

## ARCHBISHOP: MIGRANTS ARE A VALUABLE RESOURCE

### Laments Increasing Rejection of Refugees

MALAGA, Spain, APRIL 28, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Although many may feel threatened by an influx of migrants to their homeland, these newcomers can actually bring valuable resources to the country that welcomes them, says Archbishop Antonio Maria Vegliò. The president of the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travelers affirmed this in an address at the 8th CCEE (Council of European Bishops' Conferences) European Migration Congress, which began today in Malaga. The congress ends Saturday. He acknowledged that "the phenomenon of migrations has always accompanied the history of humanity, but in the past years it has taken on almost universal dimensions and ever more complex meanings."

In the 27 countries of the European Union, the prelate reported, "it is estimated that there are 24 million immigrants at present, mostly from the countries that belong to the Union."

"Two-thirds of the foreigners present are hosted by Germany, France and the United Kingdom, even though the Mediterranean countries are recording constant increases," he noted.

The archbishop affirmed that "it is difficult to obtain precise figures regarding the irregular immigrants, but according to recent evaluations, they could be between 4.5 million and 8 million, with an estimated increase of between 350,000 and 500,000 a year."

Wounded face

He asserted that migrations "have a twofold value connotation."

First, Archbishop Vegliò said, "they have reached considerable dimensions today and so due to this quantitative weight alone, they cannot be neglected."

Second, he continued, "the migrant's wounded face is increasing clear in the turmoil of movements which are not an expression of free choice, but often provoked, that is, caused by erroneous policies, in particular to thwart illegal immigration."

"In fact," the prelate said, "the more restrictive the measures are, the more the number of illegal migrants and traffickers in foreign labor grows."

"So even the most protected borders are crossed daily by people who flee from unacceptable living conditions and do not stop before dangers and obstacles of any kind," he added.

Beyond the dramatic aspects that often accompany the migrants' history," the archbishop affirmed, "their faces and experiences bear the seal of the history of salvation and the theology of the 'signs of the times.'"

Therefore, he added, migrants are "a providential resource to be discovered and given value in building a new humanity and proclaiming the Gospel."

As Christians, Archbishop Vegliò said, "since we give value to the person and the dignity of each person as an image of God, it is important to be committed so that the equality of all human persons will be realized."

Fundamental rights

He stated: "The Church wants to affirm the culture of respect, equality and the evaluation of diversities, which sees the migrants as bearers of values and resources.

"For these reasons, it suggests revisiting policies and norms that jeopardize the protection of fundamental rights, such as the right to family reunion, access to citizenship and the stability of one's migratory project.

"It also expresses strong dissent regarding the ever more restrictive praxis in granting the refugee status, and the more and more frequent recourse to the detention and expulsion of migrants."

The prelate said that "the Church will continue to be committed to intensifying meetings and interreligious dialogue and it will do its utmost so that the laws on religious freedom will be marked by a spirit of fair play and reciprocal respect."

He added that the Church "will also continue to welcome the migrants who come from sister Churches fraternally, to share the riches of diversity with them, and to proclaim the Gospel together through word and action."

"Moreover, since the Church is aware of the tragedies of the past," the archbishop affirmed, "it knows that the full integration of every minority is essential in maintaining civil harmony and democracy."

"On the basis of the Christian faith," he concluded, the Church "intends to contribute to building a Europe with a more human face where human rights and the fundamental values of peace, justice, freedom, tolerance, participation and solidarity are protected."

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