

“Dear Brothers and Sisters, Faith assures us that in a mysterious way the Kingdom of God is already present here on earth (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 39). Yet in our own time, we are saddened to see the obstacles and opposition it encounters. Violent conflicts and all-out wars continue to tear humanity apart; injustices and discrimination follow one upon the other; economic and social imbalances on a local or global scale prove difficult to overcome.

And above all **it is the poorest of the poor and the most disadvantaged who pay the price**. The most economically advanced societies are witnessing a growing trend towards extreme individualism which, combined with a utilitarian mentality and reinforced by the media, is producing a **“globalization of indifference.”**

In this scenario, migrants, refugees, displaced persons and victims of trafficking have become emblems of exclusion. In addition to the hardships that their condition entails, they are often looked down upon and considered the source of all society’s ills. That attitude is an alarm bell warning of the moral decline we will face if we continue to give ground to the throw-away culture.

In fact, **if it continues, anyone who does not fall within the accepted norms of physical, mental and social well-being is at risk of marginalization and exclusion**. For this reason, the presence of migrants and refugees – and of vulnerable people in general – is an invitation to recover some of those essential dimensions of our Christian existence and our humanity that risk being overlooked in a prosperous society.

That is why it is not just about migrants. When we show concern for them, we also show concern for ourselves, for everyone; in taking care of them, we all grow; in listening to them, we also give voice to a part of ourselves that we may keep hidden because it is not well regarded nowadays. “Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid!” (Mt 14:27). It is not just about migrants: it is also about our fears. The signs of meanness we see around us heighten “our fear of ‘the other,’ the unknown, the marginalized, the foreigner... We see this today in particular, faced with the arrival of migrants and refugees knocking on our door in search of protection, security and a better future. To some extent, the fear is legitimate, also because the preparation for this encounter is lacking” (Homily in Sacrofano, 15 February 2019). But the problem is not that we have doubts and fears. The problem is when they condition our way of thinking and acting to the point of making us intolerant, closed and perhaps even – without realizing it – racist.

...Dear brothers and sisters, our response to the challenges posed by contemporary migration can be summed up in four verbs: welcome, protect, promote and integrate. Yet these verbs do not apply only to migrants and refugees. They describe the **Church’s mission to all those living in the existential peripheries**, who need to be welcomed, protected, promoted and integrated. If we put those four verbs into practice, we will help build the city of God and [humanity]. We will promote the integral human development of all people. We will also help the world community to come closer to the goals of sustainable development that it has set for itself and that, lacking such an approach, will prove difficult to achieve.

In a word, it is not only the cause of migrants that is at stake; it is not just about them, but about all of us, and about the present and future of the human family. Migrants, especially those who are most vulnerable, help us to read the “signs of the times.” Through them, the Lord is calling us to conversion, to be set free from exclusivity, indifference and the throw-away culture. Through them, the Lord invites us to embrace fully our Christian life and to contribute, each according to his or her proper vocation, to the building up of a world that is more and more in accord with God’s plan. In expressing this prayerful hope, and through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of the Way, I invoke God’s abundant blessings upon all the world’s migrants and refugees and upon all those who accompany them on their journey.”