

1969

Apostolic Letter in the Form of Motu Proprio

Pastoralis Migratorum Cura

Establishing the New Norms for the Care of Migrants

*Paul VI
(Excerpts)*

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The pastoral care of migrants has always attracted the motherly attention and the solicitude of the Church. In fact, it has never ceased throughout the centuries to help in every way those who, like Christ in exile in Egypt with the family of Nazareth, were compelled to emigrate to lands far away from their country. [329]

A luminous testimony of this loving care of the Church is the Apostolic Constitution *Exsul Familia*¹, published by Our Predecessor Pius XII of venerated memory on August 1, 1952. As regards the problems of migration it must be regarded as the fundamental pontifical document of recent times. [330]

The gravity and the importance of the phenomenon did not escape the Fathers of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council who, for the purpose of organizing in a more adequate and efficient manner the spiritual assistance to migrants, examined the question in all its aspects, particularly from the religious point of view, since it is closely linked with the purpose proper of the Church which is working for the salvation of souls. [331]

In fact, the ecumenical Council, after recommending special solicitude toward the faithful who, on account of their way or condition of life, cannot sufficiently make use of the common and ordinary pastoral services of parish priests or are quite cut off from them, as is the case for so many migrants, exiles and refugees pressing the episcopal conferences and especially the national ones to pay energetic attention to the more pressing problems confronting these persons and to provide adequately by common agreement and united efforts and with suitable means and directives for their spiritual assistance.² [332]

And again it is the Council that addresses these recommendations to the bishops: Let them manifest their concern for all, no matter what their age, condition or nationality, be they natives, strangers or foreigners.³ [333]

Now, it is easy to understand that it is not possible to fulfill effectively this pastoral care if the spiritual patrimony and the special culture of the migrants is not taken into due account. In this respect, the national language in which they express their thoughts, their mentality and their very religious life is of great importance. Naturally, it must be avoided that these diversities and adaptations in accordance with the various ethnical groups, even though legitimate, result in harm to that unity to which all are called in the Church, as St. Paul admonishes: For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free (Cor.I,13-14); for you are all one in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3, 28). [334]

It was therefore necessary that this Apostolic See, making the concern of the ecumenical Council its own, should offer to the bishops and to the episcopal conferences the opportunity of carrying out better the spiritual assistance to the groups of migrants, who are not only entrusted, like the other faithful, to their pastoral ministry but who, owing to the special circumstances in which they live also demand particular care, precisely in keeping with their needs. [335]

On the other hand the conditions, considerably changed, which the migratory phenomenon presents today have made the necessity ever more urgent to review the norms previously issued by the Apostolic See as regards this sector, adapting them and bringing them up to date in accordance with the new circumstances. That is to say that it is necessary to renew and improve the organization and the structure of the pastoral care for migrants so that it may usefully meld the manifold experiences of the past and the collaboration of all. For this purpose the bishops, on the basis of the various circumstances of time and place, can have recourse to some special forms of apostolate already confirmed in pastoral practice. And since the very vast field of apostolate in favor of migrants demands the proper understanding of all and the active union of all their forces, it is absolutely necessary that, in addition to the priests who are directly engaged in this ministry the religious and the laymen should also collaborate in it, in unity of purpose. [336]

Therefore, having thoroughly examined the matter in all its aspects and after having attentively considered the wishes of the episcopal conferences and of the members of the Sacred Congregation for Bishops, by virtue of our apostolic authority we establish that the pastoral norms relative to the spiritual assistance of migrants and contained in the Apostolic Constitution *Exsul Familia* be the object of a timely revision on the part of the Sacred Congregation for Bishops, to which we therefore give the mandate to promulgate these norms by means of a special Instruction. Notwithstanding any disposition to the contrary. [337]

Given in Rome, at St. Peter on the fifteenth of August, the feast of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin, of the year 1969, the seventh of our pontificate.

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1 AAS XLIV, 1952, p.649 and following.

2 Decree *Christus Dominus*, no.18.

3 *Ibid.*, no.16.

Source: Motu Proprio “Pastoralis Migratorum Cura” (Paul VI). New Norms for the Care of Migrants *Pastoralis Migratorum*: Apostolic Letter Motu Proprio Pope Paul VI (August 15, 1969): 1-3.
