

PASTORAL ORIENTATIONS ON INTERCULTURAL MIGRANT MINISTRY



MIGRANTS
REFUGEES

MIGRANTS & REFUGEES SECTION
INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
PALAZZO SAN CALISTO
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MIGRANTS & REFUGEES SECTION

**DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING INTEGRAL
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

For the members of the Catholic Church, this appeal entails a commitment to becoming ever more faithful to our being "catholic" (...) The Holy Spirit enables us to embrace everyone, to build communion in diversity, to unify differences without imposing a depersonalized uniformity. In encountering the diversity of foreigners, migrants and refugees, and in the intercultural dialogue that can emerge from this encounter, we have an opportunity to grow as Church and to enrich one another. All the baptized, wherever they find themselves, are by right members of both their local ecclesial community and the one Church, dwellers in one home and part of one family.⁴²

Indeed, these Pastoral Orientations aim for us to start from below and expand to the farthest reaches of our countries to welcome, protect, promote and integrate our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters, building the Kingdom of God in fraternity and universality, and join Zacharias as he sings: "And of the oath he swore to Abraham our father, and to grant us that, rescued from the hand of enemies, without fear we might worship him in holiness and righteousness before him all our days." (Luke 1:73-75).

⁴² Francis, *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, Vatican City 2021

CONCLUSION

Growing in freedom from all fear, particularly fears based on misguided perceptions, Catholic communities are called to build bridges with newcomers, promoting a real 'culture of encounter'. We sincerely hope that this booklet helps its readers to truly become builders of bridges, drawn to deepen their awareness, through experience, of the richness that the presence of migrants and refugees bring into our communities.

Considering every occasion to encounter migrants and refugees in need as an opportunity to encounter Jesus Christ himself (cf. Mt 25:35), Catholic communities are invited to understand and value the opportunities that migrants offer to bring new life to their communities, and to grow in appreciation for the other by celebrating vibrant liturgies respectful of different cultural traditions.

Catholic communities are invited to see the presence of many migrants and refugees of other faiths or no faith as a providential opportunity to fulfil the evangelising mission of the Church through witness and charity.

By doing this, Catholic communities will be naturally promoting effective cooperation among all entities, contributing to the image and invitation presented by the prophet Isaiah to the people of God: "the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord...these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer...for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (Is. 56:6-7).

Thankful for the awareness which, by the grace of God, is growing amongst Catholic communities of the presence of migrants and refugees, the Church will continue to highlight the multiplicity of its members as a wealth to be appreciated, and the contributions of those displaced as an opportunity for a more robust and visible expression of the catholicity of our faith.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	5
ACRONYMS	7
INTRODUCTION	8
1. ACKNOWLEDGING AND OVERCOMING FEAR	10
2. PROMOTING ENCOUNTER	13
3. LISTENING AND BEING COMPASSIONATE	16
4. LIVING OUR CATHOLICITY	19
5. UNDERSTANDING MIGRANTS AS A BLESSING	23
6. FULFILLING THE EVANGELISING MISSION	28
7. COOPERATING TOWARDS COMMUNION	31
CONCLUSION	34

Cooperation among the various Christian Churches and the various non-Christian religions in this charitable work will lead to new advances in the search for and the implementation of a deeper unity of the human family.³⁹

4. Promoting more interreligious gatherings at the local level and elsewhere, aimed at reflecting together on migration, upholding the rights of migrants and refugees, and disseminating the message of universal fraternity.

Such a dialogue, starting from an awareness of one's own faith identity, can help people to enter into contact with other religions. Dialogue means not just talking, but includes all beneficial and constructive interreligious relationships, with both individuals and communities of other beliefs, thus arriving at mutual understanding.⁴⁰

5. Promoting joint actions and cooperation among different faith-based organisations, civil society organisations, governments, and international agencies in order to pursue together the wider we.

In line with her pastoral tradition, the Church is ready to commit herself to realising all the initiatives proposed above. Yet in order to achieve the desired outcome, the contribution of political communities and civil societies is indispensable, each according to their own responsibilities.⁴¹

³⁹ RCS, 34.

⁴⁰ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools. Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love*, Vatican City 2013, 13

⁴¹ Francis, *Message for The World Day of Migrants And Refugees*, Vatican City 2018

1. Ensuring the coordination of efforts of all Catholic entities engaged in the migrant ministry through regular meetings where everybody is called to share visions and plans for effective action in communion with the local Church.

It is, therefore, necessary to determine how the local Church can be strengthened so that it can be capable of taking up future challenges that arise due to some degree of continuity of commitments. To this end, Catholic charitable organizations at all times should work closely in collaboration with the local diocese/eparchial structure under the guidance of the diocesan/eparchial bishop. In terms of international organizations, the competent dicasteries of the Holy See can offer advice and assistance.³⁷

2. Fostering cooperation among local Churches in the countries of departure, transit and arrival of migrants and refugees, grounded on a shared pastoral responsibility. Ultimately it is the one Church caring for migrants and refugees.

For their part, the Churches of origin, of transit and those that welcome the migration flows should find ways to increase their cooperation for the benefit both of those who depart and those who arrive, and, in any case, of those who, on their journey, stand in need of encountering the merciful face of Christ in the welcome given to one's neighbour.³⁸

3. Enhancing ecumenical cooperation, both in prayer and in action, starting from promoting joint pastoral planning among Christian leaders ministering in the same territory.

PREFACE

These *Pastoral Orientations* offer proposals for intercultural pastoral ministry, transmitting in concrete terms my invitation in the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* to develop a *culture of encounter*. I invite you to take up anew the image of the polyhedron, which "represents a society where differences coexist, complementing, enriching, and reciprocally illuminating one another [...]. Each of us can learn something from others. No one is useless and no one is expendable." (*FT*, 215)

"We are all in the same boat." All of us are called to commit ourselves to universal fraternity. For Catholics, this translates into being ever more faithful to our being Catholic. As I wrote in the *Message for the 107th World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, "encountering the diversity of foreigners, migrants, and refugees, and in the intercultural dialogue that can emerge from this encounter, we have an opportunity to grow as Church and to enrich one another."

In times of greatest crisis, like the pandemic and the wars that we are currently experiencing, closed-minded and aggressive nationalism (*FT*, 11) and radical individualism (*FT*, 105) fracture or divide our unity, both in the world and within the Church. The highest price is paid by those who end up getting labelled as "them" versus "us": foreigners, migrants, and the marginalised who inhabit the existential peripheries. In this context, these guidelines propose an ever wider "we," which refers both to the entire human family and to the Church.

"The Catholic faithful are called to work together, each in the midst of his or her own community, to make the Church become ever more inclusive." These *Pastoral Orientations* invite us to broaden the way that we experience being Church. They urge us to see the tragedy of prolonged uprootedness, to welcome, protect, integrate, and promote our brothers and sisters, and to create opportunities to work together towards communion. They give us the chance to live out a new Pentecost in our neighbourhoods and parishes, as we come to realise the richness of their spirituality and vibrant liturgical traditions.

³⁷ WCR, 102.

³⁸ Benedict XVI, *Message for The 98th World Day of Migrants And Refugees*. Vatican City 2012

This is also an opportunity to be an authentically *synodal* Church, journeying together, not set in our ways, never stagnant, but a Church that “makes no distinction between natives and foreigners, between residents and guests,” for we are all pilgrims on this earth.

We are called to dream together. We should not be afraid to “dream as a single human family, as fellow travellers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all” (*FT*, 8). These proposals invite us to begin this dream from our concrete reality, extending to the ends of the earth like an immense tent, embracing our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters and building the Kingdom of God together in a universal spirit of fraternity.

The Lord Jesus tells us that every encounter with a refugee or migrant is an opportunity to encounter Him (cf. Mt. 25:35). His Holy Spirit makes us capable of embracing everyone, cultivating communion in diversity, and harmonising differences without ever imposing a depersonalised uniformity. Catholic communities are invited to grow in the joy of encounter and to recognize the new life that migrants bring with them.

Franciscus

Vatican, March 3, 2022

7. COOPERATING TOWARDS COMMUNION

“I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.” (John 10:16)

Our vocation as missionary disciples, baptised members of the Church, is to foster and strengthen communion and unity in diversity by following the example of Jesus. He is the Pastor who cares not only for those who are normally considered “his sheep”, but also for all humankind. The way to communion becomes then the journey toward universal fraternity.

CHALLENGE

Actions to assist migrants and refugees by different Catholic entities are often fragmentary and uncoordinated. This can jeopardise the effectiveness of the apostolate, cause internal divisions, and result in loss of resources. Similar deficiencies affect the work of other entities engaged in assisting migrants and refugees.

RESPONSE

The Catholic Church is called to promote effective cooperation among all Catholic entities, and between them and all other entities. This can be done through actions such as the following:

4. Enhancing the capacity of local communities to engage in interreligious dialogue, starting from providing a sound and balanced knowledge of the other religions, beyond generalisations and prejudices.

One family of brothers and sisters in societies that are becoming ever more multi-ethnic and intercultural, where also people of various religions are urged to take part in dialogue, so that a serene and fruitful coexistence with respect for legitimate differences may be found.³³

5. Including the mission to migrants and refugees in pastoral programmes at the diocesan and parish levels.

Migration can offer possibilities for a new evangelization, open vistas for the growth of a new humanity foreshadowed in the paschal mystery: a humanity for which every foreign country is a homeland and every homeland is a foreign country.³⁴

6. Training ministers and seminarians to be able to implement the points above.

“The apostolate of migrants is not just the work of these detached “missionaries”: it is the work of the whole local Church, priests, religious and laity”³⁵ and is so important that it must become the object of a constant effort to study and better understand if from the theological, pastoral and organizational point of view.³⁶

³³ Benedict XVI, *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, Vatican City 2010

³⁴ Francis, *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, Vatican City 2014

³⁵ John Paul II, *Address to the World Congress on Migration*, Vatican City, 15 March 1979

³⁶ PCPM, 5.

ACRONYMS

CMU: Pontifical Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *The Church and Human Mobility, A Circular Letter to the Episcopal Conferences*, 1978.

EG: Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Vatican City 2013

EMCC: Pontifical Council for the Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Erga migrantes caritas Christi*, Vatican City 2004

FT: Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*, Vatican City 2020

LG: Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, Vatican City 1964

M&R: Migrants & Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

PCPM: Congregation for Catholic Education, *Pastoral Care of People on the Move in the Formation of Future Priests*, Vatican City 1986

RCS: Pontifical Council “Cor Unum” and Pontifical Council for the Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Refugees: a Challenge to Solidarity*, Vatican City 1992

WCR: Pontifical Council ‘Cor Unum’ and Pontifical Council for the Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Welcoming Christ in Refugees and Forcibly Displaced Persons*, Vatican City 2013

INTRODUCTION

“It is essential to draw near to new forms of poverty and vulnerability, in which we are called to recognize the suffering Christ, even if this appears to bring us no tangible and immediate benefits. Migrants, [displaced people, refugees] present a particular challenge for me, since I am the pastor of a Church without frontiers, a Church which considers itself mother to all. For this reason, I exhort all countries to a generous openness which, rather than fearing the loss of local identity, will prove capable of creating new forms of cultural synthesis. [...]” (EG 210)

We realise ever more that the whole world is challenged to work together to address the needs and fundamental human rights of people affected by forced displacement, both internally and across borders. Today, the Catholic Church is invited to create a new approach to human relationships. This starts with the recognition that we are *fratelli tutti*, brothers and sisters all.

As stated in the 2021 World Day of Migrants and Refugees message, as a Church we are confronted with two main challenges, which at the same time present an opportunity and constitute a mission - both *ad intra* and *ad extra*.

The *ad intra* challenge is *how to live out the catholicity of our faith*: a Church that is able to include everyone and recognise that every single baptised person in the Catholic Church is a full member of it, wherever he or she may be. This requires embracing the arrival of Catholic individuals from different parts of the world and integrating them into the local communities as citizens and equal members, as we hear clearly from St. Paul: “you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). All Catholics have a right to a full membership within the Church, understood as an *active* citizenship: it means being

can embrace everyone, and disseminating the results of such a reflection among the faithful.

In order to give “rationales” to the pastoral care of migrants and refugees, I invite you to deepen theological reflection on migration as a sign of the times.³⁰

2. Preparing local faithful for encounter with migrants and refugees of other faiths or no faith, as it represents a concrete occasion for joyful testimony that can deepen and strengthen the Catholic faith.

Christians are called to give witness to and practise not only the spirit of tolerance – itself a great achievement, politically and culturally speaking, not to mention religiously – but also respect for the other’s identity. Thus, where it is possible and opportune, they can open a way towards sharing with people of different origins and cultures, also in view of a “respectful proclamation” of their own faith.³¹

3. Fostering welcoming attitudes and charitable services towards all migrants and refugees within local communities as an opportune way of announcing the merciful love of God and the salvation of Jesus Christ.

For this reason, the presence of migrants and refugees – and of vulnerable people in general – is an invitation to recover some of those essential dimensions of our Christian existence and our humanity that risk being overlooked in a prosperous society. (...) Through works of charity, we demonstrate our faith (cf. Jas 2:18). And the highest form of charity is that shown to those unable to reciprocate and perhaps even to thank us in return.³²

³⁰ Francis, *Address to Members of the International Federation of Catholic Universities*, 4 November 2017

³¹ EMCC, 9.

³² Francis, *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, Vatican City 2019

6. FULFILLING THE EVANGELISING MISSION

“If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?” (Acts 11: 17)

God the Father, through the Holy Spirit, offers to all, without exclusion, the life-giving gifts of faith, hope and love in Jesus. The Church must not hinder God's mission by narrowing this universal offer in the name of distorted religious and ethnocentric principles. The mission belongs to God, and he has given this mission to the Church. The Church fulfils its mission as she follows the Holy Spirit's lead in proclaiming the Gospel to all nations.

CHALLENGE

Many Catholic communities perceive the arrival of migrants and refugees of other faiths or no faith as a threat to their established religious and cultural identity. This often leads to attitudes of distrust and suspicion that prevent any meaningful interaction with them.

RESPONSE

The Catholic Church is called to see the presence of many migrants and refugees of other faiths or no faith as a providential opportunity to fulfil her evangelising mission through witness and charity. This can be addressed through actions such as the following:

1. Promoting a missiological reflection on migration as a sign of the times and as an opportunity to consider how the Church

responsible, participating in the life of the Church, animating the liturgy, and reaching to communities with their own religiosity and particular cultural expressions. The first step is therefore to make space, enlarging the tent so all are included with no division or separation of classes, where all can preserve their differences that enrich the community, on the model of the richness of Trinity: : the oneness of God in whom there are three Persons.

The *ad extra* challenge is *how to be a truly missionary Church*: to reach out to those needing help, the discarded, the ostracised, the oppressed ... all to be recognized and cared for because it is a commandment of the Lord. And through charity and love to encourage conversion of heart, particularly among those who are outside the Church either because of a choice they have made, or because they have never heard the saving message of Jesus Christ. This is a call to be an inclusive Church, where every human being receives the message of salvation in Jesus Christ.

The visible expression of the life of the Church in concrete particular communities should reflect the diversity of her members. Newcomers challenge us to rethink the parish: not modelled on a village where everybody knows each other and newcomers are seen as a new addition *from outside*, but towards a Church on the move, always *open to welcome others*. It is not a question of assimilation but rather an enrichment and a path towards transformation of all members of the community; for those arriving in a country should not feel like second class citizens but rather as part of the community, a unique “we” as full members of the Church.

The *Pastoral Orientations on Intercultural Migrant Ministry* aim to offer concrete suggestions and guidance for action which can be articulated by four verbs: welcome, protect, promote and integrate. With these verbs the Holy Father summarised the Catholic Church's commitment towards all those living in the existential peripheries, for “it is not a case of implementing welfare programmes from the top down, but rather of undertaking a journey together, through these four actions, in order to build cities and countries that, while preserving their respective cultural and religious identity, are open to differences and know how to promote them in the spirit of human fraternity”.¹

¹ Pope Francis, General Audience, 3 April 2019.

1. ACKNOWLEDGING AND OVERCOMING FEAR

“I am God, the God of your father,” he said. “Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there.” (Genesis 46: 3)

Fear is a most natural companion in the journeys of human beings and communities toward new situations and environments. It is understandable that Egypt, which represents the unknown, makes Jacob afraid despite multiple affirmations that everything will go well. Hopefully that fear, which could lead to negative perceptions and opposition to encountering the other, is not blown out of proportion, but is duly considered and then overcome thanks to God’s ever-mindful intervention.

CHALLENGE

A negative perception of migrants and refugees stands in the way of effectively welcoming many vulnerable brothers and sisters on the move. Misguided perceptions of the stranger as a threat to political and economic security often lead local communities to fear the other, including migrants and refugees, heightening intolerant and xenophobic attitudes.

RESPONSE

The Catholic Church is called to help local communities to properly understand the phenomenon of migration and ensure a conducive environment for mutual encounter. This can be done through actions such as the following:

8. Training ministers and seminarians to be able to implement the points above.

This preparation must have as its basis the prophetic revelation of hospitality, the evangelical precept of Christian brotherhood, the theological foundation of human rights and the absolute conviction of the dignity of man. Obviously a training thus motivated is the best possible means of ensuring that the directives of the Church on behalf of emigrants, whatsoever their religion, culture or social background, be applied without delay and in a truly priestly spirit.²⁹

²⁹ PCPM, 5.

basis we can envisage the intercultural and interethnic or inter-ritual parish, providing pastoral assistance for both the local population and foreigners resident in the same territory. In this way the traditional territorial parish would become the privileged and stable place of interethnic and intercultural experience, while the individual groups would retain a certain autonomy.²⁶

6. Developing innovative catechetical and pastoral programmes that take into account the significant presence of second-generation children and youth and the intercultural dynamics they can promote within local communities.

We ask that special attention be given to migrant and immigrant children and youth as they straddle two cultures, especially to give them opportunities for leadership and service in the community and to encourage vocations among them.²⁷

7. Offering specific training for foreign priests ministering to local communities so as to empower them to be skilful mediators of a revitalizing integration between local faithful and newcomers.

Careful and generous cooperation between dioceses is important to provide priests and religious who are suited for this important ministry. Guidelines for their training and reception by the host diocese must be developed jointly with the diocese that sends them. During their stay in the host diocese, international priests and religious deserve an extensive and careful orientation and gracious welcome.²⁸

²⁶ EMCC, 93.

²⁷ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, 2003

²⁸ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, 2003

1. Addressing people's fears and helping them to overcome their apprehension by improving their knowledge about migrants and refugees, their stories, the root causes, and effects of their migration.

With the help of social and pastoral workers, the local population should be made aware of the complex problems of migration and the need to oppose baseless suspicions and offensive prejudices against foreigners.²

2. Engaging media in publicising the good practices of welcome and hospitality, as well as stories of migrants and refugees who are successfully contributing to the integral human development of the hosting communities.

The communications media have a role of great responsibility in this regard: it is up to them, in fact, to break down stereotypes and to offer correct information in reporting the errors of a few as well as the honesty, rectitude and goodness of the majority. [...] The communications media are themselves called to embrace this "conversion of attitudes" and to promote this change in the way migrants and refugees are treated.³

3. Adopting positive language in public discourse concerning migrants and refugees and the dissemination of sound research-based arguments against their misrepresentation.

The information media have an important role to play in public opinion-making and a responsibility in using correct terminology, particularly in what concerns refugees, asylum seekers, and other forms of migration.⁴

² EMCC, 41.

³ Francis, *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, Vatican City 2014

⁴ WCR, 42.

4. Fostering empathy and solidarity with migrants and refugees, to be recognized as brothers and sisters, bearers of the same human dignity and co-protagonists in building an ever wider *we* in society and fostering a full expression of Christian fraternity in the Church.

I wish to invite you to an ever deeper awareness of your mission: to see Christ in every brother and sister in need, to proclaim and defend the dignity of every migrant, every displaced person and every refugee. In this way, assistance given will not be considered alms from the goodness of our heart, but an act of justice due to them.⁵

5. Engaging youth and young adults, who are used to being more open-minded and tend to have more sympathetic perceptions of migrants and refugees, towards a real change of the migration narrative.

Help young people to grow in culture and in encounter, to be capable of encountering different people, differences, and to grow with differences: this is how we grow, with comparison, with good comparison.⁶

⁵ John Paul II, *Address to the Participants in the Assembly of the Council of the ICMC*, 2001.

⁶ Francis, *Dialogue Between His Holiness Pope Francis and the Students, Teachers and Parents of Collegio San Carlo of Milan*, Paul VI Audience Hall, 6 April 2019.

3. Preparing Catholic migrants to be real missionaries in the countries of arrival, witnesses of their faith and heralds of the Gospel. Such a mission should be acknowledged, promoted, and supported through effective interecclesial cooperation.

Refugees and forcibly displaced persons themselves have a great potential for evangelization [...] it is necessary to build awareness and provide them with the necessary formation, first of all by enlightening them on the value of witness, without excluding explicit proclamation that takes into consideration situations and circumstances, fully respecting the other in all cases.²⁴

4. Promoting the active participation of Catholic migrants in the life of local parishes, engaging them in the parish pastoral councils, finance councils, and other pastoral responsibilities.

Migrants should see themselves not only as the recipients of the Church's care, but also as active contributors to its mission. While the Church tries to alleviate the difficulties they encounter in living their commitment to Christ in a new environment, particularly at the initial stage of their settlement, it encourages them to be involved in the life and the mission of the Church.²⁵

5. Envisioning new pastoral structures to respond more effectively to the growing presence of migrants, i.e., intercultural parishes, where pastoral programmes aim to build one community enriched by diversity.

Integrated pastoral care is here to be understood above all as communion that knows how to appreciate belonging to different cultures and peoples. (...) on this

²⁴ WCR, 88.

²⁵ Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, *On the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees*, Statement, 2000.

1. Acknowledging the presence of migrants in the Catholic communities and promoting the understanding of such a presence as a blessing and an occasion to open up to God's grace that can energise ecclesial life, as migrants can be agents of new revitalising dynamics.

The peculiarities of migrants is an appeal for us to live again the fraternity of Pentecost, when differences are harmonised by the Spirit and charity becomes authentic in accepting one another. So the experience of migration can be the announcement of the paschal mystery, in which death and resurrection make for the creation of a new humanity in which there is no longer slave or foreigner (cf. Gal 3:28).²²

2. Empowering migrants to be able to recognise their own richness as a valuable contribution to the life of local communities, offering the skills and expertise acquired in their communities of origin.

[...] Many migrants have played an important role in this mission right from the very beginning. Migrants were the first missionaries who supported the work of the apostles in the regions of Judea and Samaria. Migration has always served as a vehicle for transmitting the faith throughout the history of the Church and in the evangelization of whole countries. Often, flourishing Christian communities started out as small colonies of migrants which, under the leadership of a priest, met in humble buildings to hear the Word of God and to beg Him for courage to face the trials and sacrifices of their difficult life.²³

²² EMCC, 18.

²³ John Paul II, *Because of Migration, People Who Had Not Heard the Good News, Learned About the Faith and Often Appreciated and Embraced It*, Message for World Migrants' Day 1989, 10 September 1989.

2. PROMOTING ENCOUNTER

"Those who were in front sternly ordered him [the blind man] to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Luke 18: 39)

The blind man of Jericho wants to meet Jesus, but there are people who try to stop him. He does not let these people discourage him from having this encounter, but he becomes even louder, to be heard from Jesus. We live in contexts in which encounter is often avoided; it is also hindered by people who would like to maintain the *status quo* or, even worse, to stir conflict; or in which people try to silence the voices of the marginalised, excluding them from the encounters that build up the community. Promoting encounter means to pursue it "loudly" by creating opportunities in which all voices, especially those of the most vulnerable people, can be heard.

CHALLENGE

Catholic communities often find themselves unprepared and disoriented by the arrival of many migrants and refugees. Conversely, the latter might find it difficult to integrate with locals, resorting to the creation of comfort zones and ghettos.

RESPONSE

The Catholic Church is called to build bridges between local communities and newcomers, promoting a true 'culture of encounter.' This can be done through actions such as:

1. Engaging proactively in fighting inequalities and promoting a cultural shift from a throwaway culture to a culture of care and encounter as a constitutive element of community life.

Christians, strong in the certainty of their faith, must demonstrate that by placing the dignity of the human person with all his or her needs in first place, the obstacles created by injustice will begin to fall.⁷

2. Upholding the understanding of migration as an interconnected global phenomenon which produces opportunities for enriching encounters and cultural growth for all people involved.

A simple juxtaposition of groups of migrants and locals tends to encourage a reciprocal closure between cultures, or the establishment, among them, of relations that are merely superficial or tolerant. We should encourage instead a mutual fecundation of cultures. This implies reciprocal knowledge and openness between cultures, in a context of true understanding and benevolence.⁸

3. Preparing people for life-giving encounters that benefit from all venues of Catholic education: schools, catechism classes, youth groups, faith formation, and others.

Men and women of the consecrated life, communities, lay associations, and ecclesial movements as well as pastoral workers should feel above all the duty to educate Christians to welcome, solidarity, and openness to foreigners, so that migration may become more and more a "significant" factor for the Church, and the faithful may discover the semina Verbi (seeds of the Word) found in different cultures and religions.⁹

⁷ RCS, 25.

⁸ John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, Vatican City 2005.

⁹ EMCC, 96.

5. UNDERSTANDING MIGRANTS AS A BLESSING

"Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it." (Hebrews 13: 2)

God's grace is often experienced in surprising and unpredictable ways. The letter to the Hebrews, which refers to Abraham and Sarah's encounter with the three men at Mamre (Genesis 18), reaffirms that pilgrims and strangers could be the unexpected vessels and messengers of God's grace. It becomes, then, essential to welcome people on the move and migrants in order to be connected to this precious channel through which God wants to enrich and re-energize our communities.

CHALLENGE

In countries with considerable immigration inflows, many Catholic communities have a large proportion of migrants. In some cases, almost all parishioners are foreigners. Moreover, in some dioceses, the continuity of sacramental and pastoral services already depends on priests coming from abroad. Nonetheless this is seldom understood as a blessing, as a propitious occasion to make ecclesial life flourish again, particularly where, due to secularism, the spiritual desert is advancing ominously.

RESPONSE

The Catholic Church is called to understand and value the opportunities that Catholic migrants offer as a way to bring new life to local communities. This can be done through actions such as the following:

6. Training seminarians to serve a Church that is catholic by nature and ever more universal in its lived expression, including specific modules in their theological studies to enhance their proficiency in the languages spoken by the faithful, and promoting their pastoral exposure in the countries of origin of migrants.

The care of migrating people will indeed bear fruit if it is carried out by persons who know them all well [i.e., the mentality, thoughts, culture, and spiritual life] and who are fully proficient in the people's language. Thus is confirmed the already obvious advantage of caring for people who migrate through priests of their own language, and this as long as usefulness indicates.²¹

²¹ Paul VI, *Instruction De Pastoralis Migratorum Cura: On the Pastoral Care of People who Migrate*, Vatican City 1969.

4. Encouraging parishes to create spaces of encounter where both locals and newcomers have opportunities to share their experiences and celebrate their cultural diversity: e.g., sport events, feasts, other social events. Given their particular sensitivity and needs, special pastoral programmes should be developed for local and newcomer youth.

Particular Churches are thus called for the gospel's sake to a better welcome for migrants through pastoral initiatives that include meeting them and dialoguing with them as well as helping the faithful to overcome prejudices and biases.¹⁰

5. Training pastoral agents as "bridge builders," promoters of enriching dialogue and sharing among locals and newcomers. This can start by establishing contact with newcomers within the parish territory and inviting them to become active members of the local community.

Every effort made to build bridges between ecclesial, parish and diocesan communities, and between your episcopal conferences, will be a prophetic gesture on the part of the Church, which is, in Christ, "a sign and instrument both of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race" (Lumen Gentium, 1).¹¹

¹⁰ EMCC, 100.

¹¹ Francis, *Apostolic Journey to Panama on the Occasion of the 34th World Youth Day, Meeting with Central American Bishops (SEDAC)*, 24 January 2019.

3. LISTENING AND BEING COMPASSIONATE

“Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.” (Romans 12:15)

True listening is always an exercise of sympathy and empathy, which means that the person who listens must learn to care for the person who shares his or her experience, and that human experience must resonate in one's heart. It is this attitude of feeling and caring for and with others that connects people and generates a compassionate human community.

CHALLENGE

Because of suspicion or unpreparedness, local Catholic communities may fail to listen to migrants' and refugees' experiences and needs, fears and aspirations, preventing the empathy and compassion that are needed to make the encounter with them meaningful and enriching.

RESPONSE

Considering every occasion to encounter migrants and refugees in need as a unique opportunity to encounter Jesus Christ himself (cf. Mt 25:32) and practice the commandment of love, the Catholic Church is called to be eager to listen to them and grow in compassion. This can be done through actions such as the following:

The unity of the Church is not given by a common origin and language but by the Spirit of Pentecost which, bringing together men and women of different languages and nations in one people, confers on them all faith in the same Lord and the calling to the same hope.¹⁸

4. Providing adequate pastoral care - ministers, structures, and programmes - to all the faithful of different ethnic backgrounds is to be always understood as the first step of a long-term integration process aimed at building communion in diversity.

The episcopal conferences are asked that, bearing in mind the great number of migrants and travellers today, they assign to a priest delegated for this purpose or to a special commission established for this purpose everything pertaining to the study and direction of the spiritual care of these persons.¹⁹

5. Specific training to increase the capacities and competencies of ministers and pastoral agents to promote the implementation of the points above.

Specific preparation constitutes an inescapable necessity, because of both the nature and efficacy of this kind of pastoral work. [...] one perceives ever more clearly the need for the spiritual, theological, juridical and pastoral formation in the seminaries and various novitiates for future priests to be geared towards the problems raised by the pastoral care of people on the move.²⁰

¹⁸ Cf. EMCC, 103.

¹⁹ Paul VI, *Instruction De Pastoralis Migratorum Cura: On the Pastoral Care of People who Migrate*, Vatican City 1969

²⁰ CMU, 33.

1. Enhancing the understanding of the Church as communion in diversity, in the image of the triune God, and fostering the understanding of the Church as mother of all, one home and one family for all the baptised.

In virtue of this catholicity each individual part contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole Church. Through the common sharing of gifts and through the common effort to attain fullness in unity, the whole and each of the parts receive increase.¹⁶

2. Embracing authentic multiplicity of cultural and religious expression within local Catholic communities as an opportunity to learn from different traditions and to foster intercultural appreciation through creative communication.

The Church, sacrament of unity, overcomes ideological or racial barriers and divisions and proclaims to all peoples and all cultures the need to strive for the truth in the perspective of correctly facing differences by dialogue and mutual acceptance. Different cultural identities are thus to open up to a universal way of understanding, not abandoning their own positive elements but putting them at the service of the whole of humanity. While this logic engages every particular Church, it highlights and reveals that unity in diversity that is contemplated in the Trinity, which, for its part, refers the communion of all to the fullness of the personal life of each one.¹⁷

3. Ensuring adequate spaces for the celebration of the liturgy and inviting the faithful to attend the different celebrations so as to appreciate the richness of Catholic spirituality and traditions.

¹⁶ LG, 13.

¹⁷ EMCC, 34.

1. Promoting within the local Catholic communities a culture of care towards migrants and refugees who are profoundly wounded, with a special attention to minors.

“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me” (Mk 9:37; cf. Mt 18:5; Lk 9:48; Jn 13:20). With these words, the Evangelists remind the Christian community of Jesus’ teaching, which both inspires and challenges. This phrase traces the sure path which leads to God.¹²

2. Inviting parishioners, particularly youth and young adults, to be personally involved in programmes of assistance catering to migrants and refugees in need, to foster empathy and compassion.

Priests, men and women religious, lay people, and most of all young men and women are to be sensitive in offering support to their many sisters and brothers who, having fled from violence, have to face new lifestyles and the difficulty of integration. The proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ will be a source of relief, hope and “full joy” (cf. Jn 15:11).¹³

3. Including counselling and listening skills as part of the training of pastoral agents for the migrant ministry.

It is, therefore, necessary that, from the outset, in the seminaries, “spiritual, theological, juridical and pastoral formation ... be geared towards the problems raised by the pastoral care of people on the move.”¹⁴

¹² Francis, *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, Vatican City 2017.

¹³ Benedict XVI, *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, Vatican City 2011.

¹⁴ WCR, 101.

4. Encouraging Catholic health and social professionals to develop specific services to migrants and refugees in need and offer training to pastoral agents as part of their mission.

Sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, economists, jurists and canonists, moralists, and theologians would gather together and, comparing their knowledge and experience along with those who have the care of souls, would contribute to the further understanding of the phenomenon and to proposing the means suitable to cope with it.¹⁵

¹⁵ CMU, 40.

4. LIVING OUR CATHOLICITY

*“You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean.”
(Acts 10: 28)*

Peter, stimulated by the Spirit and by the invitation of the Roman centurion Cornelius, openly acknowledges his presupposition that people belonging to different nations and religions are to be avoided. Yet, he also openly admits that God has shown him a new and different path: the way toward inviting the Gentiles to participate in the salvation offered by Christ and lived out in catholic fullness in the Church. This is the path that from that moment on the Church, supported by the Spirit, is called to walk.

CHALLENGE

A tendency towards pre-packaged uniformity and nationalistic rhetoric within some local Catholic communities clashes with the true meaning of the Church, which is in nature universal, composed of people with different languages and traditions. This tendency leads to divisions and jeopardises efforts towards fostering an authentic expression of the Church's universal communion.

RESPONSE

The Catholic Church is called to understand the multiplicity of its members as a richness to be appreciated, as an opportunity to be more and more visibly “catholic” and also as a gift to be celebrated with vibrant liturgies respectful of different cultural traditions. This can be done through actions and reflections such as the following: