



Since being chosen by the papal conclave on March 13, 2013, Pope Francis's papacy has been marked by solicitude for the poor and respect for the sanctity of life. These themes have naturally led the Holy Father to speak of the experiences of migrants, refugees and newcomers and to decry the perilous, degrading and intolerable conditions which they must often endure. Pope Francis has inveighed against the mistreatment of migrants, and returned repeatedly to migration in his writings on other topics, including his encyclical *On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si)* and the apostolic exhortation *Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)*. In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis linked the issues of climate change, poverty and migration, writing:

"There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation. They are not recognized by international conventions as refugees; they bear the loss of the lives they have left behind, without enjoying any legal protection whatsoever. Sadly, there is widespread indifference to such suffering... Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded."

The Holy Father has also demanded that the humanity of migrants be honored in his messages on the annual World Day of Migrants and Refugees, his speech at the 7th annual World Congress for the Pastoral Care of Migrants, and various sermons, addresses, and statements.

In June 2013, Pope Francis took his first official trip outside of Rome to the island of Lampedusa in Sicily, where he celebrated mass to commemorate the thousands of migrants who had died crossing the Mediterranean. In his homily, he explained that he chose to visit Lampedusa in order "to pray, to make a gesture of closeness, but also to reawaken our consciences so that what happened would not be repeated." He thanked the people of Lampedusa for demonstrating solidarity and resisting the temptation to slide into "the globalization of indifference," which he said has made persons accustomed to the suffering of others so that "we are no longer attentive to the world in which we live... and we are unable to care for one another." To combat this indifference, the Holy Father invoked the theme of brotherhood, as he has often done when speaking about migrants. "Where is your brother?" he asked, referencing the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis. The question, he continued, "is addressed to each one of us" because our migrant brothers and sisters sought "a better place for themselves and for their families – but they found death." In this homily and in other statements, the Holy Father has invited his listeners

to treat migrants with acceptance and solidarity, to empathize with them and to recognize their value and human potential.

Since the start of his papacy on March 13, 2013, Pope Francis has emphasized his desire for “a poor Church for the poor” and respect for the sanctity of all life. These themes have naturally led the Holy Father to speak on the experiences of migrants, refugees and newcomers. The Holy Father has decried many of the conditions driving migration and experienced by vulnerable populations, inveighed against the world’s lack of response and indifference to their suffering, and called for solidarity with migrants, who he characterizes as our brothers and sisters. His remarks on migration are drawn from a number of sources, including his encyclical *On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si)* and the apostolic exhortation *Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)*. He has also written annual messages for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, given a speech at the 7th Annual World Congress for the Pastoral Care of Migrants, and made numerous statements before diverse audiences, including refugee and government groups.

Though the Holy Father often highlights the connections between issues like migration, poverty, development and global power structures, in *Evangelii Gaudium* (#210) and elsewhere, he addresses migration issues directly:

“Migrants present a particular challenge for me, since I am the pastor of a Church without frontiers, a Church which considers herself mother to all. For this reason, I exhort all countries to a generous openness which, rather than fearing the loss of local identity, will prove capable of creating new forms of cultural synthesis. How beautiful are those cities which overcome paralysing mistrust, integrate those who are different and make this very integration a new factor of development! How attractive are those cities which, even in their architectural design, are full of spaces which connect, relate and favor the recognition of others!”

In framing migration through the lens of Catholic social teaching, Pope Francis places particular emphasis on what he has termed “the globalization of indifference,” and its opposite — solidarity and the culture of encounter. He is also particularly concerned with the causes of migrant flows and human trafficking.

The Globalization of Indifference

In his homily at Lampedusa in July 2013 on his first official trip as pontiff, the Holy Father lamented:

So many of us, even including myself, are disoriented, we are no longer attentive to the world in which we live, we don’t care, we don’t protect that which God has created for all, and we are unable to care for one another. And when this disorientation assumes worldwide dimensions, we arrive at tragedies like the one we have seen.

He was referencing the crisis in the Mediterranean which, though it had not yet reached its current critical levels, was costing hundreds of migrant lives. “Who is responsible for the blood of these brothers and sisters?” Pope Francis asked. “No one! We all respond this way.” The Holy Father thus began his critique of the “globalization of indifference,” a term he uses to describe the callousness with which individuals and communities treat poor, desperate and marginal persons. He continued:

“But God asks each one of us: ‘Where is the blood of your brother that cries out to me?’ Today no one in the world feels responsible for this; we have lost the sense of fraternal responsibility; we have fallen into the hypocritical attitude of the priest and of the servant of the altar that Jesus speaks about in the parable of the Good Samaritan: We look upon the brother half dead by the roadside, perhaps we think ‘poor guy,’ and we

continue on our way, it's none of our business; and we feel fine with this. We feel at peace with this, we feel fine! The culture of well-being, that makes us think of ourselves, that makes us insensitive to the cries of others, that makes us live in soap bubbles, that are beautiful but are nothing, are illusions of futility, of the transient, that brings indifference to others, that brings even the globalization of indifference. In this world of globalization we have fallen into a globalization of indifference. We are accustomed to the suffering of others, it doesn't concern us, it's none of our business."

Francis concluded his liturgy by asking for forgiveness for such indifference. He has subsequently revisited this theme several times. In his encyclical *Laudato Si* (#25), he described widespread indifference to suffering and noted that: "Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded."

He also criticized the phenomenon of indifference in his message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees in 2014:

"A change of attitude towards migrants and refugees is needed on the part of everyone, moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization – all typical of throwaway culture – towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world."

Pope Francis seeks to move the world from an attitude of indifference to its opposite, which he calls a "culture of encounter."

Solidarity and Encounter

Two of Pope Francis's recurring themes on migration are solidarity and encounter. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, § 87, he writes:

"Today, when the networks and means of human communication have made unprecedented advances, we sense the challenge of finding and sharing a 'mystique' of living together, of mingling and encounter, of embracing and supporting one another, of stepping into this flood tide which, while chaotic, can become a genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a sacred pilgrimage. Greater possibilities for communication thus turn into greater possibilities for encounter and solidarity for everyone. If we were able to take this route, it would be so good, so soothing, so liberating and hope-filled! To go out of ourselves and to join others is healthy for us. To be self-enclosed is to taste the bitter poison of immanence and humanity will be worse for every selfish choice we make."

In his message for the 2015 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis condemns the hostile, suspicious and prejudiced reception of many migrants, which "conflict[s] with the biblical commandment of welcoming with respect and solidarity the stranger in need." In addition, this treatment is inimical to the mission of the Catholic Church, which seek to spread "throughout the world a culture of acceptance and solidarity, in which no one is seen as useless, out of place or disposable."

The Holy Father has also discussed solidarity in the context of multiculturalism. In the same address, he notes: "The multicultural character of society today... encourages the Church to take on new commitments of solidarity... Migration movements, in fact, call us to deepen and strengthen the values needed to guarantee peaceful coexistence between persons and cultures." To the Holy Father, solidarity is not merely a matter of individual obligation. It is also central to a just world order: "[S]olidarity with migrants and refugees must be accompanied by the courage and creativity necessary to develop, on a

worldwide level, a more just and equitable financial and economic order, as well as an increasing commitment to peace, the indispensable condition for all authentic progress.”

Causes of Migration

Discussion of the global order leads into Pope Francis’s analysis of the causes of migration, some of which are structural. In *Laudato Si*, he cites climate change as one of the factors leading to migrant flows, as migrants flee growing poverty caused by environmental degradation. He writes: “Changes in climate, to which animals and plants cannot adapt, lead them to migrate; this in turn affects the livelihood of the poor, who are then forced to leave their homes, with great uncertainty for their future and that of their children.”

Pope Francis expresses deep concern with poverty, which leads migrants to move and makes them vulnerable in transit and in their new communities. In his homily at Lampedusa, The Holy Father said to migrants: “The Church is near to you in the search for a more dignified life for yourselves and for your families.” He later repeated this theme: “These our brothers and sisters seek to leave difficult situations in order to find a little serenity and peace, they seek a better place for themselves and for their families.” In a message on the occasion of the Mexico Holy See colloquium on human migration and development in July 2014, he drew attention to the tens of thousands of unaccompanied minors migrating across the US-Mexico border, “to escape poverty and violence.”

Human Trafficking

Pope Francis has been particularly active in response to the scourge of human trafficking. In 2014, he created, in partnership with leaders of other major religions, the Global Freedom Network, which seeks to eradicate slavery and human trafficking: <http://www.globalfreedomnetwork.org/>. His statements on this global scourge have been uncompromising.

In *Laudato Si* § 91, he decried the inconsistency of working to combat trafficking in endangered species “while remaining completely indifferent to human trafficking, unconcerned about the poor, or undertaking to destroy another human being deemed unwanted.” In *Evangelii Gaudium*, § 75, he grouped human trafficking with the narcotics trade, exploitation of minors, the abandonment of the elderly and infirm and various other forms of corruption and criminal activity. He has described trafficking as, “an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ. It is a crime against humanity” (Address to Participants in the International Conference on Combating Human Trafficking 2014). In the same address, he emphasized the importance of approaching the problem trafficking both legally, through the activity of law enforcement authorities, and from a social and humanitarian standpoint, by providing victims with “human warmth and the possibility of building a new life.”

The Holy Father also condemned trafficking in his homily at Lampedusa in 2013, recounting a conversation he had with a migrant: “Before arriving here, he had passed through the hands of traffickers, those who exploit the poverty of others; these people for whom the poverty of others is a source of income. What they have suffered! And some have been unable to arrive!” Pope Francis also linked trafficking to the exploitation of poverty in his statement on “Modern Slavery and Climate Change: The Commitment of the Cities” in July 2015. He argued that unemployment results from “excessive technicization, without caring for the environment” and has led to illegal work and human trafficking. “There is a very great responsibility in this,” he said. “It all bounces back... everything has a rebound effect against the person himself. It can include human trafficking for purposes of slave labor or prostitution.”

Conclusion

Pope Francis has repeatedly demonstrated his concern for and commitment to migrants. He has condemned the mistreatment of migrants and called for accountability from individuals, states and the international community. He has emphasized the importance of engagement and encounter with migrants, refugees and newcomers, as well as the tragedy and callousness of a culture of indifference. In his Apostolic Letter to all the Consecrated People on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life, he wrote:

"I also expect from you what I have asked all the members of the Church: to come out of yourselves and go forth to the existential peripheries. 'Go into all the world;' these were the last words which Jesus spoke to his followers and which he continues to address to us (cf. Mk 16:15). A whole world awaits us: men and women who have lost all hope, families in difficulty, abandoned children, young people without a future, the elderly, sick and abandoned, those who are rich in the world's goods but impoverished within, men and women looking for a purpose in life, thirsting for the divine...I ask you to work concretely in welcoming refugees, drawing near to the poor, and finding creative ways to catechize, to proclaim the Gospel and to teach others how to pray."

To the Holy Father, migrants are not so much a "problem," but a gift to be cherished and embraced and an opportunity to create more just and faithful communities. As he put in in his Message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2014:

"We ourselves need to see, and then to enable others to see, that migrants and refugees do not only represent a problem to be solved, but are brothers and sisters to be welcomed, respected and loved. They are an occasion that Providence gives us to help build a more just society, a more perfect democracy, a more united country, a more fraternal world and a more open and evangelical Christian community. Migration can offer possibilities for a new evangelization, open vistas for the growth of a new humanity foreshadowed in the paschal mystery: a humanity for which every foreign country is a homeland and every homeland is a foreign country."

