



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE SIXTH WORLD CONGRESS
FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE**

*Clementine Hall
Monday, 9 November 2009*

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I am delighted to welcome you at the beginning of the World Congress for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees. In the first place I greet Bishop Antonio Maria Vegliò, President of your Pontifical Council, and thank him for his cordial words introducing this meeting. I greet the Secretary, the Members, the Consultors and Officials of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. I address a respectful greeting to Hon. Mr Renato Schifani, President of the Senate of the Italian Republic. I greet all of you who are present. To each one I express my appreciation of the commitment and concern with which you work in a social sector, today so complex and delicate, offering support to those who by their own free will or by obligation leave their country of origin and emigrate to other nations.

The theme of the Congress "*A Pastoral Response to Migration in the Age of Globalisation*" highlights the specific context of migration in our time. In fact, if the phenomenon of migration is as old as the history of humanity, it has never before acquired the great importance it has assumed today, due to the number and complexity of its problems. It now affects almost every country in the world and is part of the vast process of globalisation. Millions of men, women and children, young and old alike, are facing the drama of emigration, sometimes in order to survive more than to seek a better standard of living for themselves and their families. In fact, the financial gap between the poor countries and the industrialized countries is widening. The world financial crisis, with the enormous growth of unemployment, is reducing the possibility of finding work and increasing the

number of those who do not manage to find even temporary employment. Consequently, a great many people are obliged to leave their own countries and the communities of their origins; they are prepared to accept work in conditions that are in no way consonant with human dignity and the differences of language, culture and social system of the host society intensify the difficulty of integration.

The plight of migrants and especially of refugees in a certain way evokes that of the ancient biblical people who, fleeing slavery in Egypt with the dream of the promised land in their hearts, crossed the Red Sea but, instead of immediately reaching the desired destination, were obliged to face the trials and tribulations of the desert. Today, many migrants leave their country to escape humanly unacceptable living conditions but do not find elsewhere the welcome for which they had hoped. In the face of such complex situations how can one fail to pause to reflect on the consequences of mere material development as the fundamental basis of society? In my Encyclical *Caritas in veritate* I noted that integral development is the only true development, in other words it concerns every man and the whole of man.

Authentic development always features solidarity. In fact, in an increasingly globalised society, the common good and the effort to obtain it, I noted further in *Caritas in veritate*, "cannot fail to assume the dimensions of the whole human family, that is to say, the community of peoples and nations" (cf. n. 7). Indeed, the current process of globalisation, as the Servant of God *John Paul II* appropriately emphasized, can represent a propitious opportunity for promoting integral development but only "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" (*Message for the 86th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 21 November 1999*, n. 4; *L'Osservatore Romano English edition [ORE]*, 22 December 1999, p. 6). It follows that the great social changes under way demand adequate responses since it is clear that there can be no effective development without promoting encounter among peoples, dialogue among cultures and respect for legitimate differences.

In this perspective, why not consider the contemporary phenomenon of migration as a favourable condition for understanding among peoples, for building peace and for a development that concerns every nation? This is what I wished to recall in my Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees in the Pauline Jubilee Year (*Message for the 95th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 24 August 2008*; *ORE*, 15 October 2008, p. 27): migration is an opportunity to emphasize the unity of the human family and the values of acceptance, hospitality and love of neighbour. However, this must be expressed in daily gestures of sharing, joint participation and concern for others, especially those in need. To achieve this mutual acceptance, St Paul teaches that Christians must be ready to listen to the word of God, which urges all to imitate Christ, and stay united with him. Only in this way is it possible to care for one's neighbour and never to give in to the temptation of contempt or rejection of those who are different. Conformed to Christ, every man and every woman may be regarded as brothers and sisters, children of the same Father. This

treasure of brotherhood makes them "practise hospitality", which is the firstborn daughter of *agape* (*ibid.*).

Dear brothers and sisters, faithful to Jesus' teaching every Christian family cannot but feel respect and attention for all human beings created in the image and likeness of God and redeemed by Christ's Blood especially when they are in difficulty. This is why the Church invites the faithful to open their hearts to migrants and their families, knowing that they are not merely a "problem" but constitute a "resource" to be appropriately appreciated for humanity's authentic progress and development. I renew to each one of you my thanks for your service to the Church and to society, and I invoke Mary's motherly protection upon all your actions for migrants and refugees. For my part, I assure you of my prayers as I willingly bless you and all who are part of the great family of migrants and refugees.

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