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Holy Mass for Migrants in the Vatican Basilica

At 11.00 this morning, at the Altar of the Cathedra in the Vatican Basilica, the Holy Father Francis celebrated Holy Mass for Migrants on the fifth anniversary of his visit to Lampedusa. It was attended by 200 people, including refugees and those who take care of them.

The following is the homily pronounced by the Pope during the Eucharistic celebration:

Homily of the Holy Father

“You who trample upon the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land... Behold the days are coming... when I will send a famine on the land... a thirst for hearing the words of the Lord” (*Amos* 8:4.11).

Today this warning of the prophet Amos is remarkably timely. How many of the poor are trampled on in our day! How many of the poor are being brought to ruin! All are the victims of that culture of waste that has been denounced time and time again. Among them, I cannot fail to include the migrants and refugees who continue to knock at the door of nations that enjoy greater prosperity.

Five years ago, during my visit to Lampedusa, recalling the victims lost at sea, I repeated that timeless appeal to human responsibility: “ ‘Where is your brother? His blood cries out to me’, says the Lord. This is not a question directed to others; it is a question directed to me, to you, to each of us (*Homily*, 8 July 2013). Sadly, the response to this appeal, even if at times generous, has not been enough, and we continue to grieve thousands of deaths.

Today’s Gospel acclamation contains Jesus’ invitation: “Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (*Mt* 11:28). The Lord promises refreshment and freedom to all the oppressed of our world, but He needs us to fulfil his promise. He needs our eyes to see the needs of our brothers and sisters. He needs our hands to offer them help. He needs our voice to protest the injustices committed thanks to the silence, often complicit, of so many. I should really speak of many silences: the silence of common sense; the silence that

thinks, “it’s always been done this way”; the silence of “us” as opposed to “you”. Above all, the Lord needs our hearts to show His merciful love towards the least, the outcast, the abandoned, the marginalized.

In the Gospel we heard, Matthew tells us of the most important day in his life, the day Jesus called him. The Evangelist clearly records the Lord’s rebuke to the Pharisees, so easily given to insidious murmuring: “Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice’” (9:13). It is a finger pointed at the sterile hypocrisy of those who do not want to “dirty the hands”, like the priest or the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan. This is a temptation powerfully present in our own day. It takes the form of closing our hearts to those who have the right, just as we do, to security and dignified living conditions. It builds walls, real or virtual, rather than bridges.

Before the challenges of contemporary movements of migration, the only reasonable response is one of solidarity and mercy. A response less concerned with calculations, than with the need for an equitable distribution of responsibilities, an honest and sincere assessment of the alternatives and a prudent management. A just policy is one at the service of the person, of *every* person involved; a policy that provides for solutions that can ensure security, respect for the rights and dignity of all; a policy concerned for the good of one’s own country, while taking into account that of others in an ever more interconnected world. It is to this world that the young look.

The Psalmist has shown us the right attitude to adopt in conscience before God: “I have chosen the way of faithfulness, I set your ordinances before me” (*Ps* 119,30). A commitment to faithfulness and right judgement that all of us hope to pursue together with government leaders in our world and all people of good will. For this reason, we are following closely the efforts of the international community to respond to the challenges posed by today’s movements of migration by wisely combining solidarity and subsidiarity, and by identifying both resources and responsibilities.

I would like to close with a few words in Spanish, directed particularly to the faithful who have come from Spain.

I wanted to celebrate the fifth anniversary of my visit to Lampedusa with you, who represent rescuers and those rescued on the Mediterranean Sea. I thank the rescuers for embodying in our day the parable of the Good Samaritan, who stopped to save the life of the poor man beaten by bandits. He didn’t ask where he was from, his reasons for travelling or his documents... he simply decided to care for him and save his life. To those rescued I reiterate my solidarity and encouragement, since I am well aware of the tragic circumstances that you are fleeing. I ask you to keep being witnesses of hope in a world increasingly concerned about the present, with little vision for the future and averse to sharing. With respect for the culture and laws of the country that receives you, may you work out together the path of integration.

I ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and to stir our hearts to overcome all fear and anxiety, and to make us docile instruments of the Father’s merciful love, ready to offer our lives for our brothers and sisters, as the Lord Jesus did for each of us.
