



The Holy See

**VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO LESVOS (GREECE) MEETING WITH THE
PEOPLE OF LESVOS AND WITH THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY.**

A REMEMBERING OF THE VICTIMS OF MIGRATION *Presidium of the Coast Guard*

Saturday, 16 April 2016 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Prime Minister,

Distinguished Authorities,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I have wanted to visit Lesbos ever since migrants arrived here seeking peace and dignity. Today I give thanks to God who has granted me this wish. I express my appreciation to President Pavlopoulos for inviting me, together with Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Ieronymos.

I wish to express my admiration for the Greek people who, despite their own great difficulties, have kept open their hearts and their doors. Many ordinary men and women have made available the little they have and shared it with those who have lost everything. God will repay this generosity, and that of other surrounding nations who from the beginning have welcomed with great openness the large numbers of people forced to migrate.

Your island is blessed by the generous presence of many volunteers and various associations that, together with public institutions, have offered and continue to offer their assistance, visibly expressing their fraternal concern.

Today, I renew my heartfelt plea for responsibility and solidarity in the face of this tragic situation. Many migrants who have come to this island and other places in Greece are living in trying conditions, in an atmosphere of anxiety and fear, at times even of despair, due to material hardship and uncertainty for the future.

The worries expressed by institutions and people, both in Greece and in other European countries, are understandable and legitimate. We must never forget, however, that migrants, rather than simply being a statistic, are first of all persons who have faces, names and individual stories. Europe is the homeland of human rights, and whoever sets foot on European soil ought to sense this, and thus become more aware of the duty to respect and defend those rights. Unfortunately,

some, including many infants, could not even make it to these shores: they died at sea, victims of unsafe and inhumane means of transport, prey to unscrupulous thugs.

You, the residents of Lesbos, show that in these lands, the cradle of civilization, the heart of humanity continues to beat; a humanity that before all else recognizes others as brothers and sisters, a humanity that wants to build bridges and recoils from the idea of putting up walls to make us feel safer. In reality, barriers create divisions instead of promoting the true progress of peoples, and divisions sooner or later lead to confrontations.

To be truly united with those forced to flee their homelands, we need to eliminate the causes of this dramatic situation: it is not enough to limit ourselves to responding to emergencies as they arise. Instead, we need to encourage political efforts that are broader in scope and multilateral. It is necessary, above all, to build peace where war has brought destruction and death, and to stop this scourge from spreading. To do this, resolute efforts must be made to counter the arms trade and arms trafficking, and the often hidden machinations associated with them; those who carry out acts of hatred and violence must be denied all means of support. Cooperation among nations, international organizations and humanitarian agencies must be tirelessly promoted, and those on the frontlines must be assisted, not kept at a distance. In this regard, I reiterate my hope that the First World Humanitarian Summit being held in Istanbul next month will prove productive.

All of this can be achieved only if we work together: solutions to the complex issue of refugees which are worthy of humanity can and must be sought. In this regard, the contribution of Churches and religious communities is indispensable. My presence here, along with that of Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Ieronymos, is a sign of our willingness to continue to cooperate so that the challenges we face today will not lead to conflict, but rather to the growth of the civilization of love.

Dear brothers and sisters, God is neither indifferent to, nor distant from, the tragedies that wound humanity. He is our Father, who helps us to work for good and to reject evil. Not only does he come to our aid, but in Jesus he has shown us the way of peace. Before the evil of this world, he made himself our servant, and by his service of love he saved the world. This is the true power that brings about peace. Only those who serve with love build peace. Service makes us go beyond ourselves and care for others. It does not stand by while people and things are destroyed, but rather it protects them; service overcomes that dense pall of indifference that clouds hearts and minds.

Thank you, for you are guardians of humanity, for you care with tenderness for the body of Christ, who suffers in the least of his brothers and sisters, the hungry and the stranger, whom you have welcomed (cf. *Mt 25:35*).

Συχαριστώ!

A REMEMBERING OF THE VICTIMS OF MIGRATION

Prayer

POPE FRANCIS

Merciful God,
we pray to you for all the men, women and children
who have died after leaving their homelands in search of a better life.
Though many of their graves bear no name,
to you each one is known, loved and cherished.
May we never forget them, but honour their sacrifice
with deeds more than words.

We entrust to you all those who have made this journey,
enduring fear, uncertainty and humiliation,
in order to reach a place of safety and hope.
Just as you never abandoned your Son
as he was brought to a safe place by Mary and Joseph,
so now be close to these, your sons and daughters,
through our tenderness and protection.
In caring for them may we seek a world
where none are forced to leave their home
and where all can live in freedom, dignity and peace.

Merciful God and Father of all,
wake us from the slumber of indifference,
open our eyes to their suffering,
and free us from the insensitivity
born of worldly comfort and self-centredness.
Inspire us, as nations, communities and individuals,
to see that those who come to our shores are our brothers and sisters.
May we share with them the blessings we have received from your hand,
and recognize that together, as one human family,
we are all migrants, journeying in hope to you, our true home,
where every tear will be wiped away,
where we will be at peace and safe in your embrace.

HIS BEATITUDE IERONYMOS, ARCHBISHOP OF ATHENS AND OF ALL GREECE

Ο Θεός των πνευμάτων και πάσης σαρκός, ο τον θάνατον καταπατήσας, τον δε διάβολον καταργήσας, και ζωήν τω κόσμω σου δωρησάμενος, αυτός, Κύριε, ανάπαυσον τας ψυχάς των κεκοιμημένων δούλων σου, εν τόπω φωτεινώ, εν τόπω χλοερώ, εν τόπω αναψύξεως, ένθα απέδρα οδύνη, λύπη και στεναγμός. Παν αμάρτημα το παρ' αυτώνπραχθέν εν λόγω ή έργω ή διανοία, ως αγαθός και φιλόανθρωπος Θεός, συγχώρησον ότι ουκ έστιν άνθρωπος, ος ζήσεται και ουχ αμαρτήσεται, συ γαρ μόνος εκτός αμαρτίας υπάρχεις, η δικαιο-σύνη σου δικαιοσύνη εις τον αιώνα, και ο νόμος σου αλήθεια.

Ότι συ ει η ανάστασις, η ζωή, και η ανάπαυσις των κεκοιμημένων δούλων σου, Χριστέ ο Θεός ημών, και σοι την δόξαν αναπέμπομεν, συν τω ανάρχω σου Πατρί, και τω παναγίω και αγαθώ και ζωοποιώ σου Πνεύματι, νυν και αεί και εις τους αιώνας των αιώνων. Αμήν.

O God of all spirits and flesh, Who has trodden down death, destroying the power of the devil, bestowing life on Your world to the soul of Your servants departed this life, do You Yourself, O Lord, give rest in a place of light, in a place of green pasture, in a place of refreshment, from where pain and sorrow and mourning are fled away. Every sin by them committed in thought, word, or deed, do You as our good and loving God forgive, seeing that there is no man that shall live and sin not, for You alone are without sin: Your righteousness, and Your law is truth.

For You are the Resurrection, the Life, and the Repose of Your servants, O Christ our God; and to You do we send up Glory, as to Your Eternal Father and Your All-Holy, Good, and Life-creating Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

HIS HOLINESS BARTHOLOMEW, ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE

Lord of mercy, compassion and all comfort, we pray to You for our brothers in difficult circumstances and we offer to Your Goodness:

Nurture the infants; instruct the youth; strengthen the aged; give courage to the faint hearted; reunite those separated; sail with those who sail; travel with those who travel; defend the widows; protect the orphans; liberate the captives; heal the sick. Remember, O God, those who are in mines, in exile, in harsh labor, and those in every kind of affliction, necessity, or distress; and all those who entreat Your loving kindness; those who love us and those who hate us; and pour out upon all Your rich mercy, granting them their petitions for salvation

Again we pray, Lord of life and of death, grant eternal repose to the souls of Your departed servants, those who lost their lives during their exodus from war-torn regions and during their journeys to places of safety, peace and prosperity.

For You, Lord, are the helper of the helpless, the hope of the hopeless, the savior of the afflicted, the haven of the voyager, and the physician of the sick. Be all things to all, You who know each person, his requests, his household, and his need. Deliver this island, O Lord, and every city and country, from famine, plague, earthquake, flood, fire, sword, invasion of foreign enemies, and civil war. Amen.