritual heritage of the host country, obeying its laws and helping with its needs. Migrations cannot be reduced merely to their political and legislative aspects, their economic implications and the concrete coexistence of various cultures in one territory. All these complement the defence and promotion of the human person, the culture of encounter, and the unity of peoples, where the Gospel of mercy inspires and encourages ways of renewing and transforming the whole of humanity.

The Church stands at the side of all who work to defend each person’s right to live with dignity, first and foremost by exercising the right not to emigrate and to contribute to the development of one’s country of origin. This process should include, from the outset, the need to assist the countries which migrants and refugees leave. This will demonstrate that solidarity, cooperation, international interdependence and the equitable distribution of the earth’s goods are essential for more decisive efforts, especially in areas where migration movements begin, to eliminate those imbalances which lead people, individually or collectively, to abandon their own natural and cultural environment. In any case, it is necessary to avert, if possible at the earliest stages, the flight of refugees and departures as a result of poverty, violence and persecution.

Public opinion also needs to be correctly formed, not least to prevent unwarranted fears and speculations detrimental to migrants.

No one can claim to be indifferent in the face of new forms of slavery imposed by criminal organizations which buy and sell men, women and children as forced labourers in construction, agriculture, fishing or in other markets. How many minors are still forced to fight in militias as child soldiers! How many people are victims of organ trafficking, forced begging and sexual exploitation! Today’s refugees are fleeing from these aberrant crimes, and they appeal to the Church and the human community to ensure that, in the outstretched hand of those who receive them, they can see the face of the Lord, “the Father of mercies and God of all consolation” (2 Cor 1:3).

Dear brothers and sisters, migrants and refugees! At the heart of the Gospel of mercy the encounter and acceptance by others are intertwined with the encounter and acceptance of God himself. Welcoming others

means welcoming God in person! Do not let yourselves be robbed of the hope and joy of life born of your experience of God's mercy, as manifested in the people you meet on your journey! I entrust you to the Virgin Mary, Mother of migrants and refugees, and to Saint Joseph, who experienced the bitterness of emigration to Egypt. To their intercession I also commend those who invest so much energy, time and resources to the pastoral and social care of migrants. To all I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, September 12, 2015, Memorial of the Holy Name of Mary

FRANCIS

Message of the Holy Father Pope Francis (2015) 'Church without Frontiers, Mother to All'

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Jesus is “the evangelizer par excellence and the Gospel in person” ([Evangelii Gaudium](#), 209). His solicitude, particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalized, invites all of us to care for the frailest and to recognize his suffering countenance, especially in the victims of new forms of poverty and slavery. The Lord says: “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me” (Mt 25:35-36). The mission of the Church, herself a pilgrim in the world and the Mother of all, is thus to love Jesus Christ, to adore and love him, particularly in the poorest and most abandoned; among these are certainly migrants and refugees, who are trying to escape difficult living conditions and dangers of every kind. For this reason, the theme for this year’s World Day of Migrants and Refugees is: Church without frontiers, Mother to all.

The Church opens her arms to welcome all people, without distinction or limits, in order to proclaim that “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8,16). After his death and resurrection, Jesus entrusted to the disciples the mission of being his witnesses and proclaiming the Gospel of joy and mercy. On the day of Pentecost, the disciples left the Upper Room with courage and enthusiasm; the strength of the Holy Spirit overcame their doubts and uncertainties and enabled all to understand the disciples’ preaching in their own language. From the beginning, the Church has been a mother with a heart open to the whole world, and has been without borders. This mission has continued for two thousand years. But even in the first centuries, the missionary proclamation spoke of the universal motherhood of the Church, which was then developed in the writings of the Fathers and taken up by the Second Vatican Council. The Council Fathers spoke of *Ecclesia Mater* to explain the Church’s nature. She begets sons and daughters and “takes them in and embraces them with her love and in her heart” ([Lumen Gentium](#), 14).

The Church without frontiers, Mother to all, spreads throughout the world a culture of acceptance and solidarity, in which no one is seen as useless, out of place or disposable. When living out this motherhood effectively, the Christian community nourishes, guides and indicates the way, accompanying all with patience, and drawing close to them through prayer and works of mercy.

Today this takes on a particular significance. In fact, in an age of such vast movements of migration, large numbers of people are leaving their homelands, with a suitcase full of fears and desires, to undertake a hopeful and dangerous trip in search of more humane living conditions. Often, however, such migration gives rise to suspicion and hostility, even in ecclesial communities, prior to any knowledge of the migrants’ lives or their stories of persecution and destitution. In such cases, suspicion and prejudice conflict with the biblical commandment of welcoming with respect and solidarity the stranger in need.

On the other hand, we sense in our conscience the call to touch human misery, and to put into practice the commandment of love that Jesus left us when he identified himself with the stranger, with the one who suffers, with all the innocent victims of violence and exploitation. Because of the weakness of our nature, however, “we are tempted to be that kind of Christian who keeps the Lord’s wounds at arm’s length” ([Evangelii Gaudium](#), 270).

The courage born of faith, hope and love enables us to reduce the distances that separate us from human misery. Jesus Christ is always waiting to be recognized in migrants and refugees, in displaced persons and in exiles, and through them he calls us to share our resources, and occasionally to give up something of our acquired riches. Pope Paul VI spoke of this when he said that “the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others” ([Octogesima Adveniens](#), 23).

The multicultural character of society today, for that matter, encourages the Church to take on new commitments of solidarity, communion and evangelization. Migration movements, in fact, call us to deepen and strengthen the values needed to guarantee peaceful coexistence between persons and cultures. Achieving mere tolerance that respects diversity and ways of sharing between different backgrounds and cultures is not sufficient. This is precisely where the Church contributes to overcoming frontiers and encouraging the “moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization ... towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world” ([Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2014](#)).

Migration movements, however, are on such a scale that only a systematic and active cooperation between States and international organizations can be capable of regulating and managing such movements effectively. For migration affects everyone, not only because of the extent of the phenomenon, but also because of “the social, economic, political, cultural and religious problems it raises, and the dramatic challenges it poses to nations and the international community” ([Caritas in Veritate](#), 62).

At the international level, frequent debates take place regarding the appropriateness, methods and required norms to deal with the phenomenon of migration. There are agencies and organizations on the international, national and local level which work strenuously to serve those seeking a better life through migration. Notwithstanding their generous and laudable efforts, a more decisive and constructive action is required, one which relies on a universal network of cooperation, based on safeguarding the dignity and centrality of every human person. This will lead to greater effectiveness in the fight against the shameful and criminal trafficking of human beings, the violation of fundamental rights, and all forms of violence, oppression and enslavement. Working together, however, requires reciprocity, joint-action, openness and trust, in the knowledge that “no country can singlehandedly face the difficulties associated with this phenomenon, which is now so widespread that it affects every continent in the twofold movement of immigration and emigration” ([Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2014](#)).

It is necessary to respond to the globalization of migration with the globalization of charity and cooperation, in such a way as to make the conditions of migrants more humane. At the same time, greater efforts are needed to guarantee the easing of conditions, often brought about by war or famine, which compel whole peoples to leave their native countries.

Solidarity with migrants and refugees must be accompanied by the courage and creativity necessary to develop, on a world-wide level, a more just and equitable financial and economic order, as well as an increasing commitment to peace, the indispensable condition for all authentic progress.

Dear migrants and refugees! You have a special place in the heart of the Church, and you help her to enlarge her heart and to manifest her motherhood towards the entire human family. Do not lose your faith and hope! Let us think of the Holy Family during the flight in Egypt: Just as the maternal heart of the Blessed Virgin and the kind heart of Saint Joseph kept alive the confidence that God would never abandon them, so in you may the same hope in the Lord never be wanting. I entrust you to their protection and I cordially impart to all of you my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 3 September 2014

FRANCISCUS

Message of the Holy Father Pope Francis (2014) 'Migrants and Refugees: Towards a Better World'

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Our societies are experiencing, in an unprecedented way, processes of mutual interdependence and interaction on the global level. While not lacking problematic or negative elements, these processes are aimed at improving the living conditions of the human family, not only economically, but politically and culturally as well. Each individual is a part of humanity and, with the entire family of peoples, shares the hope of a better future. This consideration inspired the theme I have chosen for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees this year: *Migrants and Refugees: Towards a Better World*.

In our changing world, the growing phenomenon of human mobility emerges, to use the words of Pope Benedict XVI, as a “sign of the times” (cf. *Message for the 2006 World Day of Migrants and Refugees*). While it is true that migrations often reveal failures and shortcomings on the part of States and the international community, they also point to the aspiration of humanity to enjoy a unity marked by respect for differences, by attitudes of acceptance and hospitality which enable an equitable sharing of the world’s goods, and by the protection and the advancement of the dignity and centrality of each human being.

From the Christian standpoint, the reality of migration, like other human realities, points to the tension between the beauty of creation, marked by Grace and the Redemption, and the mystery of sin. Solidarity, acceptance, and signs of fraternity and understanding exist side by side with rejection, discrimination, trafficking and exploitation, suffering and death. Particularly disturbing are those situations where migration is not only involuntary, but actually set in motion by various forms of human trafficking and enslavement. Nowadays, “slave labour” is common coin! Yet despite the problems, risks and difficulties to be faced, great numbers of migrants and refugees continue to be inspired by confidence and hope; in their hearts they long for a better future, not only for themselves but for their families and those closest to them.

What is involved in the creation of “a better world”? The expression does not allude naively to abstract notions or unattainable ideals; rather, it aims at an authentic and integral development, at efforts to provide dignified living conditions for everyone, at finding just responses to the needs of individuals and families, and at ensuring that God’s gift of creation is respected, safeguarded and cultivated. The Venerable Paul VI described the aspirations of people today in this way: “to secure a sure food supply, cures for diseases and steady employment... to exercise greater personal responsibility; to do more, to learn more, and have more, in order to be more” (*Populorum Progressio*, 6).

Our hearts do desire something “more”. Beyond greater knowledge or possessions, they want to “be” more. Development cannot be reduced to economic growth alone, often attained without a thought for the poor and the vulnerable. A better world will come about only if attention is first paid to individuals; if human promotion is integral, taking account of every dimension of the person, including the spiritual; if no one is neglected, including the poor, the sick, prisoners, the needy and the stranger (cf. *Mt* 25:31-46); if we can prove capable of leaving behind a throwaway culture and embracing one of encounter and acceptance.

Migrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity. They are children, women and men who leave or who are forced to leave their homes for various reasons, who share a legitimate desire for knowing and having, but above all for being more. The sheer number of people migrating from one continent to another, or shifting places within their own countries and geographical areas, is striking. Contemporary movements of migration represent the largest movement of individuals, if not of peoples, in history. As the Church

accompanies migrants and refugees on their journey, she seeks to understand the causes of migration, but she also works to overcome its negative effects, and to maximize its positive influence on the communities of origin, transit and destination.

While encouraging the development of a better world, we cannot remain silent about the scandal of poverty in its various forms. Violence, exploitation, discrimination, marginalization, restrictive approaches to fundamental freedoms, whether of individuals or of groups: these are some of the chief elements of poverty which need to be overcome. Often these are precisely the elements which mark migratory movements, thus linking migration to poverty. Fleeing from situations of extreme poverty or persecution in the hope of a better future, or simply to save their own lives, millions of persons choose to migrate. Despite their hopes and expectations, they often encounter mistrust, rejection and exclusion, to say nothing of tragedies and disasters which offend their human dignity.

The reality of migration, given its new dimensions in our age of globalization, needs to be approached and managed in a new, equitable and effective manner; more than anything, this calls for international cooperation and a spirit of profound solidarity and compassion. Cooperation at different levels is critical, including the broad adoption of policies and rules aimed at protecting and promoting the human person. Pope Benedict XVI sketched the parameters of such policies, stating that they “should set out from close collaboration between the migrants’ countries of origin and their countries of destination; they should be accompanied by adequate international norms able to coordinate different legislative systems with a view to safeguarding the needs and rights of individual migrants and their families, and at the same time, those of the host countries” (*Caritas in Veritate*, 62). Working together for a better world requires that countries help one another, in a spirit of willingness and trust, without raising insurmountable barriers. A good synergy can be a source of encouragement to government leaders as they confront socioeconomic imbalances and an unregulated globalization, which are among some of the causes of migration movements in which individuals are more victims than protagonists. No country can singlehandedly face the difficulties associated with this phenomenon, which is now so widespread that it affects every continent in the twofold movement of immigration and emigration.

It must also be emphasized that such cooperation begins with the efforts of each country to create better economic and social conditions at home, so that emigration will not be the only option left for those who seek peace, justice, security and full respect of their human dignity. The creation of opportunities for employment in the local economies will also avoid the separation of families and ensure that individuals and groups enjoy conditions of stability and serenity.

Finally, in considering the situation of migrants and refugees, I would point to yet another element in building a better world, namely, the elimination of prejudices and presuppositions in the approach to migration. Not infrequently, the arrival of migrants, displaced persons, asylum-seekers and refugees gives rise to suspicion and hostility. There is a fear that society will become less secure, that identity and culture will be lost, that competition for jobs will become stiffer and even that criminal activity will increase. The communications media have a role of great responsibility in this regard: it is up to them, in fact, to break down stereotypes and to offer correct information in reporting the errors of a few as well as the honesty, rectitude and goodness of the majority. A change of attitude towards migrants and refugees is needed on the part of everyone, moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization – all typical of a throwaway culture – towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world. The communications media are themselves called to embrace this “conversion of attitudes” and to promote this change in the way migrants and refugees are treated.

I think of how even the Holy Family of Nazareth experienced initial rejection: Mary “gave birth to her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn” (*Lk 2:7*). Jesus, Mary and Joseph knew what it meant to leave their own country and become migrants:

threatened by Herod's lust for power, they were forced to take flight and seek refuge in Egypt (cf. *Mt* 2:13-14). But the maternal heart of Mary and the compassionate heart of Joseph, the Protector of the Holy Family, never doubted that God would always be with them. Through their intercession, may that same firm certainty dwell in the heart of every migrant and refugee.

The Church, responding to Christ's command to "go and make disciples of all nations", is called to be the People of God which embraces all peoples and brings to them the proclamation of the Gospel, for the face of each person bears the mark of the face of Christ! Here we find the deepest foundation of the dignity of the human person, which must always be respected and safeguarded. It is less the criteria of efficiency, productivity, social class, or ethnic or religious belonging which ground that personal dignity, so much as the fact of being created in God's own image and likeness (cf. *Gen* 1:26-27) and, even more so, being children of God. Every human being is a child of God! He or she bears the image of Christ! We ourselves need to see, and then to enable others to see, that migrants and refugees do not only represent a problem to be solved, but are brothers and sisters to be welcomed, respected and loved. They are an occasion that Providence gives us to help build a more just society, a more perfect democracy, a more united country, a more fraternal world and a more open and evangelical Christian community. Migration can offer possibilities for a new evangelization, open vistas for the growth of a new humanity foreshadowed in the paschal mystery: a humanity for which every foreign country is a homeland and every homeland is a foreign country.

Dear migrants and refugees! Never lose the hope that you too are facing a more secure future, that on your journey you will encounter an outstretched hand, and that you can experience fraternal solidarity and the warmth of friendship! To all of you, and to those who have devoted their lives and their efforts to helping you, I give the assurance of my prayers and I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 24 September 2013

Message of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI (2013) 'Migrations: Pilgrimage of Faith and Hope'

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

The [Second Vatican Ecumenical Council](#), in the Pastoral Constitution [Gaudium et Spes](#), recalled that “the Church goes forward together with humanity” (No. 40); therefore “the joys and the hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts” (*ibid.*, 1). The [Servant of God Paul VI](#) echoed these words when he called the Church an “expert in humanity” ([Populorum Progressio](#), 13), as did [Blessed John Paul II](#) when he stated that the human person is “the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission... the way traced out by Christ himself” ([Centesimus Annus](#), 53). In the footsteps of my predecessors, I sought to emphasize in my Encyclical [Caritas in Veritate](#) that “the whole Church, in all her being and acting – when she proclaims, when she celebrates, when she performs works of charity – is engaged in promoting integral human development” (No. 11). I was thinking also of the millions of men and women who, for various reasons, have known the experience of migration. Migration is in fact “a striking phenomenon because of the sheer numbers of people involved, the social, economic, political, cultural and religious problems it raises, and the dramatic challenges it poses to nations and the international community” (*ibid.*, 62), for “every migrant is a human person who, as such, possesses fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone and in every circumstance” (*ibid.*).

For this reason, I have chosen to dedicate the 2013 World Day of Migrants and Refugees to the theme “Migrations: pilgrimage of faith and hope”, in conjunction with the celebrations marking the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and the sixtieth anniversary of the promulgation of the Apostolic Constitution [Exsul Familia](#), and at a time when the whole Church is celebrating the [Year of Faith](#), taking up with enthusiasm the challenge of the new evangelization.

Faith and hope are inseparable in the hearts of many migrants, who deeply desire a better life and not infrequently try to leave behind the “hopelessness” of an unpromising future. During their journey many of them are sustained by the deep trust that God never abandons his children; this certainty makes the pain of their uprooting and separation more tolerable and even gives them the hope of eventually returning to their country of origin. Faith and hope are often among the possessions which emigrants carry with them, knowing that with them, “we can face our present: the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey” ([Spe Salvi](#), 1).

In the vast sector of migration, the Church shows her maternal concern in a variety of ways. On the one hand, she witnesses the immense poverty and suffering entailed in migration, leading often to painful and tragic situations. This inspires the creation of programmes aimed at meeting emergencies through the generous help of individuals and groups, volunteer associations and movements, parochial and diocesan organizations in cooperation with all people of good will. The Church also works to highlight the positive aspects, the potential and the resources which migrations offer. Along these lines, programmes and centres of welcome have been established to help and sustain the full integration of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees into a new social and cultural context, without neglecting the religious dimension, fundamental for every person’s life. Indeed, it is to this dimension that the Church, by virtue of the mission entrusted to her by Christ, must devote special attention and care: this is her most important and specific task. For Christians coming from various parts of the world, attention to the religious dimension also entails ecumenical dialogue and the care of new communities, while for the Catholic faithful it involves, among other things, establishing new pastoral structures and showing esteem for the various rites, so as to foster full participation in the life of the local ecclesial community. Human

promotion goes side by side with spiritual communion, which opens the way “to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the only Saviour of the world” ([Porta Fidei](#), 6). The Church always offers a precious gift when she guides people to an encounter with Christ, which opens the way to a stable and trustworthy hope.

Where migrants and refugees are concerned, the Church and her various agencies ought to avoid offering charitable services alone; they are also called to promote real integration in a society where all are active members and responsible for one another’s welfare, generously offering a creative contribution and rightfully sharing in the same rights and duties. Emigrants bring with them a sense of trust and hope which has inspired and sustained their search for better opportunities in life. Yet they do not seek simply to improve their financial, social and political condition. It is true that the experience of migration often begins in fear, especially when persecutions and violence are its cause, and in the trauma of having to leave behind family and possessions which had in some way ensured survival. But suffering, great losses and at times a sense of disorientation before an uncertain future do not destroy the dream of being able to build, with hope and courage, a new life in a new country. Indeed, migrants trust that they will encounter acceptance, solidarity and help, that they will meet people who sympathize with the distress and tragedy experienced by others, recognize the values and resources the latter have to offer, and are open to sharing humanly and materially with the needy and disadvantaged. It is important to realize that “the reality of human solidarity, which is a benefit for us, also imposes a duty” ([Caritas in Veritate](#), 43). Migrants and refugees can experience, along with difficulties, new, welcoming relationships which enable them to enrich their new countries with their professional skills, their social and cultural heritage and, not infrequently, their witness of faith, which can bring new energy and life to communities of ancient Christian tradition, and invite others to encounter Christ and to come to know the Church.

Certainly every state has the right to regulate migration and to enact policies dictated by the general requirements of the common good, albeit always in safeguarding respect for the dignity of each human person. The right of persons to migrate – as the Council’s Constitution [Gaudium et Spes](#), No. 65, recalled – is numbered among the fundamental human rights, allowing persons to settle wherever they consider best for the realization of their abilities, aspirations and plans. In the current social and political context, however, even before the right to migrate, there is need to reaffirm the right not to emigrate, that is, to remain in one’s homeland; as Blessed John Paul II stated: “It is a basic human right to live in one’s own country. However this rights become effective only if the factors that urge people to emigrate are constantly kept under control” ([Address to the Fourth World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees](#), 9 October 1998). Today in fact we can see that many migrations are the result of economic instability, the lack of essential goods, natural disasters, wars and social unrest. Instead of a pilgrimage filled with trust, faith and hope, migration then becomes an ordeal undertaken for the sake of survival, where men and women appear more as victims than as agents responsible for the decision to migrate. As a result, while some migrants attain a satisfactory social status and a dignified level of life through proper integration into their new social setting, many others are living at the margins, frequently exploited and deprived of their fundamental rights, or engaged in forms of behaviour harmful to their host society. The process of integration entails rights and duties, attention and concern for the dignified existence of migrants; it also calls for attention on the part of migrants to the values offered by the society to which they now belong.

In this regard, we must not overlook the question of irregular migration, an issue all the more pressing when it takes the form of human trafficking and exploitation, particularly of women and children. These crimes must be clearly condemned and prosecuted, while an orderly migration policy which does not end up in a hermetic sealing of borders, more severe sanctions against irregular migrants and the adoption of measures meant to discourage new entries, could at least limit for many migrants the danger of falling prey to such forms of human trafficking. There is an urgent need for structured multilateral interventions for the development of the countries of departure, effective countermeasures aimed at eliminating human trafficking, comprehensive programmes regulating legal entry, and a greater openness to considering individual cases calling for humanitarian protection more than political asylum. In addition to suitable legislation, there is a need for a patient and persevering

effort to form minds and consciences. In all this, it is important to strengthen and develop understanding and cooperation between ecclesial and other institutions devoted to promoting the integral development of the human person. In the Christian vision, social and humanitarian commitment draws its strength from fidelity to the Gospel, in the knowledge that “to follow Christ, the perfect man, is to become more human oneself” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 41).

Dear brothers and sisters who yourselves are migrants, may this World Day help you renew your trust and hope in the Lord who is always at our side! Take every opportunity to encounter him and to see his face in the acts of kindness you receive during your pilgrimage of migration. Rejoice, for the Lord is near, and with him you will be able to overcome obstacles and difficulties, treasuring the experiences of openness and acceptance that many people offer you. For “life is like a voyage on the sea of history, often dark and stormy, a voyage in which we watch for the stars that indicate the route. The true stars of our life are the people who have lived good lives. They are lights of hope. Certainly, Jesus Christ is the true light, the sun that has risen above all the shadows of history. But to reach him we also need lights close by – people who shine with his light and so guide us along our way” (*Spe Salvi*, 49).

I entrust each of you to the Blessed Virgin Mary, sign of sure hope and consolation, our “guiding star”, who with her maternal presence is close to us at every moment of our life. To all I affectionately impart my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 12 October 2012

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

Message of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI (2012) 'Migration and the New Evangelization'

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Proclaiming Jesus Christ the one Saviour of the world “constitutes the essential mission of the Church. It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent” ([Evangelii Nuntiandi](#), 14). Indeed, today we feel the urgent need to give a fresh impetus and new approaches to the work of evangelization in a world in which the breaking down of frontiers and the new processes of globalization are bringing individuals and peoples even closer. This is both because of the development of the means of social communication and because of the frequency and ease with which individuals and groups can move about today. In this new situation we must reawaken in each one of us the enthusiasm and courage that motivated the first Christian communities to be undaunted heralds of the Gospel’s newness, making St Paul’s words resonate in our hearts: “For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16).

“*Migration and the New Evangelization*” is the theme I have chosen this year for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, and it arises from the aforesaid situation. The present time, in fact, calls upon the Church to embark on a new evangelization also in the vast and complex phenomenon of human mobility. This calls for an intensification of her missionary activity both in the regions where the Gospel is proclaimed for the first time and in countries with a Christian tradition.

Blessed John Paul II invited us to “nourish ourselves with the word in order to be ‘servants of the word’ in the work of evangelization ... [in] a situation which is becoming increasingly diversified and demanding, in the context of ‘globalization’ and of the consequent new and uncertain mingling of peoples and cultures” ([Novo Millennio Ineunte](#), 40). Internal or international migration, in fact, as an opening in search of better living conditions or to flee from the threat of persecution, war, violence, hunger or natural disasters, has led to an unprecedented mingling of individuals and peoples, with new problems not only from the human standpoint but also from ethical, religious and spiritual ones. The current and obvious consequences of secularization, the emergence of new sectarian movements, widespread insensitivity to the Christian faith and a marked tendency to fragmentation are obstacles to focusing on a unifying reference that would encourage the formation of “one family of brothers and sisters in societies that are becoming ever more multiethnic and intercultural, where also people of various religions are urged to take part in dialogue, so that a serene and fruitful coexistence with respect for legitimate differences may be found”, as I wrote in my [Message last year for this World Day](#). Our time is marked by endeavours to efface God and the Church’s teaching from the horizon of life, while doubt, skepticism and indifference are creeping in, seeking to eliminate all the social and symbolic visibility of the Christian faith.

In this context migrants who have known and welcomed Christ are not infrequently constrained to consider him no longer relevant to their lives, to lose the meaning of their faith, no longer to recognize themselves as members of the Church, and often lead a life no longer marked by Christ and his Gospel. Having grown up among peoples characterized by their Christian faith they often emigrate to countries in which Christians are a minority or where the ancient tradition of faith, no longer a personal conviction or a community religion, has been reduced to a cultural fact. Here the Church is faced with the challenge of helping migrants keep their faith firm even when they are deprived of the cultural support that existed in their country of origin, and of identifying new pastoral approaches, as well as methods and expressions, for an ever vital reception of the Word of God. In some cases this is an opportunity to proclaim that, in Jesus Christ, humanity has been enabled to participate in the mystery of God and in his life of love. Humanity is also opened to a horizon of hope and peace, also through respectful dialogue and a tangible testimony of solidarity. In other cases there is

the possibility of reawakening the dormant Christian conscience through a renewed proclamation of the Good News and a more consistent Christian life to enable people to rediscover the beauty of the encounter with Christ who calls Christians to holiness wherever they may be, even in a foreign land.

The phenomenon of migration today is also a providential opportunity for the proclamation of the Gospel in the contemporary world. Men and women from various regions of the earth who have not yet encountered Jesus Christ or know him only partially, ask to be received in countries with an ancient Christian tradition. It is necessary to find adequate ways for them to meet and to become acquainted with Jesus Christ and to experience the invaluable gift of salvation which, for everyone, is a source of “life in abundance” (cf. *Jn* 10:10); migrants themselves have a special role in this regard because they in turn can become “heralds of God’s word and witnesses to the Risen Jesus, the hope of the world” (Apostolic Exhortation [Verbum Domini](#), 105).

Pastoral workers – priests, religious and lay people – play a crucial role in the demanding itinerary of the new evangelization in the context of migration. They work increasingly in a pluralist context: in communion with their Ordinaries, drawing on the Church’s Magisterium. I invite them to seek ways of fraternal sharing and respectful proclamation, overcoming opposition and nationalism. For their part, the Churches of origin, of transit and those that welcome the migration flows should find ways to increase their cooperation for the benefit both of those who depart and those who arrive, and, in any case, of those who, on their journey, stand in need of encountering the merciful face of Christ in the welcome given to one’s neighbour. To achieve a fruitful pastoral service of communion, it may be useful to update the traditional structures of care for migrants and refugees, by setting beside them models that respond better to the new situations in which different peoples and cultures interact with one another.

Asylum seekers, who fled from persecution, violence and situations that put their life at risk, stand in need of our understanding and welcome, of respect for their human dignity and rights, as well as awareness of their duties. Their suffering pleads with individual states and the international community to adopt attitudes of reciprocal acceptance, overcoming fears and avoiding forms of discrimination, and to make provisions for concrete solidarity also through appropriate structures for hospitality and resettlement programmes. All this entails mutual help between the suffering regions and those which, already for years, have accepted a large number of fleeing people, as well as a greater sharing of responsibilities among States.

The press and the other media have an important role in making known, correctly, objectively and honestly, the situation of those who have been forced to leave their homeland and their loved ones and want to start building a new life.

Christian communities are to pay special attention to migrant workers and their families by accompanying them with prayer, solidarity and Christian charity, by enhancing what is reciprocally enriching, as well as by fostering new political, economic and social planning that promotes respect for the dignity of every human person, the safeguarding of the family, access to dignified housing, to work and to welfare.

Priests, men and women religious, lay people, and most of all young men and women are to be sensitive in offering support to their many sisters and brothers who, having fled from violence, have to face new lifestyles and the difficulty of integration. The proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ will be a source of relief, hope and “full joy” (cf. *Jn* 15:11).

Lastly, I would like to mention the situation of numerous international students who are facing problems of integration, bureaucratic difficulties, hardship in the search for housing and welcoming structures. Christian communities are to be especially sensitive to the many young men and women who, precisely because of their youth, need reference points in addition to cultural growth, and have in their hearts a profound thirst for truth and the desire to encounter God. Universities of Christian inspiration are to be, in a special way, places of witness and of the spread of the new evangelization, seriously committed to contributing to social, cultural

and human progress in the academic milieu. They are also to promote intercultural dialogue and enhance the contribution that international students can give. If these students meet authentic Gospel witnesses and examples of Christian life, it will encourage them to become agents of the new evangelization.

Dear friends, let us invoke the intercession of Mary, “*Our Lady of the Way*”, so that the joyful proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ may bring hope to the hearts of those who are on the move on the roads of the world. To one and all I assure my prayers and impart my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 21 September 2011

Message of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI (2011) 'One Human Family'

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The World Day of Migrants and Refugees offers the whole Church an opportunity to reflect on a theme linked to the growing phenomenon of migration, to pray that hearts may open to Christian welcome and to the effort to increase in the world justice and charity, pillars on which to build an authentic and lasting peace. “As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (Jn 13:34), is the invitation that the Lord forcefully addresses to us and renews us constantly: if the Father calls us to be beloved children in his dearly beloved Son, he also calls us to recognize each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

This profound link between all human beings is the origin of the theme that I have chosen for our reflection this year: “One human family”, one family of brothers and sisters in societies that are becoming ever more multiethnic and intercultural, where also people of various religions are urged to take part in dialogue, so that a serene and fruitful coexistence with respect for legitimate differences may be found. The Second Vatican Council affirms that “All peoples are one community and have one origin, because God caused the whole human race to dwell on the face of the earth (cf. Acts 17:26); they also have one final end, God” ([Message for the World Day of Peace](#), 2008, 1). “His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men” (Declaration [Nostra aetate](#), 1). Thus, “We do not live alongside one another purely by chance; all of us are progressing along a common path as men and women, and thus as brothers and sisters” ([Message for the World Day of Peace](#), 2008, 6).

The road is the same, that of life, but the situations that we pass through on this route are different: many people have to face the difficult experience of migration in its various forms: internal or international, permanent or seasonal, economic or political, voluntary or forced. In various cases the departure from their Country is motivated by different forms of persecution, so that escape becomes necessary. Moreover, the phenomenon of globalization itself, characteristic of our epoch, is not only a social and economic process, but also entails “humanity itself [that] is becoming increasingly interconnected”, crossing geographical and cultural boundaries. In this regard, the Church does not cease to recall that the deep sense of this epochal process and its fundamental ethical criterion are given by the unity of the human family and its development towards what is good (cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical [Caritas in veritate](#), 42). All, therefore, belong to one family, migrants and the local populations that welcome them, and all have the same right to enjoy the goods of the earth whose destination is universal, as the social doctrine of the Church teaches. It is here that solidarity and sharing are founded.

“In an increasingly globalized society, the common good and the effort to obtain it cannot fail to assume the dimensions of the whole human family, that is to say, the community of peoples and nations, in such a way as to shape the earthly city in unity and peace, rendering it to some degree an anticipation and a prefiguration of the undivided city of God” (Benedict XVI, Encyclical [Caritas in veritate](#), 7). This is also the perspective with which to look at the reality of migration. In fact, as the Servant of God Paul VI formerly noted, “the weakening of brotherly ties between individuals and nations” (Encyclical [Populorum progressio](#), 66), is a profound cause of underdevelopment and – we may add – has a major impact on the migration phenomenon. Human brotherhood is the, at times surprising, experience of a relationship that unites, of a profound bond with the other, different from me, based on the simple fact of being human beings. Assumed and lived responsibly, it fosters a life of communion and sharing with all and in particular with migrants; it supports the gift of self to others, for their good, for the good of all, in the local, national and world political communities.

Venerable John Paul II, on the occasion of this same Day celebrated in 2001, emphasized that “[the universal

common good] includes the whole family of peoples, beyond every nationalistic egoism. The right to emigrate must be considered in this context. The Church recognizes this right in every human person, in its dual aspect of the possibility to leave one's country and the possibility to enter another country to look for better conditions of life" ([Message for World Day of Migration 2001](#), 3; cf. John XXIII, Encyclical [Mater et Magistra](#), 30; Paul VI, Encyclical [Octogesima adveniens](#), 17). At the same time, States have the right to regulate migration flows and to defend their own frontiers, always guaranteeing the respect due to the dignity of each and every human person. Immigrants, moreover, have the duty to integrate into the host Country, respecting its laws and its national identity. "The challenge is to combine the welcome due to every human being, especially when in need, with a reckoning of what is necessary for both the local inhabitants and the new arrivals to live a dignified and peaceful life" ([World Day of Peace 2001](#), 13).

In this context, the presence of the Church, as the People of God journeying through history among all the other peoples, is a source of trust and hope. Indeed the Church is "in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race" (Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution [Lumen gentium](#), 1); and through the action within her of the Holy Spirit, "the effort to establish a universal brotherhood is not a hopeless one" (*Idem*, Pastoral Constitution [Gaudium et spes](#), 38). It is the Holy Eucharist in particular that constitutes, in the heart of the Church, an inexhaustible source of communion for the whole of humanity. It is thanks to this that the People of God includes "every nation, race, people, and tongue" (Rev 7:9), not with a sort of sacred power but with the superior service of charity. In fact the exercise of charity, especially for the poorest and weakest, is the criterion that proves the authenticity of the Eucharistic celebration (cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter [Mane nobiscum Domine](#), 28).

The situation of refugees and of the other forced migrants, who are an important part of the migration phenomenon, should be specifically considered in the light of the theme "One human family". For these people who flee from violence and persecution the International Community has taken on precise commitments. Respect of their rights, as well as the legitimate concern for security and social coherence, foster a stable and harmonious coexistence.

Also in the case of those who are forced to migrate, solidarity is nourished by the "reserve" of love that is born from considering ourselves a single human family and, for the Catholic faithful, members of the Mystical Body of Christ: in fact we find ourselves depending on each other, all responsible for our brothers and sisters in humanity and, for those who believe, in the faith. As I have already had the opportunity to say, "Welcoming refugees and giving them hospitality is for everyone an imperative gesture of human solidarity, so that they may not feel isolated because of intolerance and disinterest" ([General Audience, 20 June 2007: Insegnamenti](#) II, 1 [2007], 1158). This means that those who are forced to leave their homes or their country will be helped to find a place where they may live in peace and safety, where they may work and take on the rights and duties that exist in the Country that welcomes them, contributing to the common good and without forgetting the religious dimension of life.

Lastly, I would like to address a special thought, again accompanied by prayer, to the foreign and international students who are also a growing reality within the great migration phenomenon. This, as well, is a socially important category with a view to their return, as future leaders, to their Countries of origin. They constitute cultural and economic "bridges" between these Countries and the host Countries, and all this goes precisely in the direction of forming "one human family". This is the conviction that must support the commitment to foreign students and must accompany attention to their practical problems, such as financial difficulties or the hardship of feeling alone in facing a very different social and university context, as well as the difficulties of integration. In this regard, I would like to recall that "to belong to a university community... is to stand at the crossroads of the cultures that have formed the modern world" (John Paul II, [To the Bishops of the United States of America of the Ecclesiastical Provinces of Chicago, Indianapolis and Milwaukee on their ad limina](#)

[visit](#), 30 May 1998, 6: *Insegnamenti* XXI, 1 [1998] 1116). At school and at university the culture of the new generations is formed: their capacity to see humanity as a family called to be united in diversity largely depends on these institutions.

Dear brothers and sisters, the world of migrants is vast and diversified. It knows wonderful and promising experiences, as well as, unfortunately, so many others that are tragic and unworthy of the human being and of societies that claim to be civil. For the Church this reality constitutes an eloquent sign of our times which further highlights humanity's vocation to form one family, and, at the same time, the difficulties which, instead of uniting it, divide it and tear it apart. Let us not lose hope and let us together pray God, the Father of all, to help us – each in the first person – to be men and women capable of brotherly relationships and, at the social, political and institutional levels, so that understanding and reciprocal esteem among peoples and cultures may increase. With these hopes, as I invoke the intercession of Mary Most Holy, *Stella Maris*, I cordially impart the Apostolic Blessing to all and, especially, to migrants and refugees and to everyone who works in this important field.

From Castel Gandolfo, 27 September 2010

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

Message of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI (2010) 'Minor Migrants and Refugees'

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The celebration of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees once again gives me the opportunity to express the Church's constant concern for those who, in different ways, experience a life of emigration. This is a phenomenon which, as I wrote in the Encyclical [Caritas in Veritate](#), upsets us due to the number of people involved and the social, economic, political, cultural and religious problems it raises on account of the dramatic challenges it poses to both national and international communities. The migrant is a human person who possesses fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone and in every circumstance (cf. [n. 62](#)).

This year's theme – “Minor migrants and refugees” – touches an aspect that Christians view with great attention, remembering the warning of Christ who at the Last Judgement will consider as directed to himself everything that has been done or denied “to one of the least of these” (cf. Mt 25:40, 45). And how can one fail to consider migrant and refugee minors as also being among the “least”? As a child, Jesus himself experienced migration for, as the Gospel recounts, in order to flee the threats of Herod, he had to seek refuge in Egypt together with Joseph and Mary (cf. Mt 2:14).

While the Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly states that the best interests of the minor shall always be safeguarded (cf. Art. 3, 1), recognizing his or her fundamental human rights as equal to the rights of adults, unfortunately this does not always happen in practice.

Although there is increasing public awareness of the need for immediate and incisive action to protect minors, nevertheless, many are left to themselves and, in various ways, face the risk of exploitation. My venerable Predecessor, [John Paul II](#), voiced the dramatic situation in which they live in the [Message he addressed to the Secretary General of the United Nations on 22 September 1990, on the occasion of the World Summit for Children](#).

“I am a witness of the heart-breaking plight of millions of children on every continent. They are most vulnerable, because they are least able to make their voice heard” (*L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 1 October 1990, p. 13). I warmly hope that proper attention will be given to minor migrants who need a social environment that permits and fosters their physical, cultural, spiritual and moral development. Living in a foreign land without effective points of reference generates countless and sometimes serious hardships and difficulties for them, especially those deprived of the support of their family.

A typical aspect of the migration of minors is the situation of children born in the host country or of those who do not live with their parents, who emigrated after their birth, but join them later. These adolescents belong to two cultures with all the advantages and problems attached to their dual background, a condition that can nevertheless offer them the opportunity to experience the wealth of an encounter between different cultural traditions. It is important that these young people be given the possibility of attending school and subsequently of being integrated into the world of work, and that their social integration be facilitated by appropriate educational and social structures. It should never be forgotten that adolescence constitutes a fundamental phase for the formation of human beings.

A particular category of minors is that of refugees seeking asylum, who, for various reasons, are fleeing their own country, where they are not given adequate protection. Statistics show that their numbers are increasing. This is therefore a phenomenon that calls for careful evaluation and coordinated action by implementing appropriate measures of prevention, protection and welcome, as set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the

Child (cf. Art. 22).

I now turn in particular to parishes and to the many Catholic associations which, imbued with a spirit of faith and charity, take pains to meet the needs of these brothers and sisters of ours. While I express gratitude for all that is being done with great generosity, I would like to invite all Christians to become aware of the social and pastoral challenges posed by migrant and refugee minors.

Jesus' words resound in our hearts: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt 25:35), as, likewise, the central commandment he left us: to love God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind, but together with love of neighbour (cf. Mt 22:37-39).

This leads us to consider that any of our concrete interventions must first be nurtured by faith in the action of grace and divine Providence. In this way also hospitality and solidarity to strangers, especially if they are children, become a proclamation of the Gospel of solidarity. The Church proclaims this when she opens her arms and strives to have the rights of migrants and refugees respected, moving the leaders of Nations, and those in charge of international organizations and institutions to promote opportune initiatives for their support.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary watch over us all and help us to understand the difficulties faced by those who are far from their homeland. I assure all those who are involved in the vast world of migrants and refugees of my prayers and cordially impart to them the Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 16 October 2009.

Message of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI (2009) 'St. Paul, Migrant, Apostle of the Peoples'

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This year the theme of the Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees is: “*St Paul migrant, Apostle of the peoples*”. It is inspired by its felicitous coincidence with the Jubilee Year I established in the Apostle’s honour on the occasion of the 2,000th anniversary of his birth. Indeed, the preaching and mediation between the different cultures and the Gospel which Paul, “a migrant by vocation” carried out, are also an important reference point for those who find themselves involved in the migratory movement today.

Born into a family of Jewish immigrants in Tarsus, Cilicia, Saul was educated in the Hebrew and Hellenistic cultures and languages, making the most of the Roman cultural context. After his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus (cf. Gal 1:13-16), although he did not deny his own “traditions” and felt both esteem and gratitude to Judaism and the Law (cf. Rm 9:1-5; 10:1; 2 Cor 11:22; Gal 1:13-14; Phil 3:3-6), he devoted himself without hesitation or second thoughts to his new mission, with courage and enthusiasm and docile to the Lord’s command: “I will send you far away to the Gentiles” (Acts 22:21). His life changed radically (cf. Phil 3:7-11): Jesus became for him his *raison d’être* and the motive that inspired his apostolic dedication to the service of the Gospel. He changed from being a persecutor of Christians to being an Apostle of Christ.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, he spared no effort to see that the Gospel which is “the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rm 1:16) was proclaimed to all, making no distinction of nationality or culture. On his apostolic journeys, in spite of meeting with constant opposition, he first proclaimed the Gospel in the synagogues, giving prior attention to his compatriots in the diaspora (cf. Acts 18:4-6). If they rejected him he would address the Gentiles, making himself - an authentic “missionary to migrants” - as a migrant and an ambassador of Jesus Christ “at large” in order to invite every person to become a “new creation” in the Son of God (2 Cor 5:17).

The proclamation of the *kerygma* caused him to cross the seas of the Near East and to travel the roads of Europe until he reached Rome. He set out from Antioch, where he proclaimed the Gospel to people who did not belong to Judaism and where the disciples of Jesus were called “Christians” for the first time (cf. Acts 11:20, 26). His life and his preaching were wholly directed to making Jesus known and loved by all, for all persons are called to become a single people in him.

This is the mission of the Church and of every baptized person in our time too, even in the era of globalization; a mission that with attentive pastoral solicitude is also directed to the variegated universe of migrants - students far from home, immigrants, refugees, displaced people, evacuees - including for example, the victims of modern forms of slavery, and of human trafficking. Today too the message of salvation must be presented with the same approach as that of the Apostle to the Gentiles, taking into account the different social and cultural situations and special difficulties of each one as a consequence of his or her condition as a migrant or itinerant person. I express the wish that every Christian community may feel the same apostolic zeal as St Paul who, although he was proclaiming to all the saving love of the Father (Rm 8:15-16; Gal 4:6) to “win more” (1 Cor 9:22) for Christ, made himself weak “to the weak... all things to all men so that [he] might by all means save some” (1 Cor 9:22). May his example also be an incentive for us to show solidarity to these brothers and sisters of ours and to promote, in every part of the world and by every means, peaceful coexistence among different races, cultures and religions.

Yet what was the secret of the Apostle to the Gentiles? The missionary zeal and passion of the wrestler that distinguished him stemmed from the fact that since “Christ [had] made him his own”, (Phil 3:12), he remained so closely united to him that he felt he shared in his same life, through sharing in “his sufferings” (Phil 3:10;

cf. also Rm 8:17; 2 Cor 4:8-12; Col 1:24). This is the source of the apostolic ardour of St Paul who recounts: “He who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles” (Gal 1:15-16; cf. also Rm 15:15-16). He felt “crucified with” Christ, so that he could say: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20), and no difficulty hindered him from persevering in his courageous evangelizing action in cosmopolitan cities such as Rome and Corinth, which were populated at that time by a mosaic of races and cultures.

In reading the Acts of the Apostles and the Letters that Paul addressed to various recipients, we perceive a model of a Church that was not exclusive but on the contrary open to all, formed by believers without distinction of culture or race: every baptized person is, in fact, a living member of the one Body of Christ. In this perspective, fraternal solidarity expressed in daily gestures of sharing, joint participation and joyful concern for others, acquires a unique prominence. However, it is impossible to achieve this dimension of brotherly mutual acceptance, St Paul always teaches, without the readiness to listen to and welcome the Word preached and practised (cf. 1 Thes 1:6), a Word that urges all to be imitators of Christ (cf. Eph 5:1-2), to be imitators of the Apostle (cf. 1 Cor 11:1). And therefore, the more closely the community is united to Christ, the more it cares for its neighbour, eschewing judgment, scorn and scandal, and opening itself to reciprocal acceptance (cf. Rm 14:1-3; 15:7). Conformed to Christ, believers feel they are “brothers” in him, sons of the same Father (Rm 8:14-16; Gal 3:26; 4:6). This treasure of brotherhood makes them “practise hospitality” (Rm 12:13), which is the firstborn daughter of *agape* (cf. 1 Tm 3:2; 5:10; Ti 1:8; Phlm 17).

In this manner the Lord’s promise: comes true: “then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters” (2 Cor 6:17-18). If we are aware of this, how can we fail to take charge of all those, particularly refugees and displaced people, who are in conditions of difficulty or hardship? How can we fail to meet the needs of those who are de facto the weakest and most defenceless, marked by precariousness and insecurity, marginalized and often excluded by society? We should give our priority attention to them because, paraphrasing a well known Pauline text, “God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God” (1 Cor 1:27).

Dear brothers and sisters, may the World Day for Migrants and Refugees, which will be celebrated on 18 January 2009, be for all an incentive to live brotherly love to the full without making any kind of distinction and without discrimination, in the conviction that any one who needs us and whom we can help is our neighbour (cf. [Deus Caritas Est](#), n. 15). May the teaching and example of St Paul, a great and humble Apostle and a migrant, an evangelizer of peoples and cultures, spur us to understand that the exercise of charity is the culmination and synthesis of the whole of Christian life.

The commandment of love - as we well know - is nourished when disciples of Christ, united, share in the banquet of the Eucharist which is, par excellence, the sacrament of brotherhood and love. And just as Jesus at the Last Supper combined the new commandment of fraternal love with the gift of the Eucharist, so his “friends”, following in the footsteps of Christ who made himself a “servant” of humanity, and sustained by his Grace cannot but dedicate themselves to mutual service, taking charge of one another, complying with St Paul’s recommendation: “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2). Only in this way does love increase among believers and for all people (cf. 1 Thes 3:12).

Dear brothers and sisters, let us not tire of proclaiming and witnessing to this “Good News” with enthusiasm, without fear and sparing no energy! The entire Gospel message is condensed in love, and authentic disciples of Christ are recognized by the mutual love they bear one another and by their acceptance of all.

May the Apostle Paul and especially Mary, the Mother of acceptance and love, obtain this gift for us. As I invoke the divine protection upon all those who are dedicated to helping migrants, and more generally, in the

vast world of migration, I assure each one of my constant remembrance in prayer and, with affection, I impart my apostolic Blessing to all.

From Castel Gandolfo, 24 August 2008

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

Message of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI (2008) 'Young Migrants'

The theme of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees invites us this year to reflect in particular on young migrants. As a matter of fact, the daily news often speaks about them. The vast globalization process underway around the world brings a need for mobility, which also induces many young people to emigrate and live far from their families and their countries. The result is that many times the young people endowed with the best intellectual resources leave their countries of origin, while in the countries that receive the migrants, laws are in force that make their actual insertion difficult. In fact, the phenomenon of emigration is becoming ever more widespread and includes a growing number of people from every social condition. Rightly, therefore, the public institutions, humanitarian organizations and also the Catholic Church are dedicating many of their resources to helping these people in difficulty.

For the young migrants, the problems of the so-called “difficulty of dual belonging” seem to be felt in a particular way: on the one hand, they feel a strong need to not lose their culture of origin, while on the other, the understandable desire emerges in them to be inserted organically into the society that receives them, but without this implying a complete assimilation and the resulting loss of their ancestral traditions. Among the young people, there are also girls who fall victim more easily to exploitation, moral forms of blackmail, and even abuses of all kinds. What can we say, then, about the adolescents, the unaccompanied minors that make up a category at risk among those who ask for asylum? These boys and girls often end up on the street abandoned to themselves and prey to unscrupulous exploiters who often transform them into the object of physical, moral and sexual violence.

Next, looking more closely at the sector of forced migrants, refugees and the victims of human trafficking, we unhappily find many children and adolescents too. On this subject it is impossible to remain silent before the distressing images of the great refugee camps present in different parts of the world. How can we not think that these little beings have come into the world with the same legitimate expectations of happiness as the others? And, at the same time, how can we not remember that childhood and adolescence are fundamentally important stages for the development of a man and a woman that require stability, serenity and security? These children and adolescents have only had as their life experience the permanent, compulsory “camps” where they are segregated, far from inhabited towns, with no possibility normally to attend school. How can they look to the future with confidence? While it is true that much is being done for them, even greater commitment is still needed to help them by creating suitable hospitality and formative structures.

Precisely from this perspective the question is raised of how to respond to the expectations of the young migrants? What can be done to help them? Of course, it is necessary to aim first of all at support for the family and schools. But how complex the situations are, and how numerous the difficulties these young people encounter in their family and school contexts! In families, the traditional roles that existed in the countries of origin have broken down, and a clash is often seen between parents still tied to their culture and children quickly acculturated in the new social contexts. Likewise, the difficulty should not be underestimated which the young people find in getting inserted into the educational course of study in force in the country where they are hosted. Therefore, the scholastic system itself should take their conditions into consideration and provide specific formative paths of integration for the immigrant boys and girls that are suited to their needs. The commitment will also be important to create a climate of mutual respect and dialogue among all the students in the classrooms based on the universal principles and values that are common to all cultures. Everyone's commitment—teachers, families and students—will surely contribute to helping the young migrants to face in the best way possible the challenge of integration and offer them the possibility to acquire what can aid their human, cultural and professional formation. This holds even more for the young refugees for whom adequate programs will have to be prepared, both in the scholastic and the work contexts, in order to guarantee their

preparation and provide the necessary bases for a correct insertion into the new social, cultural and professional world.

The Church looks with very particular attention at the world of migrants and asks those who have received a Christian formation in their countries of origin to make this heritage of faith and evangelical values bear fruit in order to offer a consistent witness in the different life contexts. Precisely in this regard, I invite the ecclesial host communities to welcome the young and very young people with their parents with sympathy, and to try to understand the vicissitudes of their lives and favor their insertion.

Then, among the migrants, [as I wrote in last year's Message](#), there is one category to consider in a special way: the students from other countries who because of their studies, are far from home. Their number is growing constantly: they are young people who need a specific pastoral care because they are not just students, like all the rest, but also temporary migrants. They often feel alone under the pressure of their studies and sometimes they are also constricted by economic difficulties. The Church, in her maternal concern, looks at them with affection and tries to put specific pastoral and social interventions into action that will take the great resources of their youth into consideration. It is necessary to help them find a way to open up to the dynamism of interculturality and be enriched in their contact with other students of different cultures and religions. For young Christians, this study and formation experience can be a useful area for the maturation of their faith, a stimulus to be open to the universalism that is a constitutive element of the Catholic Church.

Dear young migrants, prepare yourselves to build together your young peers a more just and fraternal society by fulfilling your duties scrupulously and seriously towards your families and the State. Be respectful of the laws and never let yourselves be carried away by hatred and violence. Try instead to be protagonists as of now of a world where understanding and solidarity, justice and peace will reign. To you, in particular, young believers, I ask you to profit from your period of studies to grow in knowledge and love of Christ. Jesus wants you to be his true friends, and for this it is necessary for you to cultivate a close relationship with Him constantly in prayer and docile listening to his Word. He wants you to be his witnesses, and for this it is necessary for you to be committed to living the Gospel courageously and expressing it in concrete acts of love of God and generous service to your brothers and sisters. The Church needs you too and is counting on your contribution. You can play a very providential role in the current context of evangelization. Coming from different cultures, but all united by belonging to the one Church of Christ, you can show that the Gospel is alive and suited to every situation; it is an old and ever new message. It is a word of hope and salvation for the people of all races and cultures, of all ages and eras.

To Mary, the Mother of all humanity, and to Joseph, her most chaste spouse, who were both refugees together with Jesus in Egypt, I entrust each one of you, your families, those who take care of the vast world of young migrants in various ways, the volunteers and pastoral workers that are by your side with their willingness and friendly support.

May the Lord always be close to you and your families so that together you can overcome the obstacles and the material and spiritual difficulties you encounter on your way. I accompany these wishes with a special Apostolic Blessing for each one of you and for those who are dear to you.

From the Vatican, October 18, 2007

Message of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI (2007) 'The Migrant Family'

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

On the occasion of the coming World Day of Migrants and Refugees, and looking at the Holy Family of Nazareth, icon of all families, I would like to invite you to reflect on the condition of the migrant family. The evangelist Matthew narrates that shortly after the birth of Jesus, Joseph was forced to leave for Egypt by night, taking the child and his mother with him, in order to flee the persecution of king Herod (cf. *Mt* 2:13-15). Making a comment on this page of the Gospel, my venerable Predecessor, the Servant of God Pope Pius XII, wrote in 1952: "The family of Nazareth in exile, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, emigrants and taking refuge in Egypt to escape the fury of an evil king, are the model, the example and the support of all emigrants and pilgrims of every age and every country, of all refugees of any condition who, compelled by persecution and need, are forced to abandon their homeland, their beloved relatives, their neighbors, their dear friends, and move to a foreign land" (*Exsul familia*, *AAS* 44, 1952, 649). In this misfortune experienced by the Family of Nazareth, obliged to take refuge in Egypt, we can catch a glimpse of the painful condition in which all migrants live, especially, refugees, exiles, evacuees, internally displaced persons, those who are persecuted. We can take a quick look at the difficulties that every migrant family lives through, the hardships and humiliations, the deprivation and fragility of millions and millions of migrants, refugees and internally displaced people. The Family of Nazareth reflects the image of God safeguarded in the heart of every human family, even if disfigured and weakened by emigration.

The theme of the next World Day of Migrants and Refugees – *The migrant family* – is in continuity with those of 1980, 1986 and 1993. It intends to underline further the commitment of the Church not only in favor of the individual migrant, but also of his family, which is a place and resource of the culture of life and a factor for the integration of values. The migrant's family meets many difficulties. The distance of its members from one another and unsuccessful reunification often result in breaking the original ties. New relationships are formed and new affections arise. Some migrants forget the past and their duties, as they are subjected to the hard trial of distance and solitude. If the immigrant family is not ensured of a real possibility of inclusion and participation, it is difficult to expect its harmonious development. The International Convention for the protection of the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families, which was enforced on July 1st, 2003, intends to defend men and women migrant workers and the members of their respective families. This means that the value of the family is recognized, also in the sphere of emigration, which is now a structural phenomenon of our societies. The Church encourages the ratification of the international legal instruments that aim to defend the rights of migrants, refugees and their families and, through its various Institutions and Associations, offers its advocacy that is becoming more and more necessary. To this end, it has opened Centres where migrants are listened to, Houses where they are welcomed, Offices for services offered to persons and families, with other initiatives set up to respond to the growing needs in this field.

Much is already being done for the integration of the families of immigrants, although much still remains to be done. There are real difficulties connected with some "defense mechanisms" on the part of the first generation immigrants, which run the risk of becoming an obstacle to the greater maturity of the young people of the second generation. This is why it is necessary to provide for legislative, juridical and social intervention to facilitate such an integration. In recent times, there is an increase in the number of women who leave their countries of origin in search of better conditions of life, in view of more promising professional prospects. However, women who end up as victims of trafficking of human beings and of prostitution are not few in number. In family reunification, social workers, especially religious women, can render an appreciated service of mediation that merits our gratitude more and more.

Regarding the integration of the families of immigrants, I feel it my duty to call your attention to the families of refugees, whose conditions seem to have gone worse in comparison with the past, also specifically regarding the reunification of family nuclei. In the camps assigned to them, in addition to logistic difficulties, and those of a personal character linked to the trauma and emotional stress caused by the tragic experiences they went through, sometimes there is also the risk of women and children being involved in sexual exploitation, as a survival mechanism. In these cases an attentive pastoral presence is necessary. Aside from giving assistance capable of healing the wounds of the heart, pastoral care should also offer the support of the Christian community, able to restore the culture of respect and have the true value of love found again. It is necessary to encourage those who are interiorly-wrecked to recover trust in themselves. Everything must also be done to guarantee the rights and dignity of the families and to assure them housing facilities according to their needs. Refugees are asked to cultivate an open and positive attitude towards their receiving society and maintain an active willingness to accept offers to participate in building together an integrated community that would be a “common household” for all.

Among migrants, there is a category that needs to be considered in a special way: the students from other countries, who are far from home, without an adequate knowledge of the language, at times without friends and often with a scholarship that is insufficient for their needs. Their condition is even worse if they are married. Through its Institutions, the Church exerts every effort to render the absence of family support for these young students less painful. It helps them integrate in the cities that receive them, by putting them in contact with families that are willing to offer them hospitality and facilitate knowing one another. As I had the opportunity to say on another occasion, helping foreign students is “an important field of pastoral action... Indeed, young people who leave their own country in order to study encounter many problems and especially the risk of an identity crisis” (*L'Osservatore Romano*, [15 December 2005](#)).

Dear Brothers and Sisters, may the World Day of Migrants and Refugees become a useful occasion to build awareness, in the ecclesial community and public opinion, regarding the needs and problems, as well as the positive potentialities of migrant families. My thoughts go in a special way to those who are directly involved in the vast phenomenon of migration, and to those who expend their pastoral energy in the service of human mobility. The words of the apostle Paul, “*caritas Christi urget nos*” (2 Cor 5:14), urge us to give ourselves preferentially to our brothers and sisters who are most in need. With these sentiments, I invoke divine assistance on each one and I affectionately impart to all a special Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 18 October 2006

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

Message of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI (2006) 'Migrations: A Sign of the Times'

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Forty years ago the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council was closed; whose rich teaching covers many areas of ecclesial life. In particular the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* made a careful analysis of the complexities of the world today, seeking the ways best suited to bring the Gospel message to the men and women of today. To this end the Council Fathers in response to the appeal of Blessed John XXIII undertook to examine the signs of the times and to interpret them in the light of the Gospel so as to offer the new generations the possibility of responding adequately to the eternal questions about this life and the life to come and about just social relations (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 4). One of the recognisable signs of the times today is undoubtedly migration, a phenomenon which during the century just ended can be said to have taken on structural characteristics, becoming an important factor of the labour market world-wide, a consequence among other things of the enormous drive of globalisation. Naturally in this “sign of the times” various factors play a part. They include both national and international migration, forced and voluntary migration, legal and illegal migration, subject also to the scourge of trafficking in human beings. Nor can the category of foreign students, whose numbers increase every year in the world, be forgotten.

With regard to those who emigrate for economic reasons, a recent fact deserving mention is the growing number of women involved (“feminization”). In the past it was mainly men who emigrated, although there were always women too, but these emigrated in particular to accompany their husbands or fathers or to join them wherever they were. Today, although numerous situations of this nature still exist, female emigration tends to become more and more autonomous. Women cross the border of their homeland alone in search of work in another country. Indeed it often happens that the migrant woman becomes the principal source of income for her family. It is a fact that the presence of women is especially prevalent in sectors that offer low salaries. If, then, migrant workers are particularly vulnerable, this is even more so in the case of women. The most common employment opportunities for women, other than domestic work, consist in helping the elderly, caring for the sick and work in the hotel sector. These, too, are areas where Christians are called to dedicate themselves to assuring just treatment for migrant women out of respect for their femininity in recognition of their equal rights.

In this context it is necessary to mention trafficking in human beings – especially women – which flourishes where opportunities to improve their standard of living or even to survive are limited. It becomes easy for the trafficker to offer his own “services” to the victims, who often do not even vaguely suspect what awaits them. In some cases there are women and girls who are destined to be exploited almost like slaves in their work, and not infrequently in the sex industry too. Though I cannot here closely examine the analysis of the consequences of this aspect of migration, I make my own the condemnation voiced by John Paul II against “the widespread hedonistic and commercial culture which encourages the systematic exploitation of sexuality” (Letter of Pope John Paul II to Women, 29th June 1995, No. 5). This outlines a whole programme of redemption and liberation from which Christians cannot withdraw.

Speaking of the other category of migrants – asylum seekers and refugees – I wish to underline how the tendency is to stop at the question of their arrival while disregarding the reasons for which they left their native land. The Church sees this entire world of suffering and violence through the eyes of Jesus, who was moved with pity at the sight of the crowds wandering as sheep without a shepherd (cf. Mt 9,36). Hope, courage, love and “creativity in charity” (Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, No. 50) must inspire the necessary human and Christian efforts made to help these brothers and sisters in their suffering. Their native Churches will demonstrate their concern by sending pastoral agents of the same language and culture, in a dialogue of charity with the particular Churches that welcome them.

In the light of today's "signs of the times" particular attention should be paid to the phenomenon of foreign students. Thanks among other factors to foreign exchange programmes between universities, especially in Europe, their number is growing, with consequent pastoral problems the Church cannot ignore. This is especially true in the case of students coming from developing countries, whose university experience can become an extraordinary occasion for spiritual enrichment.

As I invoke divine assistance on those who, moved by the desire to contribute to the promotion of a future of justice and peace in the world, spend their energies in the field of pastoral care at the service of human mobility, I impart to all as a sign of affection a special Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 18th October 2005

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

Message of Saint Pope John Paul II (2005) 'Intercultural Integration'

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. The World Day of Migrants and Refugees is at hand. In the annual Message I usually address to you on this occasion, I would like this time to consider the phenomenon of migration from the perspective of integration.

Many people use this word to denote the need for immigrants to be truly incorporated in the host country, but neither the content of this concept nor its practice is easy to define. In this regard I would like to sketch the picture by recalling the recent Instruction [Erga migrantes caritas Christi](#) (The love of Christ towards migrants) (cf. nos. 2, 42, 43, 62, 80, 89).

In this Document, integration is not presented as an assimilation that leads migrants to suppress or to forget their own cultural identity. Rather, contact with others leads to discovering their “secret”, to being open to them in order to welcome their valid aspects and thus contribute to knowing each one better. This is a lengthy process that aims to shape societies and cultures, making them more and more a reflection of the multi-faceted gifts of God to human beings. In this process the migrant is intent on taking the necessary steps towards social inclusion, such as learning the national language and complying with the laws and requirements at work, so as to avoid the occurrence of exasperated differentiation.

I will not deal with the various aspects of integration. All I desire on this occasion is to go deeper with you into some implications of its intercultural dimension.

2. No one is unaware of the identity conflict that often comes about in the meeting of persons of different cultures. Positive elements do exist in this. By introducing themselves into a new environment, immigrants often become more aware of who they are, especially when they miss the persons and values that are important to them.

In our society, characterized by the global phenomenon of migration, individuals must seek the proper balance between respect for their own identity and recognition of that of others. Indeed, it is necessary to recognize the legitimate plurality of cultures present in a country, in harmony with the preservation of law and order, on which depend social peace and the freedom of citizens.

Indeed, it is essential to exclude on the one hand assimilationist models that tend to transform those who are different into their own copy, and on the other, models of marginalization of immigrants, with attitudes that can even arrive at the choice of *apartheid*. The way to take is the path of genuine integration (cf. [Ecclesia in Europa](#), no. 102) with an open outlook that refuses to consider solely the differences between immigrants and the local people (cf. [Message for World Day for Peace 2001](#), no. 12).

3. Thus the need arose for a dialogue between people of different cultures in a context of pluralism that goes beyond mere tolerance and reaches sympathy. A simple juxtaposition of groups of migrants and locals tends to encourage a reciprocal closure between cultures, or the establishment, among them, of relations that are merely superficial or tolerant. We should encourage instead a mutual fecundation of cultures. This implies reciprocal knowledge and openness between cultures, in a context of true understanding and benevolence.

Christians, conscious on their part of the transcendent action of the Spirit, can also recognize in the various cultures the presence of “precious elements of religion and humanity” (cf. [Gaudium et Spes](#), no. 92) that can offer solid prospects of mutual understanding. It will, of course, be necessary to combine the principle of respect for cultural differences with the protection of values that are in common and inalienable, because they are founded on universal human rights. This gives rise to that atmosphere of “civic reasonableness” that permits

friendly and serene coexistence.

Moreover, if they are coherent with themselves, Christians cannot give up proclaiming the Gospel of Christ to all creation (cf. *Mk* 16:15). Obviously, they must do so with respect for the conscience of others, always resorting to the method of charity, as St Paul had already recommended to the early Christians (cf. *Eph* 4:15).

4. The image from the Prophet Isaiah, to which I have several times referred at the meetings with the youth of the whole world (cf. *Is* 21:11-12), could also be used here to invite all believers to be “morning watchmen”. As such, Christians must above all listen to the cry for help that comes from a multitude of migrants and refugees, but they must then foster, with active commitment, prospects of hope that will herald the dawn of a more open and supportive society. It is up to them in the first place to make out God’s presence in history, even when everything still seems to be enveloped in darkness.

With this hope, which I transform into prayer to God who wants to gather every nation and every language around him (cf. *Is* 66:18), I send to each one of you my Blessing with deep affection.

From the Vatican, 24 November 2004

IOANNES PAULUS PP. II

Message of Saint Pope John Paul II (2004) 'Migration with a View to Peace'

1. This year the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, with the theme "Migration with a view to peace", provides an opportunity to think about a topic that is more important than ever. Indeed, the theme, by contrast, draws public attention to forced human displacement, focusing on certain problematic aspects of great timeliness due to war and violence, terrorism and oppression, discrimination and injustice which, unfortunately, are always featured in the daily news. The mass media broadcast to homes images of suffering, violence and armed conflict. These are tragedies that sweep over countries and continents, and it is often the poorest areas that are the hardest hit. In this way tragedy is added to tragedy.

We are unfortunately becoming used to seeing dejected, displaced evacuees, the desperate flight of refugees, the arrival in the richest countries of immigrants in search of solutions to their many personal and family needs by whatever means. Thus, the question arises: how can we speak of peace when situations of tension are reported in so many of the earth's regions? And how can the phenomenon of migration help build peace among peoples?

2. No one can deny that the aspiration to peace is rooted in the heart of a large part of humanity. That is exactly the ardent desire that spurs people to seek every possible path to a better future for one and all. We are ever more convinced that we must fight the evil of war at its roots, for peace is not only the absence of conflict; it is also a long-term dynamic and participatory process that involves every social class, from families to schools and the various institutions and national and international bodies. We can and must build a culture of peace together that will prevent recourse to arms and all forms of violence. To this end, gestures and efforts for forgiveness and reconciliation must be encouraged; it is essential to overcome disagreement and division that would otherwise be perpetuated with no prospect of a solution. Then it is necessary to reaffirm vigorously that there can be no true peace without justice and respect for human rights. Indeed, there is a very close connection between justice and peace, as the Prophet pointed out in the Old Testament: "Opus iustitiae pax" (Is 32: 17).

3. As regards immigrants and refugees, building conditions of peace means in practice being seriously committed to safeguarding first of all the right not to emigrate, that is, the right to live in peace and dignity in one's own country. By means of a farsighted local and national administration, more equitable trade and supportive international cooperation, it is possible for every country to guarantee its own population, in addition to freedom of expression and movement, the possibility to satisfy basic needs such as food, health care, work, housing and education; the frustration of these needs forces many into a position where their only option is to emigrate.

Equally, the right to emigrate exists. This right, Bl. John XXIII recalls in the Encyclical [Mater et Magistra](#), is based on the universal destination of the goods of this world (cf. nn. 30 and 33). It is obviously the task of Governments to regulate the migratory flows with full respect for the dignity of the persons and for their families' needs, mindful of the requirements of the host societies. In this regard, international Agreements already exist to protect would-be emigrants, as well as those who seek refuge or political asylum in another country. There is always room to improve these agreements.

4. No one should be indifferent to the conditions of multitudes of immigrants! They are at the mercy of events, often with dramatic situations behind them. The mass media broadcast moving and sometimes horrifying images of these people. They are children, young people, adults and elderly persons with emaciated faces and sad, lonely eyes. The camps that take them in often impose on them serious restrictions. Yet it is only right, in this regard, to recognize the praiseworthy endeavours of numerous public and private organizations to alleviate the disturbing situations that have come into existence in many parts of the world.

Nor is it possible not to denounce the trafficking practised by unscrupulous exploiters who abandon at sea, on

precarious crafts, people desperately seeking a more certain future. Anyone in critical conditions needs prompt and concrete assistance.

5. Despite the problems I have mentioned, the world of immigrants can make a valid contribution to the consolidation of peace. Migration can in fact facilitate encounter and understanding between civilizations as well as between individuals and communities. The enriching dialogue between cultures, as I wrote in my [Message for World Day of Peace 2001](#), is an “obligatory path to the building of a reconciled world” (n. 3). This happens when immigrants are treated with the proper respect for the dignity of each one; when every possible means is used to promote the culture of acceptance and the culture of peace that smoothes out differences and seeks dialogue, but without letting forms of indifferentism creep in when values are at stake. This openness in solidarity becomes a gift and condition of peace.

If the gradual integration of all immigrants is fostered with respect for their identity and, at the same time, safeguarding the cultural patrimony of the peoples who receive them, there is less of a risk that they will come together to form real “ghettos” in which they remain isolated from the social context and sometimes even end by harbouring a desire to take over the territory gradually.

When “diversities” converge and are integrated they start a “friendly coexistence of differences”. Values are rediscovered that are common to every culture, which unite rather than divide and have put down roots in the same human soil. This encourages the development of a fruitful dialogue in order to prepare a path to reciprocal tolerance, realistic and respectful of the particularities of each one. Under these conditions, the phenomenon of migration helps foster the “dream” of a future of peace for all humanity.

6. “Blessed are the peacemakers”! This is what the Lord says (cf. Mt 5: 9). For Christians, the search for fraternal communion among mankind has its source and model in God, One in nature and Three in Persons. I deeply hope that every Ecclesial Community, made up of migrants and refugees and those who receive them and drawing inspiration from the sources of grace, will untiringly engage in the construction of peace. May no one let injustice, difficulties or inconvenience be a discouragement!

If the “dream” of a peaceful world is shared by all, if the refugees’ and migrants’ contribution is properly evaluated, then humanity can become more and more of a universal family and our earth a true “common home”.

7. With his life and death on the Cross, Jesus showed us the way to take. With his Resurrection, he assured us that good will always triumph over evil and that our every effort, our every suffering, offered to the heavenly Father in communion with his passion, will contribute to bringing about the universal plan of salvation.

With this certainty, I invite all who are involved in the vast sector of migration to be peacemakers. To this end, I assure them of my special remembrance in prayer, and as I invoke the motherly intercession of Mary, Mother of the Only-Begotten Son of God made man, I send my Blessing to each and every one.

From the Vatican, 15 December 2003

JOHN PAUL II

Message of Saint Pope John Paul II (2003) 'For a Commitment to Overcome All Racism, Xenophobia and Exaggerated Nationalism'

1. Migration has become a widespread phenomenon in the modern-day world and involves all nations, either as countries of departure, of transit or of arrival. It affects millions of human beings, and presents a challenge that the pilgrim Church, at the service of the whole human family, cannot fail to take up and meet in the Gospel spirit of universal charity. This year's World Day of Migrants and Refugees should be a time of special prayer for the needs of all who, for whatever reason, are far from home and family; it should be a day of serious reflection on the duties of Catholics towards these brothers and sisters.

Among those particularly affected are the most vulnerable of foreigners: undocumented migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, those displaced by continuing violent conflicts in many parts of the world, and the victims – mostly women and children – of the terrible crime of human trafficking. Even in the recent past we have witnessed tragic instances of forced movements of peoples for ethnic and nationalistic pretensions, which have added untold misery to the lives of targeted groups. At the root of these situations there are sinful intentions and actions that go contrary to the Gospel and constitute a call to Christians everywhere to overcome evil with good.

2. Membership in the Catholic community is not determined by nationality, or by social or ethnic origin, but essentially by faith in Jesus Christ and Baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity. The “cosmopolitan” make-up of the People of God is visible today in practically every particular Church because migration has transformed even small and formerly isolated communities into pluralist and inter-cultural realities. Places that until recently rarely saw an outsider are now home to people from different parts of the world. More and more, for example, the Sunday Eucharist involves hearing the Good News proclaimed in languages not heard before, thus giving new expression to the exhortation of the ancient psalm: “Praise the Lord, all you nations, glorify him all you peoples” (Ps. 116,1). These communities therefore have new opportunities of living the experience of *catholicity*, a mark of the Church expressing her essential openness to all that is the work of the Spirit in every people.

The Church understands that restricting membership of a local community on the basis of ethnic or other external characteristics would be an impoverishment for all concerned, and would contradict the basic right of the baptized to worship and take part in the life of the community. Moreover, if newcomers feel unwelcome as they approach a particular parish community because they do not speak the local language or follow local customs, they easily become “lost sheep”. The loss of such “little ones” for reasons of even latent discrimination should be a cause of grave concern to pastors and faithful alike.

3. This takes us back to a subject which I have often mentioned in my Messages for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, namely, the Christian duty to welcome whoever comes knocking out of need. Such openness builds up vibrant Christian communities, enriched by the Spirit with the gifts brought to them by new disciples from other cultures. This basic expression of evangelical love is likewise the inspiration of countless programmes of solidarity towards migrants and refugees in all parts of the world. To understand the extent of this ecclesial heritage of practical service to immigrants and displaced people we need only to remember the achievements and legacy of such figures as Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini or Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini, or the extensive present-day action of the Catholic relief agency “*Caritas*” and of the International Catholic Migration Commission.

Often, solidarity does not come easily. It requires training and a turning away from attitudes of closure, which in many societies today have become more subtle and penetrating. To deal with this phenomenon, the Church possesses vast educational and formative resources at all levels. I therefore appeal to parents and teachers to combat racism and xenophobia by inculcating positive attitudes based on Catholic social doctrine.

4. Being ever more deeply rooted in Christ, Christians must struggle to overcome any tendency to turn in on

themselves, and learn to discern in people of other cultures the handiwork of God. Only genuine evangelical love will be strong enough to help communities pass from mere tolerance of others to real respect for their differences. Only Christ's redeeming grace can make us victorious in the daily challenge of turning from egoism to altruism, from fear to openness, from rejection to solidarity.

Understandably, as I urge Catholics to excel in the spirit of solidarity towards newcomers among them, I also invite the immigrants to recognize the duty to honour the countries which receive them and to respect the laws, culture and traditions of the people who have welcomed them. Only in this way will social harmony prevail.

The path to true acceptance of immigrants in their cultural diversity is actually a difficult one, in some cases a real *Way of the Cross*. That must not discourage us from pursuing the will of God, who wishes to draw all peoples to himself in Christ, through the instrumentality of his Church, the sacrament of the unity of all mankind (cf. [Lumen Gentium](#), 1).

At times that path needs a prophetic word that points out what is wrong and encourages what is right. When tensions arise, the credibility of the Church in her doctrine on the fundamental respect due to each person rests on the moral courage of pastors and faithful to "stake everything on love" (cf. [Novo Millennio Ineunte](#), 47).

5. It hardly needs to be said that mixed cultural communities offer unique opportunities to deepen the gift of unity with other Christian Churches and ecclesial communities. Many of them in fact have worked within their own communities and with the Catholic Church to form societies in which the cultures of migrants and their special gifts are sincerely appreciated, and in which manifestations of racism, xenophobia and exaggerated nationalism are prophetically opposed.

May Mary our Mother, who also experienced rejection at the very time when she was about to give her Son to the world, help the Church to be the sign and instrument of the unity of cultures and nations in one single family. May she help all of us to witness in our lives to the Incarnation and the constant presence of Christ, who through us wishes to continue in history and in the world his work of liberation from all forms of discrimination, rejection and marginalization. May God's abundant blessings be with those who welcome the stranger in Christ's name.

From the Vatican, 24 October 2002

JOANNES PAULUS II

Message of Saint Pope John Paul II (2002) 'Migration and Inter-Religious Dialogue'

1. In the course of these last decades, humanity has more and more taken on the features of a large village, where distances have become shorter and the network of communications more compact. The development of modern means of transportation makes it easier for people to move from one country to another, from one continent to another. Among the consequences of this significant social phenomenon is the presence of about a hundred and fifty million immigrants spread all over the different parts of the world. This fact obliges society and the Christian community to reflect in order to be able to adequately respond to these emerging challenges, at the beginning of the new millennium, in a world where men and women of different cultures and religions are called to live shoulder to shoulder with one another.

For this living together to develop peacefully, it is indispensable to remove the barriers of diffidence, prejudice and fear that unfortunately still exist among those who belong to the different religions. In every country, dialogue and mutual tolerance are required among those who profess the religion of the majority and those who belong to minorities, often made up of immigrants, who are followers of various religions. Dialogue is the leading way to follow, and the Church invites us to walk this path in order to move from diffidence to respect, from rejection to welcome.

Recently, at the end of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, I wanted to renew an appeal in that direction, so that "a relationship of openness and dialogue with the followers of other religions" would come about (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 55). To reach this goal, initiatives that attract the attention of the major means of social communications are not enough. What are needed are rather everyday gestures, done with simplicity and constancy, that are capable of producing an authentic change in interpersonal relationships.

2. The vast and intense intertwining of migratory phenomena, which characterizes our times, multiplies the opportunities for inter-religious dialogue. Countries with ancient Christian roots as well as multicultural societies offer concrete opportunities for inter-religious exchange. In the European continent, marked by a long Christian tradition, citizens arrive who profess other beliefs. North America, a land that is already living a solid multicultural experience, hosts followers of the new religious movements. In India, where Hinduism prevails, there are Catholic religious men and women who render humble and useful service to the poorest in the country.

Dialogue is not always easy. For Christians, however, the patient and confident pursuit of it is a commitment to be constantly carried out. Counting on the grace of the Lord who enlightens minds and hearts, they remain open and welcoming towards those who profess other religions. Without ceasing to practice their own faith with conviction, they also pursue dialogue with those who are not Christians. They always well aware that to be able to authentically dialogue with others, a clear witness of their own faith is indispensable.

This sincere effort to dialogue presupposes, on one hand, the reciprocal acceptance of differences, and sometimes even of contradictions, and also a respect for the free decisions that people make according to their own conscience. It is therefore indispensable for each one, to whatever religion he may belong, to take into account the essential requirements of freedom of religion and of conscience, as stated so well by the Ecumenical Council Vatican II (cfr. *Dignitatis humanae*, 2) .

I would like to express the wish that this kind of living together in solidarity may also take place in countries where the majority profess a religion different from Christianity, but where Christian immigrants live and where they unfortunately do not always enjoy a true freedom of religion and conscience.

If, in the world of human mobility, everyone would be animated by this sprit, almost as in a forge, there will arise providential possibilities of a fruitful dialogue wherein the centrality of the person will never be denied. This is the only way to nourish the hope “for warding off the dread spectre of those wars of religion which have so often bloodied human history” and which have often forced many people to abandon their own countries. It is urgent to work so that the name of the one and only God may become what it is, ever more “a name of peace and a summons to peace” (cfr. *Novo millennio ineunte*, 55).

3. “*Migration and inter-religious dialogue*”: this is the theme proposed for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees of 2002. I pray the Lord that this annual celebration may offer all Christians the opportunity to go deeper into these all so actual aspects of the new evangelization. May they value every instrument at their disposal, so that in parish communities, appropriate apostolic and pastoral initiatives could be set up.

The parish represents the space in which a true pedagogy of meeting with people of various religious convictions and cultures can be realized. In its various expressions, the parish community can become a training ground of hospitality, a place where an exchange of experiences and gifts takes place. This cannot but foster a tranquil life together, preventing the risk of tension with immigrants who bring other religious beliefs with themselves.

If there is a common will to dialogue in spite of being different, it is possible to find a ground of profitable exchange and develop a beneficial and mutual friendship that can also be translated into an effective collaboration towards common objectives in the service of common good. This is a providential opportunity, especially for metropolitan areas where there are very large numbers of immigrants belonging to different cultures and religions. In this regard, it would be possible to speak of true “laboratories” of respectful living together and constructive dialogue. Allowing himself to be guided by his love for his Divine Teacher, who redeemed all men through his death on the cross, the Christian also opens his arms and heart to everyone. It is the culture of respect and solidarity that must penetrate his spirit, especially when he is in multicultural and multi-religious environments.

4. Everyday, in many parts of the world, migrants, refugees and displaced people turn to Catholic organizations and parishes in search of support, and they are welcomed irrespective of cultural or religious affiliation. The service of charity, which Christians are always called to carry out, cannot be limited to the mere distribution of humanitarian aid. In this way, new pastoral situations arise, which the Church community cannot fail to take into consideration. It is the task of its members to look for appropriate occasions to share with those who are welcomed the gift of the revelation of God who is Love, who “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (Jn 3:16). With the gift of material bread, it is indispensable not to neglect to offer the gift of faith, especially through one’s own existential witness and always with great respect for all. Welcome and mutual openness allow people to know each other better and to discover that the various religious traditions not rarely contain precious seeds of truth. The dialogue that results from this can enrich every spirit that is open to the Truth and the Good.

In this way, if inter-religious dialogue is one of the most significant challenges of our times, the phenomenon of migration could foster its development. Obviously, such dialogue, as I wrote in my apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, cannot “be based on religious indifferentism (no. 56). As a matter of fact, we Christians “are in duty bound, while engaging in dialogue, to bear clear witness to the hope that is within us” (*ibid.*). Dialogue must not hide, but exalt, the gift of faith. On the other hand, how can we keep such richness only for ourselves? How can we fail to offer the greatest treasure that we possess to migrants and foreigners who profess various religions and whom Providence places along our path, and do it with a great attention for the others’ sensitivity?

To accomplish this mission it is necessary to let the Holy Spirit guide us. On the day of Pentecost, it was the Spirit of Truth who completed the divine design of the unity of mankind in the diversity of cultures and religions. On hearing the Apostles, the numerous pilgrims gathered together in Jerusalem exclaimed with wonder: “Each of us hears them speaking in his own tongue about the marvels God has accomplished” (Acts

2:11). Since that day, the Church continues to carry out her mission, proclaiming the “marvels” that God does not cease to accomplish among those who belong to different races, peoples and nations.

5. To Mary, Mother of Jesus and of all humanity, I entrust the joys and the efforts of all those who sincerely pursue the way of dialogue among different religions and cultures, so that she may gather the people involved in the vast phenomenon of migration under her loving mantle. May Mary, the “Silence” in which the “Word” became flesh, the humble “handmaid of the Lord” who knew the tribulations of migration and the trials of solitude and abandonment, teach us to give witness to the Word who became Life among us and for us. May She render us ready for a frank and fraternal dialogue with all our migrant brothers and sisters, even if they belong to different religions.

I accompany these wishes with the assurance of my prayerful remembrance, and I bless you all with affection.

From Castelgandolfo, 25 July 2001

Joannes Paulus II

Message of Saint Pope John Paul II (2001) 'The Pastoral Care of Migrants, A Way of Accomplishing the Mission of the Church Today'

1. "Jesus Christ is the same today as he was yesterday and as he will be forever" (Heb 13:8). These words of the apostle Paul, chosen as the motto of the Great Jubilee that has just ended, recall the mission of Jesus, Word incarnate for the salvation of the world. Faithful to his task in the service of the Gospel, the Church continues to approach people of all nationalities to bring them the good news of salvation.

With this present Message, on the occasion of the World Day of Migration, I wish to reflect on the evangelizing mission of the Church with respect to the vast and complex phenomenon of emigration and mobility. This year, the following theme was chosen for the commemoration: *The pastoral care of migrants, a way to accomplish the mission of the Church today*. This is an area that many pastoral agents have at heart for they know quite well the numerous problems that are found there. They also know the various situations that make men and women leave their own country. In fact, mobility that is chosen freely is one thing; mobility caused by ideological, political or economic constraint is an entirely different thing. It is not possible to ignore this in planning and carrying out a suitable pastoral care for the various categories of migrants and itinerant people.

The Dicastery, which has the institutional task of expressing the solicitude of the Church for people involved in the phenomenon, summarizes all of human mobility with the aforementioned terminology. The term "migrant" is intended first of all to refer to refugees and exiles in search of freedom and security outside the confines of their own country. However, it also refers to young people who study abroad and all those who leave their own country to look for better conditions of life elsewhere. The migration phenomenon is in continuous expansion, and this poses questions and challenges to the pastoral action of the Church community. The II Vatican Ecumenical Council, in the Decree *Christus Dominus*, called for a "special concern ... for those among the faithful who, on account of their way or condition of life, cannot sufficiently make use of the common and ordinary pastoral service of parish priests or are totally deprived of it. Among them are very many migrants, exiles and refugees" (no. 18).

In this complex phenomenon, numerous elements come in: the tendency to foster the political and juridical unity of the human family, the noteworthy increase in cultural exchanges, interdependence among States, particularly in the economic sphere, the liberalization of trade and, above all, of capital, the multiplication of multinational enterprises, the imbalance between rich and poor countries, the development of the means of communication and transportation.

2. The interplay of such factors produces the movement of masses from one area of the globe to another. Although in varying forms and degrees, mobility has thus become a general characteristic of mankind. It directly involves many persons and reaches others indirectly. The vastness and complexity of the phenomenon calls for a profound analysis of the structural changes that have taken place, namely the globalization of economics and of social life. The convergence of races, civilizations and cultures within one and the same juridical and social order, poses an urgent problem of cohabitation. Frontiers tend to disappear, distances are shortened, the repercussion of events is felt up to the farthest areas.

We are witnessing a profound change in the way of thinking and living, which cannot but present ambiguous aspects together with the positive elements. The sense of temporariness, for instance, induces one to prefer what is new to the detriment of stability and a clear hierarchy of values. At the same time, the spirit becomes more curious and open, more sensitive and ready for dialogue. In this climate, people may be induced to deepen their own convictions, but also to indulge in superficial relativism. Mobility always implies an uprooting from

the original environment, often translated into an experience of marked solitude accompanied by the risk of fading into anonymity. This situation may lead to a rejection of the new environment, but also to accepting it acritically, in contrast to the preceding experience. At times, there could even be a willingness to undergo a passive modernization, which could easily be the source of cultural and social alienation. Human mobility means numerous possibilities to be open, to meet, to assemble; however it is not possible to ignore the fact that it also brings about manifestations of individual and collective rejection, a fruit of closed mentalities that are encountered in societies beset by imbalance and fear.

3. In her pastoral activity, the Church tries to take these serious problems constantly into consideration. The proclamation of the Gospel is directed towards the integral salvation of the human person, his authentic and effective liberation, through the achievement of conditions of life suitable to his dignity. The comprehension of the human being, that the Church acquired in Christ, urges her to proclaim the fundamental human rights and to speak out when they are trampled upon. Thus, she does not grow tired of affirming and defending the dignity of the human person, highlighting the inalienable rights that originate from it. Specifically, these are the right to have one's own country, to live freely in one's own country, to live together with one's family, to have access to the goods necessary for a dignified life, to preserve and develop one's ethnic, cultural and linguistic heritage, to publicly profess one's religion, to be recognized and treated in all circumstances according to one's dignity as a human being.

These rights are concretely employed in the concept of universal common good, which includes the whole family of peoples, beyond every nationalistic egoism. The right to emigrate must be considered in this context. The Church recognizes this right in every human person, in its dual aspect of the possibility to leave one's country and the possibility to enter another country to look for better conditions of life. Certainly, the exercise of such a right is to be regulated, because practicing it indiscriminately may do harm and be detrimental to the common good of the community that receives the migrant. Before the manifold interests that are interwoven side by side with the laws of the individual countries, it is necessary to have international norms that are capable of regulating everyone's rights, so as to prevent unilateral decisions that are harmful to the weakest.

In this regard, in the Message for Migrants' Day of 1993, I called to mind that although it is true that highly developed countries are not always able to assimilate all those who emigrate, nonetheless it should be pointed out that the criterion for determining the level that can be sustained cannot be based solely on protecting their own prosperity, while failing to take into consideration the needs of persons who are tragically forced to ask for hospitality.

4. Through her own pastoral activity, the Church tries her best not let migrants lack the light and the support of the Gospel. In the course of time, her attention towards Catholics who were leaving their country increased. Most of all towards the end of the XIX century, huge masses of Catholic migrants left Europe and navigated across the oceans. Sometimes, they found themselves in conditions that endangered their faith because of the lack of priests and structures. Not knowing the local language, and therefore unable to take advantage of the ordinary pastoral care of the adopted country, they were abandoned to themselves.

Thus, migration was in fact a danger for the faith, and that caused concern in many pastors who, in some cases, even reached the point of discouraging its practice. Later on, however, it became clear that the phenomenon could not be stopped. Thus the Church sought to introduce adequate forms of pastoral action, foreseeing that migration could become an effective way of spreading the faith in other countries. Based on the experience made in the course of the years, the Church later developed an organic pastoral care for emigrants and emanated the Apostolic Constitution *Exsul Familia Nazarethana* in 1952. Referring to migrants, it affirms that *it is necessary to see to it that they receive the same pastoral care and assistance enjoyed by the local Christians*, by adapting the structure provided by ordinary pastoral care for the preservation and growth of the faith of the baptized faithful, to the Catholic migrant's situation.

Subsequently, the II Vatican Council tackled the migration phenomenon in its various expressions: immigrants, emigrants, refugees, exiles, foreign students, put together, from the pastoral point of view, into the category of those who dwell outside their own country and therefore *cannot take advantage of ordinary pastoral care*. They are described as the faithful who, because they live outside their own country or nation, need specific assistance through a priest who speaks their own language.

We move on from considering the faith that is in danger to more aptly considering the right of the emigrant, to the respect for one's cultural heritage even in pastoral care. From this perspective, the limit placed by *Exsul Familia* of giving pastoral assistance only up to the third generation no longer holds, and the right of migrants to receive assistance as long as real need continues to exist, is affirmed.

In effect, migrants do not represent a category comparable to those that make up the parish population – children, youth, married people, laborers, employees, etc. – who are homogeneous in culture and language. They belong to another community, which should receive a pastoral care that bears similarities with that in the country of origin in terms of respect of the cultural heritage, the need for a priest of the same tongue and the need for permanent specific structures. It is necessary to have a stable, personalized and communitarian care of souls, capable of helping the Catholic faithful at a time of emergency, up to their incorporation into the local Church, when they will be in the position to take advantage of the ordinary ministry of priests in the territorial parish.

5. These principles were included in the canonical regulations in force, which have incorporated the pastoral care for migrants in the ordinary pastoral care. Over and above the individual norms, and also as far as the pastoral care of human mobility is concerned, what characterizes the new Code is the ecclesiological inspiration of Vatican II underlying it.

The pastoral care of migrants has thus become an institutionalized activity, addressed to the faithful, considered not so much as individuals, but as members of a particular community for which the Church organizes a specific pastoral service. However, this service is, by its very nature, temporary and transitory, although the law does not set a definite time for its cessation. The organizational structure of such a service is not a substitution but is cumulative with respect to the territorial parochial care, which it is expected to join sooner or later. In fact, although the pastoral care of migrants takes into account the fact that a given community has its own tongue and culture, which cannot be ignored in daily apostolic work, it does not intend to make their preservation and development its specific objective.

6. History shows that in those cases wherein the Catholic faithful were accompanied during their moved to other countries, they did not only preserve their faith, but also found a fertile soil to deepen it, personalize it and bear witness to it through their lives. In the course of the centuries, migration represented a constant means of proclaiming the Christian message in entire regions. Today the picture of migration is radically changing: on one hand, the flow of Catholic migrants is decreasing; on the other hand, there is an increasing flow of non-Christian migrants, who settle in countries where the population is Catholic by majority.

In the Encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, I called to mind the task of the Church with respect to non-Christian migrants, underlining that by settling down, they create new occasions for contacts and cultural exchanges. These urge the Christian community to welcome, to dialogue, to help and towards fraternity. This presupposes a deeper awareness of the importance of the Catholic doctrine on non-Christian religions (cfr. Decl. *Nostra Aetate*), so as to be able to undertake an attentive, constant and respectful interreligious dialogue as a means of mutual knowledge and enrichment. “In the light of the economy of salvation,” I wrote in the aforementioned Encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, “the Church sees no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in inter-religious dialogue. Instead she feels the need to link the two in the context of her mission *ad gentes*. These two elements must maintain both their intimate connection and their distinctiveness; therefore they should not be confused, manipulated or regarded as identical as though they were interchangeable” (no.55).

7. The presence of non-Christian immigrants in countries of ancient Christianity represents a challenge to the Church communities. The phenomenon continues to activate charity in the Church, in terms of welcome and aid for these brothers and sisters in their search for work and housing. Somehow, this action is quite similar to what many missionaries are doing in mission lands. They take care of the sick, the poor, the illiterate. This is the disciple's way: he responds to the expectations and necessities of the neighbor in need, although the fundamental aim of his mission is the proclamation of Christ and his Gospel. He knows that the proclamation of Jesus is the first act of charity towards the human person, over and above any gesture of solidarity, however generous it may be. There is no true evangelization, in fact, "if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed." Ap. Exhort. *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 22).

Sometimes, due to an environment dominated by growing religious relativism and indifferentism, it is difficult for the spiritual dimension of charitable undertakings to emerge. Some people fear that doing charity in view of evangelization could expose them to the accusation of proselytism. Proclaiming and bearing witness to the Gospel of charity constitutes the connective tissue of the mission towards migrants (cfr. Ap. Lett. *Novo millennio ineunte*, 56).

At this point, I would like to pay homage to the many apostles who have consecrated their existence to this missionary task. I would also like to recall the efforts that the Church has exerted to meet the expectations of migrants. Among them, I am pleased to mention the *International Catholic Migration Commission*, which will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of its foundation in 2001. In fact, it was instituted in 1951, by initiative of the then Substitute at the Secretariat of State, Msgr. Giovanni Battista Montini. It intended to offer a response to the exigencies of those involved in migratory movements, provoked by the need to re-propose the production machinery, which was damaged by the war, and the tragic situation in which entire populations found themselves. They were forced to move due to the new geopolitical order dictated by the winners. The association's fifty years of history, with the modifications adopted in order to cope better with changing situations, give witness to how various, attentive and substantial were its activities. Speaking at its inaugural session held on 5 June 1951, the future Pope Paul VI dwelt on the necessity to demolish the obstacles that prevented migration, so as to give the unemployed the possibility to work and the homeless a shelter. He added that the newborn International Commission for Migration's cause was the very cause of Christ himself. These words have entirely preserved their relevance.

As I give thanks to the Lord for the service it has rendered, I wish that the said Commission would carry on its commitment of attention and aid to refugees and migrants, with a vigor that becomes more and more concerned, the more difficult and uncertain the conditions of these categories of persons appear to be.

8. Today, the proclamation of the gospel of charity to the vast and diversified world of migrants implies a particular attention to the cultural environment. For many persons, going to a foreign country means encountering ways of life and thinking that is foreign to them, that produce different reactions. Cities and nations increasingly present multiethnic and multicultural communities. This is a great challenge for Christians, too. A serene reading of this new situation highlights many values that merit to be greatly appreciated. The Holy Spirit is not conditioned by ethnic groups or cultures. He enlightens and inspires people through many mysterious ways. Through various paths, he brings everyone close to salvation, to Jesus, the Word incarnate, who is "the fulfilment of the yearning of all the world's religions and, as such, he is their sole and definitive completion" (Ap. Lett. *Tertio millennio adveniente*, 6).

This reading will surely help the non-Christian migrant see his own religiosity as a strong element of cultural identity, and at the same time it will make it possible for him to discover the values of the Christian faith. To this end, the collaboration of the local Churches and missionaries who know the immigrants' culture will be useful more than ever. This means establishing links between the community of migrants and those of the countries of origin, and at the same time informing the communities of arrival regarding the cultures and the

religions of the immigrants, and the reasons that have caused them to emigrate.

It is important to help the community of arrival not only in being open to charitable hospitality but also to a meeting, collaboration and exchange. Furthermore, it is opportune to open the way to pastoral agents who, from the countries of origin, come to the countries of immigration to work among their fellow countrymen. It would be very useful to institute for them centers of welcome that would prepare them for their new task.

9. This enriching intercultural and inter-religious dialogue presupposes a climate that is permeated with mutual trust and respects religious freedom. Among the sectors to be illuminated by the light of Christ therefore is freedom, particularly religious freedom, which is still at times limited or restricted. It is the premise and guarantee of every other authentic form of freedom. “Religious freedom” - I wrote in *Redemptoris Missio* - “is not a question of the religion of the majority or the minority, but of an inalienable right of each and every human person” (no. 39).

Freedom is a constitutive dimension of the Christian faith itself, since it is not a transmission of human traditions, or a point of arrival of philosophical discussion, but a free gift of God, which is communicated with due respect for the human conscience. It is the Lord who acts efficaciously through his Spirit; it is He who is the true protagonist. People are instruments that He uses, to each of whom He assigns a singular role.

The Gospel is for everyone. No one is excluded from the possibility of participating in the joy of the divine Kingdom. The mission of the Church today is exactly that of giving every human being, regardless of culture or race, the concrete possibility of meeting Christ. I wholeheartedly wish that this possibility be offered to all migrants and for this, I assure my prayers.

I entrust the commitment and the generous intentions of those who take care of migrants, to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, humble Servant of the Lord, who lived the pains of migration and exile. In the new millennium, may She be the guide of migrants towards Him who is “the real light that gives light to everyone” (*Jn* 1:9).

With these wishes, I wholeheartedly impart to all agents in this important field of pastoral action a special Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 2 February 2001

JOHN PAUL II

Message of Saint Pope John Paul II (2000)

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. On the threshold of the new millennium, humanity is marked by phenomena of intense mobility, while the awareness of being members of one family continues to grow in people's minds. Voluntary or forced migration increases opportunities for exchange among people of different cultures, religions, races and nationalities. Modern means of transport are ever more rapidly connecting one part of the globe to another, and every day borders are crossed by thousands of migrants, refugees, nomads and tourists.

The immediate reasons for the complex reality of human migration differ widely; its ultimate source, however, is the longing for a transcendent horizon of justice, freedom and peace. In short, it testifies to an anxiety which, however indirectly, refers to God, in whom alone man can find the full satisfaction of all his expectations.

Many countries make a considerable effort to welcome immigrants, many of whom, after overcoming the difficulties of adjustment, are well integrated into the host community. However, the misunderstandings that foreigners sometimes experience show the urgent need for a transformation of structures and a change of mentality, which is what the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 asks of Christians and every person of good will.

2. With the Great Jubilee the Church celebrates the Birth of Christ. In order deeply to live this time of grace, many of the faithful will go on pilgrimage to the shrines of the Holy Land, Rome and the whole world, where they will learn to open their hearts to everyone, especially those who are different: guests, foreigners, immigrants, refugees, those who profess another religion and non-believers.

Pilgrimages have always been a significant part of the life of the faithful, even though assuming different cultural forms in various ages, since "a pilgrimage evokes the believer's personal journey in the footsteps of the Redeemer: it is an exercise of practical asceticism, of repentance for human weaknesses, of constant vigilance over one's own frailty, of interior preparation for a change of heart" (*Incarnationis mysterium*, n. 7).

For many pilgrims this experience of an interior journey is accompanied by the benefits of many encounters with other believers who differ in background, culture and history. A pilgrimage therefore becomes a privileged occasion for meeting others. Whoever has first made the effort, like Abraham, to leave his country, his kindred and his father's house (cf. *Gn 12: 1*), is thereby more willing to open himself to those who are different.

A similar process occurs with migration which, by making people "come out of themselves", can become an outreach to others and to other social contexts into which they can be integrated when the necessary conditions are created for peaceful coexistence.

3. The Good News is the message of the Father's infinite love revealed in Jesus Christ, who came into the world "to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (*Jn 11: 52*) and unite them in the one human family in which God has made his dwelling (cf. *Rv 21: 3*). This is why Pope Paul VI, in speaking of the Church, recalled that "there is no one who is a stranger to her heart, no one in whom her ministry has no interest. She has no enemies, except those who wish to be such. Her name of Catholic is not an idle title. Not in vain has she received the commission to foster in the world unity, love and peace" (Encyclical *Ecclesiam suam*, n. 94).

Echoing these words, the Second Vatican Council stated: "That Messianic people, although it does not actually include all men, and at times may appear as a small flock, is, however, a most sure seed of unity, hope and salvation" (Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, n. 9). The Church is conscious of her mission. She knows that Christ wanted her to be a sign of unity in the world. It is from this perspective that she also considers the phenomenon of migration, which occurs today the context of globalization with all its positive and negative

aspects (cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, nn. 20-22).

On the one hand, globalization accelerates flows of capital and exchanges of goods and services between people and inevitably influences human movement. Every important event that occurs in a specific part of the world tends to have repercussions on the entire planet, while the sense that all nations share a common destiny is increasing. The new generations have a growing conviction that the planet is now a “global village”, and they make friendships that transcend the differences of language or culture. Living side by side is becoming an everyday reality for many people.

At the same time, however, globalization produces new ruptures. Within the framework of a liberalism without adequate controls, the gap between the “emerging” and the “losing” countries is widening. The former have capital and technologies that allow them to enjoy the world’s resources at will, a possibility that they do not always use with a spirit of solidarity and sharing. The latter, instead, do not have easy access to the resources needed for adequate human development, and sometimes even lack the means of subsistence; crushed by debt and torn by internal divisions, they often end up wasting their meagre wealth on war (cf. Encyclical *Centesimus annus*, n. 33). As I recalled in my Message for the 1998 World Day of Peace, the challenge of our time is to assure a globalization in solidarity, a globalization without marginalization (cf. n. 3).

4. In many regions of the world today people live in tragic situations of instability and uncertainty. It does not come as a surprise that in such contexts the poor and the destitute make plans to escape, to seek a new land that can offer them bread, dignity and peace. This is the migration of the desperate: men and women, often young, who have no alternative than to leave their own country to venture into the unknown. Every day thousands of people take even critical risks in their attempts to escape from a life with no future. Unfortunately, the reality they find in host nations is frequently a source of further disappointment.

At the same time, States with a relative abundance tend to tighten their borders under pressure from a public opinion disturbed by the inconveniences that accompany the phenomenon of immigration. Society finds itself having to deal with the “clandestine”, men and women in illegal situations, without any rights in a country that refuses to welcome them, victims of organized crime or of unscrupulous entrepreneurs.

On the threshold of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, as the Church acquires a renewed awareness of her mission at the service of the human family, this situation also raises some serious questions. The globalization process can be an opportunity, if cultural differences are accepted as an opportunity for meeting and dialogue, and if the unequal distribution of the world’s resources leads to a new awareness of the necessary solidarity which must unite the human family. If, on the contrary, inequalities increase, poorer populations are forced into the exile of desperation, while the wealthy countries find they are prisoners of an insatiable craving to concentrate the available resources in their own hands.

5. Aware of the dramas but also of the opportunities inherent in the migration phenomenon and “contemplating the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Church prepares to cross the threshold of the third millennium” (*Incarnationis mysterium*, n. 1). In the Incarnation the Church recognizes God’s initiative in making “known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (*Eph* 1: 9-10). Christian commitment draws strength from Christ’s love, which is Good News for all human beings.

In the light of this Revelation, the Church, Mother and Teacher, works so that every person’s dignity is respected, the immigrant is welcomed as a brother or sister, and all humanity forms a united family which knows how to appreciate with discernment the different cultures which comprise it. In Jesus, God came seeking human hospitality. This is why he makes the willingness to welcome others in love a characteristic virtue of believers. He chose to be born into a family that found no lodging in Bethlehem (cf. *Lk* 2: 7) and experienced exile in

Egypt (cf. *Mt* 2: 14). Jesus, who “had nowhere to lay his head” (*Mt* 8: 20), asked those he met for hospitality. To Zacchaeus he said: “I must stay at your house today” (*Lk* 19: 5). He even compared himself to a foreigner in need of shelter: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (*Mt* 25: 35). In sending his disciples out on mission, Jesus makes the hospitality they will enjoy an act that concerns him personally: “He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me” (*Mt* 10: 40).

In this Jubilee year and in the context of a human mobility that has expanded everywhere, his invitation to hospitality becomes timely and urgent. How can the baptized claim to welcome Christ if they close the door to the foreigner who comes knocking? “If anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?” (1 *Jn* 3: 17).

The Son of God became man to reach out to all, giving preference to the least ones, the outcast, the stranger. When he began his mission in Nazareth, he presented himself as the Messiah who proclaims the Good News to the poor, brings release to captives and restores sight to the blind. He came to proclaim a “year of the Lord’s favour” (cf. *Lk* 4: 18), which is liberation and the beginning of a new era of brotherhood and solidarity.

“The Jubilee, ‘a year of the Lord’s favour’, characterizes all the activity of Jesus; it is not merely the recurrence of an anniversary in time” (Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 11). Christ’s work, ever present in his Church, seeks to bring all who feel strangers into a new fraternal communion; and his disciples are called to make themselves the servants of this mercy, so that no one will be lost (cf. *Jn* 6: 39).

6. In celebrating the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, the Church does not want to forget the tragedies which have marked the century now drawing to a close: the bloody wars which have devastated the world, the deportations, extermination camps, “ethnic cleansing” and the hatred which has spread and continues to darken human history.

The Church hears the suffering cry of all who are uprooted from their own land, of families forcefully separated, of those who, in the rapid changes of our day, are unable to find a stable home anywhere. She senses the anguish of those without rights, without any security, at the mercy of every kind of exploitation, and she supports them in their unhappiness.

In all the societies of the world the figure of the exile, the refugee, the deportee, the clandestine, the migrant and the “street people” gives the Jubilee celebration a very concrete meaning, which for believers becomes a call to change their mentality and their life, in accordance with Christ’s appeal: “Repent, and believe in the Gospel” (*Mk* 1: 15).

In its highest and most demanding motivation, this call to conversion certainly includes the effective recognition of the rights of migrants: “It is urgent in their regard that one know how to overcome a strictly nationalistic attitude to create a State which recognizes their right to emigration and encourages their integration.... It is the duty of all - and especially Christians - to work energetically to establish the universal brotherhood which is the indispensable basis of true justice and a condition for lasting peace” (Paul VI, Encyclical *Octogesima adveniens*, n. 17).

Working for the unity of the human family means being committed to the rejection of all discrimination based on race, culture or religion as contrary to God’s plan. It means bearing witness to a fraternal life based on the Gospel, which respects cultural differences and is open to sincere and trustful dialogue. It includes the advancement of everyone’s right to be able to live peacefully in his own country, as well as attentive concern that in every State immigration laws be based on the recognition of fundamental human rights.

May the Virgin Mary, who set out with haste to visit her cousin Elizabeth and, in receiving hospitality, rejoiced in God her Saviour (cf. *Lk* 1: 39-47), sustain everyone who in this Jubilee year sets out with their hearts open to

others, and help them to meet them as brothers and sisters, children of the same Father (cf. *Mt* 23: 9).

I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to all.

From the Vatican, 21 November 1999.

Message of Saint Pope John Paul II (1999)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. The Jubilee which we are rapidly approaching is an extraordinary moment of grace and reconciliation. In a very particular way it also involves the world of migrants, because of the close similarities between their condition and that of believers: ‘The whole of the Christian life’, I wrote in the Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, ‘is like a great pilgrimage to the house of the Father’ (n. 49). On this World Migration Day, which falls in the third year of preparation for the Jubilee, I would like to develop several thoughts in the light of this observation, thereby helping to “broaden the horizons of believers, so that they will see things in the perspective of Christ: in the perspective of the ‘Father who is in heaven’ ... from whom the Lord was sent and to whom he has returned” (ibid.).

2. “The land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me” (Lv 25:23). These words of the Lord, recorded in the Book of Leviticus, contain the fundamental reason for the biblical Jubilee, which, for Abraham’s descendants, corresponds to their awareness of being guests and pilgrims in the promised land.

The New Testament extends this conviction to every disciple of Christ who, as a citizen of the heavenly homeland and a fellow citizen of the saints (cf. Eph 2:19), has no lasting dwelling-place on this earth and lives as a wanderer (cf. 1 Pt 2:11), constantly seeking a final destination.

These biblical categories have become significant again in the present historical context, which is strongly marked by substantial migratory flows and a growing ethnic and cultural pluralism. They also underscore that the Church, present in every clime, is not identified with any particular race or culture since, as the Epistle to Diognetus recalls, Christians ‘live in their homeland, but as guests; as citizens they participate in all things, but are detached from all things as strangers. Every foreign country is a homeland to them and every homeland a foreign country.... They dwell on earth but are citizens of heaven’ (5, 1).

By her nature, the Church is in solidarity with the world of migrants who, with their variety of languages, races, cultures and customs, remind her of her own condition as a people on pilgrimage from every part of the earth to their final homeland. This vision helps Christians to reject all nationalistic thinking and to avoid narrow ideological categories. It reminds them that the Gospel should be incarnated in life in order to become its leaven and soul, also through a constant effort to free it from the cultural incrustations that inhibit its inner dynamism.

3. God reveals himself in the Old Testament as the One who takes the side of the stranger, the side, that is, of the people of Israel enslaved in Egypt. In the New Law he reveals himself in Jesus, born in a stable on the outskirts of town, ‘because there was no place for them in the inn’ (Lk 2:7), and who had nowhere to lay his head throughout his public ministry (cf. Mt 8:20; Lk 9:58). The Cross, the centre of Christian Revelation, is the culminating moment of this radical condition as a stranger: Christ dies ‘outside the gate’ (Heb 13:12), rejected by his own people. However, John the Evangelist recalls Jesus’ prophetic words: ‘And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself’ (12:32), and stresses that precisely by his death he will begin to ‘gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad’ (Jn 11:52). In following the Master’s example, the Church too lives as he did in the world with the attitude of a pilgrim, working to create communion, a welcoming home where the dignity conferred by the Creator is recognized in each human being.

4. The ethnic and cultural differences found within the Church could be a source of division or disunity, if she did not have the cohesive strength of charity, a virtue all Christians are invited to practise, particularly during this final year of immediate preparation for the Jubilee. In the Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, I wrote: “It will therefore be necessary, especially during this year, to emphasize the theological virtue of charity, recalling the significant lapidary words of the First Letter of John: ‘God is love’ (4:8, 16). Charity, in its twofold reality as love of God and neighbour, is the summing up of the moral life of the believer. It has in God its source

and its goal” (n. 50).

‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself’ (Lv 19:18). In the Book of Leviticus this commandment occurs in a series of precepts which forbid injustice. One of them warns: ‘When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God’ (19:33-44).

The reason, ‘for you were strangers in the land of Egypt’ which constantly accompanies the command to respect and love the migrant, is not only meant to remind the chosen people of their former condition; it also calls their attention to God’s action: on his own initiative he generously delivered them from slavery and freely gave them a land. ‘You were a slave and God intervened to set you free; you have seen, then, how God treated migrants; you must treat them in the same way’: this is the implicit thought underlying the precept.

5. In the New Testament all distinctions between human beings vanish when Christ breaks down the dividing wall between the chosen people and the pagans. ‘For he’, St Paul writes, ‘is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility’ (Eph 2:14). With Christ’s paschal mystery there is no near or far, no Jew or pagan, no accepted or rejected.

For the Christian, every human being is a ‘neighbour’ to be loved. He should not ask himself whom he should love, because to ask ‘who is my neighbour?’ is already to set limits and conditions. One day Jesus was asked this question and he responded by turning it around: it is not ‘and who is my neighbour?’, but ‘to whom should I become a neighbour?’ that is the right question. And the answer is: ‘anyone in need, even if he is a stranger to me, becomes a neighbour I must help’. The parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. Lk 10:30-37) invites everyone to reach out beyond the bounds of justice in the perspective of gratuitous and unlimited love.

For the believer, moreover, charity is God’s gift, a charism which, like faith and hope, is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:5): as God’s gift, it is not utopian but concrete; it is the Good News, the Gospel.

6. The presence of migrants challenges the responsibility of believers as individuals and as a community. Moreover, the parish is a privileged expression of community. As the Second Vatican Council recalls, the parish ‘offers an outstanding example of community apostolate, for it gathers into a unity all the human diversities that are found there and inserts them into the universality of the Church’ (Apostolicam actuositatem, n. 10). The parish is the place where all the members of the community come together and interact. It makes visible and sociologically identifiable God’s plan to call all people to the covenant established in Christ, without any exception or exclusion.

The parish, which etymologically means a house where the guest feels at ease, welcomes all and discriminates against none, for no one there is an outsider. It combines the stability and security people feel in their own home with the movement or transience of those who are passing through. Wherever there is a living sense of parish, differences between locals and strangers fade or disappear in the overriding awareness that all belong to God the one Father.

The importance of the parish in welcoming the stranger, in integrating baptized persons from different cultures and in dialoguing with believers of other religions stems from the mission of every parish community and its significance within society. This is not an optional, supplementary role for the parish community, but a duty inherent in its task as an institution.

Catholicity is not only expressed in the fraternal communion of the baptized, but also in the hospitality extended to the stranger, whatever his religious belief, in the rejection of all racial exclusion or discrimination, in the recognition of the personal dignity of every man and woman and, consequently, in the commitment to furthering their inalienable rights.

Priests, called to be ministers of unity in the parish community, have an important role in this regard. They 'are given the grace by God to be the ministers of Jesus Christ among the nations, fulfilling the sacred task of the Gospel, that the oblation of the Gentiles may be made acceptable and sanctified in the Holy Spirit' (Presbyterorum ordinis, n. 2).

Priests encounter the mystery of Jesus, who gave his life to gather into one his scattered children, in their daily celebration of the divine sacrifice and are called to devote themselves with ever new zeal to serving the unity of all the children of the one Father in heaven, striving to see that each has his place in fraternal communion.

7. "If we recall that Jesus came to 'preach the Good News to the poor' ... how can we fail to lay greater emphasis on the Church's preferential option for the poor and the outcast?" (Tertio millennio adveniente, n. 51). This question, which challenges every Christian community, highlights the praiseworthy efforts of so many parishes in neighbourhoods where phenomena exist such as unemployment, the concentration in inadequate spaces of men and women from different regions, and the degradation connected with poverty, the lack of services and insecurity. Parishes are frequently visible reference-points, easily identifiable and accessible, a sign of hope and brotherhood among the glaring divisions, tensions and outbreaks of violence in society. Listening to the same word of God, celebrating the same liturgies and sharing the same religious feasts and traditions help Christians of the area and those who are recent immigrants to feel they are all members of the same people.

In an environment which has been leveled and flattened by anonymity, the parish is a place of sharing, fellowship and mutual recognition. Instead of insecurity, it offers a place of trust where we learn to overcome our own fears; in the absence of reference-points from which to draw light and encouragement for living together, it offers a path of brotherhood and reconciliation based on Christ's Gospel. Situated at the centre of a reality marked by precariousness, the parish can become a true sign of hope. By channeling the neighbourhood's best energies, it can help the residents to move beyond a fatalistic vision of poverty to active, joint efforts aimed at changing living conditions.

Many members of parish communities are also actively involved in structures and associations for improving people's living conditions. As I express my deep appreciation of these significant achievements, I urge parish communities to persevere courageously in the work they are doing for migrants, to help promote a quality of life that is worthier of man and of his spiritual vocation.

8. When speaking of migrants, we must take into account the social conditions in their countries of origin. They are nations where people generally live in conditions of great poverty, which the external debt tends to aggravate. In my Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, I recalled that 'in the spirit of the Book of Leviticus (25:8-12), Christians will have to raise their voice on behalf of all the poor of the world, proposing the Jubilee as an appropriate time to give thought, among other things, to reducing substantially, if not canceling outright, the international debt which seriously threatens the future of many nations' (n. 51). This is one of the aspects which most directly link migration with the Jubilee, not only because migration is more intense in these countries, but especially because the Jubilee, in offering a vision of the earth's goods that condemns the exclusive possession of them (cf. Lv 25:23), leads the believer to open himself to the poor and the stranger.

In the past, the growing gap between rich and poor, which makes social harmony impossible, required that the balance be periodically restored to allow for an orderly renewal of social life. Thus a new form of equality was established by abolishing the mortgage on persons reduced to slavery because of their debts. The ordinances of the biblical Jubilee are one of the many remedies for the social imbalance caused by the perverse spiral ensnaring those who are forced into indebtedness for their own survival.

This phenomenon, which once concerned relations between citizens of the same nation, is made more critical by the current globalization of trade and the economy, involving relations between the world's States and regions. Lest the imbalance between rich and poor nations become irreversible, with tragic consequences for

all humanity, the biblical precept must be translated today into concrete and effective forms leading to an appropriate review of the poor countries' indebtedness to wealthy nations.

I hope that the forthcoming Jubilee, as many people wish, will be a fitting occasion to find appropriate solutions and to offer the poor countries new conditions of dignity and orderly development.

9. 'The Jubilee can also offer an opportunity for reflecting on other challenges ..., such as the difficulties of dialogue between different cultures' (Tertio millennio adveniente, n. 51).

The Christian is called to evangelize by reaching out to people wherever they may be, to meet them with warmth and love, to shoulder their problems, to know and appreciate their culture, to help them overcome prejudices. This concrete form of outreach to so many of our needy brothers and sisters will prepare them to encounter the light of the Gospel and, by forging bonds of sincere esteem and friendship, will lead them to ask: 'we wish to see Jesus' (Jn 12:21). Dialogue is essential for a peaceful and productive society.

In view of the ever more pressing challenges of indifferentism and secularization, the Jubilee requires that this dialogue be intensified. In their everyday relationships, believers are called to show the face of a Church which is open to everyone, attentive to social realities and to whatever enables the human person to affirm his dignity. In particular, Christians, conscious of the heavenly Father's love, will heighten their concern for migrants, in order to develop a sincere and respectful dialogue aimed at building the 'civilization of love'.

Against this vast horizon of commitments, may believers always keep their gaze fixed on Blessed Mary, 'who accompanies the Church with her motherly love and protects her on her journey homeward until the glorious day of the Lord' (Roman Missal, Italian edition, Preface of the Blessed Virgin Mary III)!

With these hopes, I affectionately impart my Blessing to all.

From the Vatican, 2 February 1999.

Message of Saint Pope John Paul II (1998)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. The Church looks with deep pastoral concern at the increased flow of migrants and refugees, and questions herself about the causes of this phenomenon and the particular conditions of those who are forced for various reasons to leave their homeland. In fact, the situation of the world's migrants and refugees seems ever more precarious. Violence sometimes obliges entire populations to leave their homeland to escape repeated atrocities; more frequently, it is poverty and the lack of prospects for development which spur individuals and families to go into exile, to seek ways to survive in distant lands, where it is not easy to find a suitable welcome.

Many initiatives aim at alleviating the hardships and sufferings of migrants and refugees. I express my deep appreciation of those who are dedicated to them, together with a cordial encouragement to continue generously supporting them, overcoming the many difficulties they meet on the way. In addition to the problems connected with cultural, social and sometimes even religious barriers, there are those associated with other phenomena such as the unemployment that afflicts even countries which have been the traditional destination of immigrants, the break-up of families, the lack of services and the precarious situation of so many aspects of daily life. Moreover, the host community fears the loss of its own identity because of the rapid increase of these "strangers" through their demographic growth, the legal mechanisms for reuniting families and clandestine enlistment in the so-called underground economy. When there is no prospect of harmonious and peaceful integration, withdrawal into self, tension with one's surroundings, dispersal and the waste of energies become real risks, with negative and sometimes tragic results. People find themselves "more scattered than before, divided in speech, divided among themselves, incapable of consensus and agreement" (Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, n.13).

The mass media can play an important role, both positive and negative. Their activity can foster a proper evaluation and better understanding of the problems of the "new arrivals", dispelling prejudices and emotional reactions, or instead, it can breed rejection and hostility, impeding and jeopardizing proper integration.

2. All this raises urgent challenges to the Christian community, which makes attention to migrants and refugees one of its pastoral priorities. From this standpoint Word Migration Day is an appropriate occasion for reflecting on how to intervene ever more effectively in this sensitive apostolate.

For the Christian, acceptance of and solidarity with the stranger are not only a human duty of hospitality, but a precise demand of fidelity itself to Christ's teaching. For the believer, caring for migrants means striving to guarantee a place within the individual Christian community for his brothers and sisters coming from afar, and working so that every human being's personal rights are recognized. The Church invites all people of goodwill to make their own contribution so that every person is respected and discriminations that debase human dignity are banned. Her action, sustained by prayer, is inspired by the Gospel and guided by her age-old experience.

The Ecclesial Community's activity is also an incentive to the leaders of peoples and international communities, institutions and organizations of various kinds involved in the phenomenon of migration. An expert in humanity, the Church fulfills her task by enlightening consciences with her teaching and witness, and by encouraging appropriate initiatives to ensure that immigrants find the right place within individual societies.

3. In particular, she concretely urges Christian migrants and refugees not to turn in on themselves, isolating themselves from the pastoral life of the Diocese or parish that accepts them. At the same time, however, she puts clergy and faithful on guard against attempting merely to assimilate them, which destroys their particular characteristics. Rather she encourages the gradual integration of these brothers and sisters, making the most of their diversity to build an authentic family of believers which is welcoming and supportive.

To this end it is good for the local community into which migrants and refugees are integrated to provide them with structures that help them actively assume their responsibilities. In this regard, the priest specifically assigned to the care of migrants is asked to be a bridge between different cultures and mentalities. This presupposes an awareness that he is fulfilling a truly missionary ministry “in the same way that Christ by his Incarnation committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances of the people among whom he lived” (Ad gentes, n.10).

Moreover, the fact that apostolic action for migrants is sometimes carried out in the midst of suspicion and even hostility can never become a reason for abandoning the commitment to solidarity and human advancement. Jesus’ demanding assertion: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Mt 25:35) retains its power in all circumstances and challenges the conscience of those who intend to follow in his footsteps. For the believer, accepting others is not only philanthropy or a natural concern for his fellow man. It is far more, because in every human being he knows he is meeting Christ, who expects to be loved and served in our brothers and sisters, especially in the poorest and neediest.

4. Jesus, the only-begotten Son made man, is the living icon of God’s solidarity with men. “Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (2 Cor 8:9). Only a Christian community really attentive to others welcomes and carries on the legacy bequeathed by Jesus to the Apostles in the Upper Room on the eve of his death on the Cross: “Such as my love has been for you, so must your love be for each other” (Jn 13:34). The Redeemer asks for a love that is self-giving, gratuitous and disinterested.

In this regard, the words of St James, who wrote to the “twelve tribes of the diaspora”, probably Christians of Jewish origin dispersed throughout the Graeco-Roman world, sound more prophetic than ever: “What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled’, without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead” (Jas 2:14-17).

5. I am pleased to call attention here to the shining example of an apostle who was able to witness in a living and prophetic way to Christ’s love for migrants. I am speaking of Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini, whom I had the joy of beatifying today, 9 November.

He was deeply moved by the dramatic exodus of migrants who, in the final decades of the last century, left Europe in large numbers for the countries of the New World, and he clearly saw the need to provide pastoral care for them through an appropriate network of social assistance. In this regard, he showed keen spiritual insight and sound practical sense in founding the Congregation of the Missionaries and Missionary Sisters of St Charles. He also strongly supported the introduction of legislative and institutional measures for the human and legal protection of migrants against every form of exploitation.

Today in certainly different social situations, the spiritual sons and daughters of Bishop Scalabrini, who were later joined by the Lay Scalabrinian Missionaries, heirs to the same charism, continue to witness to Christ’s love for migrants and to offer them the Gospel, the universal message of salvation. May Bishop Scalabrini sustain by his example and intercession everyone throughout the world who works in the service of migrants and refugees.

6. To offer a solid Christian witness in this demanding and complex sector, it is important “to gain a renewed appreciation of the Spirit as the One who builds the kingdom of God within the course of history and prepares its full manifestation in Jesus Christ” (Tertio millennio adveniente, n. 45).

How can we forget that 1998 is dedicated to the Holy Spirit, whose role was revealed in an extraordinarily effective way at Pentecost? I wrote in my Message for the 16th World Day of Peace: the descent of “the Holy Spirit caused the first disciples of the Lord to rediscover, beyond the diversity of languages, the royal road to peace in brotherhood” (n. 12; L’Osservatore Romano English edition, 27 December 1982, p. 10).

In ancient Babel pride had shattered the unity of the human family. The Spirit of Pentecost came to heal this lost unity with his gifts, re-establishing it on the model of Trinitarian communion, in which the three distinct Persons subsist in the undivided unity of the divine nature. All those who listened to the Apostles on whom the Spirit descended were astonished to hear them speaking each in his own language (cf. Acts 2:7-11). Unanimity in listening, then as today, does not jeopardize the diversity of cultures since “every culture is an effort to ponder the mystery of the world and in particular of the human person: it is a way of giving an expression to the transcendent dimension of human life”. Over and above “all the differences which distinguish individuals and peoples, there is a fundamental commonality. For different cultures are but different ways of facing the question of the meaning of personal existence” (Address to the 50th General Assembly of the United Nations, 5 October 1995, n. 9; L'Osservatore Romano English edition, 11 October 1995, p. 9).

The year of the Holy Spirit therefore invites believers to live more deeply the theological virtue of hope, which offers them solid and profound reasons for their commitment to the new evangelization and to their efforts for those who, coming from different countries and cultures, expect our help in fulfilling their human potential.

7. To evangelize is to give an account to all of the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Pt 3:15). In this duty the first Christians, although a social minority, were boldly enterprising. Sustained by the *parresia* instilled in them by the Holy Spirit, they could give candid witness to their own faith.

Today too, “Christians are called to prepare for the Great Jubilee of the beginning of the third millennium by renewing their hope in the definitive coming of the kingdom of God, preparing for it daily in their hearts, in the Christian community to which they belong, in their particular social context” (Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 46).

The phenomenon of human mobility calls to mind the very image of the Church, a pilgrim people on earth, but constantly on her way to the heavenly homeland. Even in the innumerable hardships it involves, this path reminds us of the future world whose prospective image spurs us to transform the present, which must be freed from injustice and oppression in view of the encounter with God, the ultimate goal of all men.

I entrust the Christian community's apostolic commitment to migrants and refugees to “Mary, who conceived the Incarnate Word by the power of the Holy Spirit and then in the whole of her life allowed herself to be guided by his interior activity.... Mary gave full expression to the longing of the poor of Yahweh and is a radiant model for those who entrust themselves with all their hearts to the promises of God” (ibid., n. 48). May she accompany with motherly concern all those who work for migrants and refugees; may she dry the tears and console all who have had to leave their own land and loved ones.

May everyone also be comforted by my Blessing.

From the Vatican, 9 November 1997, the twentieth year of the Pontificate.

Message of Saint Pope John Paul II (1997)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. The circumstances of migrants and the painful misfortunes of refugees, sometimes insufficiently taken into account by public opinion, cannot fail to inspire deep sympathy and interest in believers. With this message for the World Day for Migrants and Refugees, in addition to expressing my constant attention to the often dramatic situation of those who leave their own homeland, I intend to invite Bishops, parish priests, consecrated persons, parish groups, ecclesial associations and volunteer groups to become increasingly aware of this phenomenon. The next World Day will afford the opportunity to reflect on the conditions of migrants and refugees and will be an incentive to identify their priority needs and to work out responses more in harmony with the respect of their dignity as persons and the duty to accept them.

The migratory phenomenon emerges today as a mass movement which largely involves the poor and needy, driven from their own countries by armed conflicts, precarious economic conditions, political, ethnic and social conflicts and natural catastrophes. But those who leave their country for other reasons are also numerous. The development of the means of transport, the rapidity of the spread of information, the multiplication of social relationships, more widespread prosperity, more free time and the growth of cultural interests have caused the movement of persons to acquire macroscopic and frequently uncontrollable dimensions, bringing a multiplicity of cultures to almost all the metropolises and giving rise to new social and economic conditions.

Then by mingling people of different religions in the fabric of daily coexistence, migration has made this one of the elements of social diversification. The countries in this category which have experienced the most tangible changes are certainly those in the West, with a Christian majority. In some of these the plurality of religions is not only widespread, but has also taken root, because the migratory flow has long existed. Some governments have already granted certain more substantial religious groups the status of a recognized religion, with the benefits that this implies in matters of protection, qualifications, freedom of action and financial support for cultural and social initiatives.

The Church, recognizing freedom of worship for every human being, is favourable to such legislation. Indeed, holding the members of the different religions in esteem and respect, she desires to establish effective relations of collaboration with them, and in a climate of trust and dialogue, she intends to cooperate to solve problems emerging in today's society.

2. The task of proclaiming the word of God, entrusted by Jesus to the Church, has been interwoven with the history of Christian emigration from the very beginning. In the Encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, I recalled that "in the early centuries, Christianity spread because Christians, traveling to or settling in regions where Christ had not yet been proclaimed, bore courageous witness to their faith and founded the first communities there" (n. 82).

This has also happened in recent times. I wrote in 1989: "Often, flourishing Christian communities started out as small colonies of migrants which, under the leadership of a priest, met in humble buildings to hear the Word of God and to beg him for courage to face the trials and sacrifices of their difficult life" (Message for World Migration Day, n. 2, *Insegnamenti* XII, 2. p. 491; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 30 October, 1989, p. 8). Many peoples came to know Christ through migrants who arrived from the lands evangelized in ancient times.

Today the trend in migratory movement has been as it were inverted. It is non-Christians, increasingly numerous, who go to countries with a Christian tradition in search of work and better living conditions, and they frequently do so as illegal immigrants and refugees. This causes complex problems which are not easy to solve. For her part, the Church, like the Good Samaritan, feels it her duty to be close to the illegal immigrant

and refugee, contemporary icon of the despoiled traveler, beaten and abandoned on side of the road to Jericho (cf. Lk 10:30). She goes towards him, pouring “on his wounds the oil of consolation and the wine of hope” (Roman Missal, Common Preface VII), feeling herself called to be a living sign of Christ, who came that all might have life in abundance (cf. Jn 10:10).

In this way she acts in the spirit of Christ and follows in his steps, at the same time attending to the proclamation of the Good News and to solidarity towards others, elements which are intimately united in the Church’s activity.

3. However, the urgent need to go to the help of migrants in the precarious situations in which they often live must not hinder the proclamation of the ultimate realities on which Christian hope is founded. To evangelize is to account to everyone for the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Pt 3:15).

The contemporary world, frequently scarred by injustice and selfishness, nonetheless shows surprising concern for the defence of the weak and the poor. Among Christians, in recent years, a longing for solidarity has been recorded, a longing which spurs to a more effective witness to the Gospel of charity. However, love and service to the poor must not lead to underestimating the need for faith, bringing out an artificial separation in the Lord’s one commandment, that invites us to love both God and our neighbour simultaneously.

The Church’s commitment to migrants and refugees cannot be reduced merely to organizing structures of hospitality and solidarity. This attitude would impoverish the riches of the ecclesial vocation, called in the first place to transmit the faith, which “is strengthened when it is given to others” (*Redemptoris missio*, n. 2). At the end of our life we will be judged on love, on the acts of charity we have done to the “least” of our brothers and sisters (cf. Mt 25:31-45), but also on the courage and fidelity with which we have witnessed to Christ. In the Gospel he said: “So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 10:32-33).

For the Christian, every activity has its beginning and its end in Christ: the baptized person acts, spurred by love for him, and knows that even the effectiveness of his actions springs from belonging to him: “Apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). In imitation of Jesus and the Apostles, who follow up the preaching of the kingdom by concrete signs of its fulfilment (Acts 1:1; Mk 6:30), the Christian evangelizes by words and deeds, both the fruit of faith in Christ. Actions, in fact, are his “active faith”, while words are his “eloquent faith”. Since there is no evangelization without, in consequence, charitable actions, there is no authentic charity without the spirit of the Gospel: they are two intimately linked aspects.

4. “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4). The true pastor, even when he is harassed by enormous practical problems, never forgets that migrants have need of God, and that many seek him with a sincere heart. Like the disciples of Emmaus, however, their eyes are often incapable of recognizing him (cf. Lk 24:16). They should therefore also be offered a presence which, guiding and listening to them, makes the Word of God resound, makes their hearts beat with hope and guides them to the meeting with the risen Christ. This is the Church’s missionary path: to go to meet women and men of every race, tongue and nation with friendship and love, sharing their conditions in an evangelical spirit, to break the bread of truth and charity for them.

It is the apostolic style which shines through the missionary experience of the first Christian communities, in the account of Philip’s preaching to the minister of Candace, queen of Ethiopia, (cf. Acts 8:27-40) and in the episode of the Apostle Paul’s dream (cf. *ibid.*, 18:9-11). The latter, active in the city of Corinth whose population was largely composed of immigrants working in the port, is urged by the Lord not to be afraid, to continue to “speak and not to be silent” and to trust in the saving power of the wisdom of the Cross (cf. 1 Cor 1:26-27).

The events of the Apostle Paul as told in Acts testify that, guided by the firm conviction that salvation is in Christ alone, he was totally dedicated to taking every opportunity to proclaim the Messiah. He lived this

commitment as a duty: “For if I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16). Indeed he was aware of the right of those whom he was addressing to receive the saving proclamation. In this regard, my venerable Predecessor, the Servant of God Paul VI, said in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*: “Neither ... the complexity of the questions raised is an invitation to the Church to withhold from these non-Christians the proclamation of Jesus Christ. On the contrary the Church holds that these multitudes have the right to know the riches of the mystery of Christ riches in which we believe that the whole of humanity can find, in unsuspected fullness, everything that it is gropingly searching for concerning God, man and his destiny, life and death, and truth” (n. 53).

5. John’s Gospel stresses that Christ’s death was ordained “to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad” (Jn 11:52). The same Gospel recounts that during the feast of the Passover, some Greeks approached Philip and asked him if they could see Jesus (cf. Jn 12:21). Philip, consulting with Andrew, spoke to the Lord who answered: “The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If any one serves me, he must follow me ...” (Jn 12:23-26).

They are the Greeks, that is, the pagans, who want to meet the Saviour, and the answer, at first, seems to have no connection with the request. But in the light of what will happen on Calvary, we understand that the lifting up on the Cross is the condition for the glorification of Christ with the Father and with mankind, and that only the dynamism of the paschal mystery completely fulfils men’s desire to see him and to communicate with him. The Church is called to establish an intense dialogue with humanity, not only to transmit authentic values to them, but above all to reveal Christ’s mystery, because only in him does the person reach his truest dimension. “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (Jn 12:32). This “drawing”, integrates us into the communion of charity and, making us capable of forgiveness and reciprocal love, achieves authentic human advancement.

Aware of being the place where people must be able “to see Jesus” and experience his love, the Church fulfils her mission by striving to offer, in the logic of the Cross, an ever more convincing witness of the gratuitous, unlimited love of the Redeemer, “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13).

1997 will be the first year of the triennium of preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, during which Christians will be called to focus their gaze particularly on the figure of Christ. To each I renew the invitation to intensify communion with Jesus and, through charity, to make faith in him active (cf. Gal 5:6), with particular openness of spirit to those who are in need and difficulty. Thus the proclamation of the Gospel will be more eloquent and an ever living message of hope and love to the men and women of every age.

With these wishes I cordially impart a special Apostolic Blessing to migrants and refugees, and to all those who in love assume the burden of their difficult plight.

[From Castel Gandolfo, August 21, 1996](#)

Message of Saint Pope John Paul II (1996) 'Undocumented Migrants'

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. The phenomenon of migration with its complex problems challenges the international community and individual States today more than ever. The latter generally tend to intervene by tightening migration laws and reinforcing border control systems. Thus migration loses that dimension of economic, social and cultural development which it had in the past. In fact, there is less and less talk of the situation of “emigrants” in their countries of origin, and more and more of “immigrants”, with respect to the problems they create in the countries where they settle.

Migration is assuming the features of a social emergency, above all because of the increase in illegal migrants which, despite the current restrictions, it seems impossible to halt. Illegal immigration has always existed: it has frequently been tolerated because it promotes a reserve of personnel to draw on as legal migrants gradually move up the social ladder and find stable employment.

2. Today the phenomenon of illegal migrants has assumed considerable proportions, both because the supply of foreign labour is becoming excessive in comparison to the needs of the economy, which already has difficulty in absorbing its domestic workers, and because of the spread of forced migration. The necessary prudence required to deal with so delicate a matter cannot become one of reticence or exclusivity, because thousands would suffer the consequences as victims of situations that seem destined to deteriorate instead of being resolved. His irregular legal status cannot allow the migrant to lose his dignity, since he is endowed with inalienable rights, which can neither be violated nor ignored.

Illegal immigration should be prevented, but it is also essential to combat vigorously the criminal activities which exploit illegal immigrants. The most appropriate choice, which will yield consistent and long-lasting results is that of international co-operation which aims to foster political stability and to eliminate underdevelopment. The present economic and social imbalance, which to a large extent encourages the migratory flow, should not be seen as something inevitable, but as a challenge to the human race's sense of responsibility.

3. The Church considers the problem of illegal migrants from the standpoint of Christ, who died to gather together the dispersed children of God (cf. Jn 11:52), to rehabilitate the marginalized and to bring close those who are distant, in order to integrate all within a communion that is not based on ethnic, cultural or social membership, but on the common desire to accept God's word and to seek justice. “God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34-35).

The Church acts in continuity with Christ's mission. In particular, she asks herself how to meet the needs, while respecting the law of those persons who are not allowed to remain in a national territory. She also asks what the right to emigrate is worth without the corresponding right to immigrate. She tackles the problem of how to involve in this work of solidarity those Christian communities frequently infected by a public opinion that is often hostile to immigrants.

The first way to help these people is to listen to them in order to become acquainted with their situation, and, whatever their legal status with regard to State law, to provide them with the necessary means of subsistence.

Thus it is important to help illegal migrants to complete the necessary administrative papers to obtain a residence permit. Social and charitable institutions can make contact with the authorities in order to seek appropriate, lawful solutions to various cases. This kind of effort should be made especially on behalf of those who, after a long stay, are so deeply rooted in the local society that returning to their country of origin would be

tantamount to a form of reverse emigration, with serious consequences particularly for the children.

4. When no solution is foreseen, these same institutions should direct those they are helping, perhaps also providing them with material assistance, either to seek acceptance in other countries, or to return to their own country

In the search for a solution to the problem of migration in general and illegal migrants in particular, the attitude of the host society has an important role to play. In this perspective, it is very important that public opinion be properly informed about the true situation in the migrants' country of origin, about the tragedies involving them and the possible risks of returning. The poverty and misfortune with which immigrants are stricken are yet another reason for coming generously to their aid.

It is necessary to guard against the rise of new forms of racism or xenophobic behaviour, which attempt to make these brothers and sisters of ours scapegoats for what may be difficult local situations.

Due to the considerable proportions reached by the illegal migrant phenomenon, legislation in all the countries involved should be brought into harmony, also for a more equitable distribution of the burdens of a balanced solution. It is necessary to avoid recourse to the use of administrative regulations, meant to restrict the criterion of family membership which result in unjustifiably forcing into an illegal situation people whose right to live with their family cannot be denied by any law.

Adequate protection should be guaranteed to those who, although they have fled from their countries for reasons unforeseen by international conventions, could indeed be seriously risking their life were they obliged to return to their homeland.

5. I urge the particular Churches to encourage reflection, to issue directives and to provide information to help pastoral and social workers to act with discernment in so delicate and complex a matter.

When an understanding of the problem is conditioned by prejudice and xenophobic attitudes, the Church must not fail to speak up for brotherhood and to accompany it with acts testifying to the primacy of charity.

The prominence assumed by the welfare aspects of their precarious situation should not mean that less attention is paid to the fact that there are often Catholic Christians among the illegal migrants who, in the name of the same faith, often seek pastors of souls and places where they can pray, listen to God's word and celebrate the Lord's mysteries. Dioceses have the duty to meet these needs.

In the Church no one is a stranger, and the Church is not foreign to anyone, anywhere. As a sacrament of unity and thus a sign and a binding force for the whole human race, the Church is the place where illegal immigrants are also recognized and accepted as brothers and sisters. It is the task of the various Dioceses actively to ensure that these people, who are obliged to live outside the safety net of civil society, may find a sense of brotherhood in the Christian community.

Solidarity means taking responsibility for those in trouble. For Christians, the migrant is not merely an individual to be respected in accordance with the norms established by law, but a person whose presence challenges them and whose needs become an obligation for their responsibility. "What have you done to your brother?" (cf. Gn 4:9). The answer should not be limited to what is imposed by law, but should be made in the manner of solidarity.

6. Man, particularly if he is weak, defenceless, driven to the margins of society, is a sacrament of Christ's presence (cf. Mt 25:40, 45). "But this crowd, who do not know the law, are accursed" (Jn 7:49), was how the Pharisees judged those whom Jesus had helped even beyond the limits established by their precepts. Indeed, he came to seek and to save the lost (cf. Lk 19:10), to bring back the excluded, the abandoned, those rejected by society.

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Mt 25:35). It is the Church’s task not only to present constantly the Lord’s teaching of faith but also to indicate its appropriate application to the various situations which the changing times continue to create. Today the illegal migrant comes before us like that “stranger” in whom Jesus asks to be recognized. To welcome him and to show him solidarity is a duty of hospitality and fidelity to Christian identity itself.

With these wishes, I impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of abundant heavenly rewards to all those who are involved in the field of migration.