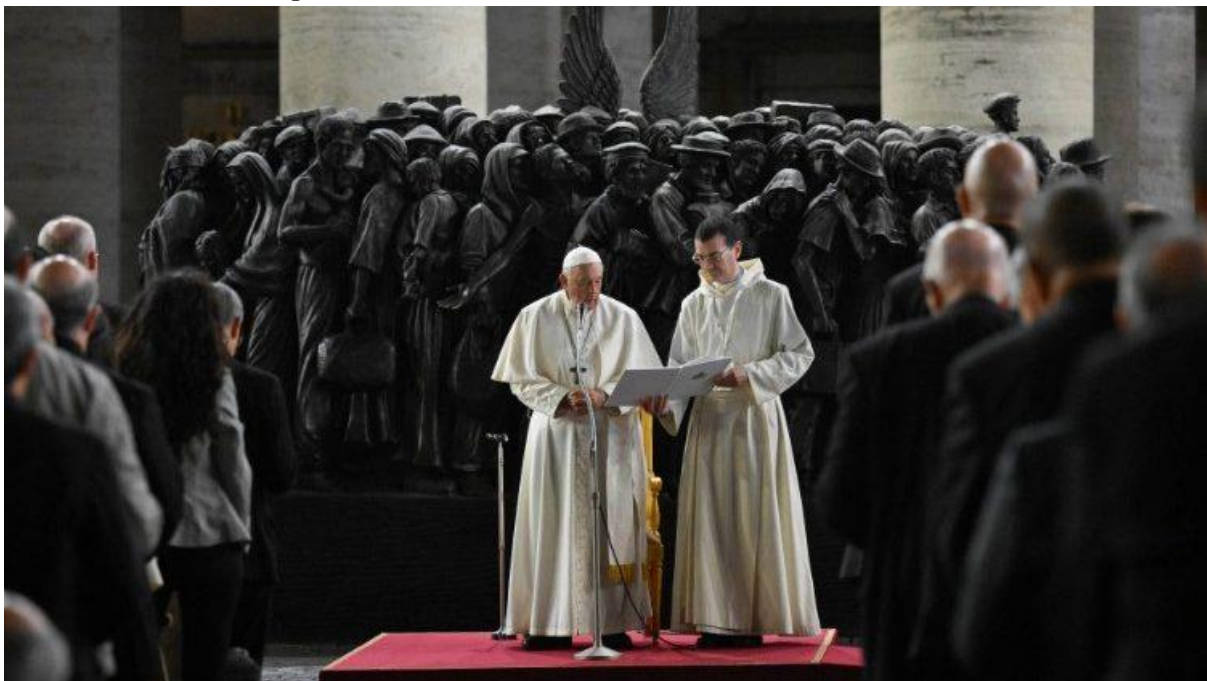


Pope: May we be neighbours to wayfarers of our time

Pope Francis presided at a “Moment of Prayer for Migrants and Refugees” in St. Peter's Square, and said "we are called to be neighbours to all the wayfarers of our time, to save their lives, to heal their wounds and to soothe their pain." The Synod participants joined the Pope in prayer at the end of the day's sessions.

On Thursday evening, Pope Francis led a prayer vigil to remember the plight of migrants and refugees and the call to save them, heal their wounds, and help them contribute to society to build a better world marked by fraternity and peace. The Pope led the “Moment of Prayer for Migrants and Refugees” organized by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development with the participation of refugees from Cameroon, Ukraine, and El Salvador. The vigil took place before the large sculpture in St. Peter's Square called the “Angels Unawares” monument, a life-size sculpture in bronze and clay that depicts a group of migrants and refugees from different cultural and racial backgrounds and from diverse historic periods in time.

The Pope shared some reflections during the brief prayer vigil while also marking a moment of silence to remember all those who have lost their lives along the different migration routes. Recalling the theme of the Good Samaritan heard in the reading from Luke's Gospel at the vigil, the Pope said the parable shows us how to move from a closed to an open world, from a world at war to one at peace.



Moment of Prayer for Migrants and Refugees, St. Peter's Square

Dangerous roads

The dangers facing travellers from Jerusalem to Jericho in ancient times are like the unsafe migration routes facing people today who travel through hostile deserts, forests, and seas, the Pope observed.

So many are robbed, stripped and beaten, often deceived by unscrupulous traffickers, the Pope said, to then be "sold like commodities."

The dangers facing migrants and refugees today are stark he went on to say as they risk kidnappings, exploitation, torture and rape with many not surviving before reaching their destination.

Sadly, he noted, even in these days we witness how people are fleeing war and terrorism.



Moment of Prayer for Migrants and Refugees, St. Peter's Square

Compassionate hearts

Recalling the witness of the Samaritan who took notice and pity on the man lying at the side of the road after being beaten by bandits, the Pope said "he saw the wounded man and had compassion on him," saying "compassion is the imprint of God in our hearts."

And from that moment, the wounded man began to recover thanks to the "foreigner" who helped him.

"The outcome was not simply a good deed of assistance; the outcome was fraternity."

Called to save lives and heal wounds.

"Like the Good Samaritan, we are called to be neighbours to all the wayfarers of our time, to save their lives, to heal their wounds and to soothe their pain. For many, tragically, it is too late, and we are left only to weep over their graves, if they even have a grave. Yet the Lord knows the face of each of them, and he does not forget it."

The Pope said the Good Samaritan's actions went beyond simple charity and consisted of four verbs that marked his service: *welcome, protect, promote and integrate.*

His immediate care for the man extended into a long-term responsibility, as he returned to make sure he was fully recovered while making it possible for him. He added that the long term opportunity of this solidarity leads to "the growth of more inclusive, more beautiful and more peaceful societies."



Moment of Prayer for Migrants and Refugees, St. Peter's Square

Making safer roads

Another action we could all undertake is to "strive to make the road safer, so that today's travelers do not fall victim to bandits," the Pope added, saying more efforts are needed to counter the criminal networks "that exploit the hopes and dreams of migrants." Creating safer routes require efforts to "expand regular migration channels," he said, while at the same time bringing "demographic and economic policies into dialogue with migration policies."

But it is key to look out for the most vulnerable, he emphasised, while working to find common and responsible approaches to managing migration flows that are only likely to increase in the coming years.

"Let us ask the Lord for the grace to draw close to all migrants and refugees who knock at our door, because today 'anyone who is neither a robber nor a passer-by is either injured himself or bearing an injured person on his shoulders.'"

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