

1985

Message

It Is Just My Wish

For World Migrant's Day 1985/86

John Paul II

16 July 1985

Venerable Brothers,

[1044]

Dear Sons and Daughters of the Church,

1. It is my wish that this message for World Migrant's Day which will be celebrated by the particular Churches during the liturgical year, may convey the expression of my affection, my solicitude and my concern for the millions of people involved in one of the most complex and dramatic events in history: migration. This subject merits all our attention and is the cause of much anxiety. Recently, in fact, migration has frequently taken on the inhuman aspect of persecution, be it political, religious, ideological or ethnic; and this impresses its stigma on the faces of the refugees, the deportees, the exiles: men and women, young and old, even children, often tragically deprived of their parents.

It is however a matter of great consolation that the Church is wide awake to the complex variety of the migratory question and so is able to indicate and propose conditions of survival, of life, of work, and above all conditions in which to create an environment characterized by respect for the fundamental rights of man. It is only in such an environment that our brothers and sisters will succeed in overcoming less painfully, the drama of integration, too often a traumatic experience for them, because of their natural reserve, inadequacy to adapt and the fact that they are faced with a society at times hostile, narrow-minded and intolerant towards anything considered to be different or likely to cause social or economic discomfort.

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I wish at the same time to show my appreciation for the numerous legislative and social initiatives already adopted by receiving countries in order to create an atmosphere not only of tolerance but also of understanding and brotherhood. The Episcopal Conferences above all have distinguished themselves by their courageous intervention filled with profound evangelical inspiration.

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In this message I would, however, like to reflect in particular on the wave of dramatic mobility which from a pastoral point of view constitutes a serious problem of Christian life, under the aspect of ecclesial integration.

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2. The Second Vatican Council (cf. *Christus Dominus*, no. 18) emphasized how the diversified human condition assumes even within the ecclesial communion a

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configuration of difficult relationships which only respect for rights and the fulfilment of duties can help to unravel.

To all those who for any reason whatsoever are obliged to live outside their country and their ethnic community, the particular Churches know that they have a duty to give due consideration to the question of their ecclesial integration, while allowing them to exercise their right of freedom (cf. Cost. past. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 58). [1049]

Free, active participation on equal terms with the faithful born in the particular Churches, without time limits or environmental restrictions, constitutes the way towards ecclesial integration for immigrant members of the Church. Being a process of self promotion it is indispensable that these people have the opportunity to understand and evaluate, and are assisted and helped in this, in all that can be assimilated into their existential experience, in the manner and style of their fundamental culture in the pluralism of their identity. The immigrant members of the Church, while freely exercising their rights and duties and being in full ecclesial communion in the particular Churches, feeling themselves Christians and brothers towards all, must be able to remain completely themselves as far as language, culture, liturgy and spirituality, and particular traditions which enriches the Church of God, and which is the result of the dynamic realism of the Incarnation of the Son of God. [1050]

In the sphere of migration, any attempt to accelerate or delay integration, or any insertion whatsoever, especially when inspired by an attitude of nationalistic supremacy, whether political or social, can only suffocate or compromise that desirable plurality of voices, which arises from the right to liberty of integration which the migrant faithful have in every particular Church, in which reciprocal acceptance among the groups forming it, is born from mutual respect for culture. On the strength of this right to integration the specific ecclesiality which the immigrants bring with them from their Churches of origin, does not become a motive of alienation or estrangement from the unity of their own faith, in as much as it is universal, Catholic. In this manner the Catholicity of the Church becomes evident in her ethnic and cultural variety: and this Catholicity implies a complete openness towards others, a readiness to share and live the same ecclesial communion. "For full Catholicity, every nation, every culture has its own part to play in the universal plan of salvation. Every particular tradition, every local Church must remain open and alert to the other Churches and traditions and, at the same time, to universal and Catholic communion; were it to remain closed on itself, it too would run the risk of becoming impoverished". (Ep. Enc. *Slavorum Apostoli*, no. 27). [1051]

In the Encyclical Letter on human work I urged that every effort should be made in order that the phenomenon of migration, should as far as possible, enrich the personal, family and social life of the migrant, "with regard both to the country to which he goes and the country which he leaves" (*Laborem Exercens*, no. 23). Emigrants in fact offer not only the work of their entire life, but very often the richness of their cultures and traditions as well. [1052]

3. The free integration of migrants, its evolution and its completion, is founded in [1053]

the nature of the Church, which is a reality of faith and charity. The particular Churches are in communion in the same Body, the Mystical Body of Christ. They are the Church with various rites, with different liturgical, cultural and religious traditions. They are the Church which sees in her migrant members people to whom every means must be offered to allow them to grow in a life of faith and charity, helping them to consolidate and intensify to the full, their ecclesial life, as when they were in their countries of origin. Therefore the particular Churches will be careful to put at their disposal priest and religious, members of secular institutes, and lay volunteers to offer them an appropriate liturgy, celebrated in their own language and respecting their legitimate customs, the comfort of the word of God announced also in personal or family visits, and they will make the presence of the Church felt in their daily lives, their local communities and their families. Immigrants will in this way feel understood and encouraged in their relations in the social community and at work, with their difficult times of sadness shared as well those of happiness and leisure.

It must be recognized that complications arise from the mingling of languages. [1054]
Nationalities, Christian traditions, cultural values and varying intensity of spiritual life, all of which can render collaboration, understanding, and common perspectives more difficult. Now whilst the complexity of the situation may require great and often heroic dedication and availability, the particular Churches are conscious and certain of the fact that the Holy Spirit will provide them with gifts- and charisms which pastoral action will recognise, foster and develop with joy and with great care.

My thought goes also to the well deserving Institutes of Consecrated Life where [1055]
religious men and women are formed who, given their total dedication to the building up of the Mystical Body of Christ, are well prepared for delicate pastoral work, particularly among those most needy and abandoned immigrants, refugees, deportees, exiles, and the persecuted. Furthermore among those personally involved in mobility, there are often seminarians, priests, religious, consecrated and dedicated lay people who, in the mystery of God's Providence, and with the assistance of the particular Churches in which they find themselves, can become invaluable workers in the pastoral field of migration.

The particular Churches of mainly Catholic and Christian countries and peoples [1056]
must also fulfil the duty, often urgent, of beginning the apostolate of first missionary evangelization among those large numbers of immigrants who are not Christian. It can happen that missionaries who are familiar with the language, the culture, the values and traditions of the countries from which these immigrants come, may also have been expelled; these can become apostles ready to offer their capabilities and availability to the responsible Bishops.

4. I have outlined briefly the religious aspect of that immense human and historical [1057]
reality which is migration in our times, in the light of the transcendent design of God, in order to discover its place in the plan of salvation carried out in the Church and by the Church.

I take this opportunity to recommend that increasing efforts be made to evaluate the [1058]

human, political and sociological characteristics of the complex phenomenon of migration, particularly in its dramatic and disturbingly negative aspects. Politicians and sociologists' have contributed and can continue to contribute largely, to reduce and as far as possible eliminate the causes. The Church, for her part, has not failed and will not fail to work with even greater effort in order that her own charitable work may harmonize with the efforts of the civil society.

May this message of mine help to overcome those obstacles which in the field of migration, prevent not only a just integration but also a more authentic evangelical brotherhood (cf. At 2, 42-48; 4, 32-35). May it contribute to the unification of immigrants and the indigenous population of the country of arrival, rendering it possible for all to make resound in their own manner the one and the same expression of faith and love in Jesus Christ, Redeemer of mankind! [1059]

To you all, dear Brothers and Sisters, my Apostolic Blessing, From the Vatican, 16th July of the year 1985, the seventh of my pontificate.

John Paul II

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