



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE PLENARY MEETING
OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE
OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE**

Monday, 29 April 2002

*Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. I am pleased to give you a cordial welcome on the occasion of the Plenary Meeting of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, whose theme is "the world of the sea". I am happy to greet your Council's President, Archbishop Stephen Fumio Hamao, and thank him for his courteous words on your behalf. I express deep gratitude to each of you for your attentive care and the generous efforts with which in your daily activity you convey the Church's solicitude to all who are involved in this complex area of human mobility.

St Augustine writes: "*I contemplate the vast expanse of sea around me, I am filled with wonder and admiration; I seek its maker ...*" (*Homily on Psalm 41,7*). These words effectively sum up the Christian's attitude toward creation, God's great gift to humanity, and especially, toward the majesty and beauty of the ocean. I am certain that these same sentiments motivate all who are dedicated in their apostolate to the vast world of migration and tourism and deal with it as it takes place on the oceans of the world.

This is a very diversified social sector, where the challenges may be many and the opportunities for evangelization abound.

2. The increase in human mobility and the process of globalization have had a notable effect on the flow of migrants and tourists and on the activity of the people who work at sea. Opportunities for meeting are multiplied. However, along with the the remarkable advantages that derive from

this phenomenon, one must also observe the negative, which include painful separations and complex, difficult situations. I am thinking, for example, of the sailors who are obliged to live long periods far from their families; of the stressful pace of work to which all sea people are subjected, interrupted only by brief calls at ports; of the many migrants who cross the seas and oceans in search of better living conditions and who often encounter harsh realities, different by far from those advertised by the media.

Nor can we forget those special offers to tourists of "artificial paradises" where, for mere commercial purposes, peoples and local cultures are exploited for the benefit of a tourism which in some cases does not even respect the most basic human rights of the local people.

3. It is important not to leave those who belong to the great family of the sea without spiritual support. They should be given an opportunity to meet God and to discover the true sense of life in him. It is the mission of believers to witness that men and women everywhere are called to live a "new humanity", reconciled with God (cf. Eph 2,15).

If they have the support of trained pastoral workers, tourists will better appreciate their holiday or cruises, because they will not just be pleasure trips. They will indeed enjoy their free time and well-deserved period of rest, but at the same time they will be helped to dialogue with the people and civilizations they come into contact with, and spend time in reflection and prayer. It is also important not to deprive migrants of a brotherly welcome and adequate religious assistance, to make them feel that their problems are understood and that they are being welcomed by societies that respect their cultural identity. Clandestine immigrants who risk much on board ships of fortune, must not be left to themselves.

In every situation, it will be necessary to guarantee more just conditions of work that respect individual and family needs, and at the same time, efforts should be made to offer them adequate opportunities to cultivate their faith and religious life. This means promoting the pastoral care that is attentive to the variety of conditions and forms of apostolic presence that correspond to the variety of personal needs.

4. Your plenary meeting intends to focus better on these aspects, taking into account the need for a global approach to this complex human and social reality. Pastoral workers should act in collaboration and fraternal communion in order to face the great challenges posed by this unusual missionary "worksite".

To this end, it is useful to recall the norms already in force that were issued in the Apostolic Letter *Stella Maris* (*Star of the Sea*), and in the Instruction *De pastorali migratorum cura* (*On the pastoral care of migrants*), of which an updated edition is being prepared, as well as the indications of the document *Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of Tourism* (ORE 10 April 2002, insert). We should be conscious of the urgent need to provide a good formation for the lay faithful who are called to work

in this apostolic sector and, by means of a constant updating, to inspire a renewed awareness of the problems of human mobility in Christian communities.

As I express the wish that your plenary meeting will contribute to greater understanding of these different social and pastoral situations, I encourage you to move forward with every valid initiative for the evangelization of this complex sector.

I entrust the work of your meeting to the motherly protection of Mary, *Star of the Sea*, whom I ask to guide you to the port of a world of greater solidarity, which is more fraternal and more united. With these sentiments, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you all.