



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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Press Conference to present the Holy Father Francis' Message for the 108th World Day of Migrants and Refugees (25 September 2022)

At 11.30 this morning, in the "John Paul II" Hall of the Holy See Press Office, a press conference was held to present the Holy Father Francis' Message for the 10th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, to be celebrated on 25 September 2022, on the theme: "Building the future with migrants and refugees".

During the press conference, there was a screening of the Holy Father's first hitherto unseen video for the campaign of preparation for the Day.

The speakers were: Fr. Fabio Baggio, C.S., under-secretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development with responsibility for the Section for Migrants and Refugees and Special Projects; Dr. Pascale Debbané, official of Lebanese origin from the same Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and His Eminence Cardinal Francesco Montenegro, archbishop emeritus of Agrigento and member of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

The following are their interventions:

Intervention of Fr. Fabio Baggio, C.S.:

"Building the future with migrants and refugees": this is the theme the Holy Father has given to his Message for the 108th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, to be held this coming 25 September.

In a world profoundly marked by the pandemic crisis and humanitarian emergencies both old and new, Pope Francis strongly reiterates the joint effort to build a future that responds increasingly to God's plan, a future of peace and prosperity, the Kingdom of God.

The future must be built "with migrants and refugees", the Pope emphasizes, along with all those living on the

existential peripheries, so that no one is excluded. Their inclusion is the necessary condition for the construction of the Kingdom of God, “for without them it would not be the Kingdom that God wants”.

But “building with” also means recognizing and promoting the contribution of migrants and refugees in this construction work, because only in this way can a world be built that ensures the conditions for the integral human development of everyone.

In his Message, Pope Francis makes ample reference to the prophetic vision of Isaiah 60, in which the arrival of the foreigners is presented as an opportunity for the social and economic enrichment of the New Jerusalem. And “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”. Undoubtedly it constitutes “enormous potential” that should be acknowledged and harnessed.

The Holy Father emphasizes that the presence of migrants and refugees also offers an opportunity for cultural and spiritual growth for the communities that welcome them. “Thanks to them, we have the chance to know better our world and its beautiful diversity”. Encounter and mutual awareness make us grow in humanity, and open our mind to new outlooks and perspectives.

The Message shows how Catholic migrants and refugees are a real “blessing” for the local Churches, as they allow Catholicity to be lived more fully. “Often they bring an enthusiasm that can revitalize our communities and enliven our celebrations”. With their expressions of faith and devotion, they contribute to making the community experience even more beautiful.

According to the Holy Father, “building the future” is an imperative that is conjugated in the first-person plural. It is a duty and a commitment for all, that must commence immediately “for the future begins today and it begins with each of us”. There is no time to lose if we truly want God’s plan for the world to be realized.

The Holy Father concludes his Message with a prayer with an exquisitely Franciscan tone:

Lord, make us bearers of hope,

so that where there is darkness,

your light may shine,

and where there is discouragement,

confidence in the future may be reborn.

Lord, make us instruments of your justice,

so that where there is exclusion, fraternity may flourish,

and where there is greed, a spirit of sharing may grow.

Lord, make us builders of your Kingdom,

together with migrants and refugees

and with all who dwell on the peripheries.

Lord, let us learn how beautiful it is

to live together as brothers and sisters. Amen.

Intervention of Dr. Pascale Debbané

Migrating helped build my present

The Holy Father writes that *“Building the future with migrants and refugees also means recognising and appreciating how much each of them can contribute in the process of construction.”* I would like to share how my experience as a migrant has enriched the mission entrusted to me today at the Section.

During the war, my family had to migrate to Canada. We were warmly welcomed and quickly integrated into the local community through our school, our parish and the various activities in which we participated.

As a teenager, I felt very guilty for leaving my country behind. Integration was challenging for me. At school, I was told to blend in normally and keep my feelings to myself, as if my life was normal, but it wasn't! I was filled with anger, sadness and frustration. Unfortunately, I was not able to hide it and was often in trouble! Thankfully, my English teacher helped me express my anger by making me write daily in a journal that he had to correct in order to assess my writing skills. My teacher and I were not of the same religion, his empathy towards me made me experience kindness and broke the boundaries of prejudice. I, in turn, was able to share this openness when I returned to my country after the war.

Today, I work in the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Vatican, assisting the local churches in the Middle-East. *Through the meticulous work of personal conversion and of transforming reality*, I had to forgive and heal in order to fulfil my mission as Regional Coordinator. The human kindness I received then, played a major part in helping me heal and understand fraternity.

Because the future starts today and begins with each of us, I am grateful that providence has found a way for me to use my experience as a migrant to help build the future of other migrants and refugees, *so that God's plan for the world may be realised and his Kingdom of justice, fraternity, and peace may come.*

Intervention of His Eminence Cardinal Francesco Montenegro

Building the future with migrants and refugees

Once again this year we welcome the Holy Father's message to the Church for the upcoming World Day of Migrants and Refugees, to be celebrated on 25 September. At the centre is the theme of the commitment to build the future with migrants, refugees, and those who inhabit the existential peripheries.

The Pope invites us to reflect on the profound link between the dimension of eternal life towards which we are moving and the present of history that appears so confused and worrying because of what is happening (wars, marginalization, inequalities). There seems to be an abysmal distance between the proclamation of the heavenly dwelling entrusted to the church, full of hope, and the history inhabited by men.

The future of the Pope speaks about in his message is not a generic “tomorrow” but is the certainty that belongs

to the believer who knows he is journeying towards eternity; just as the present cannot be framed in a confused set of facts that have nothing to do with God's plan. The Christian community has the responsibility to live today by seeking to realize God's plan through justice, peace, and respect for the dignity of each person. In this way, as it walks through time in obedience to God's will, it prepares the future - we might say, it anticipates eternity.

This vision of salvation history imposes an inclusive logic: we are all called to enter the eternal Home. Hence the title of the Day: "Building the future with migrants and refugees". The Pope invites us to pass from the logic of simple acceptance to the evangelical one of universal fraternity in which the other – and especially the poor man – is the brother with whom I am required to walk. There are not some who welcome and others who are welcomed, but brothers whom we must love, learning to make cultural, religious or social diversity a great opportunity for growth for all.

My experience as bishop of Agrigento permits me to confirm these principles that inspire Pope Francis' Message. Everything that happened in Lampedusa, with the continual arrival of migrants, shook not only the parish community and the diocese of Agrigento, but also, I believe I can say, the entire world. What is one to do when faced with thousands of people arriving on makeshift vessels every day? What is one to do when – as in 2013 – several hundred of them drown just a few metres from the coast, losing their lives? When you find yourself faced with these facts, you realize that only the principle of fraternity can help you. If you manage to look into the eyes of that man, that woman, or that child, you understand that he or she is the same as you, your brother or sister. In that instant, all distinctions, all political diatribes, the logic of numbers or the laws of this or that country, fall by the wayside. Those eyes speak to you of the dignity of that person before, and more than his or her belonging to country "X" or religion "Y". Building the future requires that gaze on the other, free from every prejudice and every privilege. The Pope insists that this perspective can prove to be an opportunity for growth for all. History teaches us that where the future has been built in an inclusive logic, in the end, everyone has gained, not only in terms of respect but also economically and culturally.

The Pope makes this appeal to everyone and in particular to young people. Indeed, they are the ones best predisposed to enter into this vision. So many associations, Catholic and non-Catholic, approach the migrant and refugee precisely with the spirit desired by Pope Francis. It comes naturally to young people to break down barriers. They feel the future as their home and I believe we must trust their instincts more to build paths of integration among all the peoples of the earth.

We are certain that the message will meet with the welcome of Christian communities and of many people of good will who wish to live in a world marked by justice, fraternity and peace. The prayer that concludes the text is very beautiful. I will repeat the central part:

"Lord, make us builders of your Kingdom,

together with migrants and refugees

and with all who dwell on the peripheries"
