

## **MESSAGE FOR MIGRANTS, REFUGEES ON INTERCULTURAL INTEGRATION**

VATICAN CITY, DEC 9, 2004 (VIS) - The Message of the Holy Father John Paul II for the 91st World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2005 was made public today in English, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and German. Dated November 24, 2004, it focuses on the theme "Intercultural Integration."

The Pope begins by quoting the Instruction "Erga migrantes caritas Christi" (The love of Christ towards migrants) which notes that "integration ... is a lengthy process that aims to shape societies and cultures, making them more and more a reflection of the multi-faceted gifts of God to human beings. In this process the migrant is intent on taking the necessary steps towards social inclusion, such as learning the national language and complying with the laws and requirements at work, so as to avoid the occurrence of exasperated differentiation."

In the Message, which focuses on implications of the intercultural dimension of integration, the Pope writes: "By introducing themselves into a new environment, immigrants often become more aware of who they are, especially when they miss the persons and values that are important to them. In our society, characterized by the global phenomenon of migration, individuals must seek the proper balance between respect for their own identity and recognition of that of others. Indeed, it is necessary to recognize the legitimate plurality of cultures present in a country, in harmony with the preservation of law and order, on which depend social peace and the freedom of citizens."

He emphasizes that "it is essential to exclude on the one hand assimilationist models that tend to transform those who are different into their own copy, and on the other, models of marginalization of immigrants, with attitudes that can even arrive at the choice of apartheid." There is need for "dialogue between people of different cultures in a context of pluralism that goes beyond mere tolerance and reaches sympathy. ... We should encourage instead a mutual fecundation of cultures."

Turning to the duties of Christians in this context, the Holy Father writes that they "can also recognize in the various cultures the presence of 'precious elements of religion and humanity'. ... It will, of course, be necessary to combine the principle of respect for cultural differences with the protection of values that are in common and inalienable, because they are founded on universal human rights."

Christians must continue to proclaim the Gospel of Christ, "in respect for the conscience of others," he states. "They must above all listen to the cry for help that comes from a multitude of migrants and refugees, but they must then foster, with active commitment, prospects of hope that will herald the dawn of a more open and supportive society. It is up to them in the first place to make out God's presence in history, even when everything still seems to be enveloped in darkness."