

Modern migration trends and the Church's responses: from Pope Leo XIII to Pope Francis

Abstract:

The Church's concern with human mobility dates from long ago. Nevertheless, her response has been changing throughout. In the 18th and 19th century, her main interest was allowing migrants the opportunity of listening to the Gospel. For that, national churches were created at the host countries and Catholics were at the core of this pastoral initiative. But from 20th century, the Church's attention was broadened. The beneficiaries were the whole people of God. Migrants come from every corner of the world and this was seen as an opportunity to foster ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. The complexity of this displacement has shown that economic crisis was no longer the main push factor. People tend to migrate where their spiritual, physical and cultural need can be met. This brings on board the argument that migration is not a spontaneous phenomenon; rather than, it has an internal logic and structure. This article will be looking at the Church's responses to migration and the way in which migration flows has been characterized.

Introduction

“Like many birds, but unlike most other animals, humans are a migratory species. Indeed, migration is as old as humanity itself”.¹

The Church has never questioned her role as the ‘teacher of humanity’; neither has it retreated in her mission of protecting immigrants. Besides immigrants, the Church has been taking care of emigrants, refugees and internally displaced people.² The subjects of

¹ Douglas S. Massey *et al*, *Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008), 1.

² Emigrants are those who leave one place or a country in order to settle in another. If they choose to move, once they reach the host country are called immigrants. But if they are forced to because of war, political reasons and persecution, they become refugees once they cross the border. However, if they do not cross it, they are called internally displaced people. For more information, Canadian Council for Refugees, “Talking about Refugees and Immigrants: A Glossary of Terms”. <http://ccrweb.ca/sites/ccrweb.ca/files/static-files/glossary.PDF> (Checked 26/03/17).

the displacement were not always the same. At the end of the nineteenth century and, throughout the twentieth century, the migratory waves were carried out by the Europeans. The aim was to reach the lands of the 'new world' of Africa, Asia and the America. In the mid-twentieth century, the main settlers were still Europeans, but also Africans, Asians and Americans. The displacement was mainly towards the northern European countries, especially Germany, France and Switzerland. For the first displacements whose destination was to the 'new world', the Vatican responded by sending priests whose nationalities were those of the immigrants. The idea behind it was to give immigrants an opportunity of listening to the Good News in their proper languages. But for the second tide of migration, the Church sought to incorporate immigrants into the existing pastoral practices in host countries. Besides being a very different response, the Church did not take into account people's cultural and religious practices, just like she had done with the European settlers in the 'new world'.

This article intends to analyze the actions carried out by the Catholic Church in favor of migrants. It shall move from the pontificate of Leo XIII to that of Pope Francis. The article will show the main characteristics from which the apostolate to migrants has been articulated. The thesis of the article is that the Church has always sought to adapt her answer to the circumstances and behavior of each displacement. The encyclicals and other papal documents will reveal the multiple responses which the Church has been giving. The article is divided into three parts: the first comprises understanding trends in migration movements. The second seeks to analyze biblical arguments the Church has used to justify her enrollment in the apostolate of human mobility. It also shows the work, which was been done by the Pontiffs from Leo XIII to Francis. The last section offers some cardinal principles of the Social Doctrine of the Church in this area. The article concludes with a synthesis and the challenges migration flows pose to the Church.

Contemporary Human Mobility

Human beings are always attached to their place of origin. In fact, contemporary anthropology seeks to study and understand the motives and the importance of one's attachment to his or her homeland. Among the motives, which drive a person to be attached to his place of birth are the family, people, cultural links, cultural heritages,

habits, customs, norms and languages. These ones keep people connected with the society from where they were born; they grow up and when they die they also expect to be buried there. The relationship one establishes with this very society is also related with the satisfaction of one's essential and ultimate need and necessity. These necessities can be either material or spiritual. However, when those fundamental essences are not met nor satisfied, the tension between one's attachment and the desire to content oneself arise. From this instant, people become restless and the impulse to migrate gains momentum.³

Migration flows are not an anarchic neither a spontaneous phenomenon. Rather, they are guided by an internal logic and structure. One of the steps to understand this consists in looking at the way in which people hold and maintain their links.⁴ First, Christians and Muslims usually immigrate to those countries where their religions are well established. Second, some choose countries with which they keep cultural, language and historical affinity. Third, others prefer places where they can find associations of their countries. In this case, migration is not only an individual endeavor; but, it is always collective. Furthermore, before departing the country of origin, emigrants often seek communicating with those in Diaspora or with the returnees. The former provide clues for the integration in the country of destination. They also support the newcomers in finding a job and being familiar with places where one can apply for basic needs. So, the bond migrants seek to preserve plus the communication with those abroad ends up perpetuating migration flows. At the same, it creates a bridge between the country of origin and the host country.

The process of migration is driven by two factors and involves three countries. The countries are the country of origin, the country of destination and the country of transit. While the country of origin is from where the migrant departs, the country of destination or host country is where the migrant ends their journey. The individual falls under the category of emigrant when he leaves his country of origin and immigrant once he reaches the host country. Quite often, before reaching their destination, migrants pass through one or more countries. These are called transit countries and the person is named migrant in transit. On their way to Europe, many Africans use Libya, Morocco

³ Josep, Lacomba, *Historia de las Migraciones Internacionales* (Madrid: Libros de la Catarata, 2009), 14.

⁴ Alonso, José Antonio, *International Migration and Development: A Review in Light of the Crisis* (Nueva York: CDP Background Papers 011, 2011), 8.

and Tunisia as transit countries. Those who return to the country of origin for having attained their travel goal or those whose migration project fails for one reason or another, are called returnees.

Finally, push factor and pull factor are the two traditional factors, which motivate people to migrate and convert a country either as a sending country or a host country. Push factor induces people to find out a new location to reside. It is related to economic burden, political persecution and unemployment. Pull factor has a different effect; instead of making people moving away, it attracts them. Economic development, respect of human rights, social welfare and the demand of labor are some examples.

Migration in the Light of the Word of God: Biblical Foundations

“Do not take advantage of foreigners who live among you in your land. Treat them like native-born Israelites, and love them as you love yourself. Remember that you were once foreigners living in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.” (Lev 19: 33-34)

The task of the Church in favor of displaced persons finds its support and inspiration in the Sacred Scripture. The Scripture highlights how migration shaped the religious experience of the People of Israel. To talk about foreigners and human displacement takes us back to the experience of the Jews in Egypt. It does also bring back to their memory their whole experiences from Egypt to the Promised Land. For this reason, the attitude towards an immigrant is rooted in the migratory experience. The quote above reminds people that they were also immigrants and the memory of once being a displaced “forges a feeling of acceptance towards the foreigner, any stranger and this is what should define the People of God.”⁵ Moreover, Mosaic Law emphasizes the principle of equality between the Israelites and the foreigners.

God's concern for migrants lies in the experience of vulnerability that these individuals undergo. In the Bible, there is a constant recourse to the triad ‘orphan-widow-foreigner’ to refer to those who are accorded special treatment. However, Yahweh’s demands go beyond it; immigrants can also be bearers of the divine message and, consequently, source of blessing. The welcome and hospitality Abraham and Sarah give to the three strangers in the “vale of Mambre” shows the relationship that may exist between

⁵ Aparicio Malo, José Manuel, “Migraciones y Doctrina Social de la Iglesia”, in José M. Caamaño and Pascual Cebollada, eds. *Pensamiento Social Cristiano* (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2015), 183.

pilgrims' cherished acceptance and the blessing from God. The message they bring to Abraham is that "Sarah thy wife shall have a son" (Gen 18: 10) and from him will be derived the origin of the people of Israel. Thanks to the reception and closeness Abraham offers to the three mysterious figures, the announcement of the birth of Isaac becomes a reality. In its essence, Abraham's gestures become a paradigm of response to all foreigners. God can speak through them and make use of them to communicate with the faithful and encourage individuals, like Sarah, who suffer from sterility.

The New Testament (NT) maintains and enlarges the gestures of hospitality expressed towards immigrants. The principle of acknowledgement, acceptance and heartiness are as well part of Jesus' gesture. The NT begins identifying the Holy Family as refugees fleeing to Egypt (Mt 2: 14-15). Furthermore, Jesus oversees the need to extend the Kingdom of God beyond Jews community. The passage on the Good Samaritan (Lk 10: 25-37) puts across a universal language and a token which bypass identifying features commonly established. The Samaritan woman (Jn 4: 1-42) at the well shows that faith can be the bridge with those considered foreigners and hostile. She also drops out stereotypes built against individuals. Lastly, Jesus makes clear the implication behind the recognition of immigrants: first, He enacts the treatment of immigrants as a criterion for salvation and discernment which takes one to the Lord (Mt 25: 35); second, Jesus proclaims the equality and common membership acquired by baptism (Gal 3: 28); third, Jesus settles the basis of plurality taking into account people's languages, ethnic affiliation and diversity (Act 2: 5-11).

Catholic Social Teaching: From Leo XIII to Francis

The Catholic Social Teaching (CST) comprises instructions on the different aspects of social life that the Church has formulated in the course of time. Migration is one of the subjects and the reply the CST has been giving to confront this issue can be found in several documents: councils' decrees, apostolic exhortation, Episcopal conferences' letters, encyclicals, *Motu proprio* and popes' radio addresses. This section will focus on the teachings of the Pontiffs. We shall begin with Pope Leo XIII and finish with Pope Francis. The contributions of the Second Vatican Council will also be considered. However, we will not only highlight what the popes have done, we will also look at the context and the type of displacement they sought to respond to. While in the late

nineteenth and early twentieth century, the CST was tasked to respond to a war-induced migration characterized by the dislocation of numerous families and the entire population, currently it is involved in a more complex type of migration whose causes are multiple and multiform too.

a) Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903)

The debut of CST begins with the publication of the first social encyclical *Rerum novarum* (RN) in 1891 by Leo XIII. *RN* does not deal directly with migration, but rather with regard to working conditions. Nonetheless, Leo XIII writes in the context of industrial revolution and the displacements enhanced by labor market. Rural societies were being dismantled by the mass mobility towards industrial zones. Many Italian workers and families were leaving for USA fleeing poverty. The Pope perceived the need for assisting the emigrants. His concern was more pastoral and the recipients were exclusively Catholics. In 1888 he published the encyclical *Quam aeromonas* in which he promotes the establishment of the ‘national parishes’⁶ in the host countries. Along with this, the document encourages creating patronages and forming priests specialized to attend to emigrants. One of such patronage was St. Raphael’s Society created to deal with German emigrants. The other one was the institution created by the so-called ‘Father of Immigrants’, Giovanni B. Scalabrini. These were Scalabrinian Missionaries who assisted the Italian emigrants in America.⁷

b) Pope Pius X (1903-1914)

Apart from following traces outlined by his predecessor, he organized structures and institutions to accompany emigrants and the displaced. Unlike Leo XIII whose main focus was the host countries, Pius X involves both societies. While host countries had the duty to integrate the immigrants, the home countries were urged to become interested with their nationals. To make it formal, in 1914 he promulgated the Motu proprio *Iam pridem*. In it, he asked the Italian bishops to raise funds for the foundation of the Roman College tasked to form priests who would work with Italian emigrants in the USA. Years earlier, in 1908 he delivered a message animating the creation of

⁶ These parishes were being run by foreigner priests who spoke and were from the same countries like emigrants themselves.

⁷ García, Paola, “La Inmigración: un Nuevo Reto para la Iglesia Católica Española”, *Anuario Americanista Europeo* (3), 2005, 3.

Episcopal commissions to assist migrants. In the same year he launched some reforms to the Roman Curia, which ended up incorporating the Office for the Spiritual Care of Emigrants within the Sacred Consistorial Congregation. This was later named the Congregation for Bishops and Pope's idea was to gather suggestions from different bishops. This Office, created in 1912, was the one, which at large allowed the birth of the current Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People.

c) Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922)

The pontificate of Benedict XV coincided with the First World War and his constant appeal for peace has earned him the title the 'pope of peace'. He was engaged in attending to the victims of the war. He appointed a bishop fully in charge of the expelled. In 1919, he published the encyclical *Paterno diu iam* in which he invited everyone to offer food, clothing and money to help the affected, particularly children. One of the Pope's achievements was to institute, in 1914, the World Day of Migrants. The set up of this day has its origin in the work of Pius X. The fundraising he had asked from Italian Bishops to found the Roman College did not succeed. Benedict XV brought back the demand and on December 6, 1914 wrote a circular letter titled *Il dolore e le preoccupazioni*. The letter, which reiterated the request for the collection of the funds, had inaugurated the celebration of World Day of Migrants and Refugees.⁸ The celebration was only confined to Italian territory. But in 1952, with Pius XII, this day gained worldwide range.

d) Pope Pius XI (1922-1939)

Pius XI exercised his pontificate between the end of the First World War and the environment which had triggered the beginning of the Second World War. In addition, he witnessed the rise of two political ideologies: the German nationalism led by Adolf Hitler and Soviet communism commanded by Joseph Stalin. In this regard, the Pope faced the task of encouraging the Church and dioceses, in particular, to welcome refugees and internally displaced people. He also condemned the persecution and atrocity of people, mainly Catholics, that was taking place in Mexico. He raised his voice condemning it through the encyclical *Iniquis afflictisque*, published in 1926. Pius

⁸ Maria Vegliò, Antonio, "La Sfida Culturale delle Migrazioni: Rische e Opportunità", in Giulio Cipollone, ed. *La Sfida delle Migrazioni: Rischi e Opportunità* (Roma: Gangemi Editore Spa, 2014), 40.

XI did not write much about migration; however, he made use of the Vatican Radio, inaugurated in 1931, with his radio address. He talked to people from the whole spectrum of the society: faithful, infidels, dissidents, rulers, rich, poor, employed, unemployed, refugees and migrants.

e) Pope Pius XII (1939-1958)

His predecessor died a few months before the eruption of the World War II. Pius XII experienced firsthand the drama, ruins, destruction and the consequences caused by the war. The pontiff was the eyewitness of countless people who were forced to leave their homes and turned into refugees and exiles. To address this, in 1952 he published the encyclical *Exsul familia nazarethana*. Apart from compiling the contribution of his predecessors, the document claims the right to immigrate. The Pope justifies his demand from the principle of the universal destination of goods. Furthermore, this is translated into the need for a better distribution of goods and their use for the common good of everyone. Pius XII was the one who extended the World Day of Migrants and refugees to all dioceses in the world. He was also the one who instituted the Higher Council for Emigration and maintained it within the Consistorial Congregation. Later on, he enlarged this department and ascribed to it the General Secretariat for the Direction of the *Apostolatus Maris* and the General Direction of the Apostleship of the Skies or the Air.

f) Pope John XXIII (1959-1963)

John XXIII exercised his pontificate in the context of post World War II, the expansion of communism, the Cold War, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the struggle for independence from the colonial powers. This background is more than sufficient to understand the displacement, inflows and outflows of people across the world. Like Pius II, he also appealed for the right to immigrate. As he puts it: “it is in this that the right of families to migrate is rooted. And so our predecessor, in speaking of migration, admonished both parties involved, namely the country of departure and the country receiving the newcomers, to seek always ‘to eliminate as far as possible all obstacles to the birth and growth of real confidence’ between the nations.”⁹ In his encyclical *Pacem in terris*, the right to immigrate is sustained as an ethical requirement and the person’s

⁹ *Mater et magistra* 45.

membership in the human family. Hence, he requested the governments to grant this right on the ground of the common good and worldwide fellowship of people.

“[...] every human being has the right to freedom of movement and of residence within the confines of his own State. When there are just reasons in favor of it, he must be permitted to emigrate to other countries and take up residence there. The fact that he is a citizen of a particular State does not deprive him of membership in the human family, nor of citizenship in that universal society, the common, world-wide fellowship of men.”¹⁰

g) Pope Paul VI (1963-1978)

Paul VI has derived his contribution from the Second Vatican Council’s teaching whose works he helped to conclude. Unlike previous pontiffs, Paul VI was the only Pope who had visited all the continents; for this reason, he is called the ‘Pilgrim Pope’. Even though he had to deal with matters from the Council, Pope Paul VI devoted time to produce documents which are still useful for contemporary teaching on migration. Early in 1969, he published a motu proprio *Pastoralis migratorum cura* which amassed theological teachings and queries highlighted during the Council and years after. Four instructions can be captured from the document: first, the cry for justice; second, economic growth and technical advancement should be human centered; third, local churches should emerge as leading entities; and fourth, new trends of evangelization should always be explored. The Pope was already sensing the effects of globalization and sought to expand the Church’s initiatives. He did so by initiating *Apostolatus Nomadum* and the Pastoral Care of Tourists. With this move, all kind of displacement was taken into account.

h) Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)

The teaching of the Council was to guide the Church’s approach for the pastoral care of immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees. The most important documents which outlined these teachings are *Gaudium et spes* and *Christus Dominus*. The two instruments put across four inspirational motives from which the Church should act. Firstly, they emphasize the respect of every human being and the recognition of its dignity.¹¹ Secondly, they demand the States to safeguard people’s need, development as

¹⁰ *Pacem in terris* 25.

¹¹ *Gaudium et spes* 66.

well as their right to immigrate.¹² Thirdly, they remind the governments to play their role in solving “the population problem in their respective countries, for instance, in the line of social and family life legislation, or regarding the migration of country-dwellers to the cities, or with respect to information concerning the condition and needs of the country.”¹³ Fourthly, they recognize that immigrants’ necessities are not only material, there are of other kinds. The Church should intervene as the dispensator of the immigrants’ special attention and assistance. Furthermore, “Episcopal conferences, especially national ones, should pay special attention to the very pressing problems concerning”¹⁴ migrants, exiles and refugees.

i) Pope John Paul II (1978-2005)

John Paul II travelled a lot. That is why he is called a ‘Pilgrim Pope’ as well. He replaced John Paul I, who had a brief pontificate, of 33 days only. When Pope Wojtyla was elected, migratory flows became more complex. Men were being succeeded by women in leading these movements. The flows were more random and the composition of immigrants turned more heterogeneous. In other words, the homogeneity which has always characterized these flows with countries, such as France, England and Portugal receiving mainly immigrants from their old colonies was no longer the case. Historical past, cultural connection, language link and family nexus were no more major pull factors when it came to choose a host country. Globalization, development of communication, improvement of transport and interdependence between people and nations were tearing apart the traditional homogeneity. The social *magisterium* of John Paul II came across this complex context. Given this background, “his approach can be considered as a point of maturity in the reflection on migrations.”¹⁵ The same can be said about his prophetic intuitions, which are irrefutable.

The Pope’s teachings on human mobility targets three main areas of concern: first, specific pastoral care for migrants; second, respect of their dignity; and third, assist them wherever they find themselves in. The three enlightenments can be found in his

¹² *Gaudium et spes* 65.

¹³ *Gaudium et spes* 87.

¹⁴ *Christus dominus* 18.

¹⁵ Aparicio Malo, José Manuel, “Migraciones y Doctrina Social de la Iglesia”, in José M. Caamaño and Pascual Cebollada, eds. *Pensamiento Social Cristiano* (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2015), 186.

messages on the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* as well as speeches. Though it seems contradictory, the Pope defends the right not to immigrate and the right to immigrate. The right not to immigrate implies “[...] being seriously committed to safeguarding [...] the right to live in peace and dignity in one’s own country [...] more equitable trade and supportive international cooperation [...] freedom of expression and movement, the possibility to satisfy basic needs such as food, health care, work, housing and education.”¹⁶ The lack of these rights, continues the Pope, “forces many into a position where their only option is to emigrate.”¹⁷ He argues for the right to immigrate from “the concept of universal common good, which includes the whole family of peoples, beyond every nationalistic egoism. The right to emigrate must be considered in this context. The Church recognizes this right in every human person, in its dual aspect of the possibility to leave one’s country and the possibility to enter another country to look for better conditions of life.”¹⁸

j) Pope Benedict XVI (2005-2013)

Pope Benedict XVI’s merit consists in introducing foreign students under the category of human mobility. The theme of 92nd World Day Message of Migrants and Refugees was “Migrations: a sign of time”. Among these signs, the Pope identifies the foreign students, “whose numbers increase every year in the world.”¹⁹ The displacement of foreign students, particularly in Europe, is being fomented by foreign exchange programs between universities. In April 1997, 53 European countries signed in Lisbon, Portugal, the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region. To put this into practice, a series of meetings and accords were held between the ministers of education in Bologna, Italy. In 1999, 29 European countries subscribed Bologna Declaration, which paved the way for the Bologna exchange programs between universities. Since then, each semester, students move all over Europe flooding several universities. For Pope Benedict, this entails “consequent pastoral problems the Church cannot ignore. This is especially true in the

¹⁶ John Paul II, “Message for the 90th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2004”, 3.

¹⁷ John Paul II, “Message for the 90th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2004”, 3.

¹⁸ John Paul II, “Message for the 87th World Day of Migration 2001”, 3.

¹⁹ Benedict XVI, “Message for the 92nd World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2006”.

case of students coming from developing countries, whose university experience can become an extraordinary occasion for spiritual enrichment.”²⁰

The second thing overseen by Benedict XVI is the ‘feminization of migration’. According to him, this is another burden to the Church. The reason is that some women end up deceived by mafias, trafficking and prostitution. Pope’s reflection on that is:

“Female emigration tends to become more and more autonomous. Women cross the border of their homeland alone in search of work in another country. Indeed, it often happens that the migrant woman becomes the principal source of income for her family. It is a fact that the presence of women is especially prevalent in sectors that offer low salaries. If, then, migrant workers are particularly vulnerable, this is even more so in the case of women. The most common employment opportunities for women, other than domestic work, consist in helping the elderly, caring for the sick and work in the hotel sector. These, too, are areas where Christians are called to dedicate themselves to assuring just treatment for migrant women out of respect for their femininity in recognition of their equal rights. In this context it is necessary to mention trafficking in human beings [...] there are women and girls who are destined to be exploited almost like slaves in their work, and not infrequently in the sex industry, too.”²¹

k) Pope Francis (2013-)

Pope Francis made it clear in his homily at the beginning of his Petrine ministry that ecology and migration would be the main subjects of his papacy. Early on (8 July 2013) he made a historic visit to the Italian port of Lampedusa, which serves as the gateway to the European continent. In the same year, on 10 September, he drove to *Centro Astalli*, the Jesuit social center for pastoral care of refugees in Rome, Italy. Three years later, in 2016, he flew to the island of Lesbos, in Greece. There, the Pontiff visited Moria, a refugee camp and the coastal guard post where he prayed for the migrants whose bodies were ‘consumed’ by the sea. Besides showing the Church’s concern, Pope Francis wanted to bring to our consciousness, mainly that of the world leaders, the drama of the displaced. In his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, he sums up a couple reasons behind people’s displacement: the economy of exclusion, the culture of discard, the new idolatry of money, inequality and postmodern individualism. To restrain them, he argues for the construction “of a better world.”

The argument for a “better world” appears in the message for the 100th World Day of Migrants and Refugees. The Pope identifies three actors to build a world in which

²⁰ Benedict XVI, “Message for the 92nd World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2006”.

²¹ Benedict XVI, “Message for the 92nd World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2006”.

everyone can achieve integral development. The first actor is the Church and her work consists in accompanying “migrants and refugees on their journey [...] to understand the causes of migration [...] to overcome its negative effects and to maximize its positive influence on the communities of origin, transit and destination.”²² The second actor is the State and has the duty to manage migration flows. Given the complexity of contemporary flows, a State cannot deal with it alone; rather “this calls for international cooperation and a spirit of profound solidarity and compassion [...] adoption of policies and rules aimed at protecting and promoting the human person [...] Working together for a better world requires that countries help one another.”²³ The third actor is the mass media and its task resides in eliminating “prejudices and presuppositions in the approach to migration [...] to break down stereotypes and to offer correct information [and break down] attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world.”²⁴

Stance of the Catholic Social Teaching (CST)

The various responses of the Popes to human mobility show the Church concern as well as how this phenomenon is at the heart of the Catholic Social Teaching (CST). We can summarize in three points the way in which the CST has been arguing for its intervention on migration. The first argument is based on the principle of human dignity and the universal destination of goods. Pope Pius XII emphasizes this as a mandate given by Christ: “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.”²⁵ Besides spiritual care, God has also provided property to humankind. Pope Leo XIII affirms that “every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own.”²⁶ However, continues the Pontiff, “God has granted the earth to mankind in general, not in the sense that all without distinction can deal with it as they like, but rather that no part of it was assigned to any one in particular, and that the limits of private possession have been left to be

²² Francis, “Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2014”.

²³ Francis, “Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2014”.

²⁴ Francis, “Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2014”.

²⁵ *Exsul familia nazarethana*, title I.

²⁶ *Rerum novarum* 6.

fixed by man's own industry, and by the laws of individual races."²⁷ The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church puts the principle of the universal destination of goods first and foremost alongside the quest of human dignity.

"A just society can become a reality only when it is based on the respect of the transcendent dignity of the human person. The person represents the ultimate end of society, by which it is ordered to the person [...] Respect for human dignity can in no way be separated from obedience to this principle. It is necessary to "consider every neighbour without exception as another self, taking into account first of all his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity."²⁸

The second argument is rooted on the principle of equal treatment, justice, fraternity and human rights. The Compendium addresses this question and reaffirms it as follows:

"The Church shows her concern for human life [...] the relationships of justice [...] the protection and promotion of the human person [...] the dignity and rights of the person [...] These are goods that the social community must pursue and guarantee. In this perspective, the Church's social doctrine has the task of *proclamation*, but also of *denunciation* [...] By denunciation, the Church's social doctrine becomes judge and defender of unrecognized and violated rights, especially those of the poor, the least and the weak."²⁹

Equal treatment and the defense of human rights secure the dignity of the individual. The Church does not rule out the possibility of denouncing what does not favor the enjoyment of these subsidies. Nevertheless, in the context of positive law, equal treatment does not occur *ipso facto*. That is, foreigners, while not belonging to the national community in which they find themselves, will always have a limited ownership in exercising some of the rights enjoyed by those who hold the status of nationals. This is something that is seen as a historical and universal constant.³⁰

The third argument the CST has been used for its implication on human mobility appears in the instruction *Erga migrantes caritas Christi*. The document was issued by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People in 2004.

²⁷ *Rerum novarum* 8.

²⁸ Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 132.

²⁹ Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 81.

³⁰ Serrano Villamanta, José, "Disposiciones del Actual Ordenamiento del Mercado Laboral Específicamente Relacionadas con los Inmigrantes", in Andrés Tornos Cubillo, ed. *Los Inmigrantes y el Mundo del Trabajo: Sociedad, Cultura y Migraciones* (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2003) 148. I translate this from the original Spanish.

Instead of a threat, the reading the document offers of migrations is that of a *sign of the time*. This interpretation has led to *aggiornamento*³¹ within the Church itself. As a result, the pastoral care of migrants has acquired a specific dimension and, consequently, was enriched with special instruments and structures, singular responsibility, ministers and priests trained for the task. These, and other, measures were promoted because immigrants were no longer seen as mere recipients; rather, as “a visible sign and an effective reminder of that universality which is a constituent element of the Catholic Church.”³² Furthermore, what was often regarded as a pastoral care addressed only to Catholics became an opportunity for dialogue with other Christian communities and religions. By doing so, it was clear that for CST, the immigrant is a religious person with beliefs that determine a certain world view, certain ways of life and certain moral values.³³

Concluding Remarks

The Church has always been on frontline attending and assisting immigrants and refugees. At first, this pastoral service was only for Catholic believers. Its aim was letting the faithful continue with their sacramental life. In other words, the growth of their faith was the *leitmotiv* of this pastoral ministry. For this reason, Pope Leo XIII sent Italian priests to serve their countrymen in USA. Moreover, St. Raphael’s Society was founded to attend German emigrants and Giovanni Scalabrini founded Scalabrinian Missionaries to work with Italian emigrants in America as well. However, with time human mobility became more complex. In response to this, the apostolate was extended to all humankind independently of one’s religion. One of the signs of such step was given by Pius XII who expanded the celebration of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees all over the world. The second follow up was the organization of the structures which could support the pastoral care of migrants. Through the encyclical *Exsul familia nazarethan*, the same Pope laid down the groundwork for administrative organization of the structures. The Higher Council for Emigration was created and local churches and bishops were involved in the service towards the foreigners.

³¹ This term was used by Pope John XXIII in calling for Vatican II, where the expression acquired a meaning of its own.

³² *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* 17.

³³ Cf. Torrez Días, Javier, “Inmigración, Pluralismo Religioso e Integración Social”, in Iván M. del Bosh Portotés *et al*, eds. *Migraciones y Desarrollo Humano* (Madrid: Editorial Dykinson, 2003) 165. I translate this from the original Spanish.

Migration flows are increasing and traditional push and pull factors are no longer the only tools to understand this phenomenon. Family bonds and ecological disaster are among other factors. These flows are also bringing about new challenges. The lack of coordination between host and home countries in designing migration policies is one of the challenges. Many States are taking unilateral decisions. Symptoms of the absence of coordinated responses are evident. One of them has to do with the increment of gangs and mafias in the Mediterranean Sea. The other one is related with the number of death and disappearance of migrants. In 2016, 5.000 people died attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea. This year the situation has not yet changed. By May 28, 2017 the number of migrants whose bodies were found drowning in the Mediterranean was 1.530.³⁴

There is no migration without mafias and these are embedded in the external and internal borders of the sending, receiving and transit countries. In this way, the response the Church gives should also be widened. The Church should encourage governments to open up legal corridors for emigration. She should also push for economic policies which seek to adjust inequalities between States. Not less important, the Church should inspire governments speeding up job creation in home countries and stimulate the development of individuals, towns and villages. These provisions *pari passu* other settlements seem to be the path leading “towards a better world.”

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³⁴ International Organization for Migration, “Missing Migrants Project”. <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/> (Checked 28/05/17).

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