Ethics in Action
for Sustainable and Integral Development
Statement on Migration
June 6, 2017

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Migration is a shared condition of all humanity. We have all been strangers in a strange land. All humanity lives today as a result of migration, by themselves or their ancestors. Migration is a matter sometimes of choice, often of need, and always an inalienable right.

All helpless people deserve to be helped. Offering such help is a commandment and a blessing shared among all religions. Accordingly, as Pope Francis reminds us, our duties to migrants include “to welcome”, “to protect”, “to promote”, and “to integrate.”

Most people want to reside and prosper in the land of their birth. This is natural. Yet to do so they require safety, food security, economic opportunity, freedom from environmental distress, and prospects for their children’s future. Forced migration is the result of wars, poverty, and environmental degradation and climate change that compel people to leave their homelands. Because of these factors, we are currently facing the largest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War. And the face of the migrant is increasingly a youthful face—for the first time in history half of all refugees are children and youths, and one in every 200 children in the world today is a refugee. Preventing the mass forced displacement of peoples has become one of the great ethical challenges of the 21st century.

The great religious traditions all emphasize the dignity of each person and the unity and common destiny of the entire human race in our common home. Accordingly, each faith calls upon individuals and communities to welcome, assist, and protect the refugees, migrants, and the displaced in our midst. Each religion provides a foundation for building a world of respect, solidarity, and safety for migrants.

Responding to the fundamental causes, the deep solutions to forced migration are peace, prosperity, and sustainability. Pope Paul VI declared that “development is the new name of
peace.” We embrace that wisdom, with the restatement that today, “sustainable development is the new name of peace.” We recognized that frequent human-caused ecological disasters constitute a new and growing threat in our own time, and a spur to mass migration. We affirmed a moral obligation to welcome refugees, and that such an obligation extends in particular to the countries responsible for causing the wars and environmental disasters that force people to move in the first place. We recognized that children in particular need a home, a safe haven, a decent education, and an appropriate response to any physical and mental health challenges. We also affirmed the need to prevent the emergence of new technological refugees given the potential effects of technology on employment and work in the near future.

Overall, we called for an approach based on sustainable and integral human development—the fullest development of each person and all people, allowing them to become active agents of their own development. This includes the full integration of migrants into the economic, social, political, and cultural life of the nation or their choice of a speedy and safe return to their homelands as circumstances permit.

Ethics in Action pledges the following steps:

First, to forge a partnership with the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, academicians of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, and other experts, to provide scientific evidence on the roots of today’s forced migrations in wars, extreme poverty, social exclusion, climate change, and environmental degradation. We pledge to be guided by best practices on mental health and trauma, legal protections, education, and well-being of asylum seekers, refugees, and irregular migrants in varied destinations.

Second, to call upon all stakeholders—religious communities, civil society, business and government—to take concrete steps to end wars, stop the arms trade, overcome poverty, and halt man made environmental degradation and climate change, as guided by Laudato Si’, the Encyclical of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Third, to push for a political response to migrants guided by three levels of responsibility:

- The most basic principle that “in case of need all things are common”, because “every man is my brother”—these issues are related to existence or subsistence and condition other related issues (such as accommodation, food, housing, security, etc.).
- As part of the fundamental rights of peoples, legal guarantees of primary rights that foster an “organic participation” in the economic and social life of the nation. Access to these economic and social goods, including education and employment, will allow people to develop their own abilities.

A deeper sense of integration, reflecting responsibilities related to protecting, examining and developing the values that underpin the deep, stable, unity of a society—and, more fundamentally, create a horizon of public peace, understood as St. Augustine’s “tranquility in order”.

Especially in this latter context, policies on migration should be guided by prudence, but prudence can never mean exclusion. On the contrary, governments should evaluate, “with wisdom and foresight, the extent to which their country is in a position, without prejudice to the common good of citizens, to offer a decent life to migrants, especially those truly in need of protection.”

Fourth, to work with the United Nations to support the intergovernmental negotiations on a new UN Migration Compact to address large movements of refugees and migrants. International migration policy should be based on a co-responsibility between origin, transit and destination countries—this includes distribution mechanisms for refugees based on international agreements (ideally within the United Nations) and compensation by the rich countries for the first-entry countries that carry the largest burden.

Fifth, to encourage and promote humanitarian corridors targeting the most vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees, especially in nations that have space. One such positive example is the program created by the Governor of San Luis in Argentina.

Sixth, to help religious leaders of all major faiths to proclaim the common value of all religions in extending generous solidarity toward migrants and refugees, including by acting together. For example, the “Faith over Fear” campaign of Religions for Peace and UNICEF seeks to mobilize religious communities to welcome and support refugees. The Alliance of Civilizations is also called upon to prioritize this concern.

Seventh, to support the Holy See’s new Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in its mission to help the Church accompany refugees and migrants, and its institutions to protect and support them in their daily struggles (see Annex).

Eighth, to mobilize key stakeholders—the UN, development leaders, businesses, high net-worth individuals, and religious communities—to mobilize and direct billions of dollars of new financial resources to achieve the SDGs, including the protection of migrants and the end of human trafficking and modern slavery.

Ninth, to promote moral education—among children and adults alike—to inculcate the norms, virtues, and values of empathy, compassion, solidarity, and care for our common humanity and common home, which incorporates obligations towards migrants and refugees.

Tenth, to encourage businesses to provide decent work and employment opportunities for newcomers so that they may in turn support their families in dignity and security and

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contribute to their community. This includes finding creative and effective solutions in using technological advances in service of the common good.

Eleventh, to encourage governments to increase budgets for peace and support for sustainable development, not for arms and military spending—the best response to the migrant crisis is to cultivate solidarity for people and care for the planet, not wars.
I. Mass Migration and its Drivers

Migration is a shared condition of all humanity. It has always been part of the human condition. All humanity lives today as a result of migration, by themselves or their ancestors. We have all been strangers in a strange land. Migration is a matter sometimes of choice, often of need, and always an inalienable right. Today, it represents the human face of globalization in the 21st century, a reflection of our interconnected and fragile world.

Historically, the clash of nation states was the main driver of large-scale displacement. Over the course of the last century, two world wars, the wars of colonial liberation, and the cold war pushed millions to seek shelter in safer lands. By the end of World War II, Europe had more than 40 million refugees—the largest number in recorded history at that point. In the second half of the twentieth century, the colonial struggles for independence in Africa and Asia, the Vietnam war, the Cold War, and the various proxy wars in Africa, Asia, and the Americas all created massive displacements of peoples. The global migratory corridors of the postwar era became increasingly blurred with the dismemberment of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

With the global financial crisis of 2008 and the Arab Spring uprisings, we are at the beginning of a new cartography of mass migration. In this modern era, migration is increasingly defined by the slow-motion disintegration of weak states, war and terror, major economic inequities, unchecked climate change, and cataclysmic environmental disruptions—and these factors are increasingly intertwined.

Migration is fact of life in today’s globalized world. In 2016, there were over 250 million international migrants. The largest international corridors of human movement today are in Asia, Europe, the Americas, and Africa. Internal migration is also a huge issue in the modern global economy. The largest chains of internal migration are in Asia—China alone had an estimated 245 million migrants in 2014, and India had 325 million (more than a quarter of the country’s population).

Turning to forced displacement, we are currently facing the largest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War. According to the UNHCR\(^3\), there are 65.6 million forcibly displaced people in the world, up from 33.9 million in 1997. Of this total, 22.5 million were refugees, 40.3 million were internally displaced, and 2.8 million were asylum seekers. One out of every 113 people in the world today is displaced, and there are twenty new displacements every single minute. Most people fleeing war and terror remain within the borders of their own country, and nine of out ten refugees find asylum within a neighboring country.

\(^3\) [http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2016/](http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2016/)
Drivers of migration

Mass migration is a complex phenomenon, eluding simple mechanistic models of causality. It reflects demographic factors, social practices, economic variables, political processes, and environmental sustainability. Today, the main drivers of economic migration are demographic differences, the lack of economic opportunities at home, and increasing environmental stress from climate change and the destruction of ecosystems.

Starting with demographics: In one sense, migration reflects a demographic rebalancing—Europe’s population is constant or declining, while the population of Africa and the Middle East is soaring. Africa now has one billion people, and this is set to rise to 3-4 billion people over the course of the century. Absent an economic miracle in Africa, this will give rise to hundreds of millions of people who will want to emigrate to Europe.

On the economic front: The world is both tremendously wealthy and tremendously unequal. There are about 7.5 billion people in the world today—about a billion in the high-income world (an average $45,000 per person), another billion in the low-income world ($800 per person), and the rest in the middle-income world (even divided between upper and lower middle income). Most people in low-income countries have profound difficulties in ensuring the well-being of their children. Such grave inequalities of resources, opportunities, and capabilities act as powerful spurs for migration. One of the main drivers of both migrants and refugees is therefore a failure of sustainable development.

This also relates to the third major driver of migration—environmental stress. Climate change and the destruction of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems—which deplete fisheries, erode soil, and intensify desertification and water stress—have become major drivers of mass migration in recent years. Factors such as rising sea levels, floods, droughts, fires, and severe weather events increase morbidity and mortality, disrupt production, decrease agricultural yields, decimate livestock—and forcefuly displace millions of people. Overall, weather-related hazards triggered 15 million displacements by 2015, and large-scale geophysical hazards led to 4.5 million displaced people. If unchecked, environmental stress could displace up to 200 million people by mid-century.

A further driver of future migration will be exponential technological progress, as more and more jobs will be replaced by robots and intelligent machines. This could also lead to mass displacement, with millions of technological refugees on the move.

These are the drivers of economic migration. Some of this movement is voluntary, as people seek a better life for themselves and their families. But some of it is involuntary, driven by sheer desperation. This is especially the case for migration driven by environmental stress, which can undermine institutions, weaken governance, and even provoke instability and violence.

Drivers of forced displacement
Despite these increasing blurred boundaries, it remains important to distinguish between economic migration and people who are forcibly displaced. Refugees in particular are not merely seeking a better life—they are seeking to protect their life. They are not just seeking better economic opportunities, but fleeing from a lack of basic safety and security.

Such forced displacement has its roots in war, violence, persecution, and human rights violations. The record number of forcibly displaced people—international refugees, internally-displaced, and asylum seekers—can be traced to conflict and chaos in countries like Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, and South Sudan. More than half of all refugees come from just three war-torn countries— Syria (5.5 million), Afghanistan (2.5 million), and South Sudan (1.4 million). In Syria alone, 12 million people were forcibly displaced.

A key problem is that these conflicts are becoming increasingly complicated and protracted, with no clear end in sight. The wars in Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia have now lasted longer than the two world wars combined. Across 33 global conflicts, the average length of exile is now 25 years. This has enormous implications for refugees, as an expectation of temporary dislocation ends up being permanent.

A complicating factor is that conflict is often entwined with the economic and environmental drivers of migration. In countries like Syria and Somalia, environmental dystopia and unchecked climate change both anteceded and accentuated the catastrophic movements of people. In the immediate run-up to its civil war, Syria suffered the worst drought in recorded history—probably in 800 years. This drought displaced over a million people, with herders losing 85 percent of their livestock and 75 percent of farmers experiencing crop failure. This did not cause the Syrian civil war, but it certainly added fuel to the conflagration.

Across the Atlantic, Hurricane Mitch, a catastrophic natural disaster in 1998, also provoked instability and violence. Three million people in Central America were displaced, a figure magnified by deforestation, which prompted a massive migration to the United States. In the maelstrom that ensued, many of these immigrants failed to adequately assimilate, turned to crime, and ended up being repatriated. This in turn gave rise to a transnational criminal enterprise centered on the flow of drugs, people, and weapons—furthering destabilizing a region already suffering from massive economic inequality and some of the highest levels of violence in the world.

**Migration and families**

The fundamental unit of migration is the family. Freud’s famous “love and work” couplet makes profound sense when it comes to assessing migration.

The face of catastrophic migrations in the 21st century is increasingly a youthful face. For the first time in history, over half of all forcefully displaced people are children and youths. Worldwide, one in every 200 children is a refugee, almost twice the number of a decade ago.
And given the nature of modern displacement, a Syrian child is likely to spend his or her entire childhood and youth in a displacement camp.

Last year brought a record number of unaccompanied or separated children—98,400 asylum applications (mainly Afghans, Eritreans, Syrians, and Somalis) lodged in 78 countries. Over 30 percent of sea arrivals in Europe since October 2015 were children and youth. Likewise, in 2014, the United States experienced a significant spike unaccompanied children fleeing Central America. The number of children and youth forcefully displaced arriving in Europe and the United States is but a small proportion of global total.

At the same time, about 20 million children are international migrants. Millions of children are also internal migrants. Even under the best of circumstances, migrations separate family members and disrupt familial bonds. To migrate today is to separate families.

**Political backlashes**

The large-scale flow of migrants and refugees has major political consequences in destination countries. It is creating a political backlash, with rising nationalism, racism, and xenophobia.

In one sense, this kind of backlash is not new. In the United States, for example, immigration from the late 19th century through the end of World War I (especially from eastern and southern Europe) raised the foreign-born population to about 15 percent. This provoked a backlash, and the United States effectively closed the door on immigration in 1924, in a very racially directed way. Over the next four decades, the foreign-born share of the population fell to 5 percent. In 1965, a new immigration law led to large-scale Hispanic migration, and the foreign-born share of the population went back up to 15 percent. This came on the heels of a temporary guest worker program for Mexican migrants during the Second World War. And it has once again provoked a populist backlash among the native-born.

In Europe, the share of the foreign-born population also rose over this period, with similar magnitudes, leading to similar backlashes. Just as in the United States, temporary guest worker programs gave rise to permanent immigrant communities. The migrant flows to Europe are different, with a lot of people coming from Africa and the Middle East. The fact that many of the immigrants are Muslim has only exacerbated tensions.

The recent backlash has both a cultural and an economic element. On both sides of the Atlantic, the reaction tends to be class-based. While immigration can deliver overall productive gains to the destination country, those with lower education have more to lose, given that they compete more directly with immigrants in the labor market. This skepticism has gained force in a fragile economic environment with long-term wage stagnation for the low-skilled and employment prospects that are increasingly limited to sectors with low productivity, low wages, and few protections. And with heightened inequality and a pattern of globalization that boosts the power of wealthy individuals, corporations, and financial institutions, the working class tends to be suspicious of what they regard as the elitism embodied in multiculturalism and liberal cosmopolitanism. For these reasons, new political movements on both sides of the
Atlantic are converging on the twin issues of generating secure employment and restricting immigration.

The failure of second and third generation immigrants to integrate into society is also driving xenophobic and nationalistic attitudes. The children of immigrants too often become alienated from society and instead gravitate toward dystopic or nihilistic paths—toward crime, terrorism, or gangs. And since refugees often come from Muslim-majority countries, this feeds into prevailing fear and paranoia.

II. Welcoming the Stranger—a Multireligious Moral Consensus

Despite their differences, the great religious traditions are all grounded in two fundamental moral principles: (i) the inherent dignity of each person, rooted in each religion’s concept of transcendence; (ii) the common destiny of the entire human race in our common home. Each tradition calls for the unfolding of human dignity across all dimensions of life in a way that is linked reciprocally to building up the common good.

In this context, each tradition affirms the virtues of solidarity as a response to interdependence, justice in meeting the needs of all, and compassion for all who suffer. Accordingly, each faith calls upon individuals and communities to welcome, assist, and protect the refugees, migrants, and the displaced in our midst. Each religion provides a foundation for building a world of respect, solidarity, and safety for migrants.

For each religious tradition, receptivity to the other—the migrant, the refugee, the displaced—is not merely a matter of prudential judgment nor the result of a technical balancing of costs and benefits, risks and opportunities, resources and resource management. The decision to open oneself, one’s family, and one’s community to the other expresses a deeper, more fundamental, orientation to the world—an orientation shaped by trust, hope, and love. To use Karl Rahner’s term, it is a “fundamental option”—the initial act of transcendent freedom. It is to accept the risk of hospitality. This in turn leads to a growth in freedom and self-awareness. This decision does not come from a vacuum—it comes after careful cultivation of the soul’s presence to itself. Religious communities “specialize” in this cultivation.

From this perspective, an ethical response to the challenge of migrants and refugees demands a spiritual transformation both of individuals and institutions, centered on the values and virtues of the world’s religious traditions.

The Abrahamic traditions

Across the Abrahamic faiths, the story of humanity and its relationship to God—as documented in the sacred texts—is the story of a migrant people. Indeed, the foundational narrative of the arrival of human life on earth is a refugee narrative. Adam and Eve, humanity’s first parents, were expelled from the Garden of Eden and condemned to wander the earth. Fleeing and migrating as strangers in strange lands—and finding refuge—is a recurring theme in the
Abrahamic tradition. Abraham himself undertook a perilous migration to the land of Israel. Jacob and his sons fled to Egypt in the face of famine. Under the leadership of Moses, the Israelites escaped persecution in Egypt—and after an arduous journey that tested their faith in God, they arrived in the Promised Land. Later on, conquering armies led to the forced migration of the people of Israel to Babylon—an exile that proved to be another traumatic experience in the history of the Jewish people.

The narrative of migration continues with the emergence of Christianity and Islam. The New Testament tells us that, immediately after his birth, Jesus had to flee to Egypt with Mary and Joseph to escape the wrath of King Herod. Jesus thus started his earthly life as a child refugee. And during the earliest days of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad’s nascent community fled the persecution of the Meccans and migrated to Ethiopia. The Prophet himself was a refugee, fleeing Mecca to migrate to Medina.

Flowing from this narrative, the Abrahamic religions all stress the duty to welcome the other and to treat the strangers in our midst with justice and compassion. This obligation flows from the two foundational principles—the inalienable dignity of each person made in the image and likeness of God; and the unity and common destiny of the human race. The Abrahamic faiths all affirm that humanity is one family under God, with a common ancestry—and that this natural unity was ruptured only by the presence of sin in the world. The Biblical story of the Tower of Babel presents the dispersion of humanity into different nations, tribes, and languages, as punishment for sin. Only at the Eschaton when death and sin are eliminated will these divisions be fully healed.

This call to welcome the other is a dominant theme in the Hebrew Scriptures: “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall do him no wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Leviticus 19:33). This recurrent theme permeates the entire Jewish tradition, with variants echoed 36 times in the Torah. It is the most repeated of any mitzvah—any commandment. The injunction to welcome the stranger is especially pertinent in Judaism, given the foundational narrative of exodus from slavery in Egypt, and the fact that Jews throughout history have been the quintessential immigrant/refugee community. And indeed, one of the most foundational stories of Judaism tells how Abraham offered hospitality to three strangers, demonstrating the virtue of hachnasat orchim—welcoming the stranger.

In Christianity, the New Testament is also replete with injunctions to welcome strangers. Jesus calls on his followers to identify expressly with the poor, the excluded, the suffering, the marginalized. He tied God’s judgment to how we treat the least among us: “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me” (Matthew 25:35-36). In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus expanded the concept of “neighbor” to include those who are different from us, coming from different communities and ethnic traditions. The New Testament also paints a picture of an early church where believers lived a communal life, sharing and meeting the needs of all. The first Christians considered themselves
“strangers” in the world, regarding their true home not on earth but in heaven, or in the future Kingdom of God.

The Christian tradition has always stressed that “personhood” is a relational category. In other words, and in direct opposition to modern strands of individualism, Christianity holds that human beings are less autonomous individuals than relational persons. From this perspective, it is only by relating to others that we truly become persons, and this relationality opens the frontiers of individual existence to the community. This derives from the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, which suggests that otherness is not an enemy of unity, but in fact constitutes unity. This Christian perspective calls for relationality to be extended to the maximum, so that we relate not only to our immediate neighbors, but to the whole of humanity. This idea of “infinite relationality” implies that the “other” is never an enemy, but in fact what gives each of us our identity. It implies that every human being must be treated as the image of God, and never as a means to an end.

In Islam too, all wayfarers are seen as deserving of food and safety. The Qur’an states: “Let them worship the Lord of this House who has satiated their hunger and freed them from fear” (Qur’an 106: 3-4). The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: “The child of Adam has no entitled rights beyond these: shelter from the elements, clothes to cover his nakedness, and grain and water to nourish him.” In Islam, these are God-given rights, which give rise to human obligations. This duty to provide for those in need is manifested in zakat, a poor tax of 2.5 percent of wealth, a percentage of animal stock, and a 5-10 percent grain tax (depending on irrigation techniques).

In Islam, those fleeing persecution, whether religious or political, have another God-given right known as haqq al-iwa—“to seek and receive refuge.” Believers are asked to tend to the needs of those burdened with hardships, no matter who they are or where they come from—because the earth and all in it belong to God, and God’s servants have the right to seek provision: “It is God who made the earth accessible to you, so travel its roads, and eat what God has provided, but know to God you will return” (Qur’an 67:15). In other words, all who inhabit the earth are God’s guests, and must be treated as such. Students of Hadith are taught that “those who show mercy will be shown mercy by the Merciful himself; have mercy on those in the earth, and the One in Heaven will have mercy on you.” This is interpreted to cover all peoples regardless of color, race, or nationality, and it presents a serious moral obligation. As the Prophet Muhammad said, “There is no leader who closes the door on someone in need or one suffering in poverty except that God closes the gates of the Heavens during his time of need.”

The Dharmic traditions

Buddhism teaches that all things exist through causes and conditions: “Because of me, they exist. And because of them, I exist.” Rather than seeing things as static or fixed, the Buddhist teaching of causes and conditions instructs us to see all things as dynamic. Therefore, Buddhism calls for empathic resonance with the plight of migrants and refugees, no matter where they come from. Furthermore, the core Buddhist principle that “all things are without self” gives rise to a relationship between the self and the other as one of intricate coexistence, from which
comes the concept “oneself and others are one.” This in turn implies an unbreakable, intricate, relationship of coexistence between the self and the migrant and refugee.

Like the Abrahamic religions, Buddhism also emphasizes the dignity of each person and the deep unity of all human beings. From this perspective, whoever hurts or heals a refugee hurts or heals themselves. At the same time, Buddhism holds that all living beings possess Buddha-nature. All existence is worthy of respect, because everything in existence has the same matter as the Eternal Buddha. All existence is irreplaceable and precious. This warrants a response of generosity and compassion toward all.

The same is true with Hinduism, the oldest of the world’s major religions. A Hindu moral response to migrants and refugees begins theologically with the origin of all in God. The Upanishads speak of God as “that from which all beings originate, by which they are sustained, and to which they return (Taittiriya Upanishad 3.1.1). This vision of a universal God who is the source of all existence, in whom all exists, and who exists equally for all, is the source of our human dignity and value. The moral value that best expresses the meaning of this divine and human unity is compassion (daya/ karuna). This gives rise to a fundamental humanism that flows from the vision of seeing oneself in others. The influential Hindu teacher Tulsidas emphasizes that caring for others is the highest expression of the moral life, and describes it as identifying with the other in suffering and happiness (para duhkha duhkha sukha sukha).

In Hinduism, the expression of these virtues in the public sphere suggests that the common good (lokasangraha) must be the focus of public policy. Accordingly, policies must be shaped by the virtues of generosity (dana), non-possessiveness (nirmana), and concern for others (nirahamkara). It is not ours to own and possess the resources of the earth that are meant for the flourishing of all beings. The Hindu response to migrants and refugees must be guided by the virtues of compassion (daya) and generosity (dana). The Vedas enjoin that “May you become one for whom the stranger (atithi) is a deva” (Taittiriya Upanishad 1.11.1-2). In the Hindu tradition, a deva is a person deserving of welcome, reverence, respect, and generosity. The stranger is deserving of our hospitality by the fact of her humanity and dignity.

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One final point: When it comes to the role of religion in the social order, an important clarification is in order. St. Thomas Aquinas distinguishes clearly between the natural political order founded on reason and the religious order founded on the grace of God and revelation. In this sense, he opposes the medieval philosophers who attributed an essentially political role to religious revelation. This insight remains valid today. It implies that religion must influence

4 Cf. Quaestiones disputatae de veritate, q. 12, a. 3, ad 11: “The society of men insofar as it is ordered to the end which is eternal life can only be conserved by the justice of the faith, whose principle is prophecy […] But since this end is supernatural, both the justice ordered toward this end, and prophecy, which is its principle, will be supernatural. In truth, the justice by which human society is governed and ordered towards the good of the city, can be sufficiently achieved by means of the principles of the ius naturale implanted in men”. (Societas hominum secundum quod ordinatur ad finem vitae aeternae, non potest conservari nisi per iustitiam fidei, cuius principium est prophetia […] Sed cum hic finis sit supernaturalis, et iustitia ad hunc finem ordinata, et prophetia, quae est eius
society while at the same time respecting the natural order based on natural reason, justice and human rights—and this is the domain of the leaders of civil society. The issue is therefore how religious values can inform and infuse the political response to migrants and refugees.

III. A Practical Ethical Response to Migrants and Refugees

**A fourfold moral obligation**

Following Pope Francis, and in line with the major religious traditions, we can say that our duty to migrants and refugees is fourfold—“to welcome”, “to protect”, “to promote”, and “to integrate.”

**To welcome:** This imperative is based on the virtue of solidarity—the notion that we are all responsible for all, not just those behind national borders. The Catholic tradition in particular grounds this in the foundational social principle of the universal destination of goods, the notion that private property is never an absolute right, and that the goods of the earth are destined for all, not the privileged few. In Laudato Si’, Pope Francis calls this principle “a golden rule of social conduct and the first principle of the whole ethical and social order.” The “sacred” duty of hospitality is therefore guided by this principle of solidarity, especially with those in the greatest need. It is also guided by the value of fraternity, the acknowledgement that every human being is a brother or a sister. In this sense, Pope Francis encourages a “culture of encounter” as the only culture capable of building a better, more just, and more fraternal world. We can combat the globalization of indifference with the globalization of encounter.

**To protect:** The requirement to protect migrants and refugees is based on the ethical principle of respect for human rights, which in turn flows from the inherent dignity of every human being. From this perspective, the right to migrate in times of need must be regarded as one of the inalienable and primary rights of the human being. As St. John XXIII stated in Pacem in Terris, “And among man's personal rights we must include his right to enter a country in which he hopes to be able to provide more fittingly for himself and his dependents. It is therefore the duty of State officials to accept such immigrants and—so far as the good of their own community, rightly understood, permits—to further the aims of those who may wish to become members of a new society.”

**To promote:** Personal and family development is an undeniable right of every human being. This calls for the promotion of the integral human development of all migrants and refugees in their countries of origin, transit, and destination. Integral human development, associated in particular with Pope Paul VI, refers to the fullest development of each person and all people, allowing them to become active agents of their own development. Before the right to migrate, states should guarantee the right not to have to migrate. All people must have the right to remain in their homelands, living lives of dignity, peace, and security. Pope Paul VI declared that “development is the new name of peace.” A restatement today would be “sustainable development is the new name of peace.” And the principle of the universal destination of
goods calls for the apportionment of the goods of the earth in line with the principles of distributive justice and shared stewardship.

_To integrate:_ Integration, not to be confused with assimilation, is a process whereby the contents of one’s original culture are preserved and integrated with selected contents of others’ cultures. Integration is always a two-way process, based on openness, a culture of encounter, and recognition of the other’s spiritual richness. Fundamentally, as relational beings, the flourishing of each depends on the flourishing of all. This calls for us to treat each migrant and refugee as a true sister or brother to love, care for, and integrate. It is not just to know about the other, but to actually know the other. Such a concrete expression of fraternity is foundational for building a just and cohesive society.

**Different ethical worldviews**

Putting these moral duties into practice is not straightforward, as it involves navigating between different moral worldviews. One such worldview is cosmopolitan liberalism, which holds that people should have the freedom to choose where to live, suggesting open borders. But most people would reject this reasoning. They would argue that a society is not merely an agglomeration of autonomous self-choosing and self-defining individuals. Instead, people have deep attachments to “home”—the place that makes possible civic friendships, identities, love and work. It is an organic community with a shared narrative, culture, and values—which in turn gives provides the bedrock for trust and social cohesion. From this vantage point, a country’s cultural capital can be undermined by entry of people from vastly different cultural backgrounds.

This second worldview obviously conflicts with liberal cosmopolitanism. Even John Rawls, firmly in the liberal camp, saw no responsibility of communities to accept people from outside. This would also present an insurmountable practical problem—no country can afford to open its borders completely, given the enormous economic costs that would ensue. This is especially the case in countries with generous welfare states. And from an equity perspective, as noted, the poor are most likely to lose out from open borders.

To get a better handle on the complexity of the issue, it helps to express some of the different ethical positions in terms of competing rights claims. People living directly in border areas often prioritize their own _property rights_. Many citizens of destination countries argue for both _sovereign rights_, the rights of nations to protect their borders, and _cultural rights_, based on the shared cultural conception of “home”. Corporations, on the other hand, stress _economic rights_, particularly as it relates to cheap labor and open markets in pursuit of profit maximization. And then there are advocates of both the _human rights of migrants_ and _natural rights_—the latter deriving from the religiously-inspired view that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God.

The big question is how these competing rights can be balanced and prioritized. Those most concerned with property and sovereign rights will emphasize closed borders. Those who prioritize cultural and economic rights might support a legal system allowing people to move
back and forth in a controlled manner, such as guest worker programs. And those who prioritize human and natural rights will lean more toward relatively open borders and the full integration of migrants in society.

The three groups will also look upon migrants from very different perspectives—the first group will see them as aliens (with few if any rights in the destination country), the second as workers (guided by a technocratic paradigm predicated on such factors as efficiency and productivity), and only the third as human beings (a fraternal recognition that they are brothers and sisters). The first group looks on the other with fear and suspicion, the second assesses the other in terms of usefulness to themselves, while the third stresses the importance of connection, encounter, and fraternity. It is this last category that embodies the highest moral calculus in terms of our duty to migrants and refugees—but this is not always easy to achieve.

In sum, it is not straightforward to strike the right balance between extending solidarity to outsiders while protecting both the economic well-being of citizens plus the country’s social capital built on shared culture. It will require the elaboration of practical ethical principles.

**Prioritizing assistance to migrants and refugees**

A basic ethical principle states that the greater the capacity to address a grave threat, the greater the responsibility to do so. In our time, the ability to help people in need, even in faraway places, gives rise to a serious moral responsibility. Yet at the same time, resources are limited. It is not possible to help everyone in need, which calls for some prioritization.

A number of philosophers have attempted to flesh out these global obligations. From the utilitarian perspective, Peter Singer argues that we are obligated to assist people in need when it is within our power to do so, without sacrificing anything of comparable value—and this includes taking in refugees and providing financial assistance to developing countries (including by diverting superfluous spending towards meeting peoples’ needs). Taking a different perspective, Thomas Pogge develops Rawls’s difference principle—the notion that social and economic inequality should only be tolerated to the extent that it helps the least advantaged—to argue that a person is differentially responsible for bad outcomes the more that person participated in causing them in the first place.

We can therefore say that a primary moral obligation is to discharge debts—to pay what is owed to the other—and to compensate for any damage caused. We owe more to the victims of our own actions than to those for whose suffering we are not responsible.

Once our basic duties have been discharged, the next task is to help as many people as possible, and this requires drawing up some criteria. Such criteria could include the seriousness of the need (most critically when a person’s life is in danger), the ability of recipients to eventually help themselves and others, and the degree of responsibility of the recipients for the situation they are in.
Based on these criteria, refugees are clear candidates for help. When it comes to discharging duties of justice, countries implicated in the harm spurring population displacement have a specific moral obligation to accept refugees—this includes former colonial powers, countries that intervene in unjust wars that destabilize countries and regions, and countries responsible for the greatest carbon emissions and environmental carnage. (From this perspective, refugees should include climate refugees.) Going beyond these basic duties, refugees typically meet the criteria for extending help. Most of them are not responsible for their plight. Their need is clearly serious—indeed, their lives are often at risk. And although those left behind might face greater need, helping these victims might not be feasible. That said, it is not necessarily a moral response to divert developmental aid to assist refugees.

All of this suggests a clear moral distinction between extending aid to refugees and extending aid to economic migrants. The acceptance of migrants into a country is usually based on some form of mutual interest. But refugees come not because of any mutual interest but because they are in dire need. They should be prioritized. To be able to accept high numbers of refugees, countries must have the right to limit economic migrants.

**Sustainable development in home countries**

Any ethical response to the plight of migrants and refugees must include an obligation to support sustainable development at home. After all, most people want to reside and prosper in the land of their birth. This is natural, especially if “home” is seen as the locus of civic friendship and identity. From this perspective, forced displacement is a moral tragedy precisely because it undermines this vital concept of “home”. This suggests a focus on making countries of origin more peaceful, more hospitable, more conducive to human flourishing and fulfillment. In turn, this calls for basic safety, food security, economic opportunity, freedom from environmental distress, and prospects for their children’s future.

The solution, therefore, is sustainable development—in particular, the timely implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals as a primary response to the challenges of mass migration. This will permit people to live dignified lives in their home countries. And to avoid future technological displacement, it is also important in this context to seek creative and effective ways of deploying technological advances in the service of employment, human dignity, and the common good.

Given the growing displacement arising from severe environmental stress, it is also vital for all countries—especially those most responsible for warming the planet—to implement the Paris Agreement on Climate Change without delay and to prioritize restoration and protection of vital natural ecosystems.

There is also a need for enhanced international solidarity in support of sustainable development. This encompasses a heightened sense of stewardship over all areas pertaining to the global commons—as Pope Francis notes in the context of climate change, “the climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all” (Laudato Si’ 23). It also encompasses the need for an effective and predicable transfer of resources from rich countries to poor countries.
If rich countries want to reduce the flow of migrants to their borders, they have a responsibility to make migrants’ homes more hospitable in the first place. In terms of the various rights attached to migrants and citizens of destination countries, we must surely add the “right to remain” in one’s country of origin—which is attached to the responsibility to make remaining a viable option.

What about refugees fleeing war and conflict? This form of large-scale forced displacement demands a two-fold response—investing in sustainable development, yes, but also addressing the deep drivers of the underlying conflict. Any attempt to deal with the proximate cause of forced displacement without addressing the deeper cause is doomed to fail. This will require a political solution to stop the wars and end the arms trade. Governments must divert resources from war and military spending toward peace and sustainable development.

**The need for an international political response**

Although we live in a world of rapid change, marked by hyper-globalization and major technological advance, the architecture for the protection of refugees and asylum seekers has not changed since the Second World War. In the aftermath of the war, the international community developed a set of policies based on the assumption that whatever caused refugees to flee their homes would be resolved. Today, increasingly protracted conflicts plus environmental devastation mean that there is little chance of safe return.

The status and rights of refugees is governed by numerous internationally-agreed documents, grounded in the notion of universal human rights. The preeminent texts here include the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* of 1948, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights*, both from 1966. These documents are the most general expressions of the recognition of basic human rights by international positive law. They affirm that human rights stem from the inherent dignity of the human person, not from the arbitrary power of the state. And in this context, the right of everyone “to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 14.1) is recognized as non-negotiable.

Specific obligations toward refugees are governed by the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* from 1951, and the *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees* from 1967 (which overcame geographic limitations to Europe). The core principles here are non-discrimination, non-penalization, and non-refoulement, which says that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to life or freedom.

Yet while these documents have accomplished a great deal in terms of codifying ethical responsibility, they remain imperfect. The first problem relates to an overly-narrow definition of “refugee” in the 1951 Convention. Legally, refugees are people who—being outside of their country of nationality or (for stateless people) the country of their former habitual residence—are unable or unwilling to return “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.” This does not include everyone whose life is in danger, such as victims of civil wars.
We need stronger protection in international law for all who face a threat to their life and person from indiscriminate violence.

A second issue is that refugees need broader protections than non-discrimination, non-penalization, and non-refoulement. They should also be granted positive rights to benefits such as housing, education, healthcare, and public relief. In this context, governments must pay special attention to the development needs of children—the youngest victims of forced displacement demand new approaches to protection and resettlement. Children in flight need more than a safe haven. They need a home, a place to grow up, a decent education, legal protections, and an appropriate response to any physical and mental health challenges.

Third, the Convention, while specifying the rights of refugees, does not oblige any state to actually accept refugees. Because refugees have rights once they cross the border, governments often go out of their way to bar access, opting for walls over bridges. In Europe, the political reaction of host countries has made the plight of refugees worse—refugees are consigned to camps, living in horrible humanitarian conditions. This is a short-term response to a long-term problem—a security response twinned with a humanitarian response, but without a political response. The absence of comprehensive migration and refugee policies at the international level feeds into a narrative of fear and chaos, leading to a vicious cycle. The political backlash can be partly traced to the lack of a common policy.

What is needed is a coordinated political response based on international solidarity. Such a response must include a just and fair apportioning of responsibilities. There is nothing inherently wrong with discouraging “asylum shopping”, as otherwise all would flock to the wealthiest and most generous countries. It is also reasonable for countries to establish clear criteria of admission to discourage unproductive and often dangerous journeys. But placing the responsibility on the first country of arrival often disadvantages the poorest countries, which are typically the most accessible for fleeing refugees. In this context, the European Union, through the Dublin Regulation, imposes an unfair burden on the countries of southern Europe. Overall, we need a legal system that identifies a system of distribution among countries—based on such factors as country size, population density, and GDP. Rich countries should compensate poorer countries that accept more refugees. And, as noted already, countries responsible for causing the problems spurring the refugee crisis have a specific obligation to open their doors.

An urgent priority in this context is the provision of safe, legal channels for refugees. The vast majority of people crossing the Mediterranean have no legal way to move safely. Their only option is to rely on traffickers, smugglers, and other criminal elements who profit from human misery. The same is true for those who seek to cross the U.S. border—extremely poor families are forced to pay enormous sums to “coyotes” who often leave their charges to die. Drug traffickers, human traffickers, and criminal gangs also prey on migrants who try to make this journey. To alleviate these pressures, we need corridors for all different types of people on the move—long-term and short-term, for protection and for economic reasons, temporary and permanent. This requires far more collaboration at both the bilateral and multilateral levels.
Partnerships are important in this context. We need new and innovative ways to protect migrants and refugees through humanitarian corridors, public-private partnerships and sponsorships. In Italy, Sant’Egidio spearheaded an excellent initiative to move people from harm’s way to safety in a way that has government support but is self-directed and self-funded. It is also important for emerging and developing countries to embrace a growing sense of global solidarity by supporting these resettlement efforts. Some are indeed stepping up—Argentina, for example, has come forward with a quota pledge. And the Governor of San Luis in Argentina has opened a vitally important humanitarian corridor to show solidarity with refugees. The private-sector partnership model also has tremendous potential to fill gaps in the aid-delivery system, especially in terms of meeting the immediate needs of refugees and displaced peoples.

With regard to migrants, there is little in the way of an applicable legal regime at the international level that apportions rights and responsibilities between migrants and host governments. For the first time, the United Nations General Assembly is seeking to derive some principles in this regard, to be embodied in a Global Compact for Migration. In this context, international migration policy should be based on a sense of co-responsibility between origin, transit, and destination countries. The Global Compact represents a unique opportunity, but it faces strong political headwinds. The G7 could not even agree on the most basic consensus on migrants and refugees.

It makes sense, as is the case in Canada, for policies to combine selective and intelligent migration standards with help to refugees. Such a comprehensive and predictable approach should make these policies more palatable with electorates. For sure, integration can prove difficult, especially in the context of large numbers of irregular arrivals. Yet this can be prudently managed, especially since the number of arrivals is not overwhelming in the context of the overall population. Even in 2015, when over a million migrants and refugees reached Europe, this represented a mere 0.2 percent of the European population. In contrast, Canada takes in the equivalent of about 1 percent of its population each year through legal and orderly migrant and refugee channels.

**A moral political response**

Pulling everything together, we can identify three dimensions of the moral-political conception of the common good that pertain to the rights and responsibilities of migrants and refugees.

First, according to the natural law, migration in search of survival is a fundamental right than can never be denied. This relates to the universal destination of goods, which takes on special relevance in circumstances of dire need. As St. Thomas Aquinas put it, “in case of necessity all things are common”, because the right to life transcends the right to ownership. Helping human beings in grave need, especially when they are escaping death, is also a categorical imperative in the Kantian sense. These basic needs of migrants must always be met without exception or equivocation. These primary rights concern issues related to existence or
subsistence and condition other related issues (such as accommodation, food, housing, and security).  

Second, the natural law also indicates that human beings, as social animals, have a duty to support their families and educate their children. Beyond meeting the basic needs of migrants and refugees, it is also necessary to support their integral human development once they have arrived in their destination countries. This duty to “promote” is also non-negotiable. As part of the fundamental rights of peoples, migrants require legal guarantees of primary rights that foster an “organic participation” in the economic and social life of the nation. Ghettoization or sustained exclusion and discrimination is never acceptable. Migrants cannot participate effectively in society if they are marginalized and excluded from social, cultural, economic, and political life. Access to these economic and social goods, including education and employment, will allow people to develop their own capacities.

Third, governments have responsibilities related to protecting, examining and developing the values that underpin the deep, stable, unity of a society—and, more fundamentally, create a horizon of public peace, understood as St. Augustine’s “tranquility in order”. This calls for deeper form of integration based on communion with deep values, including religious values, and it imposes obligations on migrants who wish to stay to respect the deep values that constitute a country’s “home”. As Pope Francis noted, “immigrants themselves must not forget that they have a duty to respect the laws, culture and traditions of the countries in which they are received.” This suggests that policies on migration should be guided by prudence, even if prudence can never mean exclusion. As Pope Francis puts it, governments should evaluate, “with wisdom and foresight, the extent to which their country is in a position, without prejudice to the common good of citizens, to offer a decent life to migrants, especially those truly in need of protection.”

**The importance of moral education**

For people to freely and openly welcome, protect, promote, and integrate immigrants, they need to be equipped with the proper cognitive, emotional, and moral tools. Coherent with modern scientific evidence, the great wisdom traditions all affirm that human beings are prone to altruism and fellow-feeling (including toward the stranger) but also to egocentric attitudes and in-group preferences. And these in-group preferences emerge at a very early age, making it all-too-easy to instill values of tribalism, racism and xenophobia in children. This is not too surprising from an evolutionary perspective—for the first 240,000 years of our existence,

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human beings lived as small-group hunter gatherers, only inhabiting larger communities in the last 10,000 years or so.

Another set of biases emerging from the social-psychological literature are self-serving biases—the notion that people are inclined to view themselves as virtuous and intelligent and to believe that all rewards come with moral desert. Hence there is an underestimation of luck and an overestimation of effort and self-determination. These cognitive biases can be magnified by the prevalence of a libertarian ideology suggesting that market outcomes are fair, just, and virtuous. These biases can also percolate up to nations, leading to feelings of superiority and exceptionalism.

As the great sages all taught, these kinds of biases can only be overcome by appropriate moral education that begins by honestly acknowledging the existence of these biases in the first place. This goes hand-in-hand with inculcating values like empathy, compassion, fraternity, and solidarity. Such education would also include an exploration of the deep structural drivers of the migrant and refugee problems. And it must begin with young children.
Annex: In Support of the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

Academia
- To produce and disseminate scientific and specialized knowledge on migration and asylum, aiming at producing a new narrative based on facts
- To produce ethical reflection grounded on shared principles aiming at reminding societies of their foundational values of justice, solidarity and fraternity
- To enhance the offer of scholarships and visas for refugee and asylum seeker students stuck in detention camps
- To facilitate the recognition (transferability) of academic credentials and professional skills of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees
- To join ongoing programs offering secondary, tertiary and professional education for young refugees and asylum seekers in camps and centers
- To gather and document best practices in welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating migrants, asylum seekers and refugees and share the results

Representatives of Governmental and International Organizations
- To engage in shaping more open and forward-looking migration and asylum policies, aiming at enhancing channels of safe and regular migration
- To unmask the hidden agendas of international lobbies, powerful companies and unscrupulous leaders
- To assure that international cooperation programs are not used for unfair interference in the political life of developing countries
- To show special attention to biased deployment and return policies
- To promote the implementation of programs involving local governments in taking responsibility for the welcome and integration of migrants and refugees
- To promote programs of humanitarian corridors targeting the most vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees
- To promote public and private, individual and collective sponsorship programs for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants
- To promote alternative programs to detention for irregular migrants, particularly children, and offer special regularization programs for long-term residents who are in an unauthorized situation
- To promote welcoming programs targeting small groups of asylum seekers and refugees to be hosted in villages, towns and small cities, engaging local communities in their assistance
- To promote the “culture of encounter” by assuring “spaces” for free and sound expressions of one’s own culture and intercultural dynamics

Civil Society Organizations
- To advocate with Governments and International Organizations for the implementation of the above-mentioned programs
- To indicate “best practices” on the field to be documented for replication
- To show availability and eagerness to share strategies and programs for a better coordination of the provision of services
- To share successful stories of migrants, refugees and victims of human trafficking in order to help change the negative narrative

**Religious Leaders and Faith-Based Organizations**
- To assist contemporary societies in recovering their transcendental dimension of human life and restoring the moral conscience in the political exercise
- To join the Catholic Church in advocating with Governments and International Organizations for points of common concern to be inserted in the 2018 Global Compacts
- To promote initiatives of interreligious dialogue and interfaith actions to assist migrants, refugees and victims of human trafficking

**Foundations and Philanthropists**
- To constitute special funds for migration and asylum and be open to receive project proposals endorsed by the M&R Section, according to their scope and possibilities