

Fr. General Arturo Sosa, S.J.
Commemoration of International Day for Migrants and Refugees
Centro Astalli - Rome
January 13, 2017

I wish to begin by expressing my gratitude, and how deeply moved I am, to have this opportunity to share with you this moment of reflection and prayer.

This moment presents an important invitation to the Society of Jesus to accompany, with its few resources, and to share in the anxieties and hopes of the refugees here in Italy and everywhere in the world. As you may be aware, I come from Latin America, a continent in teeming with millions of refugees and migrants for the same reasons that we have heard in the moving testimonies of Asiz, Dhurata, Morteza, Mirvat and Edelawit.

I have encountered similar situations on the border between Colombia and Venezuela, where I lived for ten years before being called to Rome. I met entire families that had been forced to abandon everything to save lives threatened by injustice and violence that has taken hold of our societies. I met children and young people who had been forced to become soldiers and to participate in wars so far away from their dreams, thoughts and desires. But importantly, I also encountered the generosity of many families who welcomed the refugees as brothers and sisters in search of a new life. I came across some schools, teachers, Christian communities willing to lend a hand to the new arrivals. Through these encounters, I became more and more aware of the challenges states face in facilitating the legal integration for refugees, which would grant the refugees access to job opportunities and personal development. I have witnessed the human pain resulting from abuse by police bodies and human traffickers.

Therefore, the efforts of closely accompanying the refugees and migrants, particularly the young and vulnerable, are close to my heart. I wish to encourage and promote efforts that ensure the protection of life and the hope of the child and adolescent refugees, especially those recruited by traffickers to convert them into the so-called baby-traffickers.

It is necessary to promote citizens' movements that put pressure on states and governments of Europe and other parts of the world in order to create safe access to legal channels for children and teenagers forced to leave their homes, their countries, and many sometimes, even their families to make a future elsewhere. The absence of these channels adds new dangers to the path of migrants and increases the injustice suffered by those who have had to flee their homeland. The absence of adequate protection, the difficulty of access to humanitarian visas and efficient policies of social inclusion nourishes one of the greatest scourges of humanity in our times: human trafficking. And that is what we heard in the testimonies of young people today.

The political development of Europe has created multiplicity of public institutions that aim at protecting the rights of people, especially children and young people. The increasing flow of migration challenges these institutions to ensure that there is reliable and adequate protection for many who arrive each day to knock on the doors of European countries seeking to be included and not excluded. Europeans, children of a culture that claims human rights as a sign of human and social progress, are invited by migrants to deepen their human and political conscience to demand that governments create reception systems, with facilities adequate and conveniently located throughout their territories to ensure a humane reception of migrants, especially to young people.

Europe and all other migrant receiving countries should become a source of pride by creating the circumstances in which those who come find human conditions to rebuild their lives and young people can dream about their future with the ability to make it happen if they too will put in the necessary effort.

Dear friends, we are gathered here today in Gesù Church in honour of so many migrants and refugees who are struggling to rediscover the worthiness of their human life. I invite you all to step up your effort to make our societies places of genuine welcome to those who suffering because of the need to migrate.

Dear friends, gathered today in this Church of Jesus to the memory of so many migrants and refugees struggling to have a human life worth, I invite you to intensify their efforts to make our company sincere welcome spaces of those who suffer because of the need to migrate.

Thank you so much.