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Theme of the 103rd World Day of the Migrant and Refugee: Minor migrants, vulnerable and voiceless

Vatican City, 22 June 2016 – "Minor migrants, vulnerable and voiceless" will be the theme of the 103rd World Day of Migrants and Refugees, to be held on 15 January 2017, according to a communiqué issued today by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples, which emphasises that migration is a worldwide phenomenon, not only European or Mediterranean. All continents are affected by this situation, which does not exclusively regard those in search of employment or of better living conditions, but also adults and minors who flee from real tragedies.

"It is necessary to guarantee that in every country the migrants who arrive and their families enjoy full recognition of their rights under international law. Indeed, women and children represent the most vulnerable categories within this widespread phenomenon, and minors are the most fragile, often invisible as they are without documents or unaccompanied.

With the theme 'Minor migrants, vulnerable and voiceless', the Holy Father wishes to focus attention on the smallest of the small. Often children arrive alone in the host countries, are unable to make their voice heard, and easily become victims of the most serious human rights violations.

On the occasion of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees a papal message will be published, as is customary.

This event originates from the circular letter "The Pain and the Worries" sent by the Consistorial Congregation on 6 December 1914 to Italian diocesan ordinaries, in which for the first time it was proposed to institute an annual day for raising awareness of the phenomenon of migration and also to promote a collection in support of pastoral works for Italian emigrants and for the formation of missionaries of emigration. As a consequence of this missive, the first World Day of Migrants and Refugees was held on 21 February 1915".