



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
TO PARTECIPANTS IN THE XVI GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE MISSIONARIES OF SAINT CHARLES
(SCALABRINIANS)**

*Consistory Hall
Monday, 28 October 2024*

[[Multimedia](#)]

Dear brothers, welcome!

I greet the Superior General and all of you who are here today. I am happy to meet you on the occasion of your XVI General Chapter, which you are celebrating on the eve of the Holy Year. I am pleased that the Jubilee theme – “Pilgrims of Hope” – has inspired your pastoral planning for the future of your missionary and charitable apostolate to migrants. It is fitting, then, for us to pause and reflect together on the virtue of hope in relation to three aspects of your ministry: *migrants, pastoral care and charity.*

First, *migrants*. Migrants teach us to hope. I myself am the son of migrants, and at home we always experienced the sense of going to contribute to the Americas, in order to progress and move forwards. Migrants leave their homes behind in the hope of “finding their daily bread elsewhere” – as Saint John Baptist Scalabrini used to say. Even when everything seems to work against them, and they encounter only closed doors and rejection, they do not despair. Their determination, often inspired by their love for the families they have left behind, can teach us a great deal. As “migrants among migrants”, which is what your Founder wanted you to be, you have much to learn from them as you share in their journey. In this way, through interaction and dialogue, and by welcoming Christ present in them, you will grow in solidarity with one another, putting your trust “in God and in God alone”. Do not forget the Old Testament: the widow, the orphan and the stranger are God’s privileged ones. The dream of a new future that drives people

to migrate reflects a yearning for salvation that is present in all people, whatever their race or social condition. Indeed, “itinerancy”, despite the sufferings it entails, can become a precious school of faith and humanity, both for those who provide assistance and those who receive it, provided that it is properly understood and experienced (cf. [*Message for the 2019 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 27 May 2019*](#)). Nor should we forget that the history of salvation is itself a history of migrants, of peoples on the move.

This brings us to our second point: the need for offering *pastoral care* focused on hope. Migration can certainly be a moment of growth for everyone, when proper support is provided. On the other hand, when migrants experience solitude and abandonment, their lives can degenerate into dramas of existential displacement, crises of values, stifled aspirations, and even loss of faith and despair. The injustice and violence that so many of our brothers and sisters experience in being uprooted from their homes are often so heartless as to plunge even the strongest of them into deep despondency or bleak resignation. Let us not forget that migrants must be welcomed, accompanied, promoted and integrated. If they are to preserve the strength and resilience necessary to continue on their journey, they need someone to attend to their wounds and to care for them in their extreme physical, spiritual and psychological vulnerability. *Effective pastoral interventions that demonstrate closeness* on the material, religious and human levels are required, in order to keep their hope alive and to help them advance on their personal journey towards God, their faithful companion on the way. For the Lord is ever present and close to all who suffer (cf. Benedict XVI, [*Message for the 2013 World Day of Migrants and Refugees*](#), 12 October 2012). Moreover, today many countries need migrants. Italy is not having children. The average age is forty-six. Italy, then, needs migrants and must welcome them, accompany them, promote them and integrate them. We have to speak about this truth.

This brings us to our third point: *charity*. On the eve of the Jubilee of 1900, Saint John Baptist Scalabrini noted that, “the world is groaning beneath the weight of great catastrophes”. Those were strong words, but sadly they remain timely. Today too, those who leave their native countries often do so because of tragic and unjust situations of unequal opportunity, the absence of democracy, fear of what the future may hold, or the devastation caused by the wars that plague our planet. This problem is aggravated by the closing of borders and the hostility shown by rich countries that perceive those knocking at their door as a threat to their own wellbeing. We see this in the scandal where northern countries bring in migrants from Central Europe for apple-picking but then send them away. They use them for picking apples and then reject them. This takes place today. In the dramatic confrontation between the interests of those who hoard their wealth and the struggle of those trying simply to survive by fleeing from hunger and persecution, many human lives are being lost, even as others look on with indifference and as some, even worse, turn those situations of suffering to their own advantage. In the Bible, one of the Jubilee laws was the restoration of land to those who had lost it (cf. *Lev 25:10-28*). Today, in a different context, that act of justice can be carried out through charitable works that affirm the dignity and rights of each individual (cf. John Paul II, [*Address to Participants in the Fourth World Congress promoted by the*](#)

Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, 9 October 1998, 2). In this way, exclusivist stereotypes are rejected and other persons, regardless of who they are or whence they come, are viewed as a gift of God, unique, sacred, inviolable, a precious resource for the benefit of all.

Dear brothers, the Scalabrinian charism is alive in the Church. We see this in the many young people who continue to join you from different countries of the world. Be grateful to the Lord for the vocation you have received. Indeed, if you want this Chapter to be an opportunity to deepen and renew your life and mission, start by making it a time of humble and joyful thanksgiving before the Eucharist, before Jesus crucified and before Mary, Mother of Migrants, as Saint John Baptist Scalabrini taught you. Only from there can you set out together in hope and love (cf. *Eph* 5:2).

Thinking of you, I wished to make [Father Fabio Baggio] a Cardinal. I would have liked to do so before but he did not want it. Now, I have done it, invoking obedience. With him there will be two Scalabrinian Cardinals here in Rome. Take this as a sign of esteem, of great esteem. I already know you and how much work you do!

Thank you for the immense good you do. I bless you and pray for you, and, please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.