

**ASIAN
HORIZONS**

Vol. 8, No. 4, December 2014

Pages: 789-809

MIGRATION AND POVERTY: ISSUES AND RESPONSES OF THE CHURCH

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Abstract

Although peoples have been on the move from time immemorial, migration has become truly a phenomenon of our times because of globalisation. The biggest challenges of globalisation are migration and poverty. The twenty-first century has been called “the age of migration.” Our modern economic models heighten exclusion and inequality. As a result, issues of migration and poverty remain widespread. The issues of migration and poverty could be seen as “signs of the time” to be interpreted in the light of the Word of God and the Magisterium of the Church. Both issues are intertwined. The first part of this paper highlights the issue of migration, while the second part underlines the issue of poverty. And the third part highlights the responses of the Universal Church to these issues, while the last part briefly discusses the response of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC). We do make some recommendations, in the light of the social teaching of the Church, in view of creating a better world wherein everyone will feel safe and secure and live peacefully.

I would ask the G20 Heads of State and Government not to forget that many lives are at stake behind these political and technical discussions, and it would indeed be

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regrettable if such discussions were to remain purely on the level of declarations of principle... A mindset in which individuals are ultimately discarded will never achieve peace or justice. Responsibility for the poor and the marginalised must therefore be an essential element of any political decision, whether on the national or the international level.¹

Pope Francis

Introduction

Albeit peoples have been on the move from time immemorial, migration has become truly a phenomenon of our times because of globalisation. The biggest challenges of globalisation are migration and poverty. The twenty-first century has been called “the age of migration,”² essentially because there are more migrants in the world today than ever before. There were about 232 million international migrants in 2013.³ The proportion of the world’s population identified as international migrants is around 3 per cent. The number of international migrants worldwide will increase in the future, with demographic factors, economic disparities, and environmental change continuing to be major drivers of migration.

Issues of migration and poverty remain widespread. In the name of development people are dislocated. As a result, they lose their livelihood and end up to live in poverty. *The 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development* defines development as a “constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals.”⁴ However, the poor, the migrants and the indigenous people suffer gravely in the face of technological expansion and resource exploitation where their rights are lost in the drive for development. Our modern economic models heighten exclusion and inequality. Structures and practices that exclude and leave behind members of the human family will always be barriers to full human development.⁵

We need to address the structural causes of inequality which is “the root of social ills.”⁶ Today migration and poverty could be seen

¹Pope Francis’s message to Tony Abbott, prime minister of Australia, the chair of the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the 20 Countries (G - 20) on 11 November 2014.

²Read Castles, Stephen and Mark Miller, *The Age of Migration*, 4th ed., Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

³United Nations, *Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2013 Revision - Migrants by Age and Sex*, United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2013/Age.

⁴Visit the following site for further reading, www.un.org/documents/ga/res/41/a41r128.htm

⁵Holy See Statement to the United Nations at the 69th Session of the General Assembly on the Eradication of Poverty on 23 October 2014.

⁶Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 202.

as “signs of the time” to be interpreted in the light of the Word of God and the Magisterium of the Church. There is a strong linkage between migration and poverty. Both issues are intertwined. The vast majority of them are compelled to migrate due to utter poverty or unemployment or political instability in their homeland. Some migrate looking for better opportunities and searching for a better living, but unfortunately, sometimes, they find themselves in a poverty-stricken situation in the migrated place.

This article focuses on the issues of migration and poverty, viewing them as signs of the time. The first part of the article highlights the issue of migration, while the second part underlines the issue of poverty. And the third part highlights the responses of the Universal Church to these issues of migration and poverty, while the fourth part particularly focuses on the responses of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) to the issues of migration and poverty. The article does make some recommendations, in the light of the social teaching of the Church, in view of creating a better world wherein everyone will feel safe and secure and live peacefully.

1. Migration

Human beings have migrated in search of greater opportunities and a better life from the beginning of humankind. Most migrants want to earn a better living, to live in a more agreeable environment or to join family or friends abroad. “Many, however, do not move of their own free will but are forced to do so — refugees escaping persecution, for instance; people devastated by conflict or natural disasters; or victims of trafficking. But those who willingly choose to migrate are largely driven by the desire for greater happiness, prosperity and well-being.”⁷ Though they struggle to make the transition, they are nevertheless better off than those who stayed at home. Migrants moving between two high-income countries or cities report the most satisfactory experiences. But the unskilled migrants who move to the cities in search of job end up joining the urban poor in course of time due to lack of permanent work or high cost of living in the cities, etc.

Some of the migrants become victims of trafficking, especially children and women.⁸ Pope Francis often terms human trafficking as

⁷World Migration Report 2013, *Migrant: Well-being and Development*, Switzerland: International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2013, 1.

⁸Read Statement of H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, at the 29th Special Session of the General Assembly, on the follow-up of the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. This statement is available in <http://www.holyseemission.org/statements/statement.aspx?id=480>

forms of modern slavery and crimes against humanity and an open wound on the body of our contemporary society. Since it is difficult to eliminate this phenomenon, we need to look at it in the face and concentrate on our efforts to adequately respond to the challenges and risks that it presents.

1.1. Definition of Migration

According to Oxford Dictionary, migration is the movement of people to a new area or country in order to find work or better living conditions. In other words, migration is the process of moving from the use of one operating environment to another operating environment that is, in most cases, is thought to be a better one.

An ILO (International Labour Organization) expert defined migration as a “dramatic sign of our troubled times,” a vast phenomenon which is a structural component of present-day society’s socio-economic and political reality.⁹ More often policy makers and large segments of society see migration only in a negative light. Negative stereotypes of migrants are used to promote policies detrimental to their rights and dignity. There is a tension between Government’s wishes as expressed in the policies and the outcome on the ground. This is a “gap” that has also been observed in international migration policy and is likely to increase in the future.¹⁰

1.2. The Challenges of Migrants

It is true that on the one hand receiving nations draw advantages from employing immigrants for production needs and national prosperity. On the other hand, the nations which migrants leave show a certain reduction in unemployment and benefit from earnings which are then sent back to meet the needs of families. Emigrants, in the end, are able to fulfil the desire for a better future for themselves and their families. Yet we know that some problems also accompany these benefits.¹¹ Below we list a few.

- Migrants often experience disappointment, distress, loneliness and marginalisation.

⁹Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, no. 8.

¹⁰Cornelius, Wayne A. and Takeyuki Tsuda, “Controlling Immigration: The Limits of Government Intervention,” in Wayne A. Cornelius, Takeyuki Tsuda, Philip L. Martin and James E. Hollifield, ed., *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective*, 2nd ed., Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004, 3-48.

¹¹Pope Francis’ Message to participants in the World Congress for the Pastoral Care of Migrants: “Migration is an Aspiration to Hope” on 21 November 2014.

- They find it difficult to settle in urban neighbourhoods which are already problematic.
- They have to deal with the problem of both being uprooted and needing to integrate.
- They find it difficult in integrating and learning to respect the social and cultural conventions of the new places.
- Often they are subjected to “physical, verbal and even sexual abuse” and are obliged to “work long hours, often without the benefits of medical care and the usual forms of social security.”
- The local population may regard them “with suspicion and even consider them a danger and a threat,” often provoking “manifestations of intolerance, xenophobia and racism.”¹²
- In some cases, they are also in perennial danger of becoming victims of human trafficking, which no longer spares even children.
- There are also the problems linked with the increasing “feminization of migration.” Women and girls are increasingly part of the phenomenon and their dignity and rights are not safeguarded.
- Women migrants’ rights, therefore, need to be safeguarded twice: as migrants and as women.
- The financial challenges faced by migrants are likely due to the difficulties in obtaining work or, if employed, obtaining a full-time job.

Most of the times, migrants do not feel safe because the native born residents look at them as a threat to their natural resources, job, culture, etc. Fear and high crime rates prevent a minority of migrants from fully participating socially and economically. The situation of the internal migrants from North-Eastern States in Delhi in India is a noteworthy example. These migrants tend to have fewer social contacts, however, and are less likely to have someone they can count on for help.¹³ However, the situation does seem to improve as the migrants stay longer in their new country.¹⁴

Exclusion from the job market is often accompanied by denial of the entitlements of citizenship. It has been said that in capitalist

¹²Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, no. 6.

¹³World Migration Report 2013, *Migrant: Well-being and Development*, 5. For further readings, visit http://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/What-We-Do/wmr2013/en/WMR2013_Overview_EN_final.pdf

¹⁴World Migration Report 2013, *Migrant: Well-being and Development*, 4.

democracies, class and citizenship have grown hand in hand, the former as a source of inequality and deprivation and the latter as a source of rights and entitlements.¹⁵ Lockwood observes that the growth of citizenship has not followed a smooth and uniform course, and full or substantive citizenship remains an elusive goal. Civic deficit and civic exclusion reinforce both material poverty and a sense of deprivation.¹⁶ As a result people migrate to another place with the hope of getting a full citizenship. Some succeed while others face still a worse situation marked by poverty. Hence let us discuss the issue of poverty which is linked with the problem of migration.

2. Poverty

Although economic growth has been achieved at a high price even in India, issues of migration and poverty remain widespread because there are still many needs to be met as this economic growth has not benefited all sections of the people.¹⁷ Poverty has a strong bond with the migrated people. In the big cities in India the poor people are the migrated ones from the rural areas in search of job and better living conditions.

According to a new Oxford University study, using the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), 645 million people live in poverty in India. The Oxford research found that poverty was more acute in India than in many African countries combined. Poverty in eight Indian states – Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal – exceeded that of the 26 poorest African countries.¹⁸ In contrast, these eight states contain large deposits of mineral resources. Intense exploitation of mineral resources displaces large sections of the poor, tribal population. They are also more vulnerable to environmental change.¹⁹ The linkage between environment and poverty is unavoidable, and that is the real challenge for all of us.

¹⁵See Thomas Humphrey Marshall, *Class, Citizenship and Social Development*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964, 71-134.

¹⁶Refer David Lockwood, "Civic Integration and Class Formation," *British Journal of Sociology* 47, 3 (1996).

¹⁷UNESCAP, *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2010: Sustaining Recovery and Dynamism for Inclusive Development*, Bangkok: United Nations, 2010. Available at: <http://www.unescap.org/survey2010/download/survey2010.pdf>

¹⁸Arun Kumar, *Half of India's Population Lives Below the Poverty Line*. For further reading, <http://www.countercurrents.org/akumar030810.htm> (accessed on 20.11.2014).

¹⁹Read Mary Ann Brocklesby, *Poverty and the Environment: What the Poor Say*, University of Wales Swansea: Centre for Development Studies, 2001.

2.1. Definitions of Poverty

Poverty is not only a descriptive category but also a moral one. As Piachaud writes, "The term 'poverty' carries with it an implication and moral imperative that something should be done about it. Its definition is a value judgment."²⁰ Poverty is not only a state of existence but also a process with many dimensions and complexities. It can be persistent (chronic) or transient.²¹ But transient poverty can trap succeeding generations, if it is acute.²²

We can define, in general terms, poverty as the accumulation of deprivations, in terms of goods, services, and opportunities to participate in the socio-economic and political life. There are many different types of definition, given by different economists and sociologists. To quote one, "Poverty is routinely defined as the lack of what is necessary for material well-being, especially food, but also housing, land, and other assets. In other words, poverty is the lack of multiple resources that leads to hunger and physical deprivations."²³

Sen discusses relative and absolute poverty lines and makes his own criticism.²⁴ For him, poverty is ultimately a matter of capability deprivation.²⁵ People, who are completely dependent upon income from employment, are trapped in the web of poverty because of the lack of employment opportunities. These people are prevented from meeting their own subsistence needs.²⁶

2.2. Unemployment and Poverty

Across all societies, probably the most important type of activity is labour. Therefore people migrate in search of labour. It can be either

²⁰David Piachaud, "Peter Townsend and the Holy Grail," *New Society* 10 (1981) 421. As Piachaud has clearly mentioned, poverty is not simply a category to be described, but a moral one. It invites each one of us to do something about it as a moral obligation. If we realize this moral obligation instilled in us as members of a particular society, we cannot but do something against poverty and make this world a place conducive for all the people to live happily with all the necessary means.

²¹Mahmood Hasan Khan, *Rural Poverty in Developing Countries: Implications for Public Policy*, Washington, D.C.: IMF, 2001, 1.

²²When we say that poverty is 'transient' and 'acute,' it is true in most cases that it is passed on from one generation to the other. Due to poverty sometimes a few families who receive money from the rich family in a community find no other way than becoming bonded labourers to that family. This situation continues from generation to generation.

²³Deepa Narayan and et al., *Can Anyone Hear Us?, Voices of the Poor*, 1, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000, 31.

²⁴See Amartya Sen, "Poor, Relatively Speaking," *Oxford Economic Papers* 35 (1983).

²⁵Amartya Sen, *Commodities and Capabilities*, Amsterdam: 1985, 3.

²⁶John Scott, *Poverty and Wealth: Citizenship, Deprivation, and Privilege*, Longman sociology series, London: Longman, 1994, 5.

manual or mental and takes two forms: paid or unpaid. Paid labour is particularly important because it provides direct access to other intermediate needs such as food, health, education, and so on. According to Freud, paid employment is our most important tie to reality.²⁷ Moore argues that participation in the overall division of labour in one's society is a crucial component in the evaluation of self-worth.²⁸ The unemployed are prevented from meeting their own subsistence needs.²⁹ Hence we could very well ascertain that employment plays a vital role in the economic situation of the families.

2.3. Urban and Rural Poor

Poor people can be divided into two categories:³⁰ The rural poor and the urban poor. The rural poor are those who depend largely on agriculture, fishing, forestry, and related small-scale industries and services. They are not a homogeneous group. They can be classified as cultivators and non-cultivators based on their access to agricultural land. The urban poor are those who have migrated to cities because of the distorted government policies that have penalised the agricultural sector and neglected the rural (social and physical) infrastructure.³¹ Early capitalism paved the way for the creation of slums in the cities. Engels describes in his classic account of mid-19th century England:

²⁷Sigmund Freud, *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey, New York, NY: Norton, 1962, 80.

²⁸Refer Moore Barrington, *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt*, New York: Sharpe, 1978, Chapter 1.

²⁹John Scott, *Poverty and Wealth: Citizenship, Deprivation, and Privilege*, Longman sociology series, London: Longman, 1994, 5.

³⁰Read Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1981; reprint, 2002.

³¹Here it is better that I present to you the case of India. India has millions of poor people; among them the vast majority of them are living in urban cities. They migrate to the cities in search of employment opportunities and end up in a poverty situation because they cannot cope with the urban style of living or they cannot earn money to meet their daily expenses. As a strong step towards poverty reduction the Indian government introduced job opportunities to the poor people in villages in order to stop them migrating towards big cities. On February 2, 2006, the former Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, a well-known economist in India, had introduced the central government policy of 100-day job opportunities in a year to all the villagers. In his inaugural address he said, every person has the right to employment. Right to employment is one of the human rights that India respects. Hence we assure that at least the village people get 100 days of work in a year so that they can lead a decent life in their own villages. For the first time in the history of India this policy had been introduced in 200 districts at the initial stage. Later this policy will be implemented throughout India, with a view to reducing poverty in India.

Every great city has one or more slums, where the working class is crowded together. True, poverty often dwells in hidden alleys close to the palaces of the rich; but, in general, a separate territory has been assigned to it, where, removed from the sight of the happier classes, it may struggle along as it can.³²

Rural and regional communities are generally poorer than metropolitan regions, unemployment often being the cause of financial constraints for many. The European community has been concerned itself with poverty that has social exclusion at its roots. Immigrants, guest workers, and other marginalized groups experience this social exclusion while applying for employment.³³ As said earlier, material poverty and a sense of deprivation are created by civic deficit and civic exclusion.³⁴ Wherever it may be, one cannot deny the fact that poverty is strongly linked with migration.

3. The Response of the Church to the Issues of Migration and Poverty

The Church's maternal attention is manifested always with particular tenderness and closeness to the migrants and the poor. Christian compassion, com-*passion* — "suffering with," — is expressed first of all in the commitment to know the factors or the events that push one to leave one's homeland. The unjust sufferings of the migrants and the poor elicit feelings of compassion from others. The Church gives voice to one who is unable to have one's cry of pain and oppression heard.

In the Old Testament, many prophets have forcefully denounced injustice perpetuated by judges and kings in their oppressions of the poor (Is 1:11, 15, and 17). They insist on Yahweh's defence of the poor who are exploited and oppressed (Am 5:7, 11-15; Jer 5:26-28). They also look up to the Messiah as the just Prince who will administer full justice to the poor (Is 9:7; Jer 23:5). God's compassion (Lk 6:36) through various acts of relief works to the poor (Mt 25: 31-46) is being carried out extensively by the members of the Church all over the world. Our Commitment to the poor arises from our experience of Christ in the Eucharist as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains, "To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognise Christ in the poorest, of his brethren."³⁵

³²Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*, Moscow: Progress Publication, 1973, 62.

³³Warren P. Strobel, "From Poverty to Exclusion," *International Social Science Journal* 145 (1996).

³⁴David Lockwood, "Civic Integration and Class Formation," *British Journal of Sociology* 47, 3 (1996).

³⁵*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1397. Read also Charles Irudayam, "Catholic Social Teaching on Human Right: With a Special Reference to FABC and CBCI," in

The attitude of the Church in relation to migration and poverty has always been one of solicitude. First of all, the Church wishes to be there where the migrants and the poor are, to share with them the joys and the hopes, as well as the grief and the pains of migration.³⁶ Humanitarian aid and solidarity, social action and advocacy, training and Christian formation are all part of the Church's ministry among those involved in human mobility and impoverished by poverty. John Paul II suggests that one needs to join hands with the victims of unjust structures in great solidarity with them. He defines solidarity as "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good."³⁷ The poor are always the travelling companions of an outbound Church, as they are the first she encounters. The poor are also the evangelisers, as they show us those peripheries where the Gospel has yet to be proclaimed and lived.³⁸

Here in this section while acknowledging the commendable responses of the Episcopal Conferences towards these issues of migration and poverty, we limit ourselves only to the responses of the Universal Church under the following five headings:

1. Welcome and Solidarity
2. Advocacy
3. Dialogue
4. Cooperation
5. Pastoral Care

In each section, the first part will be the response of the Church to migration, while the second part will be to poverty.

3.1. Welcome and Solidarity

3.1.1. Issue of Migration

The Church is continuously engaged in welcoming migrants and sharing with them God's gifts, in particular the gift of faith. She seeks to establish a *culture of welcome* in its communities, and shows solidarity with them.³⁹ She offers fraternal assistance and also

Scaria Kanniyakonil, ed., *New Horizons in Christian Ethics: Reflections from India*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation (ATC), 2014, 549-567.

³⁶Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 1.

³⁷John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, nos. 38-40.

³⁸Pope's message to the participants in the 4th Missionary Convention of the Italian Episcopal Conference during his audience in the Paul VI Hall, Vatican on 22 November 2014.

³⁹Read Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, nos. 39-43.

advocates legislation aimed at giving them their due place in society while respecting their identity as foreigners.⁴⁰ Furthermore, it

[The Church] promotes pastoral plans for the evangelisation and support of migrants throughout their journey from their country of origin, through countries of transit, to the receiving countries. She gives particular attention to meeting the spiritual needs of migrants through catechesis, liturgy and the celebration of the Sacraments.⁴¹

In his message for the 100th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, observed on January 19, 2014, Pope Francis urged countries to welcome and respect migrants and refugees and not treat them as “pawns on the chessboard of humanity.” He said:

Migrants present a particular challenge for me, since I am the pastor of a Church without frontiers, a Church which considers herself mother to all. For this reason, I exhort all countries to a generous openness which, rather than fearing the loss of local identity, will prove capable of creating new forms of cultural synthesis. How beautiful are those cities which overcome paralysing mistrust, integrate those who are different and make this very integration a new factor of development.⁴²

Working together, however, requires reciprocity, joint-action, openness and trust, in the knowledge that “no country can singlehandedly face the difficulties associated with this phenomenon, which is now so widespread that it affects every continent in the twofold movement of immigration and emigration.”⁴³

3.1.2. Issue of Poverty

Development cannot be reduced to economic growth alone. It is often attained without a thought for the poor and the vulnerable. “We have to work to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor, as well as small daily acts of solidarity in meeting the real needs which we encounter,” says Pope Francis.⁴⁴ There is no intermediary more powerful than religion (whereof the Church is the interpreter and guardian) in drawing the rich and the working class together, by reminding each of its duties to the other, and especially of the obligation of justice.⁴⁵ In the countries

⁴⁰Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, no. 39.

⁴¹Pope Francis' Message to participants in the World Congress for the Pastoral Care of Migrants: “Migration is an aspiration to hope” on 21 November 2014. To know more about the pastoral plan of the Church for the migrants, read also The Instruction *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, nos. 49-69.

⁴²Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 210.

⁴³Pope Francis, *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2014*.

⁴⁴Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 188.

⁴⁵Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, no. 19.

of the West, different forms of poverty are being experienced by groups which live on the margins of society, by the elderly and the sick, by the victims of consumerism, and even more immediately by so many refugees and migrants.⁴⁶

Pope Leo XIII, in his 1882 encyclical letter to the Bishops of Italy, had asked them to encourage young men and workmen in their mission “to relieve poverty.”⁴⁷ In *Rerum Novarum*, Leo XIII warned that it is no easy matter to define the relative rights and mutual duties of the rich and of the poor, of capital and of labour. He came up with the clearest articulation of the foundational ethical principle for his solution: “Each needs the other; capital cannot do without labor, or labor without capital.”⁴⁸ He proposed that the Church could be of great help in facilitating an enriching interaction between the two. In addition, he pointed out the need of the Church to intervene directly on behalf of the poor through its many associations dedicated to the relief of poverty.⁴⁹

In his address to the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations in Rome on 20 November 2014, Pope Francis sternly warned that, “while we speak of new rights, the hungry remain, at the street corner, and ask to be recognised as citizens, to receive a healthy diet. They ask us for dignity, not for charity.”⁵⁰ The Church seeks always to be attentive and watchful regarding the spiritual and material welfare of the people, especially those who are marginalised or excluded, to ensure their safety and dignity.

3.2. Advocacy

3.2.1. Issue of Migration

The Church seeks to be a source of hope for the migrants. She develops programs of education and orientation. She raises her voice in defence of migrants’ rights. She offers assistance, including material assistance to everyone, without exception, so that all may be treated as children of God.⁵¹

As Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms, “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

⁴⁶John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no. 57.

⁴⁷Refer Leo XIII, *Quod Apostolici Muneris*, no. 16 in Carlen, ed., *The Papal Encyclicals 1947-1981*, 99-100.

⁴⁸Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, no. 19.

⁴⁹Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, no. 29.

⁵⁰Visit for the full text, <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-francis-address-at-the-food-and-agricultural-organization-of-the-united-nations> (Accessed 24-11-2014).

⁵¹Pope Francis, “Migration is an Aspiration to Hope” on 21 November 2014.

When the rights of migrants are trampled on, the Church defends them, sometimes making use also of “advocacy,” because migrants are “often victims of illegal recruitment and of short-term contracts providing poor working and living conditions.”⁵² Second Vatican Council in *Gaudium et Spes*, has played an important role of advocacy insisting on the duties of the public authorities towards migrants in their countries, in the following words:

When workers come from another country or district and contribute to the economic advancement of a nation or region by their labor, all discrimination as regards wages and working conditions must be carefully avoided... public authorities must help them bring their families to live with them and to provide decent dwelling... and incorporated into the social life of the country or region.⁵³

Pope Francis also speaks in favour of the migrants asking the people to embrace with affection and respect Muslim immigrants to our countries. Further he too asks and entreats the nations to grant the migrants freedom to worship and to practice their faith.⁵⁴

3.2.2. Issue of Poverty

Leo XIII insists on the duty of the state to protect the poor.⁵⁵ He proposes to increase property ownership by the working class, along with the role of trade unions, to find solutions for class conflict.⁵⁶ His view includes a prophetic task for the Church to speak out on justice, but the strategy envisioned for change is basically from the top down unlike the more recent — emphasis on change at and from the base (grassroots) level.⁵⁷ John Paul II also holds that the denial of the right to religious freedom, the right to share in the building of society, the freedom to organise and to form unions, or to take initiatives in economic matters do impoverish the human person as much as the deprivation of material goods.⁵⁸

Pope Francis warns about the lack of *solidarity*, which he suspects, is subconsciously a word we want to take “out of the dictionary.” According to him, when there is a lack of solidarity in a country, the effects are felt throughout the world. He urges the states to become aware of their duty towards the poor. Just as human beings become

⁵²Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, no. 6.

⁵³Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 66.

⁵⁴Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 253.

⁵⁵Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, no. 29.

⁵⁶Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, nos. 33, 40.

⁵⁷Dorr, *Option for the Poor*, 18.

⁵⁸John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, nos. 15 and 42.

aware of being partly responsible for the plan of creation, become capable of mutual respect, so the States, “understood as a community of persons and peoples, are required to act concertedly, to be willing to help each other through the principles and norms offered by international law.”⁵⁹

3.3. Dialogue

3.3.1. *Issue of Migration*

The intermingling of cultures, religions and customs caused by migration is an opportunity for mutual enrichment of cultures, but it has also caused tension in the past. Dialogue is the only antidote to this tension at all levels: ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, as well as with those who do not have a religious creed, and intercultural dialogue. Dialogue is a process that leads to the recognition of values that are in common and an attitude of respect for differences without losing one’s own identity.⁶⁰

Certainly, the most common and most direct way of doing dialogue is through that of life, with simple everyday gestures of respect, solidarity, fraternity, love, etc. This can produce an authentic change in interpersonal relationships among migrants and the local residents. Here it is good to recall the words of Paul VI: “For the Catholic Church no one is a stranger, no one is excluded, no one is far away.”⁶¹

3.3.2. *Issue of Poverty*

Pope Leo XIII, in his document on socialism in 1878, ~~he~~ demanded that the rich give their surplus wealth to the poor, as “this is the best method of arranging the old struggle between the rich and poor.”⁶² The task of bettering the world could not be done without sincere and prudent dialogue. Dialogue is “the characteristic mode of the Church’s life in Asia.”⁶³ Hence dialogue with the cultures, the religions and the poor is the best way to create a better society in Asia where everyone’s rights are respected and protected.⁶⁴

⁵⁹Visit for the full text, <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-francis-address-at-the-food-and-agricultural-organization-of-the-united-nations> (Accessed 24-11-2014).

⁶⁰Refer John Paul II, Message for the World Day of Peace 2001, nos. 14ff

⁶¹Paul VI, Homily for the Closing of Vatican Council II, December 8, 1965.

⁶²See Leo XIII, *Quod Apostolici Muneris*, no. 2, 9 in Carlen, ed., *The Papal Encyclicals 1947-1981*, 64.

⁶³John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 3.

⁶⁴Charles Irudayam, “Catholic Social Teaching on Human Right: With a Special Reference to FABC and CBCI,” 549-567, 557.

There is a gap between the ideals, proposals and the praxis, especially regarding interreligious dialogue, inculturation, and the option for the poor.⁶⁵ In 1991 the Theological Consultation admitted:

In many cases the Church fails to raise prophetic voices in matters of injustice because of her minority situation as a community... In short, there is a gap between the vision statements of FABC on the triple dialogue with the poor, with the cultures and with religions and the everyday life of the Churches.⁶⁶

All these dialogues converge in the "*dialogue of life*" because it is in the process of everyday life and in relationship of ordinary persons, can real dialogue happen.

3.4. Cooperation

3.4.1. Issue of Migration

Migration affects everyone because of the social, economic, political, cultural and religious problems it raises.⁶⁷ Since migration affects everyone and raises dramatic challenges to nations and the international community, it demands a systematic and active cooperation between States and international organizations. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, sketching the parameters for policies to protect migrants, stated that there should be a close collaboration between the migrants' countries of origin and their countries of destination. This kind of collaboration could be accompanied by adequate international norms that can coordinate different legislative systems with a view to safeguarding the needs and rights of individual migrants and their families, and at the same time, those of the host countries.⁶⁸ In this connection, what Pope Francis states is significant:

It is necessary to respond to the globalization of migration with the globalization of charity and cooperation, in such a way as to make the conditions of migrants more humane. At the same time, greater efforts are needed to guarantee the easing of conditions, often brought about by war or famine, which compel whole peoples to leave their native countries.⁶⁹

⁶⁵Marcello Zago, "The First Missiological Congress in Asia," *Omnis Terra* 14 (1980) 109, 262.

⁶⁶Refer FABC, *Conclusions of Theological Consultations* (CTC), no. 15.

⁶⁷Refer Statement of H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations at the Second Committee of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Agenda Item 21: Globalization and Interdependence.

⁶⁸Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 62.

⁶⁹Refer Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 2015 World Day of Migrants and Refugees. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20140903_world-migrants-day-2015.html

In many cases, the Church continues to grow and is visible and alive because of the presence of migrants. The presence of Asian Christian migrants in Europe is a case in point. It serves to recall the following words of St John Paul II:

Migrations offer individual local Churches the opportunity to verify their catholicity, which consists not only in welcoming different ethnic groups, but above all in creating communion with them and among them. Ethnic and cultural pluralism in the Church is not just something to be tolerated because it is transitory, it is a structural dimension. The unity of the Church is not given by a common origin and language but by the Spirit of Pentecost which, bringing together men and women of different languages and nations in one people, confers on them all faith in the same Lord and the calling to the same hope.⁷⁰

In his message for the 2015 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis states, "Migration movements call us to deepen and strengthen the values needed to guarantee peaceful coexistence between persons and cultures."⁷¹ Further he added, "Solidarity with migrants and refugees must be accompanied by the courage and creativity necessary to develop, on a world-wide level, a more just and equitable financial and economic order, as well as an increasing commitment to peace, the indispensable condition for all authentic progress."⁷²

3.4.2. Issue of Poverty

John XXIII, in *Pacem in Terris*, invites the powerful to pay more attention to the weaker members of society, since these are at a disadvantage when it comes to defending their own rights and asserting their legitimate interests.⁷³ Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio* appeals to the rich nations to meet their moral obligation and their duty of solidarity to poor nations and exhorts them to maintain solidarity, social justice and charity as values at the centre of human life.⁷⁴ John Paul II also invites the whole Church to "the option or love of preference for the poor."⁷⁵ Solidarity with the oppressed poor on the

⁷⁰Refer John Paul II, Message for World Migration Day, 1988.

⁷¹Read Pope Francis' Message for 2015 World Day of Migrants and Refugees. <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-francis-message-for-2015-world-day-of-migrants-and-refugees>

⁷²Read Pope Francis' Message for 2015 World Day of Migrants and Refugees. <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-francis-message-for-2015-world-day-of-migrants-and-refugees>

⁷³John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, no. 56.

⁷⁴Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio*, no. 22.

⁷⁵John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 42.

one hand and confrontation with the oppressors and perpetrators of structural evil on the other hand form two essential inseparable dimensions of holistic, integrated, Christian Spirituality.⁷⁶

Calling on the G20 to seek improvements in the living conditions of the world's poorest people, in a letter to Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott, Pope Francis suggested that any assessment of the G20 meetings should not just consider "global indices" but should also lead to eliminating the root causes of terrorism, which has reached proportions hitherto unimaginable; these include poverty, underdevelopment and exclusion."⁷⁷

"Feed the hungry to save life on the planet," was Pope Francis' appeal during his visit, to the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome. The Pope's visit coincided with the Second International Conference on Nutrition, which was attended by representatives of 170 countries from around the world.

3.5. Pastoral Care

3.5.1. Issue of Migration

Pastoral care is provided to all the *faithful migrants* by priests or other pastoral agents of the same cultural background. This cultural and linguistic proximity is of great importance in helping them live and grow in the faith in the destination or host country. Such initiatives will help migrants and refugees become part and parcel of the local Church. Worthy of special mention is the practice of chaplaincy and its pastoral activities both within and outside the country. Pastoral workers play an important role through welcoming and assisting migrants, offering them legal aid, mediating and initiating dialogue with the local population.

On 16 November 2014, after the Angelus prayer, Pope Francis, while speaking about the recent tensions that emerged between residents and immigrants in various areas of Rome, invited "all institutions, at all levels, to consider as a priority what now constitutes a social emergency and which, if not faced as soon as possible and in an appropriate manner, risks degenerating further."⁷⁸ He insisted that it is always possible to engage in dialogue, to listen, to plan together and, in this way, overcome suspicion and prejudice, and to build a safer, more peaceful and inclusive co-existence.

⁷⁶Refer Scaria Kuthirakkattel, ed., *Biblical Spirituality of Libertine Action*, in the Collected Writings of George M. Soares-Prabhu, Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, 2003, Vol. 3, 25.

⁷⁷<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-30015523>

⁷⁸Read Pope Francis, *Immigrants and Citizens: Do not Yield to the Temptation of Confrontation*, in Vatican Information Service, Year XXII – No. 202, dated 17.11.2014.

3.5.2. Issue of Poverty

In an important message in preparation for the opening of Vatican II, John XXIII opened up a fertile perspective stating that the Church presents herself as she is and as she wants to be — as the Church of all people, especially the Church of the poor.⁷⁹ His perspective is endorsed by Vatican II as it states:

... Whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury.⁸⁰

Later Paul VI made it more concrete and clear with regard to various questions related to poverty⁸¹ and notes that no one can be ignorant any longer of the fact that in whole continents countless men and women are ravished by hunger, countless numbers of children are undernourished, so that many of them die in infancy, while the physical growth and mental development of many others are retarded and as a result whole regions are condemned to the most depressing despondency.⁸²

4. The Response of FABC to the Issues of Migration and Poverty

4.1. Issue of Migration

Migration is a major social phenomenon in Asia, exposing millions of people to situations which are difficult economically, culturally and morally. People migrate within Asia and from Asia to other continents for many reasons, among them poverty, war and ethnic conflicts, the denial of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.⁸³ The nine largest Asian migrant sending countries are the Philippines, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, Thailand, China, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. They contribute between one-half and two-thirds of all legal immigrants and refugees to the international migration stream. In her love for the poor of Asia, the Church concerns herself especially with migrants, since they are often the victims of the worst forms of exploitation.⁸⁴

⁷⁹John XXIII's Radio Message of September 11, 1962, in *The Pope Speaks* 8/4, 1963, 396.

⁸⁰Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 27.

⁸¹Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, no. 9.

⁸²Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, no. 45.

⁸³John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 7.

⁸⁴John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 34.

The FABC – Office of Human Development and International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) jointly organised a two-day conference in Bangkok, Thailand, during 10-11 October 2011, in view of addressing the challenges of the migrants of Asia.⁸⁵ It came out with the following Action Plan to address problems of migrant labour:

1. Protecting migrant workers in the existing gaps (Human Rights and Reforms, educations, health, social welfare), informing and alerting bishops' Conferences and providing them with guidelines on this protection
2. Bridging the socio/cultural/legal gaps between sending and receiving countries
3. Playing a mediating role and engaging in social advocacy
4. Developing pre-departure and post-arrival guidance/assistance
5. Becoming more pro-active in labour migration in terms of social analysis, strategies, planning and implementation
6. Preventing victimisation of migrant workers in Asia by organising some structures in deployment and employment
7. Promoting for the ratification of international conventions and other Human Rights instruments related to migrants

4.2. Issue of Poverty

Since their first meeting in Manila, the Asian bishops are aware of the necessity of being part of the historical movements on the continent and to be at the service of the aspirations of the poor and the oppressed.⁸⁶ For FABC, the Kingdom of God "confronts the forces of injustice, violence, and oppression," all of which represent "structures of sin."⁸⁷ The Kingdom of God upholds "the preferential option for the poor, since they are the victims of these structures."⁸⁸ During the seventh meeting of Bishops' Institute for Social Action (BISA),⁸⁹ the participants felt the need to form a collegial structure in order to serve the cause of the poor at a global level. They expressed:

⁸⁵The executive summary of the conference is available as a pdf at www.pcmigrants.org/Executive_Summary-OHD-ICMC.pdf

⁸⁶Refer Asian Bishops Meeting, nos. 2, 3, 14, 16, 19, 27, and 28. Refer also Anthony Rogers, "Integral Human Development and Justice for Peace at the Service of Life in the Context of Asia. Sixth Plenary Assembly: Working Discussion Guide," *FABC Papers* 72m (1995) 3; A.J.V. Chandrakanthan, "Asian Bishops' Approaches to Evangelization. A Theological Evaluation and Critique of the Statements of the Plenary Assemblies of the FABC (1970-1983)," *Indian Missiological Review* 9, 2 (1987) 112-113.

⁸⁷Refer BIRA IV/10, no. 8.

⁸⁸Refer BIRA IV/10, no. 8.

⁸⁹BISA (Bishops' Institute for Social Action) is the first institute organised by the OHD (Office of Human Development) of FABC in 1974 itself. The Theme of BISA VII

The second hope for the future of BISA VII is the strengthening of the collegial bonds among bishops and bishops' conferences all over the world for greater solidarity with the poor of Asia. We need to seriously consider a structure and a method by which the collegiality of bishops, not only from Asia, but from all over the world, may be made effective on behalf of the struggling poor. We need a structure and a method of collegiality of bishops for solidarity with the poor.⁹⁰

The joys and sorrows of a journeying people, their hopes and aspiration for a new and fuller life, their victories and struggles against different dehumanising powers, their varied resources as well as their weaknesses — all these realities were discerned as contexts, opportunities and challenges to be committed to the concerns of the Asian Churches.⁹¹

Felix Wilfred, a well known Asian theologian, notes, "Jesus is relevant to Asia, not because the bulk of the Asian masses are *non-Christians*, but because they are *poor*."⁹² While commenting on FABC V Plenary Assembly's statements, he says:

In seeking to respond to the challenges of the Asian context, the kingdom of God becomes, in the thought of the bishops, a focal point. It offers the most suitable framework for making sense of their two major experiences, which are also their chief concerns: the religious and cultural plurality of the Asian peoples, and the prevalence of massive poverty.⁹³

Therefore we conclude that the idea of the Church of the poor dominates very much the ecclesiological reflection and the pastoral concern of the bishops in the history of FABC.⁹⁴ Since their first meeting in the Philippines, the Asian bishops have chosen to side with the multitudes and to become integrated into the life of the continent. "Since millions in Asia are poor," the Church in Asia would have to be "the Church of the poor."⁹⁵

is: Asia's Religio-Cultural Heritage and Human Development. BISA II had already discussed on the theme: Social Dimension of the Church: Oppressed People and the Role of the Church.

⁹⁰BISA VII, no.21.

⁹¹Theological Advisory Commission, "Theology at the Service of Life in Asia," *Weltkirche* 4 (1994) 128.

⁹²Felix Wilfred, "Images of Jesus in the Asian Pastoral Context: An Interpretation of Documents from the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences," *Concilium* 2 (1993) 52.

⁹³Wilfred, "Images of Jesus in the Asian Pastoral Context," 53.

⁹⁴Refer International Congress on Mission – Consensus Paper of the Workshop (ICM/CPW) IV, nos. 5-6; BISA VI, no. 8; BISA VII, no. 1.

⁹⁵FABC I – Briefer Statement of the Assembly, no. 18.

5. Conclusion

Any debate on poverty eradication has to pay attention to the entire socio-political, economic and cultural aspects in its totality. Any discussion on development needs to take into account certain basic questions. What is development? Development is by whom, for whom, at what cost? Who determines the parameters of development? Who form the policies? What is their intension? What is the effect of those policies aimed towards migrants and the poor?

As Pope Francis pointed out, natural Law speaks a language that all can understand: love, justice, peace, elements that are inseparable from one another. Hence States and international institutions “are called to welcome and nurture these values — love, justice, peace — and this must be done with a spirit of dialogue and mutual listening.”⁹⁶ Let each one of us also seek to enhance our indispensable contribution to the building of a more just and fraternal society where the rights and interests of all including the migrants and the poor are addressed, since “the earth is our common home and all of us are brothers and sisters.”⁹⁷

Over and above all other considerations, it is necessary always to see the migrant as a fellow human being, endowed with the same human dignity and rights as ourselves. It is only then that we can respond to the globalisation of migration with the globalisation of solidarity and cooperation. The need of the hour is to humanize the process of globalisation wherein the dignity of the human person is respected; the common good is treated as gifts of God meant for all; the principle of subsidiarity is followed; and above all solidarity with the migrants is accompanied by efforts towards bringing justice to the poor and marginalised and peace in conflict-ridden regions and a more equitable economic world order.⁹⁸

⁹⁶For full text, visit <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-francis-address-at-the-food-and-agricultural-organization-of-the-united-nations> (accessed 24-11-2014).

⁹⁷Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 183

⁹⁸<http://www.holyseemission.org/statements/statement.aspx?id=512>