History of the Pastoral Care of Migrants

Fabio Baggio
EXODUS SERIES:
A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR THE MIGRANT MINISTRY IN ASIA

Series Editor: Fabio Baggio
Scalabrini Migration Center

1. Understanding International Migration in Asia
   Maruja M.B. Asis

2. Migration in the Bible
   Maurizio Pettená

3. Theology of Migration
   Fabio Baggio

4. The Teaching of the Church on Migration
   Maurizio Pettená

5. History of the Pastoral Care of Migrants
   Fabio Baggio

6. The Laity in the Ministry to the Migrants
   Emmanuel de Guzman

7. Counseling Migrants
   Cecilia Gastardo-Conaco and Elenita Mendoza

8. The Pastoral Care of Seasfarers
   Savino Bernardi

9. The Challenge of Religious Diversity in Migration
   James H. Kroeger

10. Advocacy and Networking on Migrants’ Issues
    Maruja M.B. Asis

11. The Human Rights of Migrants
    Graziano Battistella

For more information on the Exodus Series, please contact:

SCALABRINIMIGRATIONCENTER
4, 13th St., New Manila, Quezon City
Sel: (+632) 724-3512; Fax: 721-4296; Email: smc.org.ph; Website: http://www.smc.org.ph

Cover design by: MARCIAL CONACO III
History of the Pastoral Care of Migrants

Fabio Baggio

EXODUS SERIES:
A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR THE MIGRANT MINISTRY IN ASIA

Scalabrini Migration Center
Quezon City, Philippines
2005
Fabio Baggio is a missionary of the Scalabrinian Congregation (Missionaries of San Charles Borromeo). He was born in Bassano del Grappa (Italy) in 1965. He obtained his Baccalaureate in Philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy “Scalabrini” in Loreto (Italy) in 1986, and his Baccalaureate in Theology at the Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana in Rome in 1991. It was in the latter university where he attained his MA (1994) and PhD in Church History (1998), with specialization in Contemporary History. He was counselor of the INCAMI (Episcopal Commission for Migrations of Chile) in Santiago de Chile from 1994 to 1997. His next assignment was in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he served as Director of the Migration Department of the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires (1997-2002), engaged in research at the Center for Latin American Migration Studies (CEMLA) (1998-2002), and was adjunct professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences in Universidad del Salvador (1999-2000) as well as the Institute of Theology of Sao Paulo, Brazil (2000-2001). In September 2002, he became the Director of the Scalabrini Migration Center in Manila (Philippines), editor of the Asian and Pacific Migration Journal and co-editor of the biweekly Asian Migration News. He has written two books: La Chiesa argentina de fornte all’immigratione italiana tra il 1870 ed el 1915 (2000) and Gli italiani de Brisbane (2004). He is affiliated as adjunct professor with the Pontificia Universitas Urbaniana in Rome (from 2000) and the Maryhill School of Theology, Quezon City, Philippines (from 2004).
Foreword

Human mobility is a sign of our times, but it is not a new phenomenon. Going back to the ancestors of our faith we return to Abraham, who left his country, his kindred and his father’s house for a country which Yahweh would show him (see Gn 12:1). Isaac and Jacob were wanderers themselves. Joseph made his people come to Egypt, while Moses led them out from there and, for forty years, wandered with them in the desert. In all these events, Yahweh was always with them (see EMCC 14).

The chosen people knew what Yahweh expected from them. They saw His blessings poured on those who were faithful to Him, but they also experienced His anger when they acted against His commandments.

In today’s globalized world, people move from one country to another, in a continuous meeting and exchange of cultures, customs and traditions. They come in contact with persons professing different beliefs or belonging to other Churches or ecclesial communities. They also meet those who do not have any religious belief. It would therefore not be a surprise if Catholic people involved in human mobility would start asking questions regarding their faith and on what God expects from them in their daily life. It is therefore necessary for pastors and pastoral agents to be ready to walk with them and lead them along the path that God has marked out for them (see EMCC 34-36, 56, 59-60, 69 and 49,50).

Thus there is a need for pastors and pastoral agents actively involved in the field of human mobility to get specific formation (see EMCC 75, 78, 80, 88) to be able to cope with the issues and problems that inevitably come up in this area. It is important for them to know what it means to be a Catholic in all the various situations that could arise and how to strengthen those who have to struggle to be faithful. It is even more important that they know how to let people on the move experience the joy and fullness that comes with a coherent Christian life that would result in spontaneous sharing and proclamation of the faith (see EMCC 37,59,69, JPR Art. 2 § 2).
EXODUS SERIES

The present booklets are an important contribution in the field of formation, which the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People deeply appreciates and encourages.
Preface

Migration is a growing phenomenon in Asia and all indications suggest that it will remain an important aspect of the region’s landscape. Economic interests and political and cultural considerations tend to view migration solely as an economic process, where migrants are just factors of production. The challenge for the Church is to present a different perspective, where migration becomes a component of dialogue among cultures and societies and migrants are viewed as human beings. The challenge is also to question a model of development which ignores inequalities and disparities that uproot people from their environment and heritage. Finally, the challenge is to build a Christian community capable of appreciating differences while celebrating the unity of faith. These challenges imply that the Church in Asia must deepen its missionary dimension as constitutive of the Church, a dimension in which migrants are not simply a group of persons toward whom the Church is missionary, but as a people who characterize the mission of the Church. Thus, migrants must be an integral component in the mission of the Church in Asia, i.e., in prayer-contemplation, communion and dialogue, as well as human promotion. As the Church in Asia must become a Church of communities which are in communion, migrants can be catalysts and participants in leading the Church to experience such communion. To realize this goal, the Churches in Asia need to integrate the concern for migrants into pastoral planning. Education and awareness are part of efforts to understand the multidimensional causes and consequences of migration.

In order to help the local Churches respond positively to these challenges and address the need expressed by pastoral workers, the Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC) developed a formation program for pastoral workers involved in the care of migrants. Known as “Exodus, A Week of Formation for Agents in the Pastoral Care of Migrants,” the program has been carried out by SMC since 2001. The program invites resource persons who provide input on migration as a phenomenon, migration in the Scriptures, the teaching of the Church, Church-inspired programs and services for migrants and their families, such as counseling, program assessment, advocacy and drafting plans of action. The program also
provides a venue for pastoral workers to share experiences and to foster networking and cooperation. Each year, some 30-40 participants coming from different Asian countries and some others working with Asian migrants in other continents, gather in Tagaytay City, Philippines for a week of formation, reflection, dialogue, networking, and planning for future action. In 2004, Exodus was offered in South Korea, upon the invitation of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Korea. More than 300 participants have gone through Exodus between 2001 and 2005. Feedback from participants indicates the usefulness of the program in building capabilities and in deepening pastoral workers’ appreciation of the mission with migrants.

This module is part of the Exodus Series, A Resource Guide for the Migrant Ministry in Asia, a compendium of eleven teaching units designed as a reference or training guide for pastoral workers in the migrant ministry. The teaching units were developed based on materials that SMC has collected in past editions of Exodus. Each module offers an overview of the topic and includes recommendations on how the topic can be presented in training programs, accompanied by guide questions for group discussions and suggested reference materials. It is our hope that this series will be a relevant companion for the women and men involved in this important ministry.

Lastly, we wish to acknowledge, with many thanks, the support of Committee for Charitable Interventions in Favor of the Third World of the Bishops’ Conference of Italy (CEI).

Fabio Baggio
Director
Scalabrini Migration Center
History of the Pastoral Care of Migrants

I. Introduction

The Apostolic Constitution *Exsul Familia Nazarethana* (1952) by Pius XII represents the first attempt to elaborate a systematic reflection on the pastoral care of migrants and refugees. In the first title, the pope underlines that the concern of the Catholic Church on human mobility has always been present and effective throughout the centuries:

Holy Mother Church, impelled by her ardent love of souls has striven to fulfill the duties inherent in her mandate of salvation for all mankind, a mandate entrusted to her by Christ. She has been especially careful to provide all possible spiritual care for pilgrims, aliens, exiles and migrants of every kind. This work has been carried out chiefly by priests who, in administering the Sacraments and preaching the Word of God, have labored zealously to strengthen the Faith of the Christians in the bond of charity. Let us briefly review what the Church has done in this matter in the distant past and then discuss more fully the implementation of this work in our own times (*Exsul Familia Nazarethana*, I).

The contemporary ministry to migrants and itinerant people is to be considered as part of a long tradition of good practices and failures, the knowledge of which may enlighten present efforts. The historical comprehension of this pastoral action would help us to understand the present reality and its challenges as a result of past trends and events.

In this teaching unit, the author intends to present a simple overview of the history of the Catholic Church’s pastoral concern for the people on the move as it was understood and performed since the first centuries. In particular, the following points will be considered:
II. The Ancient Church and Human Mobility

The first approach of the Apostolic Church to human mobility concerned essentially the question of how to convey the Good News to the “foreigners” and their inclusion in the early community. In the time of the Fathers of the Church, the time of pilgrimages and huge forced migrations, hospitality to pilgrims and displaced people were a major concern.

The Apostolic Church and the Foreigners

Although the historicity of the *Acts of the Apostles* has been the object of controversial debates in the last decades, in the light of contemporary studies and archaeological discoveries, its value as an accurate and trustworthy historical document seems undeniable today (Powell, 1991). Based on the document, the author presents the first challenges of human mobility to the Apostolic Church and her responses.

In obedience to the command of Jesus Christ, the evangelizing mission of the Apostles started in Jerusalem, just after the Pentecost. Because of the Jewish celebration, the Holy City was full of pilgrims coming from all over:

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, “Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome,
both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God” (Acts 2,4-11).

Beyond its miraculous nature, the “glossolalia” (i.e., the ability of speaking in foreign tongues) of the disciples can be considered a concrete response to one of the main challenges of the ministry to migrants: the difference of language. The first missionary enterprise indicated a Christian community, which was truly concerned about cultural differences; faced with immense human diversities, the announcement of the Good News underwent a special process, which modern theology would call “inculturation of the Gospel.”

The persecution Herod Agrippa carried out in 44 compelled the extension of the evangelizing mission outside the walls of Jerusalem (Acts 8,4), leading to the first encounters with non-Jewish people, generally immigrants and travelers in Palestine. The message of the salvation of Jesus Christ was heard by the multitude of foreigners and itinerants in Palestine. Among them was the Ethiopian eunuch who was converted following a random meeting with the apostle Philip:

Then Philip opened his mouth and, beginning with this scripture passage, he proclaimed Jesus to him. As they traveled along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look, there is water. What is to prevent my being baptized?” Then he ordered the chariot to stop, and Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water, and he baptized him. When they came out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, but continued on his way rejoicing (Acts, 8,34-39).

There was no problem in understanding the language, but Philip’s consideration of cultural differences led him to patiently explain the main patterns of Judaism in order to convey the messianic mission of Jesus Christ.

In spite of some successes, the inclusion of the gentiles in the Apostolic Church was not that smooth. A debate about the necessity of circumcision before Christian baptism generated serious tensions in the early community and the possibility of a schism appeared imminent. The extraordinary experience of the universality of the Kingdom of God, which took place in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10,44-48), did not dissuade Peter to oppose Paul on this matter. The tendency to homogenize every “alien” element
EXODUS SERIES

was justified in light of tradition and promoting equality among the members. A special council was held in Jerusalem to resolve the controversy. The Christian leaders, gathered together for the first time, decided to respect differences (Acts 15,1-19). The resolution proved to be wise and its positive effects were made immediately visible: the Good News was disseminated everywhere and many new communities appeared in Asia and Europe.

The destruction of Jerusalem ordered by the Roman general Titus in August 70 and the subsequent diaspora saw Jews and Christians experiencing the tragedy of forced migration. Mobility in the early Christian communities notably increased because of the frequent religious persecutions decreed by the Roman Emperors: Domitianus (90), Trajanus (100-110), Antoninus Pius (150), Marcus Aurelius (160-180), Septimius Severus (190-200), Caracalla (210), Maximinus (230), Decius (240), Gallus and Valerianus (250) and Diocletian (300-310). The constant threat of informants and “spies” of the imperial intelligence prompted the early Christians to look with diffidence at foreigners and newcomers, particularly in the western part of the Roman Empire. During this troubled time, the use of a Christian “contessaratio hospitalitis” (hospitality cards) - an “ecclesiastic” version of the identity document given by the civil authorities to their citizens migrating inside the Empire – was of great help indeed. This shows that Christian migrants and travelers were easily welcomed by the local communities. Nevertheless, the tragic news about massive killings and massacres heightened Christians’ apprehension and they designed a special code of words and signs to preserve privacy and secrecy inside the communities. Such preventive measures resulted in some reticence or wariness to strangers.

In 260, the Emperor Gallienus issued an edict of tolerance and Christians were given freedom of religious expression. In 311, the edict of Galerius acknowledged the religion founded by Jesus Christ as one of the official faiths in the Roman Empire and the Church started its process of institutionalization. The fear of strangers was over.


The Fathers and the Practice of Hospitality

For the Church in the IV and V centuries, a period of fast development of pastoral structures and actions, the care for pilgrims, strangers, displaced people and migrants was a real concern. This clearly appeared in the exhortations of the Fathers, in both East and West. Some of their statements and good practices are worth mentioning.

John Chrysostom (344-407), ordinary of Antioch, in his *Treatise on the Priesthood*, revealed that one of the main pastoral concerns for a Bishop was providing the necessary funds to assure a worthy welcome to strangers and the care of the sick.

Moreover, in the reception of strangers, and the care of the sick, consider how great an expenditure of money is needed, and how much exactness and discernment on the part of those who preside over these matters. For it is often necessary that this expenditure should be even larger than that of which I spoke just now, and that he who presides over it should combine prudence and wisdom with skill in the art of supply, so as to dispose the affluent to be emulous and ungrudging in their gifts (*Treatise on the Priesthood, III,16*).

It was not just a pious recommendation. In Antioch, Christian migrants and visitors can rely on a generous offer of shelters, which was administered by priests. They were concrete testimonies of a tradition of hospitality, whose highlight is the invitation to participate in the Eucharistic communion together with the local community. Nevertheless, such organized reception, in the mind of Chrysostom, did not substitute in any way the individual duty of hospitality, which was required of every disciple of Jesus Christ.³

Towards the end of the IV century, the imminence of large-scale Barbarian invasions terrorized the Northeast region of the Roman Empire. Many families were forced to abandon their homes along the borders and sought refuge in safer places. Many of them found generous hospitality in Italian territories. Several Christian families were effectively involved in

this “ante litteram” pastoral care of refugees. Unfortunately, not all were able to escape; many were captured by the Barbarians and reduced to slavery. Ambrose (339-397), Bishop of Milan, in his book, On the Duties of the Clergy, explained why he decided to sell even the sacred vessels of his Church in order to rescue the Roman prisoners, after the defeat of the Emperor Valentine near Adrianopolis, in 379, and to give them a new house:

So I once brought odium on myself because I broke up the sacred vessels to redeem captives—a fact that could displease the Arians. Not that it displeased them as an act, but as being a thing in which they could take hold of something for which to blame me. Who can be so hard, cruel, iron-hearted, as to be displeased because a man is redeemed from death, or a woman from barbarian impurities, things that are worse than death, or boys and girls and infants from the pollution of idols, whereby through fear of death they were defiled? (On the Duties of the Clergy, II,28)

At the beginning of the V century, the Barbarian conquest, passing through Spain, extended to North Africa. This gave birth to two kinds of migration: the flight of Christians to safer places and the settlement of new pagan or Aryan families in the North African territories. In Hippo, Bishop Augustine was quite concerned about the human mobility caused by the invasion of the Vandals and called on fellow bishops and priests to a two-pronged action. Following their firm commitment not to leave their flock, some of them were urged to follow the displaced, while others were called to remain in the cities to help in the difficult process of integrating locals and newcomers:

But when the danger is true for everybody, bishops, clergy and lay people, those who are more in need are not to be abandoned by those whom they need. Therefore, either they move all together to fortified places or those, who are compelled to stay, are not to be abandoned by those who are supposed to supply what is necessary to religious life: may they survive in the same way or suffer in the

---

4 On the hospitality to Roman families fleeing due to the Barbarian invasions, see Angelo Paredi, “Le migrazioni negli anni di Sant’Ambrogio, San Gerolamo e Sant’Agostino,” L’epoca patristica e la pastorale della mobilità umana, Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (Padova: Edizioni Messaggero, 1989, 167-170).
same way what the Father of the family wanted them to suffer (Possidium, *Vita Augustini*, 30,11).5

Disappointed by the immorality of the Roman clergy, the priest Jerome, migrated to Palestine and settled in Bethlehem, to study and translate the Bible into Latin. He established several monasteries, always ready to offer hospitality to two kinds of migrants: the devout pilgrims coming to visit the Holy Land, and the asylum seekers coming from the territories occupied by the Barbarians. In his Letter to Heliodorus, dated 396, Jerome expressed his sincere solidarity and concern for the victims of the apocalyptic scenario that, according to the author, were signs marking the end of the Roman world:

> For twenty years and more the blood of Romans has been shed daily between Constantinople and the Julian Alps. Scythia, Thrace, Macedonia, Dardania, Dacia, Thessaly, Achaia, Epirus, Dalmatia, the Pannonias—each and all of these have been sacked and pillaged and plundered by Goths and Sarmatians, Quades and Alans, Huns and Vandals and Marchmen. How many of God’s matrons and virgins, virtuous and noble ladies, have been made the sport of these brutes! Bishops have been made captive, priests and those in minor orders have been put to death. Churches have been overthrown, horses have been stalled by the altars of Christ, the relics of martyrs have been dug up. Mourning and fear abound on every side and death appears in countless shapes and forms. The Roman world is falling: yet we hold up our heads instead of bowing them (Letter to Heliodorus, 16).

Christianity emerged in Spain since the first century. In ancient Iberia, communities developed quite quickly and cohesively. Every important issue was the subject of community discussions in local councils organized by the official leaders. During the V century, just before the fall of the Western Roman Empire (476), Spanish territories were devastated by several Barbarian invasions, resulting in the dispersal of many Christians around the mountains and in villages. The subsequent settlement of the Visigoths

---

created a diversity of races and cultures in many towns and villages of the peninsula. The perception of the newcomers as invaders prejudiced their reception by the local Christian communities. The sincere concern of Spanish bishops in the face of such massive and troubled human mobility is suggested in the proceedings of two important councils in the VI century: Tarragona (516) and Braga II (572). Canon 8 of the Council of Tarragona urged bishops to know better the needs of their flock through regular pastoral visitations, including the remotest areas of their dioceses. Canon 1 of the II Council of Braga stated that bishops should demand from their clergy a physical and permanent presence among the faithful in their jurisdiction, since they were subject to frequent migrations.6

III. The Medieval Church’s Concern for Migrants

During the Middle Ages, the Church in West Europe went through different traumatic experiences: the invasion of the Barbarians, the conquest of the Muslims, the displacement of the Roman Curia, schisms and decadence. All these phenomena were accompanied by forms of human mobility, which challenged the life and structures of the Western Church.

The Barbarian Invasions

After several Barbarian incursions, in 476, the Western Roman Empire fell and its last Emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed. The imperial territories, including Rome, were divided among the conquerors and the populations were subjected to obey the new Barbarians kings. The various Barbarian tribes (Vandals, Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Suevis, Lombards and Franks) did not come from a common historical and cultural background and often fought each other to impose their rule on the territories. At a religious level, most of them had already come to know Christianity. Some of them still kept their pagan tradition, while others adopted Jesus’ religion, mixed with Aryan heresy.

In times of invasions and devastations, the European Church did not abandon her duty of taking care of many displaced Christian families; she

also showed her concern for the conversion and integration of the newcomers. An historical assessment of the different practices reveals a common pattern. In those territories, where the Church (the bishop and priests in particular) promoted the integration process between former imperial subjects and invaders, a quick conversion of the Barbarians to orthodox Christianity occurred. Conversely, where cultural and religious divides were stressed, the conquerors did not convert and even persecuted local Christians. In the *Exsul Familia Nazarethana*, Pius XII praised the efforts of bishops and priests who worked towards a peaceful coexistence:

> Equally noble were the vigorous ardent labors of bishops and priests who sought to bring to newcomers the blessings of the true Faith and to introduce them into the social customs of these new countries. They also facilitated the assimilation of the uncultured invaders whom they introduced both to the Christian religion and to a new culture (*Exsul Familia Nazarethana*, I).

The work of mediation between the Roman classic tradition and the wild Barbarian world was mainly entrusted to a group of special missionaries: the monks of Benedict of Norcia, the father of Western cenobitism. The holy founder dreamt of a new Christian Empire, a melting pot of races and cultures, which the popes supported. Totally committed to the evangelizing mission, the monks followed the movements of the Barbarian tribes until they came to a permanent settlement and helped in organizing the first ecclesiastical structures. Among them, Augustine of Canterbury, Clement of Utrecht and Wilfred are especially worth mentioning.7

The Muslim Expansion

At the beginning of the VII century, a new religion originated in Arabia, thanks to the preachings of the prophet Mohammad. The new creed, Islam (i.e., unconditional dedication to God/Allah), combined elements from Judaism, Christianity and Arab paganism. Through Islamism, Mohammad succeeded in unifying the different Arab tribes, making them a unique theocratic nation. After the death of the Prophet (632), his successors waged a massive campaign of conquest and dissemination of Islamism in the nearby territories. In a few years, they took Palestine, Syria, Egypt and Persia; by

---

the beginning of the VIII century, Armenia, Cyprus, Turkistan, North Africa and Spain were under their rule.

In spite of the cultural divide, the process of assimilation between the “conquered” and the “conquerors” developed quite quickly and smoothly. Such an interesting phenomenon arose due partly to the weakness of the Roman-Christian cultural model which resulted from recurrent religious conflicts (heresies and schisms) and the negative effects of the Barbarian invasions, and partly because of the strength of the Muslim model. In some places, the fusion of the elements of the two cultures gave birth to a rich culture, as demonstrated by the artistic heritage in the towns of Spain and Sicily.

As far as religion was concerned, at least initially, Christianity was able to survive under Islamic domination with no major problem. The only exception was the case of the Christians in Arabia, who were compelled to migrate. In the following decades, the Church experienced a worrisome loss in her membership. The new rulers favored conversion to Islam, using the carrot-and-stick policy. Christians who converted to Islam gained some social privileges; they were freed if they were slaves; they were offered privileges in the conduct of their businesses. The evangelizing efforts of Christians were limited and not as effective by comparison. One of the main reasons was the deterrent presented by the pain of death, which was reserved for Muslims who abandoned their faith.

In the VIII century, Muslim expansion reached the territories of the ancient Gallia, up to the city of Tours. They intended to go further, but the Franks, led by Charles Martel, succeeded in pushing the Arabs back to Iberia. During this time, relationships between Islam and the Hispano-Visigoth Church were good. The latter did not show any special interest in converting the invaders, while Muslims respected freedom of religion in the peninsula. Such “peaceful” coexistence encouraged mutual cultural and religious exchanges, so that, after a while, elements of syncretism were made visible. Church leaders were involved in this social and religious integration; a new liturgy, called “Mozarabic,” was implemented, a concrete sign of Muslim influence. The many martyrs of this period were more the victims of the Muslim fight against anti-Islam fanaticism among Christians rather than anti-Christian persecution.8

The “Christian” re-conquest of the Spanish territories started in the IX century and its success encouraged several campaigns for the liberation of the Holy Land, traditionally called the “Crusades,” during the XI and XII centuries. The myth of the liberation of the Holy Sepulcher inspired the Crusades, which combined the elements of a pilgrimage and a holy war. Soldiers, prisoners, asylum seekers and refugees increased the ranks of people on the move in the Mediterranean region during these two centuries. Beyond the hidden interests and unjustified crimes, the Crusades have been credited for advancing Western religious culture at par with the more developed Byzantine and Arab cultures.

The Early Middle Ages

The whole European Middle Ages can be defined as essentially Christian, because different peoples and cultures had as a common denominator the profession of only one religion: faith in Jesus Christ. The ecclesiastic architecture, with its new styles (Romanesque and Gothic), suggests the syncretism of classical and Barbarian elements - the pagan demons and monsters are the “guards” at the gates of the Latin cross planted in cathedrals.

Since the restoration of the “Western Empire,” through the action of Charlemagne (IX century), a productive alliance between political and religious powers started. The Pontifical State was constituted as the temporal expression of the authority of the Church. The fast homogenization of very different elements in the new Holy Roman Empire, in the name of the unique faith in Jesus Christ, was not exempted from lapses or inconsistencies. Popular religious expressions were often based on superstition and the cabala rather than on a deep and solid faith. In the XII and XIII centuries, the flourishing of new religious orders aimed to respond to such gaps. Some of the new orders intended to undertake pastoral work in the field of human mobility. The “Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem” (later called the “Knights of Malta”) were founded to run free shelters for the poor, pilgrims and strangers in Jerusalem and other places in Europe. The Order of Knights Templars had a similar goal: to defend Christians during their pilgrimage to the Holy Land. A special concern for the redemption of

Christian captives and slaves from the hands of the Muslims was the founding idea for the constitution of the Order of Trinitarians.\(^{10}\)

Human mobility within the Holy Roman Empire led to the emergence of a cosmopolitan reality in many cities and towns. The new multiethnic and multicultural environment challenged the Church in her catholic dimension. In 1215, the IV Lateran Council, under Innocence III, issued what can be defined as the first decree explicitly envisioning a specific pastoral care of migrants:

> We find in most countries, cities and dioceses in which people of diverse languages who, though bound by one Faith, have varied rites and customs. Therefore we strictly enjoin that the Bishops of these cities or dioceses provide the proper men, who will celebrate the Liturgical Functions according to their rites and languages. They will administer the Sacraments of the Church and instruct their people both by word and by deed (\textit{Concilium Lateranense} IV, IX)

In the XIV century, the pontifical power experienced a time of decadence. Because of its strong dependence on the crown of France, the Holy See was forced to move first to Lyon and then to Avignon. From 1305 to 1377, the pope and his curia faced a kind of “golden displacement” in a foreign land. The return of the pontiff to Rome was largely credited to Catherine of Siena, a Dominican sister, who mediated between the temporal and spiritual powers. Back to the original see, the high hierarchy of the Church experienced the “Western Schism,” an internal and painful division that would last until 1417. In a time of confusion between religious and political interests, at the beginning of the XV century, the Western Church was led by three popes, who all claimed to be the only true one.

In 1400, the urgent need for a structural reform in the Church was evident: several heresies were widespread; moral attitudes and customs were becoming decadent; religious authorities had completely lost their credibility. The only way out was seen in the creation of a universal council to solve all the problems and reconcile the divisions. The Council of Florence (1438-1442), which came in the heels of the Council of Basel (1431-1437), was the third attempt at ecclesiastical reunification. Aside from providing

\(^{10}\) On the Order of Trinitarians see James William Brodman, \textit{The Trinitarian and Mercedarian Orders: A study of Religious Redemptionism in the Thirteenth Century} (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1974).
a valuable solution to the Western Schism, the conciliar fathers were also able to re-establish the religious union with Armenians and Greeks, through a notable exercise of interconfessional dialogue, respectful of cultural and liturgical differences.

The XV century was marked by an interesting rise in lay charity associations, especially in the Italian ecclesial context. The “Oratories of Divine Love” were a clear expression of this charitable “renaissance.” The aid promoted by such brotherhoods addressed mainly the more marginalized categories of people: the sick, orphans, widows, prostitutes, prisoners and the miserable. Although foreigners were not explicitly mentioned as beneficiaries of their action, the share of strangers in the mentioned categories was notable.11

IV. The Catholic Church and Human Mobility in the Modern Age

The Modern Age (XVI-XVIII centuries) was a time of conquests, religious controversies and revolutions. As a consequence, massive flows of human beings crossed continents and oceans, looking for greener pastures, tolerance, or survival. The pastoral concern of the Catholic Church at the time was not always clear and timely; nonetheless, many good practices and edifying examples have to be considered.

Discoveries (or Conquests) and Missions in the New World

In *Exsul Familia Nazarethana*, Pius XII read the historical events of the European colonization of the America as a providential opportunity for mission and evangelization, where a few brave priests assisted the colonists, announced the Gospel to the natives and mediated the integration of the different elements.

With the discovery of the New World, Christ’s priests were the tireless companions of the men who founded colonies in those far distant lands. It was these priests who made sure that these colonists would not desert Christian ways nor become proud because of the riches acquired in the new lands. These priests also wished to move

forward suitably and readily as missionaries to teach the Gospel to the natives, who previously were entirely ignorant of the Divine Light. And they zealously proclaimed that the natives were to be treated as brothers by the colonists (*Exsul Familia Nazarethana*, I).

Such optimistic magisterial interpretation, though based on many facts, shall be complemented with other information that may are perhaps less positive, but which reveal the pastoral challenges presented by the massive movement of people during the Modern Age.

From the beginning of the XV century, Portuguese and Spanish navigators crossed the Strait of Gibraltar to conquer African coasts and islands. Some missionary priests used to join the expeditions to guarantee spiritual assistance to the conquerors and to establish Christian communities in the new territories. In most cases, such missionaries did not show a real commitment to encourage the cultural and religious integration of conquerors and natives. Many times, they silently assisted in the repugnant slave trade, which was a goldmine for the colonists.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus’ travels opened new political, economic, demographic and religious prospects to European societies. The “New World” quickly became one of the favorite destinations for conquerors, politicians, businessmen and missionaries. The complex mixture of material and sacred interests on the American continent gave birth to the “Black Legend,” supposed accounts of atrocities committed by the Spanish conquerors – as allegedly spread by their French and English rivals - in Spain’s initial forays in the New World.\(^\text{12}\) The “Catholic Kings” of Spain assumed personal responsibility in the propagation of the Gospel in the colonies and the establishment of new Christian communities. Nonetheless, some excesses of “apostolic zeal” in compulsory and massive conversions of natives, which were justified by prevailing beliefs on the “human nature” of the indigenous people. These historical vicissitudes were juridically and theologically justified by the privilege of “patronage” granted to Spain and Portugal.

The missionary enthusiasm, which revitalized the old religious orders (Franciscans, Augustinians and Dominicans) and enflamed the hearts of

the new ones (Jesuits and Capuchins), impelled hundreds of missionaries to bravely commit to the evangelizing work in the New World. Nonetheless, not everything was “pure and perfect;” many historical reports speak of the limitations of pastoral care, i.e., the missionaries were sometimes more concerned with the baptism of the natives rather than with their life and dignity. While there were attempts to build a local Church that was open to the natives and respectful of differences by a few missionaries (e.g., Bartolomé de Las Casas and José de Anquieta), many others preferred to limit their pastoral concerns to the colonists.

Indigenous peoples were often compelled against their will to leave their lands and settle in the small “reserves” assigned by the conquerors. In South America, Jesuits and Franciscans succeed in establishing many flourishing and well-organized Christian communities with the natives, called “reducciones.” Unfortunately, due to political reasons, such communities did not prosper. In the second half of 1700 all the “reducciones” were dramatically abolished by the Spaniards through bloody military interventions.

Some missionaries showed a special concern for the black slaves massively ‘imported’ from Africa. A Jesuit priest, Peter Claver, undertook a very important pastoral action in this regard for more than 40 years in “Nueva Granada” (today Colombia), for which he deserves the title of “Apostle of the black people.” From a historical point of view, the forced exodus of African slaves has been mostly neglected by the Catholic hierarchy and the clergy. In spite of the many magisterial condemnations of such horrible trade (e.g., Pius II in 1462, Paul III in 1537, Urban VIII in 1639, Benedict XIV in 1741, Pius VII in 1815 and Gregory XVI in 1839), only a few missionaries effectively accompanied the tragic journey of thousands of Africans in the Americas.13

From the XVI century the missionary action extended to the Far East Asia. In the Philippines, Augustinians, Dominicans, Franciscans and Jesuits spread the Gospel in the whole archipelago, achieving widespread conversion of the natives. In spite of the political and social divide between colonists and natives, the resulting local Church was a good example of the integration of beliefs and practices. Francis Xavier, a Jesuit missionary, spent his life in the evangelization and the formation of local clergy and

catechists in many Asian countries; hence he is called the “Apostle of the Indias.”

Thanks to the zeal of the Jesuits, Francesco Buzomi and Alexander of Rhodes, Christianity reached Indochina in the XVII century. At the same time, beyond the borders of European colonization, some Jesuit fathers extended their evangelizing mission to China; Matteo Ricci, Johan Adam Shall and Ferdinand Vierbiest succeeded in proposing a model of inculcation of the Gospel in the Chinese context. Such undertakings were forerunners of the II Vatican Council.

Religious Controversies in Europe and Forced Migrations

The XVI century was marked by the Protestant Reform and the Catholic Reformation, two different events that intrinsically bound one to the other. The Augustinian priest Martin Luther (1483-1546) was the initiator of the Protestant Reform, which moved quickly from the theological level to politics. In 1521 some German princes took advantage of the Protestants’ claims to justify a series of fratricidal wars inside the Empire of Charles V. In 1555 the “Peace of August” sealed the compromise between the two opposing parties: the principle “Cuius regio, eius et religio” (“who rules determines the religion”) forced the subjects either to adopt the confession of the local prince or to migrate.

The Swiss priest Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), a disciple of Erasmus of Rotterdam, started his own reform campaign in Zurich where he was ministering. With the support of the city council, he led the city to political and religious independence. His Protestant Reform extended to the rest of Switzerland, advancing to Bern, Basel, Constance and Biel, and to South-West Germany. The whole region became a bastion of Protestantism and those who did not accept the new order were persecuted and expelled from the cities.

Another main figure of the Protestant Reform was John Calvin (1509-1568), a French theologian. As a young graduate of law, he converted to Protestantism in Paris and because of that he was compelled to flee. He went first to Basel and then to Geneva, where, with the preacher William Farel, he promoted the Reform in the city. His moral strictness caused his expulsion from Geneva and Calvin found refuge in Strasburg, where for some years he ministered to a community of French exiles. In 1541 he returned to Geneva and he stayed there until his death.
In the first half of the XVI century, in Denmark, Norway, Iceland and Sweden the official acceptance of the doctrine of Luther produced deep changes in the local societies and many Catholics were obliged to leave. In the XVII century, the Holy See constituted a special Apostolic Vicariate to assist the faithful who have persevered in the Catholic faith in Denmark and Norway. The first bishop was Niels Stensen.

Mainly because of political reasons, in 1534, the English Church - from now on called Anglican - separated from the Roman Church. In the following years a sad sequence of religious persecutions and forced migrations struck Catholics, Protestants and Anglicans. King Henry VIII, just after the schism, persecuted Catholics and Lutherans. Thomas More and John Fischer were among the illustrious martyrs of this time. Henry’s successor, Edward VI (1547-1553), introduced new religious theories and practices, based on Calvinist Protestantism, and began a new persecution of Catholics. With Queen Mary Tudor (1553-1558), Catholic orthodoxy was reestablished and papal supremacy restored. But the notable increase in internal tensions caused a bloody persecution of Anglicans and other Protestants. Under her rule, the exiled Catholics came back and the “heretics” were compelled to abandon the Kingdom. Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603) converted to Protestantism and decreed the suppression of the Catholic Church in the territories of the United Kingdom. New waves of religious migrants fled to other parts of Europe and America.

Protestant Great Britain was not exempted from doctrinal exaggerations and internal divisions. At the beginning of XVII century, the members of a religious extremist group called the “Puritans” were strongly persecuted by the Anglicans. Migration to North America, the Promised Land of freedom and respect, was their only option. The famous “Pilgrim Fathers,” who reached the coasts of Massachusetts onboard the “Mayflower” in 1620, belonged to this group.14

In 1603, Ireland was conquered by the British army. The military control of the new territories was quickly assured; but the imposition of English political rule and Anglican confession was harder than expected. To accelerate the process, the British government organized a massive migration of families from England to Ireland. However, their coexistence

was not peaceful, and in 1641 a group of Irish “patriots” started a brutal uprising against the “invaders.” The English reaction included a new wave of cruel persecutions against the followers of the Irish Catholic Church. Such situation and the tremendous famines which struck Ireland in the following years caused a massive exodus of Irish families to North America. The Jesuit missionaries, sent to evangelize American natives, realized immediately the dimension of the phenomenon and decided to provide pastoral care to the new immigrants.

At the same time, many new Catholic communities cropped up in the States of Maryland and Pennsylvania; their founders were emigrants from Great Britain in search of religious tolerance in the New World. In 1634 some 3,000 Catholics were counted in a census in Maryland, while in 1757 some 1,400 were counted in Pennsylvania. They represented a small minority in the religious environment of the English colony overseas, but a few Jesuit missionaries regularly assisted them in their spiritual needs. Between 1642 and 1649 new anti-Catholics measures were adopted by the British government, and the zeal of the subsequent persecutions reached the New World. In some American states, the immigration of Catholics was forbidden. In 1654, Catholics were declared outlaws in Maryland and the Jesuits priests were compelled to be exiled in Virginia. Towards the end of the century, adherence to the Church of England was imposed on all citizens and those who refused were deprived of political and social participation. Many Catholics moved to Pennsylvania. Religious intolerance extended in the XVIII century, but the Catholic communities were able to survive, even when, in 1773, the Society of Jesus was suppressed.

The Synod of Anverse (Belgium) in 1566 marked the triumph of Calvinism in the Netherlands. Belgium remained Catholic and received, during this time, several Dutch asylum seekers faithful to the Roman hierarchy. The local Church showed a real concern for the pastoral care of these special refugees.

In the XVI century, France, though with mixed feelings, decided to persevere in its Catholic faith and started a violent persecution of French Calvinists, called “Huguenots.” From 1562 onwards, eight religious wars devastated the French territories, causing massacres and massive forced migrations.
XVII-XVIII Centuries: Absolutism and Revolutions

In the XVII and XVIII centuries, Central America and Southern America received huge immigration flows, mainly from Spain and Portugal. At a religious level, there was a positive and smooth integration between the newcomers and the natives, who, by this time, have already embraced the Catholic faith – at least in terms of exterior practices. Nevertheless, the ecclesiastic organization was still determined by European Churches and Kings, thanks to the privilege of patronage. Local clergy was extremely scarce.

In North America the situation was different. Canada, a French colony, was essentially Catholic. After the English conquest in 1763, a measure of religious tolerance was granted, but with heavy control upon the local ecclesiastic structures. The United States, once a refuge for persecuted Protestants, became a providential shelter for many Catholics. As was discussed above, the Jesuit missionaries extended pastoral care to migrants and refugees. In 1773 because of the pressure of some absolutist European states, Clement XIV decreed the suppression of the Society of Jesus, with the document Dominus ac Redentor. Many Catholic communities in North America were left on their own, without access to Church support.

In Europe it was a time of revolutions. The Enlightenment ideas were questioning the basis of the absolute power of the king for several years, and in 1789 the French Revolution started. Amid a general political and religious confusion, deist claims caused a strong opposition to the Catholic faith and those who wished to remain faithful to Rome faced forced migration and exile. Pius VI and Pius VII showed a real concern for the French Catholics obliged to abandon their homeland. A well-structured pastoral action was organized for them in the Pontifical State and in other European countries:

Indeed, there never has been a period during which the Church has not been active in behalf of migrants, exiles and refugees. But to be brief, we will recount only her work of recent years. It is well to begin this survey by mentioning the fifty volumes preserved in the Vatican Archives: Holy See’s Care in behalf of the French. Truly they constitute a magnificent proof of the never-ending devotion of the Roman Pontiffs to the hapless persons banished from their country by revolution or war. These volumes reveal the fatherly care taken of the French by our predecessors Pius VI and Pius VII.
Driven from their native land, many of these émigrés were received with open arms in the Papal State, and particularly in Rome, while others took refuge in other countries (*Exsul Familia Nazarethana*, I).

Towards the end of the XVIII century, Napoleon Bonaparte’s military campaigns traced a new map of Europe. The realization of the French generals “imperial dream” involved forced migrations and the exile of many people. Among the victims was Pius VI, who was obliged to go on exile in France from 1797 to 1799.

V. The Catholic Church and Massive Migrations in the Contemporary Age

The XIX and XX centuries were marked by massive migrations of people. Because of revolutions, famines, tyrannies and world wars, human mobility became one of the main social phenomena of the Contemporary Age. The deep concern of the Church for millions of people on the move is confirmed by the publication of several magisterial documents and the undertaking of multifaceted pastoral actions.

Massive European Migrations before the First World War

After the defeat of Napoleon, in 1815, the European kingdoms convened the Congress of Vienna, with the aim of getting Europe back to the political situation it was in before the Napoleonic military campaigns. The fine diplomatic work of the Austrian Councilor, Klemens Wenzel Lothar Winneburg Metternich, succeeded in reconciling opposite forces, restoring the principles of absolutism. The political compromise, however, was not sustainable. The Enlightenment ideas of freedom, equality and brotherhood have already opened the way to a new society, one that is democratic and which guarantees undeniable personal rights.

If the French Revolution radically transformed the political and social context, the Industrial Revolution changed the world of labor dramatically. The process of industrialization emptied the rural areas and crowded the cities. The mechanization process generated unemployment at a large scale, forcing many people to migrate. Economic liberalism freed the market from any government control and rewarded the entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, there
was room for only a few and the rest were left with little choice but to migrate overseas. In the XIX century, scientific progress was accompanied by demographic growth, which challenged the weak structures of European societies. In this general scenario, massive continental and trans-Atlantic migrations provided the way out of despair and hunger. Peasants and factory workers, soldiers and intellectuals - mostly anarchic and socialist – left their home countries, desperately looking for a better future.

During the first half of the XIX century, a huge number of Italians decided to try their luck in England. In 1850, Saffron Hill, one of the poorest suburbs of London, counted some 2,000 Italian immigrants, who worked as street vendors and musicians, artisans, framers, and makers of barometers and other scientific instruments. Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman, the first archbishop of Westminster, concerned about the preservation of the Catholic faith among the immigrants, invited Fr. Vincenzo Pallotti, founder in 1835 of the *Opera dell’Apostolato Cattolico* (*Society of the Catholic Apostolate*), to establish a permanent mission for Italians in London. In 1853, a small lot in the heart of London’s “Little Italy” was acquired to build a church for Italian immigrants, dedicated to Saint Peter.

During this time, an influx of German migrants reached North and South America. In Bamberg, during the Catholic Congress in 1868, it was decided to constitute the *St. Raphael Society* (*St. Raphaels-Verein zum Schutz deutscher Auswanderer*) to assist German emigrants. The worthy initiative was mainly supported by Prince Isemburg Birnstein, who presented the same proposal in the general assembly of Catholic unions in Germany in 1872. The society was established and Paul Cahensly of Limbourg, congressman for the central wing in the Prussian Chamber, was the soul of the new organization. The aim of the society was to protect emigrants from all the dangers related to their migration experience and to provide for their spiritual and moral needs, especially during their stay at the ports of departure and arrival. In 1890 the St. Raphael Society was present and active in the ports of Hamburg, Bremen, Anverse and Rotterdam.

Although emigration from Italy started at the beginning of the XIX century, a massive migration towards other European countries and the Americas occurred only after 1870. National unity was forged amid many difficulties and was immediately threatened by the exodus of thousands of Italians, who decided to leave their new home country in search of greener pastures. There were many “push factors”: an unstable economic situation; the generous colonization policies enacted by many countries of destination;
and the aggressive campaign of the recruitment agents, who often responded to the interests of the big shipping companies. It was a real challenge to the Church in Italy, which readily and effectively rose to meet the challenge. Upon the explicit invitation of the archbishop of Buenos Aires, in 1875, Fr. Giovanni Bosco, founder of the Salesian Fathers and Sisters, decided to send his missionaries to Argentina to assist Italian immigrants. Fr. Bosco also entrusted the education of the youth in the New World and the evangelization of the natives to the first batch of missionaries.

Giovanni B. Scalabrini, bishop of Piacenza (Italy), after experiencing the negative effects of migration in his family and diocese, decided to take action. Initially, he devoted himself to researches and publications on the issue. Concerned about the lack of awareness on the phenomenon, he embarked on a tour of conferences on migration in several Italian cities. In spite of a dangerous political involvement, he intervened in favor of a new emigration law respectful of the freedom to choose. In November 1887 he established the Pious Society of the Missionaries of St. Charles and, after some months, a St. Raphael Society following the example of the German prototype. In 1895 a female religious congregation was formed to cooperate with the missionaries. At the beginning of the XX century, he undertook two trips to North America and South America, in order to get a real feel of the situation of Italian emigrants.15

In 1888, Leo XIII, worried about the trans-Atlantic exodus of thousands of Italians, wrote the letter, Quam Aerumnosa, to all the American bishops, recommending the newly established society of Bishop Scalabrini. Moreover, the pontiff asked the ordinaries to send candidates, possibly Italian descendants, to the Apostolic College in Rome in order to prepare new missionaries for migrants. Finally, Leo XIII requested the American bishops to appoint special chaplains for Italian immigrants and to organize regular missions among them.

The bishop of Cremona (Italy), Geremia Bonomelli, a personal friend of Scalabrini, supported the initiatives in favor of Italian emigrants and in 1900 he established the Opera di Assistenza (Society of Assistance) with the goal to provide material and spiritual aid to Italians working in most industrialized areas in Europe. The foundation was strongly involved at a social level and it was characterized by a lay and non-confessional identity.

15 On the apostolic initiatives of Bishop Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, see Mario Francesconi, Giovanni Battista Scalabrini (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1985).
In the following years priests and lay people were sent to assist Italian migrants in Switzerland, France and Germany. Sometimes, they initiated joint ventures with the local Church.

The Associazione Nazionale per soccorrere i Missionari Cattolici Italiani (National Association to Assist Italian Catholic Missionaries), was founded in Florence in 1886 by a small group of Catholic intellectuals, led by Ernesto Schiaparelli. Aware of the emergency migration from the very beginning, the Associazione supported the initiatives of Bishop Scalabrini and Bishop Bonomelli. The assistance to Italian migrants was added to the original goals of the Associazione. In 1909, it proclaimed itself as the coordination office for all the religious organizations involved in the ministry for Italian migrants. They organized a “federation” called Italica Gens (Italian People), which aimed at providing financial support to efforts directed at assisting Italian workers abroad. They succeeded in getting funds from the Italian government, through the Commissariato per l’Emigrazione (Commission for Emigration), but the political implications of such an alliance would cause serious problems of independence in the future.

Francesca Saverio Cabrini was the founder of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Upon the insistence of Bishop Scalabrini and explicit instructions of Leo XIII, Mother Cabrini decided to send her nuns to North America to assist Italian immigrants. In 1889 the first batch of missionaries was ready to depart for the United States; Giovanni B. Scalabrini himself presided over the ceremony of the giving of the missionary cross.

In 1905, a Roman priest, Gian Giacomo Coccolo, who was already involved in the advocacy for human rights, realized that there was no institution taking care of Italian migrants during their trans-Atlantic travel. With the support of the Holy See, Fr. Coccolo established the society of the Missionaries of St. Anthony of Padua to fill the pastoral gap.

At the beginning of the XX century there were other institutions dedicated to the assistance of Italian migrants, with a more limited action, often operating at a regional level: the Opera cardinal Ferrari (Cardinal Ferrari Society), with branches in some European cities; the Società di Patronato San Michele (St. Michael Patronage Society) in Palermo (Sicily) for the Southern Italians who emigrated to America; the Consorzio veneto per la protezione degli emigranti (Venetian Coalition for the Protection of Emigrants) in Padua; and the Consorzio San Gaetano (St. Cayetan Coalition) for the assistance of migrants coming from the diocese of Vicenza.
During this time, other than Italy, Spain, Poland, Germany and Ireland also assisted their nationals who migrated in large numbers to the Americas. Many members of the diocesan clergy decided to join their faithful in the journey to the Promised Land. Sometimes this special emigration was promoted by the dioceses of origin; sometimes it was requested by the dioceses of destination; sometimes it was just the result of a private initiative, where spiritual and material interests were often mixed. Excesses and abuses in this line of work led to the publication, in 1890, of the decree, *Litterae ad Episcopos et Ordinarios Italiae et Americae de sacerdotibus Italis ad Americanas regiones emigrantibus*, by the Congregation of the Council, demanding that American bishops double check the documentation of the foreign priests before admitting them into their diocese.

The huge number of Catholic immigrants challenged the Church in the countries of destination. Different models for pastoral assistance were proposed, according to the different interpretations of the integration process in the local ecclesiastic structures. In the United States the model of “national parishes” seemed to be the best response while in Argentina and Brazil the preferred choice was a comprehensive pastoral care which facilitated the integration of foreigners in their new home.

In the first years of the XX century, under the pontificate of Pius X, the concern for the pastoral care of migrants was reflected in several magisterial documents. The 1903 decree, *De Clericis in Americam et ad Insulas Philippinas profecturis*, intended to reaffirm and tighten the norms of acceptance of the foreign clergy in America and in the Philippines. In 1907, the Consistorial Congregation conducted a survey on the spiritual assistance to migrants in all the dioceses of the receiving countries. The responses reveal a rich panorama of ongoing actions to favor the integration of Catholic migrants into the local Church. A notable role was granted to religious congregations in this special ministry. In 1911, through the letter, *Quod Hierarchia*, the pope addressed all the Brazilian bishops, asking them to make available for migrants, priests who can speak the same language. The following year, with the “Motu Proprio” *Cum omnes catholicos*, Pius X established the *Officium de espiritualis migrantium cura* (*Office for the Pastoral Care of Migrants*), under the Consistorial Congregation. It was a clear sign of the sincere pontifical concern for all the massive human mobility of this time. The new office was responsible for coordinating all the actions related to the ministry for Catholic migrants. Between 1907 and 1914, the pope wrote several letters, through which he recommended careful assistance to the Catholics of Oriental rites in the United States. In 1914,
with the “Apostolic Letter,” *Universi Episcopatus*, Pius X gifted a temple in Rome for the spiritual care of the Romanian migrants residing in the Italian capital.

**Human Mobility under the Pontificate of Benedict XV**

During and after the First World War, the Catholic Church showed a deep sensitivity and solidarity towards the victims of massive forced migrations and exiles. In 1914, under the pontificate of Benedict XV, the “Roman College for Priests for Italian Migrants” was established. It was actually a project of Pius X, but the credit for the enterprise went to his successor. In the same year, with the letter, *Il dolore e le preoccupazioni*, Benedict XV instituted in Italy a compulsory annual collection to sustain the new college.

The years 1914 and 1915 were periods of laicist revolution and persecution of Mexican Catholics. Many of them, to keep their faith and save their life, were forced to flee to the United States. The pontifical letters, *In summa animi* (1914) and *Certiores quotidiem* (1915), reveal the sincere concern of the pope for the exiles, demanding that the US bishops give special attention to them.

The internal migration, which often characterizes the drama of the Italian “mondine” (female rice harvesters), was also the object of the pastoral concern of Benedict XV. In 1918 he wrote the letter, *Mi faccio un dovere*, asking the bishops of Northern Italy to assure the female workers of much-needed religious and economic assistance.

At the end of the First World War, Europe assumed a new political configuration and massive migration flows move from one country to another transpired. With the letter, *Considerando che i sacerdoti* (1918), the pope proceeded to appoint a bishop, whose exclusive task would be to assist asylum seekers and refugees in the Italian territories. After a break due to the conflict, European migration to America resumed. In 1919, through the letter, *Tristia, Laeta*, Benedict XV addressed the archbishop of Sao Paulo (Brazil), Leopoldo Duarte Silva, a plea for special pastoral care to be granted to the European workers who migrated to Brazilian cities.

During this time the Old Continent assisted in the notable “internal” migration of German nationals. With the aim to consolidate the action of the *Raphaels-verein*, in 1920, the Consistorial Congregation sent the circular letter, *Coniiciunt statistae*, to all European bishops, calling for a more effective involvement of the local Church in this specific apostolate.
During his whole pontificate, Benedict XV showed a real concern for the migrants belonging to the Oriental and Greek rites. In the letter, *Cum sat numerosores* (1916), he addressed the issue to the ordinaries of South America. In 1919, the pope wrote the *Catholicis fideles graeci* to the bishops of Calabria (Italy), about the pastoral care of the descendants of the Greeks who arrived in the previous centuries.

In 1920, the Catholic Church in the United States decided to organize many local initiatives, which provided material and spiritual assistance to immigrants. A Central Office of the Bureau of Immigration of the National Catholic Welfare Council was established in Washington, DC; the two branches of such office, opened in New York and in El Paso, revealing the concern to address both the “old” migration (from Europe) and the recent one (from Mexico). According to its bylaws, the Central Office is responsible for coordinating the whole Catholic aid offered to immigrants; nevertheless, the real pastoral action is still a prerogative of the individual dioceses.

The Pastoral Challenges under the Pontificates of Pius XI and Pius XII

A scientific presentation of the historical concern of the Church on human mobility should conclude with the end of the pontificate of Benedict XV, as the Vatican Secret Archive, the main source of documentation, was not accessible after 1922. Nonetheless, the author believes that it would be prejudicial to omit some interesting reflections and practices, which mark the Church’s ministry to the people on the move before the celebration of the Vatican II.

Just after his election, Pius XI had to face the terrible effects of the genocide and diaspora of the Armenians. As a concrete sign of his concern, he welcomed in his house, in Castel Gandolfo, more than 400 orphans, victims of the Armenian tragedy. In 1925, Pius XI established the Commission for Russia to assist the asylum seekers fleeing the communist revolution. During this time, the implementation of a more restrictive immigration law in the United States resulted in the diversion of European migration flows to Australia. The Australian hierarchy warmly welcomed the arrival of Catholic migrants and often reserved a special pastoral care for them. Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries were particularly active in promoting the integration of the immigrants in their new religious environment.

The rise of new totalitarian regimes in the Old Continent revived ancient colonialist craving and many people were encouraged to migrate to
Asia and Africa, in the name of development and civilization. Many brave missionaries accompanied their journey and settlement in the colonies; thanks to their zeal, new Christian communities were established, and a fruitful evangelizing mission for the natives was started.

In 1932 Pius XI assigned the temple of Sant’Antonio Ermita on the Esquilino to the faithful of Slavic rites and gave them the authorization to celebrate according to their own liturgical tradition. In the following year, the pope officially acknowledged the important work of Polish bishops and communities in assisting East European asylum seekers. In the same period, Pius XI expressed his personal concern for the pastoral care of Spanish and Mexican refugees escaping religious persecutions in their countries:

When bishops, priests, members of religious communities and lay people had to flee Spain because of the most detestable antireligious persecution raging there, he received them humanely and consoled them most affectionately. In order that Mexicans who emigrated to foreign countries might not become the prey of the enemies of Christ nor lose the Christian ways of their fathers, he urged the Mexican Bishops to confer with their brother bishops in the United States, and he appealed for the cooperation of Catholic Action groups (Exsul Familia Nazarethana, I).

It is not easy to assess the attitude of the Catholic Church in Europe during the Second World War; one of the most problematic issues was the “silence” of the Vatican to the perpetration of the “Holocaust” by the Nazi regime. It is true that clear and prompt magisterial interventions were missing; nevertheless, the Church often acted openly and bravely to aid refugees regardless of nationality, religion or political color. Along this line, the commitment of the Church in the United States represents an example; but it should be noted that her programs of assistance and integration rely on huge political and financial support. The National Catholic Welfare Council, through its Immigration Bureau, conducted valuable pastoral and social action with a network of volunteers throughout the United States, combining material assistance to and advocacy for migrants.

At the end of the Second World War, the successor of Pius XI, Pius XII, showed his immediate concern for the plight of refugees and asylum seekers. In 1944 he established the Pontifical Commission for the Assistance
of Refugees, under the direction of Msgr. F. Baldelli. In 1946 the pope established the Office for Migrations inside the Secretariat of State; the new office was composed of two sections: one for “voluntary migration” and the other for “forced migration.” The example was immediately followed by other national initiatives. Between 1947 and 1948, the following structures were established: the Bishops Resettlement Council in the United States, the Catholic Committee for Relief Abroad in the United Kingdom, the Catholic Committee for Aid to Immigrant of Canada and the Missio Vaticana in Germany. Millions of European emigrants started leaving again in search of greener pastures in the Americas and Australia. To respond to the new pastoral challenge, in 1949 Pius XII ordered the reopening of the Pontificio Collegio Emigrazione, to prepare diocesan priests to assist Italian migrants overseas. In 1951, with the task of coordinating all the Catholic migration-related initiatives, the pope established the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), based in Geneva. The following year, Pius XII published the Apostolic Constitution, Exsul Familia Nazarethana. The document can be considered as the Magna Charta of the pastoral care of migrants, a compendium of historical information, doctrinal principles and pastoral indications. The new organic vision offered in the Constitution is founded in the centrality of the human person and his/her undeniable rights, which includes the freedom to migrate. The challenge of ethnic differences in the Church is considered and a pluralistic approach to migrants’ assistance is advised, opposing a widespread pastoral tendency to pursue a the assimilation of the newcomers in the structures and traditions of the local Church.

REFERENCES

Alberigo, Giuseppe

Baumann, Martin

Brodman, James W.
Burini, Clara  

Eberts, H. W.  

Fletcher, Richard  

Francesconi, Mario  

Gibson, Charles, ed.  

Hitti, Philip K.  

LaGrand, James  

Langdon-Davies, John  

Malherbe, Abraham  

Panzer, Joel S.  

Papez, Viktor  

Petris, Luigi  

Pius XII  
1952  *Exsul Familia Nazarethana*. Città del Vaticano.
EXODUS SERIES

Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People

Powell, Matthew A.

Richard, Pablo

Rosoli, Gianfausto


Seward, Desmond

Tassello, Graziano and Luigi Favero, eds.

Tirimanna, Vimal

Tornos, Andrés

Tracy, James

Van Gerwen, Jef
Workshop Suggestions

Objective

To enhance the participants’ capacity to assess the local Church’s initiatives for the pastoral care of people on the move.

Activities

As a preparatory activity, it is recommended that the facilitator collects informative materials about some of the most relevant initiatives - reflections and actions - undertaken by the local Church in line with the ministry to people on the move (brochures, articles, documentation, books, photographs, videos, etc.) in the last 10 years.

In the workshop, the facilitator shall invite the participants to divide into small groups (by twos or threes), providing each group with informative materials referring to one initiative of the local Church (e.g., Apostleship of the Sea), with the following instructions:

a) To outline a brief history of the initiative;

b) To assess the development of the reflection/action related to the initiative (improvement, difficulties, approaches that worked/did not work, updates, etc.); and

c) To identify the challenges and envision possible solutions.

After sufficient time for discussion (about 45 minutes), each group shall prepare a report to be presented by the group’s representative in the plenary.

During the presentation of the reports, the facilitator shall help the participants to draw a comprehensive outline of the actual undertakings of the local Church for the pastoral care of people on the move.
Recommended Resources

Castillo, Noemi M.


Films
1997 Amistad, directed by Steven Spielberg, DreamWorks Pictures.
