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Message of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development on the occasion of World Tourism Day 2022

The following is the Message sent by the prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, His Eminence Cardinal Michael Czerny, S.J., on the occasion of World Tourism Day, held every year on 27 September:

Message

“Rethinking Tourism”

World Tourism Day 2022 is dedicated to: "Rethinking Tourism." The current health crisis, which began in late 2019 and has not yet ended, has confronted everyone with long-term problems and also highlighted new and unexpected ones. It certainly took us by surprise. Tourism has been one of the human activities most severely affected by this crisis, but, paradoxically, it can now become one of the engines of the reconstruction of a more just, sustainable, and integral world. The Church, therefore, looks at the rebirth and renewal of tourism as well with the eyes of hope.

A more just tourism

The revival of tourism can have a reference in the principles that inspired the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, which understood this activity as, among other things, "a vital force in the service of peace and a factor of friendship and understanding among the peoples of the world," "a factor of sustainable development," "a means of using the cultural heritage of humanity to contribute to its enrichment," and "a beneficial activity for host countries and communities." These are fundamental elements for building fraternity and social friendship, but above all for serving integral human development.

This means – and in this there is an urgent need for a change of course, showing that we know how to emerge better from a crisis that has revealed so many inequalities and injustices – that tourism activity, as a real economic industry, must be carried out according to principles of equity and social transformation. This happens, for example, when the labor rights of workers in the industry are respected at all levels and in every country, and when tourism itself, as a leisure and recreational activity, is carried out with full respect for the fundamental rights and dignity of people.[1] Justice is also sharing profits fairly, overcoming a predatory logic, especially with regard to populations and geographic areas particularly tried by the multiple crises that plague the contemporary world.[2]

In this regard, we want to express our closeness to all those in the tourism sector who already act according to a righteous conscience and have built not only their professionalism but their very lives around hospitality. There is no shortage of entrepreneurs who are attentive to the most vulnerable and to workers exposed to exploitation, especially seasonal staff who perform more menial tasks in the service of tourists. Once again, however, it must be denounced that "many work in precarious and sometimes illegal conditions, with unequal pay, forced into strenuous work, often far from the family, at high risk of stress and bent to the rules of aggressive competitiveness".[3] Christians are asked to make alliance with all women and men of good will, because this must change.

A more sustainable tourism

Regeneration also means not forgetting that the impact tourism has on the environment is very significant. The dominant paradigm of maximizing consumption can damage it quickly and viciously.[4] With the pandemic and the current energy crisis, it has become more evident how good it is first and foremost to focus on grassroots tourism: to be able to look around, recognize and appreciate the treasures of heritage, cuisine, folklore, and even spirituality that neighboring regions have to share. Local policies today can be profoundly rethought in terms of hospitality and quality of life for incumbents, newcomers, and immediate neighbors.

On a planetary scale, moreover, the flow of goods, the movement of people for tourism purposes, and the pace of consumption must certainly be recalibrated in the direction of a proper relationship between human beings and creation. The sustainability of tourism, in fact, is measured not only in terms of pollution, but also in the impact on the biodiversity of natural and social ecosystems: there is a need for a sensibility that expands the protection of ecosystems in a concrete way, so as to ensure a harmonious passage of tourists in environments that do not belong to them, nor to a single generation. Medium-term climate change may negatively affect the attractiveness of many traditional destinations, with the risk of further penalizing already economically fragile regions in this respect as well. Protection of biodiversity and awe before the wonders of creation must therefore coexist in 'rethought' tourism.

Integral tourism

Tourism offers enormous possibilities for the human spirit and the Spirit of God to interact, activating an encounter transcending diversity.[5] There is certainly no shortage of resistance and opposing elements. One notices, for example, how, culturally, the space to include different ways of thinking and living is shrinking. The production system, even in the tourism industry, is quickly turning to the standardization of content, especially through the contingency of time - of visit, of travel, of stay -, which develops a more individualistic and less collective experience. A rethought tourism needs to keep in mind the "integral vision of the person," which, as Pope Francis points out, is not a theory, "but a way of living and acting; this vision is not found first of all in a manual, but in people who live in this style: with their eyes open to the world, with their hands holding other hands, with their hearts sensitive to the weaknesses of their brothers and sisters."[6] Only in this way can one encounter a different culture, ask for an account of its history, discover the deep values it holds. In summary, tourism is also called to embrace the perspective of integral ecology.[7] It can, in fact, support a community's

capacity for "regeneration" by fostering dialogue between local cultural languages and visitors' lifestyles. Welcoming tourists, then, becomes a way of transforming civic spaces, the social and urban environment, in the enhancement of identities in the right balance between preserving roots and offering services.

Tourism to cultivate hope

The Catholic Church is keen on promoting this renewed vision of tourism from the perspective of integral human development. The synodal process, which throughout the world it is experiencing, from the most peripheral communities up to the most important decision-making centers, represents a methodology of listening and participation, which can also bring in civil society and economic organizations a greater aptitude for the composition of conflicting interests and points of view. The art of discernment and the collective ability to arrive at new syntheses represent epochal challenges, on which a future on a human scale for all depends. These perspectives will be the subject of further reflection during the work of the VIII World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Tourism, which will take place in Santiago de Compostela from October 5-8, 2022. The event, included in the framework of the Holy Year of Compostela, will have as its theme, "Tourism and Pilgrimages: paths of hope." Indeed, we look with hope at the vibrancy of the sector, all those involved and those who have responsibility for it. Taking up the words of Pope Francis we encourage everyone to "keep the torch of hope lit" and "do everything so that everyone regains the strength and certainty to look to the future with an open mind, a trusting heart and a forward-looking mind".[8]

Cardinal Michael Czerny S.J.

Prefect

[1] *Video message of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, on the occasion of the 109th Conference of the International Labor Organization*, 17 June 2021.

[2] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith & Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, *Oeconomicae et pecuniariae quaestiones: Considerations for an Ethical Discernment Regarding Some Aspects of the Present Economic-Financial System*. 6 January 2018, nos. 4,8.

[3] *Message of the Prefect of the Dicastery for Integral Human Development on the occasion of the World Day of Tourism 2019: "Tourism and Jobs: A Better Future for All."* 24 July 2019.

[4] Cf. Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, 18; 203.

[5] Cf. Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*, 215.

[6] Cf. *Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Directors and Associates of the Youth Tourist Centre*. 22 March 2019.

[7] *Laudato Si'*, Chapter IV.

[8] Cf. *Letter of the Holy Father Francis to Msgr. Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, for the Jubilee 2025*. 11 February 2022.

