

Ethics in Action

Statement on Migration

June 2, 2017

Migration is a shared condition of all humanity. We have all been strangers in a strange land. All humanity lives today as a result of migration, by themselves or their ancestors. Migration is a matter sometimes of choice, often of need, and always an inalienable right.

All helpless people deserve to be helped. Offering such help is a commandment and a blessing shared among all religions. Accordingly, as Pope Francis reminds us, our duties to migrants include “to welcome”, “to protect”, “to promote”, and “to integrate.”

Most people want to reside and prosper in the land of their birth. This is natural. Yet to do so they require safety, food security, economic opportunity, freedom from environmental distress, and prospects for their children’s future. Forced migration is the result of wars, poverty, and environmental degradation and climate change that compel people to leave their homelands. Because of these factors, we are currently facing the largest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War. And the face of the migrant is increasingly a youthful face—for the first time in history half of all refugees are children and youth, and one in every 200 children in the world today is a refugee. Preventing the mass forced displacement of peoples has become one of the great ethical challenges of the 21st century.

The great religious traditions all emphasize the dignity of each person and the unity and common destiny of the entire human race in our common home. They affirm that “in case of need all things are common”, because “every man is my brother”—this includes the provision of basic necessities such as food, housing, security, etc.¹ Accordingly, each faith calls upon individuals and communities to welcome, assist, and protect the refugees, migrants, and the displaced in our midst. Each religion provides a foundation for building a world of respect, solidarity, and safety for migrants.

Responding to the fundamental causes, the deep solutions to forced migration are peace, prosperity, and sustainability. Pope Paul VI declared that “development is the new name of peace.” We embrace that wisdom, with the restatement that today, “sustainable development

¹ Pope Francis addressed these issues in Lampedusa in 2013 (http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130708_omelia-lampedusa.html) and expanded them in Lesbos in 2016 when he spoke about the Good Samaritan in the context of the refugee crisis (http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/april/documents/papa-francesco_20160416_lesvos-rifugiati.html).

is the new name of peace.” We recognized that frequent human-caused ecological disasters constitute a new and growing threat in our own time, and a spur to mass migration. We affirmed a moral obligation to welcome refugees, and that such an obligation extends in particular to the countries responsible for causing the wars and environmental disasters that forced people to move in the first place. We recognized that children in particular need a home, a safe haven, a decent education, and an appropriate response to any physical and mental health challenges. We also affirmed the need to prevent the emergence of new technological refugees given the potential effects of technology on employment and work in the near future.

Overall, we called for an approach based on sustainable and integral human development—the fullest development of each person and all people, allowing them to become active agents of their own development. This includes the full integration of migrants into the economic, social, political, and cultural life of the nation or their choice for a speedy and safe return to their homelands as circumstances permit.

This approach also encompasses legal guarantees of immigrants to primary rights, including the founding of institutions favorable to what Pope Paul VI called the "organic participation" of the various social forces in managing a community. Moreover, for Pope Francis, there are responsibilities related to protecting, examining and developing the values that underpin the deep, stable, unity of a society—and, more fundamentally, create a horizon of public peace, understood as St. Augustine’s "tranquility in order".

Ethics in Action pledges the following steps:

First, to forge a partnership with the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, academicians of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, and other experts, to provide scientific evidence on the roots of today’s forced migrations in wars, extreme poverty, social exclusion, climate change, and environmental degradation. We pledge to be guided by best practices on mental health and trauma, legal protections, education, and well-being of asylum seekers, refugees, and irregular migrants in varied destinations.

Second, to call upon all stakeholders—religious communities, civil society, business and government—to take concrete steps to end wars, stop the arms trade, overcome poverty, and halt manmade environmental degradation and climate change, as guided by *Laudato Si’*, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Third, to work with the United Nations to support the intergovernmental negotiations on a new UN Migration Compact to address large movements of refugees and migrants.

Fourth, policies on migration should be prudent, but prudence does not mean exclusion. On the contrary, governments should evaluate, “with wisdom and foresight, the extent to which their country is in a position, without prejudice to the common good of citizens, to offer a decent life

to migrants, especially those truly in need of protection.”² Migration policy should be based on a co-responsibility between origin, transit and destination countries—this includes distribution mechanisms for refugees based on international agreements (ideally within the United Nations) and compensation by the rich countries for the first-entry countries that carry the largest burden.

Fifth, to encourage and promote humanitarian corridors targeting the most vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees, especially in nations that have space. One such positive example is the program created by the Governor of San Luis in Argentina.

Sixth, to help religious leaders of all major faiths to proclaim the common value of all religions in extending generous solidarity toward migrants and refugees, including by acting together. For example, the “Faith over Fear” campaign of Religions for Peace and UNICEF seeks to mobilize religious communities to welcome and support refugees. The Alliance of Civilizations is also called upon to prioritize this concern.

Seventh, to support the Holy See’s new Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in its mission to help the Church accompany refugees and migrants, and its institutions to protect and support them in their daily struggles (see Annex).

Eighth, to mobilize key stakeholders—the UN, development leaders, businesses, high net-worth individuals, and religious communities—to mobilize and direct billions of dollars of new financial resources to achieve the SDGs, including the protection of migrants and the end of human trafficking and modern slavery.

Ninth, to promote moral education—among children and adults alike—to inculcate the norms, virtues, and values of empathy, compassion, solidarity, and care for our common humanity and common home, which incorporates obligations towards migrants and refugees.

Tenth, to encourage businesses to provide decent work and employment opportunities for newcomers so that they may in turn support their families in dignity and security and contribute to their community. This includes finding creative and effective solutions in using technological advances in service of the common good.

Eleventh, to encourage governments to increase budgets for peace and support for sustainable development, not for arms and military spending—the best response to the migrant crisis is to cultivate solidarity for people and care for the planet, not wars.

² Pope Francis, Address to Members of the Diplomatic Corps, January 9, 2017 (http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/january/documents/papa-francesco_20170109_corpo-diplomatico.html).