

THE POPE MEETS REFUGEES ARRIVED RECENTLY FROM LESBUS WITH
HUMANITARIAN CORRIDORS
ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
Thursday, 19 December 2019

[Link](#)

This is the second life jacket that I receive as a gift. The first one was given to me a few years ago by a group of rescuers. It belonged to a girl who drowned in the Mediterranean. I then donated it to the two Undersecretaries of the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for the Integral Human Development Service. I said to them: "Here is your mission!". With this I wanted to mean the essential commitment of the Church to save the lives of migrants, to then be able to welcome, protect, promote and integrate them.

This second jacket, delivered by another group of rescuers only a few days ago, belonged to a migrant who passed away at sea last July. Nobody knows who he was or where he came from. It is only known that his jacket was recovered adrift in the Central Mediterranean, on 3 July 2019, at certain geographical coordinates. We are facing another death caused by injustice. Yes, because it is injustice that forces many migrants to leave their lands. It is injustice that forces them to cross deserts and suffer abuse and torture in detention camps. It is injustice that rejects them and makes them die at sea.

The jacket "dresses" a cross in colored resin, which wants to express the spiritual experience that I was able to grasp from the words of the rescuers. In Jesus Christ the cross is a source of salvation, "foolishness for those who are lost - says St. Paul - but for those who are saved, that is, for us, it is the power of God" (1 Cor 1:18). In the Christian tradition the cross is a symbol of suffering and sacrifice and, at the same time, of redemption and salvation.

This cross is transparent: it poses a challenge to look more carefully and always seek the truth. The cross is luminescent: it wants to strengthen our faith in the Resurrection, the triumph of Christ over death. Even the unknown migrant, who died with the hope of a new life, is a participant in this victory. Rescuers told me how humanity is learning from the people they manage to save. They revealed to me how in every mission they rediscover the beauty of being a single large human family, united in universal brotherhood.

I decided to expose this life jacket, "crucified" on this cross, to remind us that we must keep our eyes open, keep our hearts open, to remind everyone of the

imperative commitment to save every human life, a moral duty that unites believers and non-believers.

How can we not listen to the desperate cry of so many brothers and sisters who prefer to face a stormy sea rather than die slowly in Libyan detention camps, places of torture and ignoble slavery? How can we remain indifferent to the abuse and violence of which they are innocent victims, leaving them at the mercy of unscrupulous traffickers? How can we "go further", like the priest and the Levite of the parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. Lk 10: 31-32), thus making us responsible for their death? Our sloth is a sin!

I thank the Lord for all those who have decided not to remain indifferent and endeavor to help the victim, without asking too many questions about how or why the poor half-dead ended up on their way. It is not by blocking their boats that the problem is solved. Serious efforts must be made to empty the detention camps in Libya, evaluating and implementing all possible solutions. Traffickers who exploit and mistreat migrants must be reported and prosecuted without fear of revealing connivances and complicity with institutions. Economic interests must be put aside so that the person, each person, whose life and dignity are precious in the eyes of God is at the center. We must help and save, because we are all responsible for the life of our neighbor, and the Lord will ask for an account at the time of the judgment. Thank you.

Now, looking at this jacket and looking at the cross, everyone silently pray.

The Lord bless you all.