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**ELEMENTS FOR PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS<sup>1</sup>**

When we consider the condition of the migrants, refugees, displaced people, travelers, etc., the expression “sign of the times” emerges naturally. In fact, this is how the Social Doctrine of the Church (SDC) refers to the phenomenon of the “multitude of stateless persons” who, today and more than ever, travel the roads of the world. Not to mention those who die or simply disappear into the waters of the Mediterranean, in the sand of the desert or at unknown borders. However, the problem does not concern only the institutions, whether public, private or religious.

It is rather a huge challenge that involves several instances of international relations, governments, civil society, Churches, non-governmental organizations, entities, social movements, and so on. In the following paragraphs, however, the emphasis will be put on the social, pastoral and political action, which develops in the broad field of human mobility and, in a particular way, on the activities related to the Catholic Church. Without going into great details, we will follow the method of See, Judge and Act.

### **1. Photography of human mobility**

In the last decades of the twentieth century and in early twenty-first century, most researchers began to talk about paradigm shift. This is not a time of change, some say, but a change of era, which shakes, not only the social and political face of the waters, but mostly, the underground currents of the economy and cultural values. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world, *Gaudium et Spes*, a document approved by the Second Vatican Council in 1965, had already warned us, saying: “Today, the human race is involved in a new stage of history. Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the whole world (GS 4)”.

Human mass movements are generally a kind of thermometer, which serves as a measure of the temperature of such transformation. In fact, throughout the history, these movements often precede or follow structural changes, both socially and economically, as well as in the politically and culturally. These changes form a kind of occult waves, that is to say, visible signs of invisible phenomena. More than a century ago, during the so-called historical migrations caused by the Industrial Revolution, Pope Leo XIII published the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), a document which inaugurated the Social Doctrine of the Church (SDC), using the expressions such as “the spirit of revolutionary change” and the “disturbing of the nations” (NR 1). Indeed, the two expressions vividly and significantly express the reality of constant movement of migrants in all directions.

#### **1.1. Figures and trajectories**

The figures concerning the migration phenomenon are usually cause for controversy between sociologists, demographers and researchers, in general. And the reason of the controversy is very simple: most of the immigrants are illegal in many countries; which leads them to “live in hiding in order to protect themselves”. Hence, the difficulty to obtain reliable statistics. The Instruction *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, issued in 2004 by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, says in its introduction: “*Today’s migration makes up the vastest movement of people of all times. In these last decades, the phenomenon, now involving about two hundred million individuals, has turned into a structural reality of contemporary society. It is becoming an increasingly complex problem from the social, cultural, political, religious, economic and pastoral points of view (EMCC, Presentation)*”.

Two observations can be made. The first is that, ten years after the update of this document in 2014, the UN estimates that 232 million people live outside their country of origin. If we add to this the number of internal and/or temporary migrants and those who move every day because of their work, the figures tend to increase dramatically. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) observed, in its last official report published in 2012 that, there are not less than 45.2 million refugees worldwide. In short, if we add to that those who migrate for social and economic reasons, the exiles and expatriates, the nomads and those traveling by sea and in the skies, etc., we get huge figures comparing to the world population.

The second observation concerns the concept of “structural reality”, used by the document. In fact, a recent analysis of the global economy and modern or post-modern society cannot ignore the factor “migration”, if it does not want to run the risk of becoming anachronistic. Historians and other renowned

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scientists, such as Eric Hobsbawm, Alain Touraine, Boaventura Santos, Manuel Castells, Antonio Negri, Jürgen Habermas, among others, have dedicated long pages to this topic of human mobility. For some, the human mass movements have become, little by little, a sort of window through which to observe the current society and the world as a whole. In other words, they are an important key of interpretation for any serious and up-to-date study.

Where are the largest migration flows coming from and where are they going? In fact, the largest number tends to leave the peripheral (or underdeveloped) countries to the central (or developed) countries. It is therefore a movement from the Southern Hemisphere — Asia, Africa and Latin America —, in search of greener pastures and new opportunities in the North. Moreover, many people and families leave the countries of Eastern Europe, the former “iron curtain” of the ex-Soviet Union, in order to try to build a future in Western countries. The general framework of human migrations however is not that simplistic so as to fit in this pattern. Because, a part from these significant trends, millions of people move in all imaginable directions, either temporarily or permanently.

The same phenomenon of migration exists at the national and regional levels. And, according to the Paraguayan Sociologist, Tomás Palau, “*The dynamic and multifaceted movement of people in the so-called “complex of borders”, where the reality of crossing the borders of two or more countries is one of the most important symptoms of global economy*”. Held in the Airports by stricter and more selective immigration laws, workers try to push the borders of their home countries, so as to cross at all costs to the other side. The proof of this phenomenon is what is happening at the border between Mexico and the United States of America, or in the Mediterranean Sea that separates Northern Africa and Southern Europe, or in the tri-border area of the Mouth of Iguazu River between Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, to mention but a few. This is a macabre “adventure”, which has left a trail of unburied corpses in the sand of the desert and in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, or along the winding paths of the forest.

We should also remember the so-called migration of the borders, which is the constant movement of workers, moving from one region to another or from one country to another, in search of work, often temporary work. The people migrate because of agricultural reasons, governments’ projects and work in the construction sites. The tri-border between Chile, Bolivia and Peru is just one example of this phenomenon. And it is also important to emphasize the tragedy of the people “displaced” by various forms of violence, as is the case of thousands of Colombians, who are caught in the crossfire between the guerrillas and the army. In the first case, we have a type of migration called “migration of resistance”, which consists in leaving temporarily the regions affected armed conflicts; the second type of migration consists in rural exodus to urban centers or other neighboring countries.

## **1.2. Names and faces**

More important than the figures, the tables and the statistics is indeed the lived experiences of the people, their names, their faces, their stories and their future. The human mobility brings individual workers and also entire families together, men and women, young people and children, who flee from their current situation and are in search of different and better living conditions elsewhere. They **flee** poverty, misery and hunger; violence and armed conflicts; discrimination, prejudice, and political, ideological or religious persecution, etc. They **look for** a place where they will be welcomed as citizens and which they can consider as a homeland.

We can use three adjectives to classify the phenomenon of contemporary migration, which is, at the same time, larger, more complex and varied. Nowadays, however, the phenomenon is much **greater** than it was in the past. As we have noted, the number of people moving has gradually grown bigger throughout the world. This is due, among others, to the development of means of transportation and the revolution of the means of communications. The historian Peter Gay has chosen the train and the movement, as two great metaphors of the nineteenth century, with huge transatlantic travels. According to him, between 1820 and 1920, no fewer than 62 million people left the old European continent to the new lands of the Americas, Australia and New Zealand.

And what about what is happening today! The phenomenon of migration is also **more complex**. In the past, people used to leave the countries where they were born and brought up, and where their ancestors have been buried. But, in general, they left to settle elsewhere and to take roots there, as settlers or colonizers. The origin and the destination of migration flows were more or less planned and the objectives well defined. Today, however, the main trend is reflected in a type of migration that repeats itself and consists in several steps, sometimes without deepening the roots anywhere. It is a kind of endless movement back and forth, with various horizons and perspectives. The migratory movements tend to navigate according to the tides and the flow of the waves created by the waters of the global economy. It is a

true “army of reservists”, which is not living but rather camping, as Karl Marx denounced it. They move as they are being tossed about by the wind of new opportunities of employment or under-employment. According to some, it is a circular and pendular movement.

Finally, the phenomenon of migration is *more diversified*. Many people from different races and nations are part of the contingent of migrants. The cultural and religious pluralism of the modern society is thus reflected in the different faces of migrants. In some cities like New York, Rome, Sao Paulo, Paris or London, and in most of cosmopolitan cities, the residents come across almost daily “thousands of faces of the other”, and get in contact with different languages, nationalities and customs. And it is actually very difficult, nowadays, and even impossible, to find a country, which is not involved and concerned in some way about the phenomenon of migration. In fact, some are concerned as countries of origin of migrants, others as countries of destination, others as countries of transit, not to mention those countries, which can fulfil at the same time the three functions, such as Mexico and Guatemala, Portugal, Italy and Turkey.

## **2. Radiography of the phenomenon of migration**

It is not enough, however, to make only the photography of the phenomenon. In fact, any doctor worthy of the name, even though he would not be able to cure his patient, he should at least try to know the root causes of the disease. Therefore, to know what is going wrong is the condition *sine qua non* to fulfill before prescribing the right medicine or treatment. It is the same with the phenomenon of migration. In most cases, we are faced with forced displacements, which can be avoided by putting in place appropriate measures and policies in the countries of origin, of transit and of destination. In a word, it is a problem that can be dealt with if there is enough cooperation at both the national and international levels.

Therefore there is the need to take a radiography or make a detailed description of the situation of human mobility. Only such a radiography can help shed more light on some misleading appearances. It is also important to listen to the stories of each migrant, to know the values of their culture, so as to deepen the study of the reality of migration. The radiography of the phenomenon would then reveal not only what appears on the skin, but also what is hidden inside the bones, the internal organs and the heart. In this way, as we will see later, we will be able to develop a more effective pastoral ministry for migrants.

### **2.1. The immediate motivations**

When we ask any migrant, why has he left his homeland and migrated to another region or country, risking his life and embarking on a journey which is sometimes of no return, the answers can be very diversified. Some will say that they had a desire to know other places; others may indicate a prolonged drought or severe flooding in their homeland; others will show you the scars of armed conflicts on their bodies or will remember with sadness the family members who perished as victims of violence. Many others will simply say that they have decided to follow a relative or a friend who preceded them abroad. Sometimes, those who migrated before will call a relative to join them in the foreign land so that the family can be reunited again.

A considerable group of people leave their country for health reasons, in search of places where they can receive better medical care. Many young people, after completing their primary and secondary school, start looking for places where they can continue higher education and take specialized studies in view of obtaining a good job. So, the words “better job”, “better future” and “better life” appear in almost all the answers. It is also common to speak of “brain drain”. In this kind of vision, emerge naturally the so-called factors of expulsion and attraction. But the first migrant's response and that of the one listening to him can be deceiving. The immediate motivations usually hide deeper causes. Here, too, the photography needs to be well X-rayed.

### **2.2. The remote causes**

In most of cases, the migration flows are marked by a background of social and economic, that is, a twofold contradiction. On the one hand, there are small islands of wealth in a sea of poverty and misery, a reality which is marked by the concentration of the income in the hands of a few rich and the social exclusion of the masses of people. And indeed, the line that divides the first and the third world is experienced in each country and even in each region. On the other hand, since the early 1970s, we have been witnessing a prolonged and structural crisis of the capitalistic system of production, which has increased the circular movement of huge masses of people around the world. The consequences of the crisis befalls, first of all, the most vulnerable, who are forced to leave their homeland, in search of better living conditions in foreign lands, in the wake of the accumulation of the capital in certain regions of the world.

If we consider the case of those who blame the drought as the main cause for abandoning their homeland, in principle, the migration as an answer is not wrong as such, but is incomplete. While it is true that the prolonged drought forces many people to leave their own region or country, it is equally true that, alone, it does not explain the exodus of the masses of people. Drought marks the moment of departure; but behind this scourge, there is an agricultural and land structure issue that has, for a long time, robbed people of any defense. This is proven by the fact that big landowners, with or without rain, they remain and don't migrate. Therefore, what moves people out is not the drought as such, but the "fence", which has been erected where they live. In other words, the unjust and unequal conditions of land ownership.

The same reality can be verified with regard to other types of responses or superficial analyzes of the phenomenon. In the broad context of human mobility, the immediate vision, superficial or simply cyclical, hides often deeper and structural causes. In most cases, the main root cause of migration is the unfavorable social and economic situation experienced in the place of origin. The unemployment and the lack of decent work and wages, the precarious public health system and education, the working conditions that borders on slavery, the patriarchal culture, in which women are totally subjected to male power, the exploitation of children through child labor (not to be confused with the healthy initiation of children to services within the family), are but a few examples of the main causes of such a situation.

In some countries and regions, this reality can be considered as the medieval residues in full twenty-first century. All this reveals the most blatant and perverse face of capitalism. Paradoxically and contradictorily, the technological revolution and the most advanced technological innovations coexist with the forms of works condemned and banned long ago, by the trade union struggles, throughout the history. As stated by the Sociologist José de Souza Martins, non-capitalistic forms of production can coexist with a capitalistic system of production.

The other causes of mass displacements are related, as we have seen above, to political, ideological or religious persecution, which force people to flee their homeland. The causes are also related to prejudices, xenophobia, ethnic or religious discrimination; or armed conflicts within a country (e.g. Lebanon) or between two different and warring states (e.g. Israel and Palestine, Russia and Ukraine); or clashes between rebel factions and armed forces (e.g. Colombia); or violence of different kinds, especially human trafficking caused by organized crime; the struggle for control of drugs and arms trafficking (e.g. Mexico, Colombia and Brazil); or temporary work which, over the time, can lead to permanent migration.

### **3. A biblical, theological and pastoral look**

There are three ways of reading the phenomenon of migration in light of the Word of God. The first consists in taking one biblical story or one particular Book, — respectively the episode of the disciples of Emmaus or the Book of Ruth —, and from there to seek to deepen the approach of theme. The second way is to take the biblical texts that relate to the issue of migration and elaborate a theological, spiritual or pastoral reflection. The third way is to read the entire Word of God, in the context and perspective of human mobility, with a particular focus on the theological or spiritual approach. Without underestimating other possible approaches, we will follow the third approach, and will consider only a few paradigmatic texts of the Old and the New Testaments, to illustrate the experience of a journeying or pilgrim people.

#### **3.1. Looking at migrants with God's eyes**

As concerns the Old Testament, we will focus our attention on what scholars call the "historical creed" of the people of Israel: Dt 26:5-10, which is its more elaborate version, and Ex 3:7-10, which is a more primitive version. As we know, this is the experience that contributed to the election of Israel as God's people. When we compare the two versions, we find four verbs in the first singular person, all attributed to God, which show us a common thread or a central theme that goes through the entire Bible. "*The LORD said: I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry against their taskmasters, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I have come down\* to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them up from that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey*" (Ex 3:7-8).

The four verbal forms — *see*, *hear*, *know* and *come down* — indicate that, as their "founding experience", the Israelites have developed the theology and the spirituality of a God who, not only, pays attention to the concrete situation of his people in the country of slavery, but also and above all, came down to walk alongside his people in his Exodus through the desert and, later, in the exile and the diaspora. This act of coming down will be fully realized in the Mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus. It is also important to stress at this point the sensitivity and solidarity of a God who is close to his people oppressed by Pharaoh, and who sides with those who suffer and those who are humiliated. In short, this is a God who loves the

poor, not only because they are poor or because they are necessarily “good”, but because they are victims of adverse historical circumstances.

The prophetic movement also emphasizes the same theology and spirituality, especially during the troubled times of the monarchy and the exile. The combination of the alliance between *liberation* and *promise* is therefore girded with new vigor. Hence the triple prophetic tone. The first tone is the **reminder** that “*you were slaves in Egypt*”; therefore you should not oppress the stranger who dwells among you nor should you oppress your brother. The second tone is the **denunciation** of various forms of oppression, because you, “*Hear, you leaders of Jacob, rulers of the house of Israel! Is it not your duty to know what is right, you who hate what is good, and love evil? You who tear their skin from them, and their flesh from their bones*”, says the prophet Micah (Micah 3: 1-2). And third tone is the **annunciation**, which is like the breath of an oppressed people waiting for the promise of the heavenly Jerusalem, “*a new heaven and a new earth*” (cf. Is 65:17-25).

With regard to the New Testament, we will consider two fundamental texts. The first one is at the beginning of Jesus public ministry. In fact, the itinerant Prophet of Nazareth (John P. Meier) takes the Book of Isaiah to announce what we can call “Jesus’ program or manifesto” (Lk 4:16-20; Is 61:1-2). It reveals from the beginning his predilection for the oppressed, the slaves, the prisoners and the poor, a program which, in other words, takes the terms “*orphan, widow and stranger*” from the Old Testament. *The preferential option for the poor* is therefore rooted in the heart of the Master, because he has a special concern for the marginalized, the powerless, the migrants and the excluded, “*I was a stranger and you welcomed me*” (Mt 25,35).

The second text is taken from the Gospel of Matthew, where the Evangelist Matthew usually interrupts the narrative, to introduce short summaries and highlight something that should not be forgotten. “*Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness*”, says the text. Then, it continues: “*At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest”*” (Mt 9:35-38).

Two observations can be made at this point: first, our attention is drawn to the verb “*go around*”, which in itself, as Jesus’ pastoral practice testifies it, could be used for a good retreat in view of conversion. Jesus does not limit himself to waiting for people to come to the temple (or wait at the door step of the Church). Instead, he goes around to meet the pilgrims. Moreover, among these “*crowds who were troubled and abandoned*”, we can put a special emphasis on the number of migrants who wander around the roads of the world, often orphaned, lost and alone.

### **3.2. Looking at God with the eyes of the migrants**

He who travels a lot learns not only to alleviate his luggage, but also his soul. Any long journey teaches us to put aside what is superfluous and carry only what is essential. The fact of migrating again and again helps to discern and distinguish what is essential from what is superfluous. The road, especially if it has been traveled more than twice, teaches us the wisdom to get rid of what is heavy and what slows down the pace, and therefore focus on the main goal, on the ultimate horizon of human existence. In a word, the feet of the pilgrim develop a natural mystic, that of relativizing the quantity of “things” and focus on “the one thing that is absolute”; the only one, which is the most important, as we are taught in the episode of Jesus’ visit to Martha and Mary (Luke 10: 38-42). Moreover, according to the concept of *cor inquietum* of Saint Augustine, the migrant represents the condition of every human being, that is, a pilgrim on earth, looking for the definitive homeland.

According to the Social Doctrine of the Church (SDC), there are the seeds of the Word of God in the heart of every human person and in every culture. In moving from one place to another, the migrants are holders of such seeds. According to Blessed J.B. Scalabrini, “Father and Apostle of the migrants”, in the way that the birds and winds transmit the pollen that fertilizes life, so the travelers, too, carry with them the expressions and the values, which fertilize other peoples’ cultural traditions. Therefore, the phenomenon of migration will always be an instrument of evangelization, which promotes the reciprocal and continuous purification of cultures, as recalled by the Aparecida Document.

Moreover, the migrants cannot be considered solely as victims of the exploitation of the labor market. In fact, while it is true that, on the one hand, they are generally exposed to the most difficult works, the most dangerous and the poorly paid jobs, it is also true that, on the other hand, their indomitable and unbeatable determination make of them protagonists and prophets of the future. Though they have walked

in inhospitable and hostile ways or “*on hitherto unexplored waters*”, according to the expression used by the Portuguese Poet Luís de Camões, but they kept their eyes turned to and fixed on God, and have become the light of the “fragile ship” of every migrant.

In this perspective, the faith and the hope of the migrants are usually a light that opens up new horizons for history, be it personal, family or community history. In their luggages, even though poor and simple, you will always find a symbol of the religion of their ancestors, such as the Bible or the Koran for the Muslims. Therefore, in the reality of migration, there are involved, not only the expectations of the migrants and their family, but also their own history.

On the one hand, the forced migration also denounces the failure of many countries to provide a dignified life for their citizens. At the same time, it announces, through the phenomenon of transit and destination chosen, the urgent need for structural changes in the national, regional and international relations. In short, it is no exaggeration to say that, the words of Martin Luther King: “*I have a dream*” become a driving force in the life of the migrant. Paraphrasing Euclides da Cunha, we would say: “*the migrant is first and foremost a strong person*”.

#### **4. Challenges and opportunities: what to do?**

After a brief overview of the reality of migration (Parts 1 and 2), followed by some biblical, theological and pastoral elements that illuminate and guide the approach of the phenomenon (Part 3), the main objective of this last Part (Part 4) is to give some ideas in view of taking action on social, pastoral and political levels. More than “reinventing the wheel”, we will try to focus on certain activities, which, in most cases, have been already underway in the Church, in general, and the in Pastoral Care of Migrants, in particular.

##### **4.1. Welcome and documentation**

The welcome is the DNA of the Pastoral Care of Migrants. This consists in the opening of heart, doors and ecclesial and cultural spaces, for “the other, the stranger, the different”. To welcome migrants means, above all, to provide the immediate help for those who arrive in a new place. This assistance, provided on a case by case basis, means also to be concerned about the personal, family, social, legal, educational, health and psychological welfare of migrants. That is why there is a network of Migrants Houses scattered along the border, for example, between Mexico and the United States, between Mexico and Guatemala and between Chile, Bolivia and Peru; and in some other cities with a large numbers of migrants, like São Paulo, Santiago and Manaus. It is needless to mention that, very often, it is fundamental to teach them the local language, so as to help with their integration in the new society.

The welcome is accompanied by a long process of regularization of documents. In fact, without these documents, all the doors would be closed, starting with the access to a decent work and enter a formal work contract. The work, in turn, opens up a range of possibilities. Again, migrants can rely on a network of the Reception and Information Centers, with the help of social workers, lawyers and other professionals, who can help with faster integration into the new society. The rough way in which most authorities of the Police treat newcomers is undeniable and notorious. The presence of a professional gives always more confidence to migrants.

##### **4.2. The rights the migrants**

The commitment to the defense of human rights, in general, and the rights of migrants, in particular, is one of the characteristics of the social and pastoral action in the field of human mobility. Many immigrants remain for months, years, or even decades (if not for life) in the precarious situation of undocumented residents. In this irregular condition, they become more vulnerable to all sorts of labor and sexual exploitation, and easy prey to the global network of organized crime.

We know the weight of the word “illegal” in societies like the United States, as well as in Europe, Australia and Japan, among other countries. Concretely, it means living in insecurity, instability, fear, and eventually, running the risk of facing the repatriation process. Unfortunately, as regards the treatment of immigrants without regular documents, the same thing occurs in the developing and in the emerging countries as well. That is why, it is very urgent to fight for the legal protection and the defense of the rights of migrants to life and human dignity.

##### **4.3. Multicultural and multiethnic Parishes**

From a strictly pastoral point of view, in the host Parishes, it is necessary to protect and promote the cultural and religious values of migrants. It is necessary to create spaces for multicultural or multiethnic encounters, such as the celebration of the feast of the Patron Saint, the National Holiday, etc. On this level,

however, lies an ambiguity that is often a trap, which can confuse the less attentive to the situation. In fact, the preservation of the original language, and the cultural and religious expressions, helps indeed to strengthen and maintain the cohesion of one's ethnic group, especially in cases of discrimination, prejudice and hostility.

However, in this process of cultural promotion, there is the risk of creating ghettos that prevent rapid and natural integration. In metaphorical terms, the Angels of religious tradition can turn into demons, in promoters of division and isolation. The challenge here is to find and maintain the just balance between the respect of the different ethnic groups and the gradual integration into the society of the host country.

To preserve and promote the values inherent to every human person, to every people and culture, it requires primarily an adequate space, where it is possible to tell the personal and collective history. In this line, the encounters and meetings of migrants by ethnic groups are very important. It is assumed that migration is a blow that leaves inner wounds, some of which will never heal. The uprooting and exposure to the travels in scorching sun has inevitable consequences. Usually, both those who leave and those who remain in the home country encounter a lot of suffering. To be able to tell one's story, as it is said in Psychology, is a way to exorcise the shadows that obscure our itinerary to recovery. To be able to verbally express our pain, frees us from the burden of our past. The same goes for the history of the group as a whole. Therefore, it is important to provide time and create space for migrants to be able to share their experiences and stories, and to learn from each other.

#### **4.4. Presence on departure and on arrival**

In the same way that the migrations establish **a bridge of survival** between the country of origin and the host country, the agents and leaders who accompany the migrants can commit themselves to building, through correspondence, a **social and pastoral bridge** between the country of origin and the host country. This implies an effort to seek to unite both sides of the bridge, through regular visits, popular missions, sharing of information and of personnel, etc. It is one of the ways to maintain and strengthen the faith and the efforts of migrants in their daily struggles for a better and more dignified life. In case the migrants would have difficulties to go to Church, the Church will then have the duty to reach out to them where they are.

The presence of the Church, both in the country of origin and in the host country, is not a novelty of modern times. In fact, at the end of the nineteenth century, Bishop J.B. Scalabrini founded two religious Institutes (of men and women) and a Secular Institute, to accompany the Italian immigrants, both in his own Diocese of Piacenza and in other regions of Italy, on the other side of the ocean, that is in the United States, Brazil, Argentina, Australia and elsewhere. It was, as he used to say, to bring them the "*smile of their country of origin and the comfort of faith*". He also said: "*for the migrants, the country to which they really belong is the land that gives them the bread*"; and concluded, saying: "*the migration, in fact, extends the concept of homeland*".

#### **4.5. The Centers for Studies and Pastoral**

In order to develop a more efficient work in favor of migrants and to exert a greater social and political impact for their protection, it is necessary to make a scientific and updated approach of the phenomenon of human mobility. It is from this consideration the Centers of Migration Studies were born and are today present in Europe, Asia, Africa and North and South America.

In a close collaboration with other academic Institutions, these Centers conduct research and study, and organize conferences, meetings, courses and seminars, to involve the largest number possible of people, and also to sensitize the Church, civil society and competent authorities, about the drama of migration. It is obvious that such a thorough approach regarding the flux and trends, the causes and consequences of migration is to be done by considering all the above mentioned aspects of the phenomenon. It requires not only to increase the pastoral, social and political activities, but also to focus on the necessary changes to make to the new immigration laws.

In this regard, it is worthwhile to mention the work of the International Forum on Migration and Peace. At its 5<sup>th</sup> Edition (Antigua, Bogota, Mexico City, New York and Berlin), the Forum presented a twofold objective: on the one hand, to distinguish and separate the concept of migration from the ideology of national security and organized crime; therefore, to emphasize above all the potential it represents for the construction of peace. On the other hand, it aims at involving the political authorities, the academic thinkers and others personalities, in view of a larger social and political participation, for the defense and the protection of the rights of the migrants.