

## **Migrants and refugees: seekers of peace**

### **Compassion, not without prudence**

Compassion, to open our hearts to brothers and sisters seeking a safe place to live in peace, is essential, but not enough. As the Holy Father has said several times,<sup>1</sup> **compassion** and **prudence** need to go together. Really welcoming others requires concrete commitment, effective forms of support and, eventually, integration.

**Family** life is a very good example. Each member has real needs. The family heads need to distinguish these from frivolous desires. Prudent parents respond and allocate resources accordingly. If resources are inadequate, they adjust goals – they do not block or expel members who seem too needy.

This year's theme of migrants and refugees falls within the **care of our common home** which Pope Francis proposed so forcefully and eloquently in *Laudato si'*. Our leaders are responsible for managing complex situations and rapid change, and for distributing resources which are limited. Like in a family, our leaders need to be both compassionate and prudent, both caring and careful.

Decision-makers should establish practical measures to welcome, protect, promote and integrate “and – so far as **the good** of their own community, rightly understood, permits – to further **the aims** of those who may wish to become members of a new society”.<sup>2</sup> They should bear in mind the needs of all members of the human family and the wellbeing of each and every one. At the same time, newcomers “must not forget that they have a duty to respect the laws, culture and traditions of the countries in which they are received.”<sup>3</sup>

How does a civic or religious community welcome, protect, promote and integrate the **newly arrived**? Whatever measures are taken, they must also fairly exercise care for the **residents** already in place. This can include appealing for resources from outside. For example, wealthier countries should donate generously to the places where many asylum seekers flee to settle temporarily or long-term.

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<sup>1</sup> Flights back from Sweden, 1.11.16, and from Colombia, 10.09.17.

<sup>2</sup> John XXIII, *Pacem in terris*, 106.

<sup>3</sup> To the Diplomatic Corps, 9.01.17.

The Migrants & Refugees Section has prepared **20 Action Points** in pastoral form and as a contribution to the drafting, negotiation and adoption of the **Global Compacts** for Migrants and on Refugees by the end of 2018.<sup>4</sup> The countries of the world have agreed to improve the framework within which asylum-seekers and refugees are treated, and to establish a new framework for safe, orderly and regular migration. Hopefully, the new Compacts will make it easier for the world's nations to share responsibilities and resources more equitably on behalf of the most vulnerable who are on the move.

In support of the important processes of reflection and discernment underway, this year's World Day of Peace Message invites us to consider migrants and refugees as men and women who are seeking, bringing and building **peace**.

This is the **mystery**: what was denied them in their home country, they help build in their new one. This mystery is the concrete experience of Christian and other communities who welcome and integrate. Prophetically Pope Francis reminds us in the Message (§ 3) that we are able to transform "our cities, often divided and polarised by conflicts concerning the presence of migrants and refugees, ... into building sites for peace."

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<sup>4</sup> 20 Pastoral Action Points: <https://goo.gl/aeFyQ5>  
20 Action Points for the Global Compacts: <https://goo.gl/1dazou>