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Audience with pilgrims gathered for the canonization of Giovanni Battista Scalabrini

This morning, in the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the pilgrims gathered for the canonization of Giovanni Battista Scalabrini.

The following is the address delivered by the Holy Father during the audience:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

You are all celebrating, aren't you? I thank Fr. Chiarello for his words of greeting and presentation. I am pleased to be able to stay a little with you, who participated yesterday in the Eucharistic celebration and in the canonization of Blessed Giovanni Battista Scalabrini. You are a very varied gathering – this is good! There are missionaries, missionary sisters, secular missionaries and lay Scalabrinians; there are faithful from the dioceses of Como and Piacenza; and then there are migrants from many countries, a good mix, and this is good. In this way, you represent well the breadth of the work of Bishop Scalabrini, the openness of his heart, for which, so to say, one diocese was not enough.

His apostolate in support of Italian emigrants was of great relevance. In that time, thousands left for the Americas. Bishop Scalabrini viewed them with the gaze of Christ, of which the Gospel speaks; for example, Matthew writes: “At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd” (*Mt 9:36*). And he took care with great charity and pastoral intelligence to assure them of adequate material and spiritual assistance.

Today, too, migration constitutes a very important challenge. It highlights the urgent need to put fraternity before rejection, solidarity before indifference. Today, every baptized person is called upon to reflect God's gaze towards migrant and refugee brothers and sisters – there are many of them – to let his gaze broaden our own, thanks to the encounter with humanity on the move, through genuine closeness, following the example of Bishop

Scalabrini.

We are required to day to live out and spread the culture of encounter, an encounter on an equal footing between migrants and the people of the host country. It is an enriching experience, inasmuch as it reveals the beauty of diversity. And it is also fruitful, because the faith, hope and tenacity of migrants can be an example and a spur for those who want to commit themselves to building a world of peace and wellbeing for all. And for it to be for everyone, as you well know, we must start from the last: if we don't start out from the last, it isn't for everyone. As in mountain hikes: if the first ones run, the group breaks up, and the first ones after a while burst out; if instead you keep up with the last ones, you all go up together. This is a rule of wisdom. When we walk, when we go on a pilgrimage, we always need to go at the pace of the last.

To make fraternity and social friendship grow, we are all called upon to be creative, to think "outside the box". We are required to open up new spaces where art, music and staying together become tools for intercultural dynamics, where the richness of the encounter with diversity can be savoured.

Therefore, I urge you, Scalabrinian missionaries, always to let yourselves be inspired by your founder Saint, father of migrants, of all migrants. May his charism renew in you the joy of being with migrants, of being at their service, and of doing so with faith, inspired by the Holy Spirit, in the conviction that in each one of them we encounter the Lord Jesus. And this will help you have the style of generous giving, of sparing no physical and economic resources to support migrants in an integral way, and it will also help you to work in communion of purpose, as a family, united in diversity.

Dear brothers and sisters, may the holiness of Giovanni Battista Scalabrini "infect" us with the desire to be holy, each one in an original, unique way, as God's infinite imagination has made us and wants us to be. And may his intercession give us the joy, and give us the hope to walk together towards the new Jerusalem, which is a symphony of faces and peoples, towards the kingdom of justice, fraternity and peace.

Thank you for coming to share your celebrations! I heartily bless you and your travelling companions, from where you live. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!
