



Welcome Amal!

Thank you, Bishop Ambarus, for inviting me to this celebration. Good morning to all you boys, girls and adults here present!

The Diocese of Rome has chosen the powerful symbol of the Tent for this occasion. As we read in chapter 18 of the Book of Genesis, Abraham generously welcomes three strangers into his tent at the oaks of Mamre; later they turn out to have been sent by God. This teaches us that offering hospitality to unexpected and unknown guests opens up the possibility of an encounter with God. On that occasion, the three strangers told Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son. They were messengers of unexpected good news, offering a new perspective on the future, a promise of something that Abraham and Sarah longed for and had thought unattainable. As this famous biblical passage teaches us, hospitality generates life.

Habits of generous encounter with others, as Pope Francis says, can lead to important situations - and sometimes awkward ones! - that allow communities to become more familiar with each other as one human family in our common home.

Dear Amal, you can rest in the tent, of course, but soon you will resume your journey. Each one of us, *fratelli tutti, brothers and sisters all*, is on a journey. The Church is on a journey, and the changes in each of us contribute to the Church's renewal; this shows how alive the Church is.<sup>1</sup>

The act of welcoming transforms people. Very many communities and families can testify to this from having taken up the care of "the stranger". This is especially true for those who care for minors uprooted from their families, their communities, their aspirations. These youngsters rely on strangers of good will to protect them so that they can become the people God intended them to be, and take their rightful place in the communities that welcome them.

Integration is a two-way process, with reciprocal recognition, rights and duties.

<sup>2</sup> The path can be complicated, sometimes bumpy, but the goal must always

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iNgrl3E7Gs>

<sup>2</sup> [https://youtu.be/2Si8s2G\\_An4](https://youtu.be/2Si8s2G_An4) "Integration, which is neither assimilation nor incorporation, is a two-way process, rooted essentially in the joint recognition of the other's cultural richness" (Address to the International Forum on "Migration and Peace", 21.2.2017).

be the integral human development of newcomers, especially the most vulnerable among them, as well as of those who do the welcoming. .

The 107<sup>th</sup> World Migrant and Refugee Day will be celebrated throughout the world on Sunday 26 September. The Holy Father has centred his message on the theme "Towards an ever wider 'we'",<sup>3</sup> which identifies a clear horizon for our common journey in this world. "We are all in the same boat," the Pontiff emphasizes, "and called to work together so that there will be no more walls that separate us, no longer *others*, but only a single 'we', encompassing all of humanity."

Here beside us is indeed a boat: a sculpture that Pope Francis wanted in St. Peter's Square to remind everyone of the Gospel challenge to welcome: to provide the welcoming that opens the door to extraordinary encounters. In the midst of the many figures of migrants, representing the multitudes of people throughout history who have had to flee, you can see the two wings of an angel.

"Do not forget hospitality; some, practicing it, have welcomed angels without knowing it" says Letter to the Hebrews (13:2). Who knows how many angels are hiding behind the faces of countless migrants and refugees, minors and young people, adults and elderly? It is up to us to welcome and protect them as the first essential steps towards promoting their integral human development, which is the kind of future we all want.

Dear Amal, thank you for coming among us. You are an angel for those who meet you. We follow your story, we accompany you on your journey, and we hope that you and all of us find what we are looking for.

Card. Michael Czerny S.J.  
Under-secretary

St Peter's Square  
10 September 2021