



The Holy See

JUBILEE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Friday, 2 June 2000

1. *"Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality"* (Heb 13: 1-2). The passage from the Letter to the Hebrews, which we heard a few moments ago, links the exhortation to offer hospitality to the guest, the pilgrim and the stranger with the commandment of love, which sums up the new law of Christ. "Do not neglect to show hospitality". This message rings out in a particular way today, dear migrants and itinerant people, as we celebrate this special Jubilee. I greet you with great affection and thank you for responding in great numbers to my invitation and that of the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Itinerant People. I especially greet Archbishop Stephen Fumio Hamao, President of your Pontifical Council, and thank him for his words on your behalf at the beginning of our celebration. With him, I greet the Secretary, Archbishop Gioia, the Undersecretary, the staff and all who have helped to organize this important spiritual event. Among you are *migrants* from various countries and continents; *refugees* who have fled situations of violence and are asking to see their fundamental rights recognized; *foreign students*, wishing to complete their scientific and technical training; *people of the sea and sky*, who work at the service of those who travel by ship or plane; *tourists*, interested in knowing new surroundings, environments, customs and traditions; *nomads*, who have traveled the roads of the world down the centuries; *circus people*, who bring their attractions and healthy entertainment to public squares. To each and all, my most cordial embrace.

Your presence recalls that the Son of God himself, when he came to dwell among us, *became a migrant* (cf. 1 Jn 1: 14). He became a pilgrim in the world and in history. 2. *"Come, O blessed of my Father, ... for ... I was a stranger and you welcomed me"* (Mt 25: 23-35). Jesus says that we can enter the kingdom of God only by practising the commandment of love. We do not enter it, then, through racial, cultural or religious privileges, but indeed by doing the will of the Father who is in heaven. (cf. Mt 7: 21). Your Jubilee, dear migrants and itinerant people, expresses with remarkable eloquence the central place which the charity of acceptance must hold in the Church. In taking on our human and historical condition, Christ was united in a way with every human being. He accepted every one of us and, in the commandment of love, asked us to imitate his example, that is, to *accept one another as Christ accepted us* (cf. Rom 15: 7). Ever since the Son of God "pitched his tent among us", every person has in a way become a "place" of encounter

with him. Welcoming Christ in our needy brothers and sisters is the condition for being able to meet him "face to face" and perfectly at the end of our earthly journey. Thus the exhortation of the author of the Letter to the Hebrews is still timely: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (*Heb* 13: 2).³ I make my own the words of my venerable predecessor, the Servant of God Paul VI, who, in his homily at the close of the Second Vatican Council, said: "*For the Catholic Church, no one is a stranger, no one is excluded, no one is distant*" (AAS, 58 [1966], pp. 51-59). In the Church, wrote the Apostle of the Gentiles at the very beginning, there are no strangers or sojourners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (cf. *Eph* 2: 19). Unfortunately, we still encounter in the world a closed-minded attitude and even one of rejection, due to unjustified fears and concern for one's own interests alone. These forms of discrimination are incompatible with belonging to Christ and to the Church. Indeed, the Christian community is called to spread in the world the leaven of brotherhood, of that *fellowship of differences* which we can also experience at our meeting today. Certainly, in a complex society like ours which is marked by many tensions, *the culture of acceptance must be joined with prudent and far-sighted laws and norms*, which allow the most to be made of the positive aspects of human mobility and to provide for its possibly negative aspects. This will ensure that every person is effectively respected and accepted. Even more in the era of globalization, the Church has a precise message: to work so that this world of ours, which is often described as a "global village", may truly be more united, more fraternal, more welcoming. Here is the message which this Jubilee celebration is meant to spread everywhere: *always put man and respect for his rights at the centre of the phenomenon of mobility*.

4. Having been entrusted with the universal message of salvation, the Church knows that her primary task is to proclaim the Gospel to every individual and to all peoples. From the moment when the risen Christ sent the Apostles to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth, her horizons are those of the whole world. It was in the multiethnic, multicultural and multireligious context of the Mediterranean that the first Christians began to recognize one another and to live as brothers and sisters since they were children of God. Today it is not only the Mediterranean but the whole world which is open to the complex dynamics of a universal brotherhood. Your presence here in Rome, dear brothers and sisters, stresses how important it is that this phenomenon of human growth should be constantly enlightened by Christ and by his Gospel of hope. It is in this perspective that we must continue our efforts, sustained by divine grace and by the intercession of the great patron saints of migrants: from St Frances Xavier Cabrini to Bl. John Baptist Scalabrini. These saints and blessed remind us what the Christian vocation among men and women is: walking with them as brothers or sisters, sharing their joys and hopes, difficulties and sufferings. Like the disciples of Emmaus, believers, supported by the living presence of the risen Christ, become in turn the traveling companions of their brothers and sisters in trouble, offering them the word which rekindles hope in their hearts. With them they break the bread of friendship, brotherhood and mutual help. This is how to build the civilization of love. This is how to proclaim the hoped-for coming of the new heavens and the new earth to which we are heading. Let us invoke the intercession of these patron saints for all those who belong to the great family of migrants and itinerant people. Let us invoke in a special way the protection of Mary, who went before us on the pilgrimage of faith, so that she might guide the steps of every man and woman who seeks freedom, justice and peace. May she accompany the individuals, families and communities who are on the move. May she fill the hearts of residents with cordiality and acceptance; may she foster relations of mutual understanding and solidarity among those who know they are called one day to share the same joy in the house of the heavenly Father! Amen!

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