

## **Press Conference**

### **Presentation of the Message of the Holy Father**

#### **For the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2019**

International migration and its large numbers are well known. According to United Nations estimates, there are about 260 million migrants worldwide. Every 10 years this number increases by about 50 million. Migration is not an occasional or passing phenomenon but something structural. It results not only from imbalances in economic and social development and wars, but also from profound changes in states and internationally. To think of stopping migration with administrative decrees, barriers and walls is illusory. It's like wanting to stop history. And more, it squanders the mutual enrichment that can occur when people of different backgrounds meet.

The Holy Father rightly reminds us that when we look at migration, we must realize that it is not just a matter of migrants. It's about the aspirations and needs common to all people, but from which many are excluded. It is about the rebellion that many feel in the face of this exclusion, about the irregularities that they often commit because regular routes are closed, but also about the insensitivity of those who hide within their own indifference and the wickedness of those who take advantage of others' needs for their own interests, refusing to respect the rights and dignity of others.

Aware of these dimensions, the international community took an important step last year with the adoption of the Global Compact on Migration and the Global Compact for Refugees. This important stance of the international community espouses a common vision of migrants and refugees, based on principles of humanitarian law and aimed at achieving benefits for all involved. Much remains to be done, especially in translating inspirational intentions into policies and cooperative initiatives between governments in managing migration. But at least there is a common point of reference, which hopefully will become more than just a fine document. Unfortunately, not all States endorse it, but the initiative shows that cooperation between nations is possible. It is not just about migrants, it is about international civil coexistence.

Migrants reach our shores, our cities, our communities of believers. Their presence is an opportunity for encounter and for showing concern. It requires knowing how to welcome, how to provide room, how to listen. Here, the story of encounter with God acquires a chapter about meeting God within a stranger, wherein we set aside our certainties based on habits and fears and open up to discovering new truths about ourselves. It's not just about migrants, it's about how to be a Church.

Inspired by the message of the Holy Father, I would like to recall what Blessed Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, father of migrants and founder of men and women missionaries for

migrants, said many years ago: migrants are "the instrument of that Providence which presides over human destiny and which guides them, even through catastrophes, toward the ultimate goal which is the perfection of man on earth and the glory of God in Heaven". It is not just about migrants, it is about the quality of our civilization and our faith.

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