

7th World Congress in Migration and Refugees

“Cooperation and Development in the Pastoral Care of Migrants”



The Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrant and Itinerant People had organized the 7th World Congress in Migration and Refugees with a theme: Cooperation and Development in the Pastoral Care of Migrants. The congress is being held every five years. The recent congress was held on November 17 to 21, 2014 at Urbaniana University in Rome.

Gathering together nearly 300 participants, which include delegates from Bishops' Conferences, commissions and Church structures and partners from over 90 countries. Fr. Eliseo Napiere, MSP, Fr. Joy Tajonera, MM, and Rose Lin joined the congress in behalf of the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People of the Chinese Regional Bishops' Conference.

The objective of the Congress was to reflect upon the current migration situation that so strongly marks modern-day society, and to seek and propose a renewed Catholic pastoral approach to the phenomenon within the Church at international, regional and local levels.

The pastoral care of the Catholic Church, expressed in specific programs and plans of action, takes into consideration the particular situation of economic migrants, who live between the realities of uprooting and that of integration. Pastoral programs concern the spiritual search of the sense of life, experiences of welcome, sharing and reconciliation, the proclamation of the Gospel, the Liturgy, the celebration of the Sacraments. At the same time, the pastoral solicitude also cares towards basic needs of migrant workers such as legal assistance in the regularization process of their status, the defence and the promotion of their dignity, decent jobs and housing. Christian communities continue to be spaces of hope and action,

advocating on behalf of migrants (particularly children, unaccompanied minors, women and persons with disabilities), that raise awareness, protect and extend the necessary assistance, whatever their status.

Presentations, discussions and sharing of experiences helped to address the issue of the migrants' family with all positive aspects that contribute to strengthen and promote fruitful human relationships, which are the basis and the core of all societies. Emphasis has been given on family separation, caused by the lack of adequate migration policies, which is especially challenging in countries with a large diaspora.

Furthermore, the feminization of migration is a new characteristic. Migrant women are no longer moving within processes of family reunification mainly, but also as bread-winners. Migration, therefore, can be an instrument of empowerment for women but also a threat when criminal nets take advantage of their vulnerability and force them into smuggling, trafficking, and even prostitution and labor exploitation.

Similarly, young migrants carry a great potential in building bridges of cooperation between societies towards development. The pastoral care of young migrants concentrates on their religious and integral formation, assisting them to be active bridges between cultures, both for the benefit of society and Christian communities.

Migration continues to be a sign of modern times, deeply marked by growing fear and lack of hospitality. In this regard, the centrality of the human person and the respect for his/her dignity are of even greater importance, preceding any religious, ethnic, social or cultural differences.

The participants of the Meeting encourage all actors, including civil society and governments, to work towards more comprehensive and just immigration policies, fully implementing international conventions to guarantee job opportunities and better living conditions, to prevent exploitation and/or trafficking of migrant workers.

The participants appeal to the responsibility of the whole international Community to contribute to the common good and to the universality of human rights, underlining the need for a positive change in attitude towards migrants.

Finally, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People and the participants recommend collaborative action amongst all Church structures in the countries of origin, transit and destination to implement the considerations and conclusions of the Congress, which will be published.