

Pope Francis - 4 points to guide the world's response to refugees

Colleen Dulle, August 21, 2017

Welcoming

The Pope called for better options for refugees to legally resettle, including simplified processes for humanitarian visas and sponsorship programs for refugees, along with “adequate and dignified” accommodation and services when people first enter a new country.

Pope Francis also denounced both the detention of people who enter countries without authorization and “collective and arbitrary” deportations, particularly when migrants’ human rights were threatened in their home countries.

“The principle of the centrality of the human person, firmly stated by my beloved Predecessor, Benedict XVI, obliges us to always prioritize personal safety over national security,” Pope Francis wrote.



Pope Francis with refugee children from Syria

Protecting

The Pope asked that migrants' rights be protected beginning in their country of origin and continuing into the countries that welcome them. The countries of origin, the Pope said, should provide reliable information before departure and protection from recruiting practices that could lead to human trafficking or unfair labor conditions. In their new countries, migrants should be guaranteed a range of services including legal assistance, the possibility of opening a bank account and a monthly minimum wage. They should enjoy freedom of movement, work opportunities and access to communication tools, "out of respect for their dignity," the Pope wrote.

Pope Francis also emphasized the need to respect the rights of children, from their right to a nationality at birth and foster care services to access to primary and secondary education and the option to continue their studies in their adopted countries. He insisted that children should not be detained because of their migratory status and that they should be guaranteed the right to remain when they come of age.

Promoting

According to Pope Francis, "Promoting essentially means a determined effort to ensure that all migrants and refugees—as well as the communities which welcome them—are empowered to achieve their potential as human beings, in all the dimensions which constitute the humanity intended by the creator."

This means providing for freedom of religious practice, employment opportunities, language instruction, a path to citizenship, labor regulation for underage migrants and opportunities for family reunifications, which Pope Francis explicitly says includes grandparents, grandchildren and siblings. The Pope also asked that the global community assist emerging countries and communities that receive greater numbers of migrants and refugees.

Integrating

Pope Francis cited St. John Paul II's last World Day of Migrants and Refugees message, saying that integration "is not an assimilation that leads migrants to suppress or forget their own cultural identity;" instead, the arrival of migrants is an opportunity to enrich both migrants and the countries that welcome them. Pope Francis said this process takes a long time but could be accelerated by granting citizenship without language requirements, compiling best practices for integration and offering more opportunities for intercultural encounters, among other initiatives.

Adapted from original article Published in America Magazine