

August 28, 2017



**MESSAGES** - Dear brothers and sisters!

“You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:34).

Throughout the first years of my pontificate, I have repeatedly expressed my particular concern for the lamentable situation of many migrants and refugees fleeing from war, persecution, natural disasters and poverty. This situation is undoubtedly a “sign of the times” which I have tried to interpret, with the help of the Holy Spirit, ever since my [visit to Lampedusa on 8 July 2013](#).

When I instituted the [new Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development](#)

t, I wanted a particular section – under my personal direction for the time being – to express the Church’s concern for migrants, displaced people, refugees and victims of human trafficking.

Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age (Matthew 25:35-43). The Lord entrusts to the Church’s motherly love every person forced to leave their homeland in search of a better future. <sup>[1]</sup> This solidarity must be concretely expressed at every stage of the migratory experience – from departure through journey to arrival and return. This is a great responsibility, which the Church intends to share with all believers and men and women of good will, who are called to respond to the many challenges of contemporary migration with generosity, promptness, wisdom and foresight, each according to their own abilities.

In this regard, I wish to reaffirm that “our shared response may be articulated by four verbs: to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate”.

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Considering the current situation, welcoming means, above all, offering broader options for migrants and refugees to enter destination countries safely and legally. This calls for a concrete commitment to increase and simplify the process for granting humanitarian visas and for reunifying families. At the same time, I hope that a greater number of countries will adopt private and community sponsorship programmes, and open humanitarian corridors for particularly vulnerable refugees. Furthermore, special temporary visas should be granted to people fleeing conflicts in neighbouring countries. Collective and arbitrary expulsions of migrants and refugees are not suitable solutions, particularly where people are returned to countries which cannot guarantee respect for human dignity and fundamental rights. [↩](#) Once again, I want to emphasise the importance of offering migrants and refugees adequate and dignified initial accommodation. “More widespread programmes of welcome, already initiated in different places, seem to favour a personal encounter and allow for greater quality of service and increased guarantees of success”.

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The principle of the centrality of the human person, firmly stated by my beloved Predecessor, Benedict XVI,

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emphasises to always prioritise personal safety over national security. It is necessary therefore to ensure that agents in charge of border control emergency teams. The situation of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees requires that they be guaranteed personal safety and access to basic services. For the sake of the fundamental dignity of every human person, we must strive to find alternative solutions to detention for those who enter a country without authorisation.

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