



1. Press Release

1.1. English (Original version)

Refugees & Migrants in Our Common Home: Rome hosts global summit shaping higher education's response to migration

Over 200 participants from 40+ countries will gather at the Istituto Patristico Augustinianum on October 1–3, 2025, to collaborate across disciplines and draft the first Action Plans for higher education's global response to migration and displacement.

(Rome, September 26, 2025). From October 1–3, 2025, ahead of the **Jubilee for Migrants** held October 4–5, Rome will host ***Refugees & Migrants in Our Common Home***, the first in-person global gathering of a three-year initiative uniting higher education institutions, NGOs, and community partners to address the urgent realities of migration and displacement.

Organized by **Villanova University**, the Rome Summit will convene over **225 registered participants from 40+ countries**. Together, they will co-create multiple university-focused **Action Plans** rooted in education, research, advocacy, and service with migrants and refugees to strengthen coordinated, compassionate, and long-term academic responses for the future.

The event is inspired by the words of **Pope Francis**, who called on the academic community to take concrete action to address the global challenges of migration, and by **Pope Leo XIV**, a Villanova alumnus, whose Augustinian identity and call for shared responsibility guide the project's vision.

On the second day of the Rome Summit, participants of ***Refugees & Migrants in Our Common Home*** will be received in a private audience with **Pope Leo XIV**, preceded by a Mass celebrated



by **Cardinal Michael Czerny, S.J.**, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

Shaping a Compassionate Future

As the first in-person gathering of the *Refugees & Migrants in Our Common Home* initiative, the Rome Summit marks the beginning of a sustained, collaborative effort to transform how higher education responds to migration. At its core, the project seeks to foster **compassionate systems change**—moving beyond traditional approaches, breaking down silos, and building coalitions that can respond to the systemic realities of displacement with empathy and vision. Participants will leave not only with the first draft of global Action Plans, but with new partnerships, shared resources, and a renewed sense of purpose. “This summit is about more than dialogue—it’s about building the frameworks and relationships that will sustain change for decades to come,” said Prof. **Michele Pistone**, J.D., LLM, founder and faculty director of Villanova University’s [Mother Cabrini Institute on Immigration](#). “Together, we can shape the leaders of the next generation and create systems grounded in compassion and justice.” To do so, in the words of **Dr. Lana Cook**, Associate Director of the MIT Systems Awareness Lab, “we need to develop our capacities to deeply listen, to move beyond the quick fix, and to build our muscle of hope as we work together toward a preferred future rooted in human dignity and justice. This conference is a collective practice space towards that vision.”

Notable speakers include **Amy Pope**, Director General, International Organization on Migration (IOM); **Cardinal Fabio Baggio, C.S.**, Under-Secretary, Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development; **Msgr. Paul Desmond Tighe**, Secretary, Dicastery for Culture and Education; **Lana Cook, Ph.D.**, Associate Director, MIT Systems Awareness Lab; **Massimo Faggioli, Ph.D.**, Professor in Historical and Contemporary Ecclesiology Loyola Institute at Trinity College Dublin; **Rabia Nasimi**, Refugee Advocate & UK Government Policy Advisor (speaking in a personal capacity); **Sr. Norma Pimentel, M.J.**, Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley; and **Michele R. Pistone, J.D., LLM**, Professor of Law, Villanova University, Founder and Faculty Director, Mother Cabrini Institute on Immigration (Chair).

A New Kind of Academic Conference



Unlike traditional academic conferences, the Rome event is participatory and action-oriented. Participants are organized into four **Working Groups**—aligned with the project’s pillars of **Education, Research, Advocacy, and Service**—and started collaborating across disciplines, countries, and backgrounds months before the conference. In Rome, **Plenary Sessions, Lightning Talks, and Poster Presentations** will deepen collaboration and culminate in initial **Action Plans**. These roadmaps will help universities engage migration issues in coordinated, compassionate, and impactful ways.

Additional highlights include cultural and spiritual activities tied to the Vatican’s **Jubilee for Migrants** (October 4–5), providing a symbolic and global context for the gathering.

Another highlight of the Summit will be the presence of renowned artist **Timothy Schmalz**, who will sculpt live during the event. He will create a new work depicting Mother Cabrini for the Mother Cabrini Institute on Immigration. The statue will be blessed at the conclusion of the Rome Summit, offering participants a powerful moment of reflection and legacy.

This event is sponsored by [The Mother Cabrini Institute on Immigration](#), in partnership with the [Center for Migration Studies \(CMS\)](#), the [Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development](#), the [Dicastery for Culture and Education](#), the [International Federation of Catholic Universities](#), the [Fondazione Agostiniani nel Mondo](#), [Jesuit Refugee Service](#), [Jubilee 2025](#), [MIT Systems Awareness Lab](#), [Scalabrinii International Migration Institute \(SIMI\)](#), [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#), and [U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, Migration and Refugee Services \(USCCB\)](#).

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LUNCH FOR JOURNALISTS

Journalists are invited to join the second day of **Refugees & Migrants in Our Common Home** for a luncheon providing the opportunity to engage directly with the event organizers and distinguished participants.

Day: Thursday, October 2, 2025.

Time: 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Place: Pontifical Patristic Institute Augustinianum – Via Paolo VI, 25, Rome.



Spokespersons Available:

- **Prof. Michele Pistone**, J.D., LLM, Professor of Law, Villanova University, Founder and Faculty Director, Mother Cabrini Institute on Immigration (Chair). Language: EN
- **Lana Cook**, Ph.D., Associate Director, MIT Systems Awareness Lab. Language: EN
- **Fr. Joseph Farrell, O.S.A.**, Prior General of the Augustinian Order. Language: EN
- **Fr. Arthur Purcaro, O.S.A.**, Assistant Vice President of Mission and Ministry, Villanova University. Language: EN
- **Fr. Aldo Skoda, C.S.**, Executive Director, Scalabrin International Migration Institute (SIMI)
Language: EN, IT
- **Ms. Amy Pope**, Director General, International Organization on Migration (October 2).
Language: EN
- **Angelo Pittaluga**, Head of Global Advocacy, Jesuit Refugee Service.
Language: EN, FR, IT
- **Dieu Merci (Wa Luundo) Luundo**, Founder and project coordinator of at Vijana Twaweza Club. Congolese refugee based in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya. Language: EN
- **Mario Russell**, Executive Director, Center for Migration Studies. Language: EN
- **Massimo Fagioli**, Ph.D., Professor in Historical and Contemporary Ecclesiology Loyola Institute at Trinity College Dublin. Language: EN, IT
- **Sr. Norma Pimentel, M.J.**, Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley. Language: EN, ES
- **Rabia Nasimi, MPhil.**, Refugee Advocate & UK Government Policy Advisor (speaking in a personal capacity). Language: EN
- **Fr. Anthony Banks, O.S.A.**, Former Assistant General of the Order of Saint Augustine.
Language: EN



REFUGEES & MIGRANTS IN OUR COMMON HOME

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF UNIVERSITIES

- **Fr. Victor Gonzaga, O.S.A.**, Augustinian representative to the UN. Language: EN

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More information about Refugees & Migrants in Our Common Home

👉 <https://migrationandacademia.org>

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Falcone:

florencia.falcone@lamachi.com

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About Refugees & Migrants in Our Common Home

Refugees & Migrants in Our Common Home is a global initiative led by Villanova University and its partners to mobilize academic communities in addressing the critical challenges faced by migrants and refugees. More than just a conference, this multi-year project models a new way forward, where academics, students, and community partners collaborate in plenary sessions and small groups to share ideas, resources, and expertise. Together, they will refine concrete Action Plans that inspire change and fosters mutual learning. More information: <https://migrationandacademia.org/about-the-project>