

WORLD DAY OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES (WDMR)
29 SEPTEMBER 2019

HOMILY



IT IS NOT JUST ABOUT MIGRANTS



MIGRANTS
REFUGEES

Gospel: Luke 16: 19-31

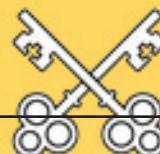
Homily 1

This Sunday's gospel fits (very) well the celebration of World Migrant Sunday.

Firstly, the image of the rich man and the poor man at his gate named Lazarus relates to the images of the many migrants who are waiting at borders between the rich and poor countries. Some examples are the borders between the US and Mexico, or the borders between Europe and Africa. There are many other borders existing not only between countries, but also within a country. Borders that define inclusion and exclusion, borders that protect differences in wealth, opportunities and culture, and remain close for those who tries to enter.

Secondly, the image of Lazarus lying at the gate, who is being fed of the crumbs wasted from the table of the rich man, is also the image of migrants left only with crumbs when the gates do not open. The enormous imbalances in the appropriation and consumption of the earth's resources between rich and poor countries leave those born on the poor side of the borders with only the crumbs. There is no communication between the rich man and Lazarus. The same as migrants entering the border having no communication with the policies that barred them. Migrants have no say on the decisions that exclude them out. Those who decides do not want to hear them. They think migrants have nothing to contribute. Their place is only outside the border, and left only with crumbs.

Thirdly, the parable is commonly read as a condemnation of the rich man, not because he is rich, but because he is bad. However, the gospel does not say that the rich man is bad. It does not say that he is corrupt or morally debased, nor does it say that he is not charitable. If Lazarus continued to stay at the gate, it was because Lazarus is in a way, benefitting from the breadcrumbs. Likewise, migrants and refugees are often prevented from entering the border. Considered as others, and outsiders, rich countries who wants to support would rather let them be on the outside of the fence; and will just extend support from where they are. It is an ideological position that simply perpetuates differences and divisions.



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Finally, the parable's core message is that the differences in the possession and the use of the earth's goods have created an abyss between the first world and third world countries; between the rich and poor people. It is not possible to close such abyss with only crumbs to provide, with charity. It is time to close the abyss that creates division. Welcoming

migrants and refugees is one way to do it, to be inclusive, not exclusive. To consider them as part of our journey with equal opportunities, and rights as people, as human beings.

There is one major difference between the time of parable, and of ourtime. Today, everyone knows the names of the rich people but no one knows the names of the poor. For Jesus it is the other way around. In the parable, the rich man has no name; the name of the poor is Lazarus, which means: God helps. Through the parable Jesus is telling us that God has taken the side of the poor. Today, as we celebrate the World Day of Migrants, Pope Francis chose the theme "*It is not just about migrants.*" we could say that the Church has taken the side of the migrants and refugees – the poor.

It is not just about migrants, but is about welcoming them in our midst. It is about including them in our journey to manifest in the society we want to be; to what kinds of persons we want to be. We will not find guidance in exoteric events or ideologies. The word of God should be our guidance and the teaching of the Church. There is enough there to know how to close the abyss of exclusion and division; and to open the gates of inclusion and positive encounter with migrants and refugees.



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