

The Pastoral Response of the Catholic Church to Contemporary Massive Displacements

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Reverend Fathers,
Dear Friends,

I am sincerely grateful for the invitation to attend this Seminar and for the opportunity to talk about the pastoral response of the Catholic Church to contemporary massive displacements. Let me first of all briefly present the mission of the Migrants and Refugees Section (M&R), and then continue with a short review of its publications. The second part of my speech will focus on the main points of the Pastoral Orientations for the Intercultural Migrant Ministry, which is the last document issued by the M&R Section and offers useful tools and suggestions for today's context. In the end, I will say something about the Working Group "Catholic Response for Ukraine."

The mission of the Migrants and Refugees Section

The M&R mission is to help the local Church's pastoral work to accompany people on the move. The M&R is open to listening, encourages communication and networking, provides documentation and media resources (available on our website <https://migrants-refugees.va>). These include yearly publications of pastoral orientations. There are also summary regional reports, relating to Migrant Ministry in Europe; regular newsletters since March 2020 on challenges, best practices and advocacy all over the world, with a special focus on the pandemic (COVID-19 Bulletin); and the annual six-month communication campaign leading up to the celebration of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees (WDMR) in late September (25 September this year). Every WDMR has a special theme explained by an official Message, and the Holy Father decided to title his Message for the 2022 WDMR "Building the Future with Migrants and Refugees". The Message was presented on 12 May 2022 at the Holy See Press Hall.

Documents published by the M&R Section

- Starting from 2017, the Section began to work on drafting and editing the *20 Pastoral Action Points* to respond to the needs of migrants and refugees, with the help of various Catholic Bishops' Conferences and NGOs. In 2018 the *Pastoral Points* were reformulated in a more technical (legal) language, and the Holy See officially submitted the *20 Action Points for the*

Global Compacts to the United Nations as its contribution to consultations and negotiations on the *Global Compact on Refugees* and the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration*. Both documents, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, echo the content of the 20 Points and many of its specific suggestions.

- To address human trafficking and enslavement, in 2018 the M&R consulted partner organisations, researchers and practitioners working in the field and developed a second document, the *Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking*.
- The year 2019 was devoted to the topic of internal displacement. After different consultations, the M&R Section published the *Pastoral Orientations on Internally Displaced People*.
- On 30 March 2021, the *Pastoral Orientations on Climate Displaced People* were published. This document explains the new challenges posed by the disturbing and dangerous phenomena of climate disruption in many parts of the globe and suggests appropriate pastoral responses.
- Following a cycle of consultations with all the Episcopal Conferences, Catholic organisations and religious congregations, with the aim of offering some guidelines on intercultural migratory pastoral care, the M&R Section on 24 March 2022 published the *Pastoral Orientations on Intercultural Migrant Ministry*. And now, I would like to draw your attention to the main points of this document.

Pastoral Orientations on Intercultural Migrant Ministry

Introduction

The pandemic restrictions contextualised the sense of globalisation in a particular manner. In his Message for the 2021 WDMR, Pope Francis stressed that “the truth however is that we are all in the same boat and called to work together so that there will be no more walls that separate us, no longer others, but only a single ‘we’, encompassing all of humanity. Thus I would like to use this World Day to address a twofold appeal, first to the Catholic faithful and then all the men and women of our world, to advance together towards an ever wider ‘we’.”

In the Preface, the Pope states that “These Pastoral Orientations offer proposals for intercultural pastoral ministry, transmitting in concrete terms my invitation in the Encyclical ‘*Fratelli Tutti*’ to develop a culture of encounter”.

Structure:

- Preface by Pope Francis: the document in the context of His teaching (*Fratelli Tutti*)
 - Introduction: general presentation and genesis of the document
 - Structure of each point: 1 general challenge followed by at least 3 pastoral responses
 - 7 main challenges, in the world and in the Church
 - Conclusions
- Annex: best practices, M&R website

Acknowledging and Overcoming Fear:

Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. (Gn 46:3)

Challenge: negative perceptions of migrants, fear and xenophobic reactions.

Pastoral responses:

- Addressing people's fears and helping them to overcome their apprehension by improving their knowledge about migrants and refugees, their stories, the root causes, and the effects of their migration.
- Engaging media in advertising the good practices of welcome and hospitality, as well as stories of migrants and refugees who are successfully contributing to the integral human development of the hosting communities.
- Adopting positive language in public discourse concerning migrants, fostering empathy and solidarity with them and engaging youth and young adults towards a real change of the migration narrative.

Promoting Encounter:

Challenge: Catholic communities often find themselves unprepared and disoriented by the arrival of many migrants and refugees.

Pastoral responses:

- Engaging proactively in fighting inequalities and promoting a cultural shift from a throwaway culture to a culture of care and encounter.
- Upholding the understanding of migration as an interconnected global phenomenon offers opportunities for enriching encounters and cultural growth for all people involved.
- Preparing people for life-giving encounters that benefit from all venues of Catholic education: schools, catechism classes, youth groups, faith formation, and others.
- Encouraging parishes to create spaces of encounter where both locals and newcomers have opportunities to share their experiences and celebrate their cultural diversity.
- Training pastoral agents as "bridge builders," promoters of enriching dialogue and sharing among locals and newcomers.

Listening and Being Compassionate:

Challenge: because of suspicion, local Catholic communities may fail to listen to migrants' and refugees' experiences and needs, preventing empathy and compassion.

Pastoral responses:

- Promoting a culture of care towards migrants and refugees who are profoundly wounded, with special attention to minors.
- Inviting parishioners to be personally involved in programmes of assistance catering to migrants and refugees in need, to foster empathy and compassion.
- Including counselling and listening skills as part of the training of pastoral agents involved in migrant ministry.

Living Our Catholicity:

Challenge: A tendency towards pre-packaged uniformity and nationalistic rhetoric within some local Catholic communities clashes with the true meaning of the Church, which is in nature universal.

Pastoral responses:

- Enhancing the understanding of the Church as communion in diversity and embracing an authentic multiplicity of cultural and religious expression within local communities.
- Give space to all cultural and religious expressions aiming at enriching each other.
- Providing adequate pastoral care to all the faithful of different ethnic backgrounds as the first step of a long-term integration process.
- Training pastoral agents to serve a Church that is Catholic by nature and ever more universal in its living expression.

Migrants as a Blessing:

Challenge: in some dioceses, the continuity of sacramental and pastoral services already depends on priests coming from abroad. Nonetheless, this is seldomly understood as a blessing and a propitious occasion to make ecclesial life flourish.

Pastoral responses:

- The understanding of migrants as a blessing and an occasion to open up to God's grace can energise ecclesial life, as migrants can be agents of new revitalising dynamics.
- Empowering migrants to be able to recognise their own richness as a valuable contribution to the life of local communities.
- Preparing Catholic migrants to be real missionaries in the countries of arrival, witnesses of their faith and heralds of the Gospel.
- Envisioning new pastoral structures, i.e., intercultural parishes, where pastoral programmes aim to build one community enriched by diversity and develop innovative pastoral programmes that take into account the significant presence of second-generation children and youth.

Fulfilling the Evangelising Mission:

Challenge: Many Catholic communities perceive the arrival of migrants and refugees of other faiths or with no faith as a threat to their established religious and cultural identity.

Pastoral responses:

- Promoting a missiological reflection on migration as an opportunity to consider how the Church can embrace everyone, and disseminate its results among the faithful.
- Preparing local faithful for encounters with migrants and refugees of other faiths or with no faith.
- Fostering welcoming attitudes and charitable services towards them as an opportune way of evangelisation.
- Enhancing the ability of local communities to engage in interreligious dialogue and

including the mission to migrants and refugees in pastoral programmes.

Cooperating towards Communion:

Challenge: Actions to assist migrants and refugees by different Catholic organisations are often fragmentary and uncoordinated.

Pastoral responses:

- Ensuring the coordination of efforts of all Catholic agencies engaged in migrant ministry through regular meetings.
- Fostering cooperation among local Churches in the countries of departure, transit and arrival of migrants and refugees.
- Strengthening ecumenical and interreligious cooperation, both in prayer and in action, starting from promoting joint pastoral planning.
- Promoting joint actions and cooperation among different faith-based organisations, civil society organisations, governments, and international agencies.

POIMM Conclusion:

- Enriching dialogue among cultures is necessary for a world of peace and prosperity: to build bridges with newcomers, by promoting a real “culture of encounter”.
- Interculturality as an essential element in the realisation of the Kingdom of God: Catholic communities are invited to see the presence of many migrants and refugees of other faiths or with no faith as a providential opportunity to fulfil the evangelising mission of the Church through witness and charity.
- POIMM are addressed mainly to the Churches that welcome migrants, but migrant ministry shall be synergically harmonised between the Churches of origin and transit.
- Promoting effective cooperation among all entities and communities and creating adequate space for intercultural pastoral care as "the" pastoral care of the Catholic Church.

Working Group “Catholic Response For Ukraine” (cr4u.info)

On Friday, 4 March 2022, the M&R organised a meeting with representatives from Caritas Internationalis, Caritas Europe, the Jesuit Refugee Service Europe, the International Catholic Migration Commission and two Regional Bishop Conferences in Europe - COMECE and CCEE. The participants decided to establish a “Catholic Response For Ukraine” (CR4U) Working Group to coordinate their actions and formulate a strategic plan for the coordination of efforts.

The strategic plan would be aimed at:

1. coordinating the initiatives already put in place (or to be put in place soon) by the different Catholic actors;
2. identifying new actions deemed necessary and distributing the specific responsibilities.

The participants also decided to engage additional major Catholic actors in the Working Group activities, and share key data and information with an even wider group of organisations,

including the members of the Migration Working Group of the Forum of Catholic-inspired organisations. These ecclesial bodies and organizations have pledged to share information on their respective ongoing efforts to relieve the suffering of those affected by the senseless invasion of Ukraine – both the local populations and displaced people in the country and those Ukrainians who have sought refuge in both neighbouring and far-distant countries.

On the basis of the shared strategic plan, which identified five major areas of action, five Task Forces were created:

1. Humanitarian assistance: Caritas Internationalis supported by Caritas Europa, due to their members' network and extensive humanitarian response in all the affected countries, took responsibility to coordinate this action, with the cooperation of the Jesuit Refugee Service, Malteser International, and other relevant actors.
2. Advocacy: COMECE coordinates the EU-level advocacy, while ICMC offers to assist with global advocacy in this regard. Other task force members are JRS, Caritas Internationalis and Caritas Europa.
3. Data gathering and analysis: ICMC took responsibility to coordinate the actions of Malteser International, JRS, Caritas Internationalis and Caritas Europa.
4. Spiritual care: CCEE coordinates this activity as well as engagement with national hierarchies in all the European countries.
5. Communications: Caritas Internationalis coordinates this group, assisted by ICMC, JRS, COMECE, CCEE and Caritas Europa.

Task Force for humanitarian aid

The main goal of this task force is to foster cooperation among all the Catholic actors engaged in the delivery of humanitarian services in Ukraine and neighbouring countries, catering to vulnerable locals and internally displaced in Ukraine, displaced people crossing the borders, asylum seekers and refugees in neighbouring countries, people resettled in other countries.

- Identifying engaged Catholic actors
- Connecting with coordinators of identifying Catholic actors
- Promoting the sharing of information among actors
- Enhancing the coordination of efforts
- Fostering the collaboration among Catholic actors
- Scouting for possibilities of donations and grants
- Providing regular information to the other Task Forces

Task Force for Advocacy

The main goal of this task force is to foster cooperation among all the Catholic actors engaged in advocating for vulnerable people in Ukraine, neighbouring countries and other countries, both at the EU level (COMECE) and UN level (ICMC).

- Connecting with coordinators of Catholic actors and other NGOs engaged in advocacy

- Monitoring and assessing the political and legal framework
- Identifying common concerns for advocacy
- Promoting the joint action of Catholic actors
- Providing regular information to the other Task Forces

In the area of advocacy, many of Working Group members joined other faith-inspired organizations to issue a *Statement on the arrival of refugees from Ukraine and the application of the Temporary Protection Directive*, related to the urgent decision made by the European Council “... to activate the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) and to introduce operational guidelines for external border management to facilitate border crossings at the EU-Ukraine borders.” They welcome[d] the mobilisation and flexibility of EU funding to be allocated towards the needs of Ukrainian refugees and found it “... encouraging that the EU Member States have taken a pragmatic approach to help the people concerned, for example, by allowing people to choose which EU Member State to go to.” They urged that “... all persons leaving Ukraine in need of protection should be allowed to avail themselves of protection – irrespective of their origin, colour of skin ... or residence status.”¹

Task Force for Data Collection

Fostering the sharing of relevant data among all the Catholic actors engaged in the different task forces is the main goal of this task force.

- Collecting data from official sources
- Preparing regular summaries for all Catholic actors
- Collecting and sharing data on services provided by the different actors
- Providing regular information to the other Task Forces

Task Force for Communication

The main goal of this task force is to foster cooperation among all Catholic actors as far as external communication is concerned.

- Connecting all the communication offices of the Catholic actors engaged
- Suggesting the right terminology to be adopted
- Promoting joint campaigns on common concerns (i.e. human trafficking campaign)
- Promoting joint relevant gestures (i.e. moments of prayers in different places)
- Collecting the documentation of the actions and increasing their visibility
- Providing regular information to the other Task Forces

¹<https://reliefweb.int/report/moldova/statement-arrival-refugees-ukraine-and-application-temporary-protectiondirective>, 23 March 2022.

Task Force for Religious Assistance

The main goal of this task force is to foster cooperation among all Catholic actors so as to ensure adequate religious assistance to vulnerable people in Ukraine, and people displaced in neighbouring countries and other countries.

- Connecting with local Churches to assess the needs for religious assistance
- Promoting the engagement of priests, religious and lay missionaries in the religious assistance
- Collecting and sharing the official statement of Bishops and Bishops Conferences
- Promoting joint appeals by local Churches
- Providing regular information to the other Task Forces

Conclusion

The Catholic Church's response to the contemporary migration flows aims at transmitting in concrete terms the invitation of *Fratelli tutti* to develop a culture of encounter. “No one must be excluded. God’s plan is essentially inclusive and gives priority to those living on the existential peripheries. Among them are many migrants and refugees, displaced persons, and victims of trafficking. [...] Thanks to them, we have the chance to know better our world and its beautiful diversity. We can grow in our common humanity and build together an ever greater sense of togetherness.” (Message for the 2022 WDMR). This common vocation of ours foresees multifaceted cooperation of all entities and communities in order to strengthen the multiplicity of the Church’s members as a wealth to be appreciated and to enlighten the contributions of those displaced as an opportunity for a more robust and visible expression of the catholicity of our faith.

In some Episcopal Conferences, the Commissions for Social pastoral care, Justice and Peace and/or Caritas’ presidency are also responsible for the pastoral care of migrants and refugees. Many of you are already collaborating with us. In order to strengthen this collaboration, I would like to emphasise just a couple of points.

- You can support the work of the M&R Section by disseminating the materials and the documents at the local level.
- As the M&R is actively engaged in disseminating good news about the response of the Catholic Church to people on the move through its social media and on its website, you can send us stories, photographs as well as reports on your initiative catering to migrants and refugees.