

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS  
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ACCREDITED TO THE  
HOLY SEE  
FOR THE TRADITIONAL EXCHANGE OF NEW YEAR GREETINGS**  
*Sala Regia*

9 January 2017

[Link](#)

[...]Millions of people still live in the midst of senseless conflicts. Even in places once considered secure, a general sense of fear is felt. We are frequently overwhelmed by images of death, by the pain of innocent men, women and children who plead for help and consolation, by the grief of those mourning the loss of a dear one due to hatred and violence, and by the drama of refugees fleeing war and migrants meeting tragic deaths. [...]

I am convinced that for many people the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy was an especially fruitful moment for rediscovering “mercy’s immense positive influence as a *social value*”.<sup>[13]</sup> In this way, everyone can help bring about “ a *culture of mercy*, based on the rediscovery of encounter with others, a culture in which no one looks at another with indifference or turns away from the suffering of our brothers and sisters”.<sup>[14]</sup> Only thus will it be possible to build societies that are open and welcoming towards foreigners and at the same time internally secure and at peace. This is all the more needed at the present time, when massive waves of migration continue in various parts of the world. I think in a special way of the great numbers of displaced persons and refugees in some areas of Africa and Southeast Asia, and all those who are fleeing areas of conflict in the Middle East.

Last year the international community gathered at two important events convened by the United Nations: the first World Humanitarian Summit and the Summit for Refugees and Migrants. With regard to migrants, displaced persons and refugees, a common commitment is needed, one focused on offering them a dignified welcome. This would involve respecting the right of “every human being... to emigrate to other countries and take up residence there”,<sup>[15]</sup> while at the same time ensuring that migrants can be integrated into the societies in which they are received without the latter sensing that their security, cultural identity and political-social stability are threatened. On the other hand, immigrants themselves must not forget that they have a duty to respect the laws, culture and traditions of the countries in which they are received.

Prudence on the part of public authorities does not mean enacting policies of exclusion vis-à-vis migrants, but it does entail evaluating, with wisdom and foresight, the extent to which their country is in a position, without prejudice to the common good of citizens, to offer a decent life to migrants, especially those truly in need of protection. Above all, the current crisis should not be reduced to a simple matter of numbers. Migrants are persons, with their own names, stories and families. There can never be true peace as long as a single human being is violated

in his or her personal identity and reduced to a mere statistic or an object of economic calculation.

The issue of migration is not one that can leave some countries indifferent, while others are left with the burden of humanitarian assistance, often at the cost of notable strain and great hardship, in the face of an apparently unending emergency. All should feel responsible for jointly pursuing the international common good, also through concrete gestures of human solidarity; these are essential building-blocks of that peace and development which entire nations and millions of people still await. So I am grateful to the many countries which offer a generous welcome to those in need, beginning with various European nations, particularly Italy, Germany, Greece and Sweden.

I vividly remember my visit to the island of Lesbos in the company of my brothers Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Ieronymos. There I saw at first hand the dramatic situation of the refugee camps, but also the goodness and spirit of service shown by the many persons committed to assisting those living there. Nor should we overlook the welcome offered by other countries of Europe and the Middle East, such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, as well as the commitment of various African and Asian countries. In the course of my visit to Mexico, where I experienced the joy of the Mexican people, I likewise felt close to the thousands of migrants from Central America who, in their attempt to find a better future, endure terrible injustices and dangers, victims of extortion and objects of that deplorable trade – that horrible form of modern slavery – which is human trafficking. [...]