



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF
THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF
MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE***

*Clementine Hall
Monday, 15 May 2006*

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I am pleased to welcome you on the occasion of the Plenary Session of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. First of all, I greet Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino, who I thank for the words with which he introduced our meeting. I also greet the Secretary, the Members and the Consultors of this Pontifical Council and especially those recently appointed, and I address to all a cordial thought with best wishes for the success of your work.

The theme chosen for this Session - *Migration and Itinerancy from and towards Islamic Majority Countries* - concerns a social reality that is becoming ever more present. Therefore, human mobility with regard to Muslim countries calls for a specific reflection, not only because of the extent of the phenomenon, but above all because the Islamic identity is both religious and cultural. The Catholic Church realizes with increasing awareness that interreligious dialogue is part of her commitment to the service of humanity in the contemporary world. This conviction has become, as one says, "daily bread" especially fit for those who work in contact with migrants, refugees and with different categories of itinerant people.

We are living in times in which Christians are called to cultivate a style of dialogue open to the religious question, without failing to present to the interlocutors the Christian proposal consistent with her own identity. So, one increasingly feels the importance of reciprocity in dialogue,

reciprocity that the Instruction *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* rightly defines as a "principle" of great importance. It treats of a "relationship based on mutual respect", and before that on an "attitude of heart and spirit" (n. 64). The importance and delicacy of this commitment is witnessed by the efforts that are made in many communities to weave relations of mutual awareness and esteem with immigrants, which appear ever more useful to overcome prejudice and a closed mentality.

In its action of reception and dialogue with migrants and itinerant peoples, the Christian community has as its constant reference point Christ, who left to his disciples, as a rule of life, the new commandment of love. Christian love is, by its nature, prevenient. This is why single believers are called to open their arms and their hearts to every person, from whatever nation they come, allowing the Authorities responsible for public life to enforce the relevant laws held to be appropriate for a healthy co-existence.

Continually stimulated to witness the love that the Lord Jesus taught, Christians must open their hearts especially to the lowly and the poor, in whom Christ himself is present in a singular way. Acting in this way, they manifest the most qualifying characteristic of their own Christian identity: the love that Christ lived and continually transmits to the Church through the Gospel and the Sacraments.

Obviously, it is to be hoped that Christians who emigrate to nations with an Islamic majority will also be welcomed and their religious identity respected.

Dear brothers and sisters, I willingly welcome this occasion to thank you for what you do in favour of an organic and efficient pastoral service for migrants and itinerant peoples, putting your time, your competency and your experience at this service. May it escape no one that this is a significant frontier in the new evangelization in the current globalized world. I encourage you to pursue your work with renewed zeal, while, for my part, I follow you with attention and I accompany you with prayer, so that the Holy Spirit may make your initiative fruitful for the good of the Church and the world.

May Mary Most Holy watch over you, she who lived her faith as a pilgrimage in the different circumstances of her earthly life. May the Holy Virgin help every man and every woman to know her Son Jesus and to receive from him the gift of salvation. With this wish I impart my Blessing to all of you and to those dear to you.

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