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Synod23 – Moment of prayer for migrants and refugees presided over by the Holy Father Francis

This evening, at 19.15, at the end of the works of the 13th General Congregation of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, a moment of prayer for migrants and refugees presided over by the Holy Father Francis took place in Saint Peter's Square, near the sculpture *Angel Unawares*.

The following is the reflection given by the Pope after listening to the Word of God:

Reflection of the Holy Father

We can never be grateful enough to Saint Luke for passing on to us this parable of the Lord (cf. *Lk* 10:25-37). This parable is also at the heart of the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* because it is a key, I would say *the* key, to moving from the closure of a world to an open world, from a world at war to the peace of another world. Tonight we listened to this parable thinking of the migrants whom we see represented in this large sculpture: men and women of all ages and backgrounds, and in their midst are angels guiding them.

The road leading from Jerusalem to Jericho was not a safe route, just as today the many migration routes that traverse deserts, forests, rivers and seas are not safe. How many of our brothers and sisters find themselves today in the same condition as the traveller in the parable? Many! How many are robbed, stripped and beaten along the way? They leave their homes deceived by unscrupulous traffickers. They are then sold like commodities. They are kidnapped, imprisoned, exploited and enslaved. They are humiliated, tortured, raped. And so many of them die without ever reaching their destination. The migration routes of our time are filled with men and women who are wounded and left half-dead, our brothers and sisters whose pain cries out before God. Often, they are people fleeing war and terrorism, as we are witnessing, sadly, in these days.

Today, as then, there are still those who see this, and then cross to the other side of the road; surely they come up with some reason to justify this, but in fact it is out of selfishness, indifference and fear. This is true. Instead, what does the Gospel tell us about that Samaritan? It tells us that he saw the wounded man and *had compassion on him* (v. 33). Here is the key. Compassion is the imprint of God in our hearts. God's style is

closeness, compassion and tenderness: this is God's style. And compassion is the imprint of God in our hearts. Here is the key. Here is the turning point. From that moment forward, the wounded man begins to recover, *thanks to that foreigner who treated him as a brother*. The outcome was not simply a good deed of assistance; the outcome was fraternity.

Like the Good Samaritan, we are called to be neighbours to all the wayfarers of our time, to save their lives, to heal their wounds and to soothe their pain. For many, tragically, it is too late, and we are left only to weep over their graves, if they even have a grave, or the Mediterranean ends up being their grave. Yet the Lord knows the face of each of them, and he does not forget it.

The Good Samaritan does not just help the poor traveler on the wayside. He loads him on his own beast, takes him to an inn, and cares for him. Here we can find reflected the meaning of the four verbs that sum up our service to migrants: welcome, protect, promote and integrate. Migrants should be welcomed, protected, promoted and integrated. This involves a long-term responsibility; in fact, the Good Samaritan is also concerned about returning. This is why it is important for us to be prepared adequately for the challenges of today's migrations, understanding not only critical issues, but also the opportunities they offer, with a view to the growth of more inclusive, more beautiful and more peaceful societies.

Allow me to point out the urgent need for something else, which is not addressed in the parable. All of us must strive to make the road safer, so that today's travelers do not fall victim to bandits. We need to multiply our efforts to combat the criminal networks that exploit the hopes and dreams of migrants. It is likewise necessary to indicate safer routes. This means that efforts must be made to expand regular migration channels. In the current world situation, it is clearly necessary to bring demographic and economic policies into dialogue with migration policies for the sake of all those involved, without ever forgetting to put the most vulnerable at the centre. It is also necessary to promote a common and co-responsible approach to the governance of migration flows, which appear set to increase in the coming years.

Welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating: this is the work we must carry out.

Let us ask the Lord for the grace to draw close to all migrants and refugees who knock at our door, because today "anyone who is neither a robber nor a passer-by is either injured himself or bearing an injured person on his shoulders." (*Fratelli Tutti*, 70).

And now, we will have a brief moment of silence, as we remember all those who did not make it, who lost their lives along the different migration routes, and those who have been exploited or enslaved.
