



# The Holy See

---

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS  
TO MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION  
OF CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES**

*Consistory Hall  
Saturday, 4 November 2017*

---

**[Multimedia]**

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I welcome you at the conclusion of the International Conference entitled “Migrants and Refugees in a Globalized World: Responsibility and Responses of Universities”, organized by the International Federation of Catholic Universities. I thank the President for the words with which he introduced our meeting.

For little less than a century this organization, with the motto “*Sciat ut serviat*”, has sought to promote Catholic formation at a higher level, availing itself of the great richness that derives from the encounter of many diverse university situations. An essential aspect of this formation aspires to promote social responsibility, for the building of a more just and more humane world. Thus, you have felt called by the global and complex situation of contemporary migration and have organized a scientific, theological and pedagogical reflection deeply rooted in the Social Doctrine of the Church, in an endeavour to overcome the prejudice and fear linked to an inadequate awareness of the migratory phenomenon. I congratulate you and would like to point out the need for *your contribution in three areas* that are within your competence: those of *research, teaching, and social promotion*.

With regard to the first area, Catholic universities have always sought to harmonize *scientific* with *theological research*, placing reason and faith in dialogue. I think it would be timely to begin further — even long-term — studies into the remote causes of forced migration, with the aim of identifying practical solutions, because it is important first to ensure people the right not to be forced to

emigrate. It is likewise important to take into account the reactions — negative in principle, at times even discriminatory and xenophobic — that the arrival of migrants is generating in countries of ancient Christian Tradition, in order to recommend programmes for educating consciences. Moreover, the migrants and refugees' many contributions to the host society certainly deserve greater appreciation, as do those contributions that benefit their communities of origin. In order to give “rationales” to the pastoral care of migrants and refugees, I invite you to deepen theological reflection on migration as a sign of the times. “In migrants the Church has always contemplated the image of Christ who said, ‘I was a stranger and you made me welcome’ (Mt 25:35). Their condition is, therefore, a challenge to the faith and love of believers, who are called on to heal the evils caused by migration and discover the plan God pursues through it, even when caused by obvious injustices” (Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, Instruction *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, 12).

With regard to the *teaching* sphere, I hope that Catholic universities may set up programmes aimed at fostering the education of refugees, at various levels, both by offering correspondence courses for those living in reception camps and centres, and by allocating study grants that allow for their relocation. By taking advantage of the extensive international academic network, universities can also facilitate the recognition of the qualifications and professional status of migrants and refugees, to their benefit and that of the societies that welcome them. In order to respond satisfactorily to the new challenges of migration, it is important to train, in a specific and professional way, the pastoral workers who strive to assist migrants and refugees: this is another compelling task for Catholic universities. At a more general level, I would like to invite Catholic universities to educate their own students — some of whom will become political leaders, entrepreneurs and creators of culture — to understand the migratory phenomenon, in a perspective of justice, global co-responsibility and communion in cultural diversity.

The sphere of *social promotion* views the university as an institution that undertakes to bear the burdens of the society in which it operates, by exercising first and foremost its role of critical conscience with regard to the various forms of political, economic and cultural powers. With regard to the complex world of migration, the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development has recommended “20 Action Points” as a contribution to the process that will lead to the the international community’s adoption of two Global Compacts, one on migrants and the other on refugees, in the second half of 2018. In this and other areas, universities can carry out their role as privileged actors even in the social sphere, such as, for example, by encouraging students to engage in volunteer assistance programmes for refugees, asylum seekers, and newly arrived migrants.

All the work that you carry out in these great areas — research, education and social promotion — finds a sure reference in the four milestones on the Church’s path through the situations of contemporary migration: *to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate* (cf. *Message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2018*).

Today we are commemorating Saint Charles Borromeo, an enlightened and impassioned Pastor who made humility his motto. May his exemplary life inspire your intellectual and social activity and also the experience of fraternity that you promote in the Federation.

May the Lord bless your commitment at the service of the university world and of our brother and sister migrants and refugees. As I assure you of my remembrance in prayer, I ask that you, please, not forget to pray for me.