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Press Conference to present the book “Pastoral Orientations on Internally Displaced People”, edited by the Section for Migrants and Refugees of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

Intervention by Cardinal Michael Czerny, S.J.

Intervention by Fr. Fabio Baggio, C.S.

Intervention by Dr. Amaya Valcárcel

At 11.30 this morning, in live streaming from the Sala Marconi in Palazzo Pio, a press conference was held to present the book “Pastoral Orientations on Internally Displaced People”, edited by the Section for Migrants and Refugees of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

The speakers were His Eminence Cardinal Michael Czerny, S.J., under-secretary of the Section for Migrants and Refugees of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development; Fr. Fabio Baggio, C.S., under-secretary of the Section for Migrants and Refugees of the same Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and Dr. Amaya Valcárcel, international Advocacy Coordinator for the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), International Office in Rome.

The following are the interventions:

Intervention by Cardinal Michael Czerny, S.J.

From the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis has been urging the Church to accompany all people who in one way or another are forced to flee. He established the Migrants & Refugees Section (M&R) and directs it

himself for the time being. Since early 2017, the M&R mission is to assist the Church's Bishops and all those serving vulnerable persons on the move.

In 2017, M&R produced 20 Pastoral Action Points, for use by Catholic dioceses, parishes and religious congregations, by Catholic and other organisations of civil society, by schools and groups catering to migrants and refugees. The 20 points are pastoral priorities for local programs and key points for homilies, education and media. Notably, they were the outcome of a thorough process of consultation and reflection with a great many leaders and practitioners in the field. The Holy See offered the 20 Action Points as its contribution to the drafting, negotiation and adoption of the United Nations Global Compacts on refugees and for safe, orderly and regular migration, adopted by the end of 2018.

In 2018, following a similar process, M&R prepared the Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking to provide key considerations and proposals which Catholic and other actors can use in their pastoral ministry, responding to what Pope Francis called "an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ" (2014).

Last year M&R again held two consultations with Church leaders and partner organisations, with practitioners and scholars working in the field of internal displacement. Today we are happy to present the Pastoral Orientations on Internally Displaced People, approved by the Holy Father and meant to guide the Church's ministry to IDPs in planning and practical engagement, in advocacy and dialogue.

In this time of pandemic, the virus does not distinguish between those who are important and those who are invisible, those who are settled and those who are displaced: everyone is vulnerable, and each infection is a danger to everyone. The Pastoral Orientations on Internally Displaced People want today's more than 50 million IDPs to be recognised and supported, promoted and eventually re-integrated, so that they can play an active, constructive role in their country even if powerful causes, both natural and unjust human causes, have forced them to flee from home and take refuge somewhere else. In the post-COVID-19 world that is emerging, their contribution will be very much needed.

In the name of all IDPs and of those who generously and selflessly accompany them, may God bless every effort of reconciliation and every work of mercy to "gather the outcasts [and] the dispersed [...] from the four corners" of every land (cfr. Isaiah 11:12).

Intervention by Fr. Fabio Baggio, C.S.

The *Pastoral Orientations on Internally Displaced Persons* (IDPs) adopt the definition provided by the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998): "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border".

According to the latest data produced by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC, 2020), 33.4 million new IDPs were registered worldwide in 2019. Of these, 8.5 million were forced to leave their homes due to conflicts of various kinds, while 24.9 million did so due to disasters[1].

The vast scale of this forced migration, together with its frequent invisibility and the vulnerability it causes, amply justifies the Holy Father's concern and the particular interest of the Section for Migrants and Refugees of the Department for Promoting Integral Human Development, which led to the preparation of the document we are presenting today.

The *Pastoral Orientations on Internally Displaced Persons* have been nurtured by the richness of the universal

and local Magisterium and the long pastoral tradition of the action that the Church, in different parts of the world, has undertaken for the benefit of these inhabitants of existential peripheries.

The *Orientations* are grouped around the four verbs with which the Holy Father wanted to synthesise the pastoral care of migrants: to *welcome protect, promote* and *integrate*. The structure followed for each point highlights on the one hand the challenges and on the other the responses that should be strengthened and/or implemented by the Church.

The first verb, *to welcome*, was associated with a first challenge constituted by the frequent invisibility of internally displaced persons, which, together with the lack of data and the lack of their formal recognition, increases their vulnerability. The precariousness in which many of the host communities find themselves and the responsibility of the institutions both in case of emergency and in case of prolonged displacement have been highlighted.

The second verb, *to protect*, was ascribed a second challenge posed by the lack of international instruments of protection. Specifically, the increase in vulnerability for people who are already fragile, the proliferation of trafficking and the risky conditions in urban areas and refugee camps were considered. The *Orientations* also highlight the imperatives for the protection of humanitarian workers and the need to resolve ethnic conflicts that are at the root of much violence.

Under the third verb, *promote*, the document introduces the challenge of socio-economic inclusion, which necessarily involves recognition and personal identification. The need for a sound and transparent administration of funds for displaced persons is therefore highlighted, considering that the programmes of the local Churches also need funding. In line with the idea of integral human development, the Guidelines recall the essentiality of spiritual growth, together with material growth, and the empowerment of the recipients.

The final verb, *to integrate*, poses the challenge of developing durable solutions, including both the integration of displaced persons into the host communities and, if possible, their return home. In this context, the responsibility of the local Churches in the pastoral care of displaced Catholics is recalled.

The *Orientations* conclude with a point dedicated to the importance of cooperation between all actors, fostering joint work between all Catholic realities, interfaith and interreligious collaboration, and the willingness to coordinate efforts with relevant institutions, international agencies and other civil society entities.

I would like to conclude my speech by quoting the words that the Holy Father addressed to us in his *Urbi et Orbi* Message only a few days ago, words that can also be well understood in favour of internally displaced persons: “This is not a time for indifference, because the whole world is suffering and needs to be united in facing the pandemic. May the risen Jesus grant hope to the poor, to those living on the peripheries, to refugees and the homeless. May these, the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters living in the peripheries of every part of the world, not be abandoned” *Urbi et Orbi* Message, 12 April 2020).

1 Cf. <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/>

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is present in 56 countries. Its mission is to accompany, serve and defend the rights of forced migrants, including IDPs. It works with internally displaced populations in 14 countries.

The biggest problem of IDPs is their invisibility. National governments and even international organisations focus their attention on domestic or other migration issues. Another problem is the limited access to displaced populations, which may be restricted due to conflict or lack of recognition of their rights and needs. The social and economic crisis produced by the COVID-19 may result in greater invisibility and restriction to IDPs.

JRS works in different contexts of internal displacement providing different responses according to the needs of the displaced population.

The case of Colombia is paradigmatic, as the number of IDPs exceeds 5.5 million (5,576,000 as of December 2019). However, they are becoming increasingly invisible due to two factors: (a) the peace agreement with the FARC and the subsequent conclusion for many that “there is no longer an armed conflict”, and therefore no longer any displaced victims of the armed conflict; (b) the exponential growth of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, with more than 1.8 million currently in the country. The reality is that:

- Internal displacement continues, which keeps Colombia as the country with the highest accumulated number of displaced people in the world. It is an ongoing challenge and the policies to address all these IDPs are not clear in Colombia today;
- There is growing intra-urban displacement, which leads to what may be called “chronic displacement”, as many people, after their first rural or urban displacement, have experienced two, three or even four displacements due to the armed groups and criminal gangs present in the cities. They are displaced in a situation of chronic vulnerability and are not integrated into the social and economic dynamics of the cities.

JRS implements an integrated strategy which combines political and economic integration through projects of access to small jobs; social empowerment and reconciliation, all with a view to promoting durable solutions.

Another example is the Ezidi survivors in the Duhok area of Iraqi Kurdistan, where women and children face significant protection and psychosocial care needs due to chronic displacement and the trauma of the captivity of their loved ones at the hands of ISIS. There, JRS provides psychiatric assistance to adults and educational support to children. The total number of IDPs in Iraq is 1,555,000. Recently 975 people were displaced between 18 and 22 March in the district of Nineveh as a result of heavy flooding.

In Kachin State in Myanmar, international humanitarian organizations, including those from the UN, have restricted access to some IDP camps outside government control areas. During the current pandemic people do not have access to information to protect themselves from the virus. IDPs know how to wash their hands but do not have access to clean water, not even to drink.

Working together with local populations who have not been displaced is very important. In Burundi we are now working with the displaced who are returning home after socio-political tensions. Positive interventions include access to quality education for the majority of displaced children returning to their schools and reconciliation work between those who were displaced during the conflict and those who stayed behind.

In South Sudan, JRS works to promote peace education, conflict resolution and reconciliation. This has helped to create community-based initiatives to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of IDPs into their home communities.

In Afghanistan, developing long-term solutions for IDPs include peace education projects and psychosocial support, as well as adult literacy, quality education for children, and teacher training. Here too, integration between different members of ethnic groups and with the local community are key aspects of a sustainable solution.

Making these situations visible is key because international cooperation is urgently needed.

For a church organisation such as the Jesuit Refugee Service, it is crucial for the Holy Father to publish a document with guidelines for the work with IDPs, because there was a danger that this population - no less than some 50 million people - would become totally invisible.

We are deeply grateful to the Holy Father for once again placing at the centre people who find themselves on the periphery of our world, in this case internally displaced persons.
