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Prot. N. 7870/2014/M

MESSAGE
2nd ASIA PACIFIC CONGRESS ON MIGRATION, FAMILY AND MISSION
Taichung, Taiwan (September 25th – 28th, 2014)

Dear brothers and sisters!

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincerest greetings to all of you present at the 2nd Asia Pacific Congress on Migration, Family and Mission. I wish to greet all of the participants gathered together, for you are those who share the important mission of ministering to the “people on the move” – a mission that is ever more present and requiring ever more attention in the modern-day world.

The Instruction of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* begins with this paraphrase of the words of Saint Paul the Apostle from his second letter to the Corinthians (*cfr.* 5,14):

“The love of Christ towards migrants urges us to look afresh at their problems, which are to be met with today all over the world” (n.1).

The document is a reminder that migration is an important pastoral issue for the entire Church, and is a matter that must be continually re-addressed. Yes, the context and situation may differ from place to place and from decade to decade, but the Church continues to play an important role in assisting migrants in keeping their faith and their culture, while at the same time assisting the host countries in opening up to the culture of the migrants’ countries of origin by bringing together both migrant and local communities.

On the one hand, the migratory trend of the Asia Pacific region places into discussion the welcoming communities. The local Churches are obliged not only to review their own proposals of evangelization, but the faith of its members is also put “to the test”, in particular at the moment of proclaiming the Gospel to others. It is a call to propose fresh pastoral initiatives that include the welcoming and meeting of the incoming migrants, so as to enter into positive interaction with them. It often must include the overcoming of preexistent prejudices and biases¹, as well as the need to see migration as an opportunity to discover new forms of presence and proclamation. It is a call for a supportive response from the Church who, meanwhile announcing Jesus Christ, is also an instrument of charity called to stand by those who are suffering and in need of solidarity.

On the other hand, the Asia Pacific migration phenomenon also places into discussion the migrants themselves, as well as those spiritually accompanying them. Obviously, it is not enough to be called Christian. There is a need to “reawaken (...) the

¹ Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, Instruction *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, no. 100.

*enthusiasm and courage that motivated the first Christian communities to be undaunted heralds of the Gospel's newness"*² - as Pope Benedict XVI wrote in one of his last messages for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees. The vast potential of such a migratory movement requires the fervid zeal of faith of those who migrate. Here, the role of the pastoral agent among immigrants plays a key role: meanwhile safeguarding the migrants' cultural and religious identity with respect and a profound sense of value, the pastoral agent should bring them to dialogue with the local Church so as to guide them on the process of authentic integration. In all of this, a missionary and evangelizing spirit is of utmost importance, done in an atmosphere of a clear testimony to authentic Christian life³.

The family undoubtedly plays a fundamental and basic role. As the centrepiece of society, founded on the marriage between a man and a woman, the family must be always considered and protected, and its stability never undermined. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis notes that in the case of the family, "*the weakening of these bonds is particularly serious because the family is the fundamental cell of society, where we learn to live with others despite our differences and to belong to one another; it is also the place where parents pass on the faith to their children*"⁴.

In the case of human mobility, there exists a particular vulnerability of the family, and all those involved: not only for those who leave, but also for those who remain at home. At times, migration can even have devastating effect on the family. In addition to the negative effects of family separation, migrants have to face the consequences of laws and politics aimed at limiting their movement. The Church's pastoral care of human mobility continues to underline Her genuine commitment "*not only in favour of the individual (...), but also of his family, which is a place and resource of the culture of life and a factor for the integration of values*"⁵. In order to promote the harmonious and integral development of the migrant family, the Church's effort ensures a real possibility of inclusion and participation.

Therefore, I wish all of the participants of this 2nd Asia Pacific Congress the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that this meeting may lead to new and fresh resolutions in the pastoral care of migrants. May the spirit of welcome and cooperation between you be reflected in the development of new initiatives and approaches.

To all those present, I invoke God's blessing!

Antonio Maria Card. Vegliò
President

Fr. Gabriele Bentoglio, CS
Under-Secretary

² BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees* 2012.

³ Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, *Instruction Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, no. 78.

⁴ FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 66.

⁵ BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees* 2007.