



## 106<sup>th</sup> WORLD DAY OF MIGRANTS & REFUGEES

27 September 2020

### “Forced like Jesus to flee”

The Church has been celebrating the World Day of Migrants and Refugees (WDMR) since 1914 as an occasion to express concern for different vulnerable people on the move; to pray for them as they face many challenges; and to increase awareness about the opportunities that migration offers. Every year the last Sunday of September; in 2020 it will be celebrated on 27 September. The title the Holy Father has chosen for his annual message is: “Forced like Jesus Christ to flee” to focus on the pastoral care of internally displaced people.

This Message (“**Like Jesus Christ, forced to flee. Welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating internally displaced persons**”) has been written in such a way that it is rich in its composition and content, using current material and meditations and reflections shared by the Pope in key moments of encounter as we lived together through this Pandemic.

*“In the light of the tragic events that have marked 2020, I would like this Message, although concerned with internally displaced persons, to embrace all those who are experiencing situations of precariousness, abandonment, marginalization and rejection as a result of COVID-19”.*

**During the flight into Egypt, the child Jesus experienced with his parents the tragic fate of the displaced and refugees, marked by fear, uncertainty and unease. In our own times, millions of families can identify with this sad reality. Almost every day the television and papers carry news of refugees fleeing from hunger, war and other grave dangers, in search of security and a dignified life for themselves and for their families.**

*“... the faces of the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, strangers and prisoners, we are called to see the face of Christ who pleads with us to help (cf. Mt 25:31-46). If we can recognise him in those faces, we will be the ones to thank him for having been able to meet, love and serve him in them. Displaced people*

*offer us this opportunity to meet the Lord, “even though our eyes find it hard to recognise him: his clothing in tatters, his feet dirty, his face disfigured, his body wounded, his tongue unable to speak our language” (Homily, 15 February 2019). We are called to respond to this pastoral challenge ... “.*

## Practical actions

In his Message for WDMR 2018 Pope Francis mentioned four verbs: welcome, protect, promote and integrate. To these words, in the WDMR Message for 2020 Pope Francis adds another six pairs of verbs that deal with very practical actions and that are linked together in a relationship of *cause and effect*.

- **to know in order to understand:**  
And knowing their stories, we will be able to understand them. We will be able to understand, for example, that the precariousness that we have come to experience as a result of this pandemic is a constant in the lives of displaced people.
- **to be close in order to serve:**  
Drawing close to others often means being willing to take risks, as so many doctors and nurses have taught us in recent months. This readiness to draw near and serve goes beyond a mere sense of duty. Jesus gave us the greatest example of this when he washed the feet of his disciples: he took off his cloak,

knelt down and dirtied his hands (cf. Jn 13:1-15).

- **to be reconciled, we need to listen:** it is only through humble and attentive listening that we can truly be reconciled. In 2020, silence has reigned for weeks in our streets. A dramatic and troubling silence, but one that has given us the opportunity to listen to the plea of the vulnerable, the displaced and our seriously ill planet. Listening gives us an opportunity to be reconciled with our neighbour, with all those who have been “discarded”, with ourselves and with God, who never tires of offering us his mercy.
- **to grow, it is necessary to share:** God did not want the resources of our planet to benefit only a few. This was not the Lord’s will! We have to learn to share in order to grow together, leaving no one behind. The pandemic has reminded us how we are all in the same boat. Realising that we have the same concerns and fears has shown us once more that no one can be saved alone.
- **to be involved in order to promote:** Sometimes the impulse to serve others prevents us from seeing their real riches. If we really want to promote those whom we assist, we must involve them and make them agents in their own redemption. The pandemic has reminded us of how essential co-responsibility is, and that only

with the contribution of everyone – even of those groups so often underestimated – can we face this crisis.

- **to cooperate in order to build:** Building the Kingdom of God is a duty common to all Christians, and for this reason it is necessary that we learn to cooperate, without yielding to the temptation to jealousy, discord and division. In the present context it should be reiterated: “This is not a time for self-centredness, because the challenge we are facing is shared by all, without distinguishing between persons” (Urbi et Orbi Message, 12 April 2020). To preserve our common home and make it conform more and more to God’s original plan, we must commit ourselves to ensuring international cooperation, global solidarity and local commitment, leaving no one excluded.

**Pope Francis concludes his Message with a prayer suggested by the example of Saint Joseph at the time he was forced to flee to Egypt to save the child Jesus.**

## **We pray:**

***Father, you entrusted to Saint Joseph what you held most precious:  
the child Jesus and his Mother,  
in order to protect them from the dangers and threats of the wicked.***

***Grant that we may experience his protection and help.***

***May he, who shared in the sufferings of those who flee from the hatred of the powerful, console and protect all our brothers and sisters driven by war, poverty and necessity to leave their homes and their lands to set out as refugees for safer places.***

***Help them, through the intercession of Saint Joseph, to find the strength to persevere, give them comfort in sorrows and courage amid their trials.***

***Grant to those who welcome them some of the tender love of this just and wise father, who loved Jesus as a true son and sustained Mary at every step of the way.***

***May he, who earned his bread by the work of his hands, watch over those who have seen everything in life taken away and obtain for them the dignity of a job and the serenity of a home.***

***We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, whom Saint Joseph saved by fleeing to Egypt, and trusting in the intercession of the Virgin Mary, whom he loved as a faithful husband in accordance with your will.  
Amen.***

