



The Holy See

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

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 28 May 2010*

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

I welcome you with great joy on the occasion of the Plenary Session of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. I greet the President of the Dicastery, Archbishop Antonio Maria Vegliò whom I thank for his words of joyous warmth the Secretary, the Members, the Consultors and the Officials. I express to everyone the wish that his or her work may be rewarding.

You chose as the topic of this Session the *Pastoral care of human mobility today, in the context of the co-responsibility of States and of International Organizations*. The movement of persons has been for some time the object of international conventions, which seek to guarantee the protection of fundamental human rights and to fight discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance. It concerns documents which provide the principles and methods of supranational protection.

An appreciable effort is being made to build a system of shared norms which contemplate the rights and duties of the foreigner, as well as those of the host community, taking into account in the first place the dignity of every human person, created by God in his image and likeness (cf. Gen 1: 26). Obviously, the acquisition of rights goes hand in hand with the acceptance of duties. In fact, all people enjoy rights and duties which are not arbitrary, for they stem from human nature itself, as Bl. Pope John XXIII's Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* affirms: "Each individual man is truly a

person. His is a nature... endowed with intelligence and freewill. As such he has rights and duties, which together flow as a direct consequence from his nature. These rights and duties are universal and inviolable, and therefore, altogether inalienable" (n. 9). The responsibility of States and international organizations is, therefore, particularly specified in the commitment to influence matters which, respecting the competencies of the national legislator, involve the entire family of peoples, and require an agreement between the Governments and Organisms more directly concerned. I am thinking of such problems as the entry or forced removal of the foreigner, the enjoyment of the goods of nature, of culture and art, of science and technology, which must be accessible to all. One must not forget, then, the important role of mediation so that national and international resolutions, which promote the universal common good, find acceptance with local entities and are reflected in daily life.

In this context, laws on the national and international level which promote the common good and respect for the person encourage hope and the efforts being made for the achievement of a world social order founded on peace, brotherhood and universal cooperation, despite the critical phase international institutions are currently traversing as they concentrate on resolving crucial questions of security and development for everyone. It is true, unfortunately, that we are witnessing the re-emergence of biased cases in some areas of the world, but it is also true that there is reluctance to assume responsibility which should be shared. Moreover, not yet extinguished is the longing of many to break down the walls that divide and to establish broad consensus, also through legislative provisions and administrative practices which foster integration, mutual exchanges and reciprocal enrichment. In effect, the prospects of peoples living side by side can be offered through cautious and concerted policies for acceptance and integration, providing for legal entry, favouring the just right of reuniting families, of asylum and of refuge, compensating for the necessary restrictive measures and opposing the disgraceful traffic of individuals. Precisely here the various international organisations, in cooperation among themselves and with the States, can make their particular contribution by reconciling, with various methods, the recognition of the rights of the person and the principle of national sovereignty, with specific reference to the exigencies of security, public order and the control of borders.

The fundamental rights of the person can be the focal point in the commitment to responsibility by international institutions. This, then, is closely linked to "openness to life, which is at the centre of true development", as I confirmed in the Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (cf. n. 28), where I also appealed to States to promote policies for the centrality and the integrity of the family (cf. n. 44). On the other hand, it is evident that openness to life and to the rights of the family must conform to the different contexts, because "in an increasingly globalized society, the common good and the effort to obtain it cannot fail to assume the dimensions of the whole human family, that is to say, the community of peoples and nations" (n. 7). The future of our societies rests upon the meeting between peoples, upon dialogue between cultures with respect for identity and legitimate differences. In this scenario, the family retains its fundamental role. Therefore, the Church with the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ in every sector of existence, carries forward "the

commitment... in favour not only of the individual migrant, but also of his family, which is a place and resource of the culture of life and a factor for the integration of values", as I affirmed in the *Message for the 93rd World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, 18 October 2006, celebrated in 2007.

Dear brothers and sisters, it is also your task to awaken the Organizations committed to the world of migrants and itinerant people to forms of co-responsibility. This pastoral sector is tied to a phenomenon in constant expansion and, therefore, your role must be expressed in concrete responses of closeness and personal pastoral support, taking into account the different local situations. On each of you I invoke the light of the Holy Spirit and the maternal protection of Our Lady, as I renew my gratitude for the service that you render to the Church and to society. May the inspiration of Bl. Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, described as the "Father of migrants" by the Venerable John Paul II, the 105th anniversary of whose birth in heaven we shall be commemorating on 1 June, illumine your actions in favour of migrants and itinerant people and spur you to an ever more attentive charity, which will witness to them the unfailing love of God. For my part I assure you of my prayers while blessing you from my heart.

© Copyright 2010 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana