
Pope Francis: migrants "are not invaders" - they contribute to the growth of society

"History teaches us that the contribution of migrants and refugees has been fundamental to the social and economic growth of our societies. This continues to be true in our own day", writes Pope Francis in his Message released today, marking the 108TH World Day for Migrants and Refugees, which will be celebrated on Sunday, September 25, 2022 under the theme "Building the Future with Migrants and Refugees." "Building the future with migrants and refugees also means recognizing and valuing how much each of them can contribute to the process of construction": "foreigners are not invaders or destroyers", underlines the Pope. **Eliminating inequality and discrimination.** "Their work, their youth, their enthusiasm and their willingness to sacrifice enrich the communities that receive them – Francis writes -. Yet this contribution could be all the greater were it optimized and supported by carefully developed programs and initiatives. Enormous potential exists, ready to be harnessed, if only it is given a chance." The Pope calls for eliminating "the many forms of inequality and discrimination in the present world":

"No one must be excluded."

God's plan "is essentially inclusive and gives priority to those living on the existential peripheries. Among them are many migrants and refugees, displaced persons, and victims of trafficking. The Kingdom of God is to be built with them, for without them it would not be the Kingdom that God wants. The inclusion of those most vulnerable is the necessary condition for full citizenship in God's Kingdom. **"Foreigners are not invaders or destroyers."** "I like to see this approach to migration reflected in a prophetic vision of Isaiah – says Pope Francis - which considers foreigners not invaders or destroyers, but willing labourers who rebuild the walls of the new Jerusalem, that Jerusalem whose gates are open to all peoples." In the same prophecy "the arrival of foreigners is presented as a source of enrichment." There ensues, the Pope points out, that

"the presence of migrants and refugees represents a great challenge, but at the same time an immense opportunity for the cultural and spiritual growth of everyone."

Thanks to them, we have the chance to know better our world and its beautiful diversity. We can grow in our common humanity and build together an ever greater sense of togetherness. Openness to one another creates spaces of fruitful exchange between different visions and traditions, and opens minds to new horizons." **Discovering the richness present in other religions and forms of spirituality.** It also leads to a discovery "of the richness present in other religions and forms of spirituality unfamiliar to us, and this helps us to deepen our own convictions." In this light, continues the Pope's Message, "the arrival of Catholic migrants and refugees can energize the ecclesial life of the communities that welcome them. Often they bring an enthusiasm that can revitalize our communities and enliven our celebrations." "Sharing different expressions of faith and devotions – he points out - offers us a privileged opportunity for experiencing more fully the catholicity of the People of God." **The appeal to the young: "build the future together with migrants and refugees."** The Pope concludes with an invitation addressed especially to young people: "If we want to cooperate with our heavenly Father in building the future, let us do so together with our brothers and sisters who are migrants and refugees. Let us build the future today! For the future begins today and it begins with each of us. We cannot leave to future generations the burden of responsibility for decisions that need to be made now." The Pope concludes his Message with a prayer dedicated to migrants. **"The principle of fraternity."** During the press conference for the presentation of the Message, Cardinal Francesco Montenegro, Archbishop Emeritus of Agrigento and member of the

Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, recalled his personal experience during the years of mass arrivals of migrants in Lampedusa, as in 2013: "When faced with these facts, you realise that only the principle of fraternity can help you. When you look into the eyes of that man, that woman or that child, you realise that they are your equal, that they are your brothers and sisters. In that instant, all distinctions, political controversies, the logic of numbers or the regulations of this or that country disappear." Father Fabio Baggio, Under-Secretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development with responsibilities for the Migrants and Refugees Section and for special projects, likewise highlighted the fact that the presence of migrants and refugees constitutes "undoubtedly an immense opportunity that must be recognised and enhanced." Answering a question regarding Ukrainian refugees, he quoted the Pope's words that urge us not to forget migrants from other countries, since "a new war does not erase the previous ones" and "hospitality must be given to each and every one, regardless of the continent or country of origin."

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