

Retreat with the Comunitat de Jesús. 22 January 2022

To begin with, I want to share with you what my experience was on my return from Guatemala a little over 10 years ago.

In the first interview with the bishop I resigned from a parish ministry and chose to continue in a missionary ministry, outgoing, trying to make my way in an unknown environment even though it was my city. I joined a grassroots Christian community that I had known well for many years and I committed to volunteering with two NGOs, which made it possible for me to contact people from very different environments and realities unknown to me in the life of my city. This led me to two realities that currently vitalize my life as a citizen, my faith in Jesus and my commitment to the Kingdom: 1) My family expanded. I share a house, table, joys, difficulties, hardships and projects with a family from Senegal made up of a married couple and three children aged 16, 4 and 1 and a half years and who left in Senegal another two children aged 14 and 12. We also share the faith and trust in God that they call Allah and I, simply, Father. A great unexpected gift for me. And 2) My option for the poor materialized at this time with the concern and relationship with migrants, their world, their faces, their stories, their dreams, their way of the cross... which led me to commit to the Circle of Silence.



From there, from this experience is that I propose to share with you this reflection that I make from my condition as a believer in Jesus of Nazareth, my commitment to the cause of migrants and refugees and my daily effort to respond to the calls that God is making me from the people with whom I meet and interact every day at home and in the environment in which I move.

I will do it with the outline of the life review: See, Judge and Act. I do not intend so much to inform you of a reality that, without a doubt, you know, but rather to ask ourselves what God is telling us through this reality of migrants and asylum seekers at this specific moment in which we live.

This is how I connect with the scheduled work of the community for this course: The person as a social being: the relational self. The relationship with others and our social responsibility.

Title: MIGRANT PEOPLE: Kairos and challenge to our faith in the gospel of the Kingdom.

First part SEE What are we talking about?

1. We speak of a people in exodus.

Human migrations are a phenomenon as old as humanity. Humanity as we know it today would not exist if man had not moved, if he had not constantly sought better living conditions. By migrating, the human being has fine-tuned one of his most important characteristics to guarantee subsistence: the ability to move and adapt.

Despite this, migration is currently one of the most controversial issues in political debate around the world. According to United Nations estimates, the number of international migrants worldwide has increased considerably over the last twenty years, reaching 281 million people in 2020. More than 84 million are people who have been forced to leave their homes to save their lives. (Refugees). If we could bring them together in a single geographical space, it would be the fifth most populous country on the planet. A people made up of people of all races, languages, colors, origins and, for the most part, poor. This is why I speak of “people in exodus, migrant”.



2.- This town does not move for pleasure, for tourism, for the pleasure of seeing the world... but most of the time out of necessity. He flees to save his life. It is a people beaten, suffocated, impoverished, crucified, but not defeated but resilient.

The causes of migration are very different: economic, political, social or ecological. But the fundamental cause of the constant increase in migrants and that is at the root of many other causes is the economic model in which we live, the neoliberal capitalist system, imposed globally. System, radically unjust, predatory, which, as FT.n.22 says "does not hesitate to exploit, discard, and even kill man" and that has led humanity to an extreme inequality, scandalously inhuman. "While one part of humanity lives in opulence, another part, the largest, sees its own dignity unknown, despised or trampled on and its fundamental rights ignored or violated"

As long as this economic system and this inequality continue to spread and deepen, as is the case, the migratory phenomenon will increase because poverty and violence are not the result of chance, but rather the consequence of the selfishness and ambition of a minority.

3.- We are talking about a people impoverished because of neoliberal globalization and neocolonial policies that arrive at our borders, at our doors, looking for bread, peace and a dignified life.

Pope Francis points to this cause when in EG No. 53 he speaks to us about the economy of exclusion: “Today we have to say ‘NO to an economy of exclusion and inequity’. That economy kills....Today everything falls into the game of competitiveness and the law of the strongest, where the powerful eat the weakest. Large masses of the population are excluded and marginalized: without work, without horizons, without a way out. The human being in itself is considered as a consumer good that can be used and then thrown away. We have started the culture of discarding, which is also promoted. It is no longer simply a matter of the phenomenon of exploitation and oppression, but of something new: With exclusion, belonging to the society in which one lives is affected at its roots, since one is no longer down there, but you are out. The excluded are not exploited, but leftover waste

Faced with the reality of the migrant population, developed countries entrench themselves to defend themselves against those they classify and treat as invaders. The migratory policies of the EU and Spain, in particular, see this migratory phenomenon as a security and defense problem. Its sole objective is to control and defend its borders to prevent, by all means, the entry of migrants, even if it is at the cost of investing 10 billion in its border security policy, and systematically violating fundamental human rights and International treaties that are cynically presumed.

They are not moved by the thousands of deaths on migratory routes, especially in the Mediterranean, which seems to use them to their advantage as a deterrent, so that others can punish others. According to “Caminando Fronteras”, during the year 2021, 4,404 (600 women and 205 children) have died or disappeared at sea trying to reach Spanish coasts. 103% more than in 2020. An average of 12 fatalities every day. The vast majority on the Canarian route with 4,016 people dead or missing. And in the Central Mediterranean, at least 1,700 people have died or disappeared. (IOM)

4.- We are talking about an impoverished people, in exodus towards what they consider to be the “Promised Land” and that stumbles upon very sophisticated security systems and the sign that you are not welcome! No entry if you are poor!



After facing thousands of dangers of all kinds, crossing deserts and borders, suffering from hunger and thirst, subjected to blackmail, abuse, humiliation,

degrading work and in conditions of slavery on a journey that lasts months and years, they arrive in Spain, Europe dreamed, "unknown" but idealized. And they stumble upon an unexpected reality: Fortress Europe that looks at them as dangerous enemies, invaders, criminals and intruders. The EU, which blesses the free movement of capital and products and whose transnational companies enter, exploit and traffic raw materials from the countries that send migrants, is not willing to allow the free movement of people.

5.-That is why we speak of a rejected people. The EU has conservative policies and repressive immigration laws, focused on a single objective: Prevent them from entering and that are specified in three verbs and three policies:



A. STRENGTHEN BORDERS, erecting walls and fences and outsourcing border control through payment to third-party bridge countries and conditioning development aid to their faithful collaboration in curbing emigration from the countries of origin.

B. CRIMINALIZE migrants and those who defend them. To do this, a) it raises psychological walls loaded with prejudices and stereotypes that separate and deepen the gap between us and them, from which we have to defend ourselves and b) raises legal barriers through immigration laws designed and aimed at making it very difficult life to those who manage to enter illegally, as a deterrent. They legalize practices that violate fundamental human rights and impose harsh conditions to obtain "papers", the right to work and be someone in this society, to asylum and to obtain refugee status.

C. LABOR EXPLOITATION OF THE MIGRANT POPULATION. Instead of facilitating the regularization of people without papers to work legally, they are kept as irregular, which favors their vulnerability and overexploitation in jobs that nobody wants, poorly paid and with quasi-slavery working conditions.

Second Part: JUDGE What is at stake?

We are a group of people who believe in the God of Jesus, a God who loves us and because he loves us, he lives in us and with us, accompanies us and communicates with us, speaks to us, sends us messengers, sends us signs. The Second Vatican Council already tells us that the Spirit of God moves, acts and speaks to us in the events of life, both in our personal history and in that of humanity and the world, in the signs of the times. Therefore, we cannot avoid the question: What does God want to tell us in all this? What is his will?

1.- The migratory phenomenon, a sign of the times and theological place, of encounter with God.

Faced with the millions of migrants today, we cannot help but feel challenged by two questions: 1) With the Apocalypse we ask ourselves: This great multitude of all nations, races, languages, cultures, religions... forced to leave their land in search of a better life and walking by land, sea and air towards the countries of the "global north" until knocking on our doors, ... who are they and where do they come from? ... And the answer they give fits perfectly to the seer: "These are the ones who come from the great tribulation, who have washed their clothes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." We could say something else: It is the same slain Lamb who comes at the head with them and who, fully identified with them, demands our compassionate and fraternal welcome. It is not an exaggeration: Matthew 25: "I was hungry and you fed me... I was a foreigner and you welcomed me..."...

And 2) as much as we want to avoid it, we are always haunted by God's eternal and insistent question to Cain: "Where is your brother?" And on this occasion it is not fair to respond in the manner of Cain: "I don't know. Is it my obligation to take care of him? And the too direct accusation of God: Why have you



done this? The blood of your brother that you have spilled on the earth cries out to me to do justice" Gen. 4, 9-10). It's hard to say, we are not innocent, our hands are stained with blood. We are guilty and co-responsible for the structural and collective sin of this unjust world. Our well-being has a lot to do with their bad living. It is a transversal constant in the Bible: The cry of the blood of the innocent always reaches the ears and finds an echo in the heart of God and will have consequences. The blood of the innocent screams. God's love is universal, but it is also partial in favor of the poor.

2.- Migrants are a true Kairos

For me, this migrant people, marching along all the paths of the planet, is a time of grace, a Kairos in which God himself approaches us, visits us. They are a theological place where Jesus himself comes to meet us and summons us in the person of migrants, refugees and the nobodies of the earth, demanding of us justice, empathy, solidarity and compassionate love. We believers cannot be afraid, like those who have no hope. It is a Kairos, the passage of the Lord through our personal, ecclesial and socio-political life, an opportunity for salvation, which is expressed as a wake-up call, a call to conversion for this unequal and fratricidal world, but loved by God to the point of death. craziness.

God comes with them, the poor, loves us and calls us from them to submit to a healing judgment to discern what is wheat from what is tares in our lifestyle. He does not come to leave things as they are, but to help us guide our current history towards the values of the Kingdom of God.

3.- Migrants embody a prophetic challenge.



In this postmodern time, the developed and “rich” countries have ridden us with the same concept of truth and, of course, we are proud to have put an end to the old utopias. We are back from everything. We have lost the ability to dream and we have killed hope, which is precisely the source and secret of true joy. We only aspire to have more to consume more, but not to be different.

And we, are we still capable of dreaming? Pope Francis does not miss the opportunity to invite us to dream, to recover the profound meaning of life on a personal level, as a church and as humanity.

I think that in our attitude and our response to migrants and refugees we are risking our condition as believers in Jesus of Nazareth, the profound sense of our Christian commitment to the service of the Kingdom of God and our credibility as the Catholic Church.

The migrant people, in addition to embodying in their way of the cross the pains and the unjust condemnation of the Servant of Yahweh, also incarnates in today's world the mission of all the prophets sent by God: a. denounce sin and personal and structural evil; b. announce the utopia of a more just, reconciled and new world and c. sow and mobilize hope.

I am convinced that migrants, in their poverty, vulnerability and resilience, are bearers of great human, cultural and spiritual values that can help us rediscover utopia, hope and the path to a fairer, more humane and more fraternal world. . With them comes God's call to leave our comfort zones and conformism and to recover old dreams and hopes and set out on the path towards a necessary and urgent change in our personal, social, political and religious life. We could concretize these prophetic challenges that come from migrants in these utopian principles that should mobilize and humanize us.

3.1.- “No human being is illegal”. We are one world. Faced with our nationalist, individualistic, fragmented conception of the world and of humanity, where borders mark the difference between us and them, migrants announce to us the utopia of another conception of the human being and of the world: a world without borders which is the land and homeland of all, without walls or barriers, intercultural, multiracial, multilingual, interreligious, inclusive... common home of humanity.



3.2.- The other is a person, a human being like me. We are one humanity. A fundamental category, coming from Africa, much poorer than us, but richer in solidarity, is very inspiring. This category is expressed by the word Ubuntu, which means: "I am us" or "I am only me through you" which is a recognition that "the other" is essential for me to exist as human and civilized. Migrants demand of us and demand a world that recognizes the equal dignity of all and of all and the richness that legitimate differences of race, sex, color, culture, religion, country of origin... and that puts the dignity of the person human in the center Migrants take away the masks of human rights defenders that we presume and bring to light our true face, quite similar to Cain's.

3.3.- The other is my brother. We are a great human family. Migrants announce to us the value of universal brotherhood, the utopia of humanity as one big family, a united and fraternal world that finds peace in the community sense of life, in the enriching meeting of different peoples and cultures, in the mutual help, in love made empathy, compassion, and fraternal welcome especially to those most vulnerable people. And, at the same time, they denounce the unfair and racist immigration laws that discriminate, exclude, criminalize and cause the death of innocent people.

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3.4.- The other is the flesh of Christ (Pope Francis). We are all members of the body of Christ, diverse but united by the same Spirit of Life. Migrants remind



those of us who are the Church of Jesus of our condition as an itinerant people, “on the way out” to all the roads of the world, with light luggage, poor and for the poor, caretaker of life, field hospital, mother and a teacher in drying tears, washing sore feet and a Samaritan community that approaches the wounded that it finds on the roadsides of the

global Galilee, that defends the lives of the impoverished against the servers of

Money and Power. And they denounce the fear and the installation of the church of Jesus locked in the "distant, parallel and aseptic world" of our temples and our cults, its fixation on the past, on a stagnant dogma and morality and its lack of faith in the gospel of the Kingdom of God that he preaches.

Part Three: ACT What can we do?

Pope Francis in his Encyclical "Fratelli Tutti" has had the courage to present the parable of the Good Samaritan as a roadmap for humanity to find ways towards universal brotherhood, an open brotherhood, "that goes beyond the barriers of geography and space and allows each person to be recognized, valued and loved beyond physical proximity, beyond the universe where they were born or where they live" (n.1).

In the face of migrant people pillaged, beaten, wounded and left half dead along the paths of history, there are only two positions: indifference, passing by or stopping. And sadly, it seems that what Pope Francis calls the globalization of indifference and the culture of discarding is growing in the world.

In Europe and Spain and throughout the world there are many people, believers and non-believers, Christians and non-Christians, communities, groups, associations, NGOs involved and committed to saving lives, healing wounds, welcoming, accompanying and serving migrants who we find along the way, as well as defending their rights and denouncing violations of their dignity as persons. I am sure that the people who are here belong to that broad and supportive group of people who dream of a fraternal world and we are already working, each one in what they can, in this Samaritan service to immigrants and refugees, promoting that other globalization of compassion.

Pope Francis in different documents and on different occasions does not tire of reminding us of the four verbs that should guide our action and commitment to our immigrant brothers.



I only intend to recall the four verbs that Pope Francis suggests to us and that, by themselves, are a program of action to deepen, illuminate and carry out each one according to their abilities and possibilities: Welcome, Protect, Promote and integrate. Each one of these verbs entails, on the one hand, a wide range of solidarity possibilities and, on the other, resonances, references and lights that are very dear and concrete for those of us who are following Jesus, helped by the testimony of Charles de Foucauld.

I dare to add another verb that I think is very necessary and that goes beyond humanitarian aid. I mean defend. It may be included in the Protect, but when we

see and hear the hate speech, rejection, xenophobia... preached by the extreme right-wing parties and by many people in our churches grow and spread among ordinary people, I think we cannot keep quiet, we have no right to swallow and pass by without reacting to feelings so contrary to what we have seen, heard and learned in the Person of Jesus.



*Archbishop **Santiago Agrelo** "As Christians we are called to a love without frontiers and without limits, a sign and testimony that we can go beyond the walls of selfishness and personal and national interests; beyond the power of money that often decides the*

causes of peoples; beyond the fences of ideologies, which divide and amplify hatred; beyond all historical and cultural barriers and, above all, beyond indifference"

Encouraged by Jesus and the testimony of Brother Carlos, I share with you, finally, three calls that guide me personally at this moment and keep my faith in Jesus of Nazareth and my commitment to the Gospel of the Kingdom in tension. I propose them to you in case they help you in your community sharing now or your personal reflection at another time:

- 1) Do I live with joy the greatness of being small?**
- 2) Do I faithfully live the greatness of "the small"?**
- 3) Do I live and support with hope the greatness of "the little ones"?**



They are three very evangelical and very Foucauldian values, which we have all been deepening and working on for many years, they make us live gratefully, walk in humility and brotherhood and bring love and hope to this society and to this Church from our little Nazareth.

Antonio SICILIA VELASCO, priestly fraternity
Jesus Caritas

