

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS  
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ACCREDITED TO THE  
HOLY SEE  
FOR THE TRADITIONAL EXCHANGE OF NEW YEAR GREETINGS**

Regia Hall  
Monday, 8 January 2018

[Link](#)

[...] It is likewise important that the many refugees who have found shelter and refuge in neighbouring countries, especially in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, be able to return home. The commitment and efforts made by these countries in this difficult situation deserve the appreciation and support of the entire international community, which is also called upon to create the conditions for the repatriation of Syrian refugees. This effort must concretely start with Lebanon, so that that beloved country can continue to be a "message" of respect and coexistence, and a model to imitate, for the whole region and for the entire world. [...]

[...]

At the same time, we cannot forget the situation of families torn apart by poverty, war and migration. All too often, we see with our own eyes the tragedy of children who, unaccompanied, cross the borders between the south and the north of our world, and often fall victim to human trafficking.

Today there is much talk about migrants and migration, at times only for the sake of stirring up primal fears. It must not be forgotten that migration has always existed. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the history of salvation is essentially a history of migration. Nor should we forget that freedom of movement, for example, the ability to leave one's own country and to return there, is a fundamental human right.<sup>[17]</sup> There is a need, then, to abandon the familiar rhetoric and start from the essential consideration that we are dealing, above all, with persons.

This is what I sought to reiterate in my Message for the World Day of Peace celebrated on 1 January last, whose theme this year is: "Migrants and Refugees: Men and Women in Search of Peace". While acknowledging that not everyone is always guided by the best of intentions, we must not forget that the majority of migrants would prefer to remain in their homeland. Instead, they find themselves "forced by discrimination, persecution, poverty and environmental degradation" to leave it behind... "Welcoming others requires concrete commitment, a network of assistance and good will, vigilant and sympathetic attention, the responsible management of new and complex situations that at times compound numerous existing problems, to say nothing of resources, which are always limited. By practising the virtue of prudence, government leaders should take practical measures to welcome, promote, protect, integrate and, 'within the limits allowed by a correct understanding of the common good, to permit [them] to become part of a new society' (Pacem in Terris, 57). Leaders have a clear responsibility towards their own communities, whose legitimate rights and harmonious development they must ensure, lest they become like the rash builder who miscalculated and failed to complete the tower he had begun to construct" (cf. Lk 14:28-30).<sup>[18]</sup>

I would like once more to thank the authorities of those states who have spared no effort in recent years to assist the many migrants arriving at their borders. I think above all of the efforts made by more than a few countries in Asia, Africa and the Americas that welcome and assist numerous persons. I cherish vivid memories of my meeting in Dhaka with some members of the Rohingya people, and I renew my sentiments of gratitude to the Bangladeshi authorities for the assistance provided to them on their own territory.

I would also like to express particular gratitude to Italy, which in these years has shown an open and generous heart and offered positive examples of integration. It is my hope that the difficulties that the country has experienced in these years, and whose effects are still felt, will not lead to forms of refusal and obstruction, but instead to a rediscovery of those roots and traditions that have nourished the rich history of the nation and constitute a priceless treasure offered to the whole world. I likewise express my appreciation for the efforts made by other European states, particularly Greece and Germany. Nor must it be forgotten that many refugees and migrants seek to reach Europe because they know that there they will find peace and security, which for that matter are the fruit of a lengthy process born of the ideals of the Founding Fathers of the European project in the aftermath of the Second World War. Europe should be proud of this legacy, grounded on certain principles and a vision of man rooted in its millenary history, inspired by the Christian conception of the human person. The arrival of migrants should spur Europe to recover its cultural and religious heritage, so that, with a renewed consciousness of the values on which the continent was built, it can keep alive her own tradition while continuing to be a place of welcome, a herald of peace and of development.

In the past year, governments, international organizations and civil society have engaged in discussions about the basic principles, priorities and most suitable means for responding to movements of migration and the enduring situations involving refugees. The United Nations, following the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, has initiated important preparations for the adoption of the two Global Compacts for refugees and for safe, orderly and regular migration respectively.

The Holy See trusts that these efforts, with the negotiations soon to begin, will lead to results worthy of a world community growing ever more independent and grounded in the principles of solidarity and mutual assistance. In the current international situation, ways and means are not lacking to ensure that every man and every woman on earth can enjoy living conditions worthy of the human person. In the Message for this year's World Day of Peace, I suggested four "mileposts" for action: welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating.<sup>[19]</sup> I would like to dwell particularly on the last of these, which has given rise to various opposed positions in the light of varying evaluations, experiences, concerns and convictions. Integration is a "two-way process", entailing reciprocal rights and duties. Those who welcome are called to promote integral human development, while those who are welcomed must necessarily conform to the rules of the country offering them hospitality, with respect for its identity and values. Processes of integration must always keep the protection and advancement of persons, especially those in situations of vulnerability, at the centre of the rules governing various aspects of political and social life.

The Holy See has no intention of interfering in decisions that fall to states, which, in the light of their respective political, social and economic situations, and their capacities and possibilities for receiving and integrating, have the primary

responsibility for accepting newcomers. Nonetheless, the Holy See does consider it its role to appeal to the principles of humanity and fraternity at the basis of every cohesive and harmonious society. In this regard, its interaction with religious communities, on the level of institutions and associations, should not be forgotten, since these can play a valuable supportive role in assisting and protecting, in social and cultural mediation, and in pacification and integration.

[...]