

FR. TADEUSZ BORUTKA
Department of Sociology of Religion
Pontifical University of John Paul II

THE ISSUE OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN THE LIGHT OF THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EVENTS OF 2015

Migration accompanies man from the very beginning. Nomadic way of life was associated with the conditions of the geographical environment. Survival depended on acquiring food, therefore, mobility of people grew steadily along with the development of transport. As a result, more and more people began to reach further and further areas¹. This resulted not only in improving life conditions, but also in opening to other cultural values.

A two thousand year history of the Church provides many depictions of migrating people. There also survived many interesting statements on this important social issue. Until now, the largest migration took place in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages (from the fourth to the sixth century). “This process radically changed the character of the European continent, it led to ethnic changes over large areas, marked the end of antiquity and brought about the fall of the Empire”².

In the last century, migration became a widespread phenomenon and now it encompasses all countries, including the countries of origin, transit and destination. It is becoming a big social problem which poses a particular challenge for politicians and economists, sociologists and demographers. Migration affects millions of people and it also constitutes a problem which must be faced and dealt with in the spirit of evangelical love by the Church which serves all humanity.

In the past year, 2015, migration increased on an unimaginable scale. Today, Europe faces an invasion of hundreds of thousands people from a different cultural and religious background. According to estimates by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), since the end of August 2015 more

¹ Conf. A. Drela, *Migracje na świecie*, <http://www.geografia24.eu/geo_prezentacje_podst/370_2_ludnosc_i_urbanizacja/104a_druk.pdf>, (accessed on: 10.01.2016).

² *Wielka wędrówka ludów*, <https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wielka_w%C4%99dr%C3%B3wka_lud%C3%B3w>, (accessed on: 10.01.2016).

than 300,000 people from Africa and the Middle East have reached the shores of Europe. Among those, nearly 200,000 followed the route from Turkey to Greece and 110,000 the route from Libya to Italy. Many people who arrive in Italy, come through Austria or France to Germany. On the other hand, those from Greece travel to Germany through Macedonia and Serbia and then through Hungary and Austria. This route is also followed by inhabitants of the Western Balkans (42 per cent of asylum applications in Germany since 2015)³.

The refugees consist of Syrians and Iraqis, but also Eritreans, citizens of Nigeria, Sudan or Gambia. Many of them flee due to war in their country, but there is also a group of economic migrants. It should be noted that in order to finance a trip many people run into debt borrowing money from relatives or friends. Not everyone manages to reach the European continent in safety, some die on the way. Many Syrian refugees are staying in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, where they have earlier found shelter fleeing from war which engulfed their homeland. Among refugees from that country, whose number exceeds 4 million, more than 1.9 million took refuge in Turkey, 1.1 million live in Lebanon, 630,000 in Jordan and 250,000 in Iraq. Since the outbreak of the conflict in Syria in 2011 to July 2015, Europe accepted 348.5 thousand asylum applications submitted by Syrians.

However, up to 80 percent of refugees rather than coming to developed countries in Europe or North America, arrive in developing countries which often do not have the resources to maintain refugee camps. For many migrants, this implies the need to remain for several years in the camps, in difficult conditions, with no prospects for changing their situation and having no guarantee that all human rights will be respected there.

According to UNHCR, 75 percent of people who reached the EU via the Mediterranean Sea this year are men, while women constitute 2 per cent, children - 13 percent. On the Balkan route, that is, the one starting in Greece, men constitute 69 percent of migrants, women - 12 percent, children - 19 percent. However, in Turkey, which is a direct neighbor of Syria, the number of arriving men and women is equal. This suggests that the longer way to the EU is undertaken by stronger men, while some of them are thinking about bringing later their families whom they often do not leave in Syria, but in Turkey. In addition, cultural barriers make it difficult for young women (and their families) to decide on undertaking a solitary trip to the north.

According to the International Organization for Migration, approximately 2.5 thousand people have drowned in the Mediterranean since the beginning of 2015. In April 2015, the EU increased funding for patrols in this area and it has become a little safer, but tragedies still continue to happen. This exodus has not finished yet, but it constantly continues and even intensifies. It is estimated that

³ Conf. *Co powinniśmy wiedzieć o uchodźcach [15 WAŻNYCH PYTAŃ]*, <<http://wyborcza.pl/1,75477,18731087,co-powinnismy-wiedziec-o-uchodzcach.html#ixzz3wZaPL8nR>>, (accessed on: 10.01.2016).

approximately one million people, or possibly even two, will come to Europe in 2016. Europe seems to be at a loss with respect to the ways in which it should deal with that phenomenon in a sensible way. It appears, that European countries will not be able to handle the problem by themselves and that the whole world must involve in providing a solution to it.

The incidents that took place on the New Year's Eve of 2015 in some cities in Germany, but also in Austria, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland (according to the media report, there were hundreds of cases when groups of young men attacked women), shocked the public opinion in and beyond Germany, the more so that for a few days the police and other law enforcement agencies as well as the media concealed the fact from the public. Women were fleeing through the streets in city centers, near the train station and the cathedral, while the assailants molested, insulted and, finally, robbed them.

All this raises legitimate concerns and even righteous anger. It also gives rise to specific questions that demand right answers. In order to provide those answers, it is necessary to refer to the teaching of the Church.

1. TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

Among the effects of modern transformations, the increasing phenomenon of migrations is perceived by the Church as a "sign of the times", as Pope Benedict XVI defined it⁴. It is because, on the one hand, migration often points to the shortcomings and weaknesses of countries and of the international community, however, on the other hand, it reflects the mankind's desire to live in unity and to have respect for differences. Openness and hospitality allow for equitable distribution of goods of the earth, protection and strengthening of human dignity and ensure every human being a central place in society⁵.

"I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt 25:35). With these words Jesus Christ calls each of us to come to the aid of refugees, He calls for Christian hospitality, especially at this time when so many people experience the drama of war, are in danger of losing their lives, suffer from cold and hunger, and fear for their future or the future of their relatives.

The situation of refugees is dramatic. Pope Francis referred to it in the following words: "Refugees, [...] are often deprived, sometimes for a long time, of basic goods: decent housing, health care, education, jobs. They had to abandon not only material goods but, above all, the freedom, the closeness of family members, their living environment and cultural traditions. The degrading conditions in which

⁴ Conf. Benedykt XVI, *Migracja znakiem czasu. Orędzie na Światowy Dzień Migranta i Uchodźcy 2006*, L'Osservatore Romano (Polish edition) 27(2006)1, p. 4.

⁵ Conf. Franciszek, *Migranci i uchodźcy: ku lepszemu światu. Orędzie na Światowy Dzień Migranta i Uchodźcy 2014*, L'Osservatore Romano (Polish edition) 34(2014)10, p. 5.

many refugees have to live, are unbearable! Therefore, you need to undertake all the trouble to remove the causes of this situation”⁶.

First of all, it is necessary to undertake far-sighted actions aimed at “eliminating the reasons why entire communities, forced by war and poverty, leave their native land”⁷. The main efforts of the world should be directed at resolving the conflicts due to which people are forced to flee from their own countries. Therefore, it is necessary to help those who suffer from wars in their countries of origin. It is imperative to spare no efforts to remedy that situation at root. What is indispensable, is greater international cooperation in an attempt at settling the conflicts that cause bloodshed and eliminating other causes inducing people to leave their homeland. Efforts should be made to provide people with conditions allowing them to remain in their own country, or if they have already left, to return to it.

From the very beginning, the Church cares for migrants and refugees. Pope Francis in his *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2015* wrote that “The mission of the Church, which is a pilgrim on the earth and the mother of all, is, therefore, to love Jesus Christ, to worship Him and to love Him especially in the poorest and abandoned people; these undoubtedly include migrants and refugees”⁸. The Pope explains: “The Church without borders, the mother of all, spreads in the world the culture of acceptance and solidarity according to which no one can be regarded as unnecessary, as a misplaced person only to be rejected. If the Christian community really carries out its mission of motherhood, it strengthens, directs and leads the way, patiently accompanies its members and becomes close by prayer and works of charity”⁹.

Currently, the issue of helping migrants and refugees is of particular significance. In recent times, as has already been mentioned, more and more people are leaving their native lands and undertake a perilous journey in search of more humane living conditions. Not infrequently, however, the phenomenon of migration arouses mistrust and hostility, even in ecclesial communities. We must remember that believers are bound by the commandment of love that Jesus left us. He Himself identified with a stranger coming among us, with a suffering man, with all the innocent victims of violence and exploitation¹⁰.

On the other hand, due to the weakness of human nature, “we experience the temptation of being Christians, while maintaining a prudent distance in relation to the wounds of the Lord”¹¹. It is, therefore, necessary to recognize Him in migrants and refugees, in the displaced and in the fugitives. In this way, Christ also calls to

⁶ Franciszek, *Kościół was wspiera*, <<http://www.idziemy.com.pl/spoleczenstwo/papiez-domlodych-uchodzcow-kosciol-was-wspiera>>, (accessed on: 09.01.2015).

⁷ Franciszek, *Kościół bez granic matką wszystkich. Orędzie na Światowy Dzień Migranta i Uchodźcy 2015*, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Polish edition) 35(2014)10, p. 4.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ *Conf. ibidem*.

¹¹ Franciszek, *Adhortacja apostołska „Evangelii gaudium”* (24 November 2013), No. 270.

share resources, sometimes giving up part of our own goods. It was reminded by Paul VI who stated that “the most privileged should give up some of their rights, so that they could with greater freedom give their goods to the service of others”¹².

The Church obliges believers to undertake new actions in the scope of solidarity, unity and evangelization. In fact, migrations demand a reaction on the part of all, not only because of the extent of this phenomenon, but also “because of social, economic, political, cultural and religious problems it raises, due to the dramatic challenges it poses both to national and to the international community”¹³.

Accepting forced migrants is an expression of solidarity and respect for human rights and human dignity. Therefore, migrants and refugees need special pastoral care on the part of the ecclesial community. The calling of the Church is to show hospitality to migrants and to serve them. The Church should work harder, be more alert, it should implement all relevant initiatives with great judiciousness and sensitivity. Migrants and refugees should not retreat into themselves and become isolated from pastoral life of dioceses and parishes that welcome them. The Church tries to incorporate migrants into their community, recognizing the value of their differences.

However, common work requires mutual and harmonious assistance of countries, provided readily and confidently, because it is well known that “no country can alone face the difficulties associated with this phenomenon, which is so vast that both immigration and emigration movements can already be observed on all continents”¹⁴. The phenomenon of migration globalization needs to be responded with globalization of love and cooperation in order to create more humane conditions for migrants.

At the same time, efforts should be intensified in order to gradually eliminate the causes that induce entire communities to flee from their native lands, forced by war and poverty, while often the first is the cause of the other¹⁵. This action for migrants and refugees undoubtedly requires courage and creativity; it is necessary to propagate worldwide a more just and sustainable economic and financial order, as well as increase efforts for peace, which is a prerequisite for any genuine progress¹⁶. Pope Francis in the *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2015*, clearly stated that: “Migration flows have gained, after all, so great a size that only systematic and specific cooperation, joined by states and international organizations, may effectively regulate and direct them”¹⁷.

¹² Paweł VI, *List apostolski „Octogesima adveniens”* (14 May 1971), No. 23.

¹³ Benedykt XVI, *Encyklika „Caritas in veritate” o integralnym rozwoju ludzkim w miłości i w prawdzie* (29 June 2009), No. 62.

¹⁴ Franciszek, *Migranci i uchodźcy: ku lepszemu światu*, p. 5.

¹⁵ Conf. Franciszek, *Kościół bez granic matką wszystkich*, p. 4.

¹⁶ Conf. *ibidem*.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

2. SOME INDICATIONS

As moral theology teaches, providing help must conform to *ordo caritatis* (the order of merciful love). The following part will present the assumptions of this order.

In the case of a need of the same rank, priority should be given to the closest people, for example the Poles living in Donbas and Mariupol, because their life is also threatened. Scripture says: "So, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, and especially to our brothers in the faith" (Gal 6:10). "And if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for family members, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5.8). However, in the situation of diverse needs, if the needs of relatives consist in, for example, the needs of growth and the needs of others are the needs of existence, priority must be given to the latter, since the needs of existence are more important than the needs of growth.

It should be noted that Syrians or Iraqis, while they are accommodated in areas where there is no fighting (Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan), can be called refugees of war, but when they leave this place of safety, they cease to be refugees of war and become emigrants. Consequently, they should be assisted in the place of the first dislocation. It is, therefore, necessary to ask why they should be helped in the place of first dislocation.

In the first place, when the fighting ceases, refugees will be closer to their place of origin and, thus, it will be easier for them to return home. Moreover, countries where they stay are culturally and religiously closer to the ones they come from, so there is no danger of cultural eradication and social alienation and they remain in the sphere of the same or a related language. Finally, the standard of living in these countries is similar to their previous one. In Europe, on seeing higher standard of living, they formulate social claims or take the way of offense to ensure themselves similar conditions.

Discriminatory and imperious attitudes of men to women, including European women, are, unfortunately, motivated by Koran and they are difficult to eradicate. For the Europeans, such behavior is incompatible with applicable laws and centuries-old tradition. Past experience shows that due to fertility of these families, newcomers quickly begin to predominate in the local European communities and try to establish the Sharia law in the new places of their residence. Security must not be guaranteed to newcomers in Europe (especially when there is no danger of loss of life) at the cost of depriving our own people of the sense of security. The past experience shows that among refugees there are also (although, fortunately, occasionally) terrorists, as evidenced by last year's bombings in Paris.

There are also other, additional difficulties associated with admission of immigrants to Europe. They will be briefly presented below.

The majority of refugees are young men, which bids us to perceive this type of newcomers as economic migrants rather than refugees of war. Some of them cannot be identified, because they either do not have any documents, or have inten-

tionally destroyed them, while others have false documents. Even if the documents are valid, they are essentially unverifiable in war-torn countries.

Limited distribution of refugees is unrealistic, because they want to settle in developed countries (Germany, Scandinavian countries, countries with the highest level of social assistance) and, if they were settled somewhere else, it would be necessary to keep watch over them, limiting their personal freedom in order to prevent their escaping from those places as was the case with Syrians in Poland. Immigrants often try to live in the former colonial countries (France, England, Holland, Belgium, Germany), reckoning that since they were once exploited, they are now entitled to some compensation.

These people are reluctant to assimilate and tend to create a kind of ghettos: whoever enters their territory is treated like an intruder towards whom they adopt an aggressive attitude. It must be remembered, that they behave in a different way when they are in the minority, and in a different way, when they constitute the majority. Islam is incompatible with democracy. These are two totally distinct phenomena, distinct ways of thinking and perceiving the world.

Western, highly industrialized countries lead in this regard specific policies of segregation and do it under the banner of humanitarianism. It might be assumed, however, that they will choose for settlement in their country qualified and prospective personnel, necessary for further development of their economy and the rest will subsequently be allocated to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

In ordinary situations, assistance should be provided according to the “see – judge – act” principle. However, the situation referred to in this article, should be treated as *casi urgenti* (cases of urgency), which requires applying the “action – reflection – operation” principle, where reflection should be understood as verification of the ethical character and effectiveness of ongoing activities and possible modification of undertaken actions.

What immediate steps should, therefore, be taken in the current situation? The reason for such mass migration can be brought down to two factors: the ongoing war and, which obviously no longer raises any doubt, the fact that, to a large extent, it is also a controlled process.

To weaken the migratory movement, it is necessary to undertake actions to resolve the conflict and determine who inspires migration (today, it is a profitable business for many people). This is a task for international organizations (United Nations, European Union) as well as for such states as the US, Russia, China, Britain, France and the countries of the region.

Without tackling the reasons, it will not be possible to solve the problem, because countries in the Middle East, Asia and Africa are overcrowded and poor (there are only few beneficiaries of oil use, corruption is rife on the government level), therefore, the process of changing the living conditions of vast sections of the population in these countries will grow till it becomes unsolvable. The only ethical, solidarity solution must consist in eliminating developmental disparities between the rich North and the poor South.

3. CONCLUSION

Migration is becoming an increasingly complex problem, which encompasses almost the whole modern world. It is necessary to face it and try to find a suitable, ethical solution to that issue. Many countries are in a state of war which is taking its toll rising to hundreds and thousands of innocent people. It condemns them to escape to countries where there is relative peace. Unfortunately, almost all over the world there appears a disturbing tendency to close the borders and control them in a very rigorous way. In this context, both migrants and refugees encounter increasing difficulties.

The problem of migration should be seen also in the context of contemporary economic systems: on the one hand, they produce unemployment in the industrialized countries, especially among the unskilled and, on the other, they bring countries which are on the path to development rather fictitious than real benefits. In this context, migration is currently losing its historical value of being an incentive to development.

As a social problem, migration constitutes also a pastoral challenge for the Church. This fact should encourage reflection among the Christian community and prompt it to undertake deliberate, purposeful actions. These issue cannot be delayed. A great role in helping migrants can be played by parishes which, undoubtedly, are places where Christian evangelical solidarity towards migrants should not only be present in thought and prayer, but also concretely implemented in everyday life. Mindful of the *ordo caritatis*, one must not forget the need to ensure order in one's own home to host visitors, in order to prevent a situation in which guests should dominate their hosts and bring them to incapacitation.

THE ISSUE OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN THE LIGHT OF THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EVENTS OF 2015

Summary

In the past century, migration has become a widespread phenomenon that has an impact on the countries of origin, as well as on the countries of transit and destination. It is becoming a huge social problem and a particular challenge for politicians, economists, sociologists and demographers. Migration affects millions of people. It is also a problem for the Church, which serves all humanity, and which must cope with and meet all its demands in an evangelical spirit of love.

The unprecedented migration of the past year has reached dimensions previously unimaginable. Currently, we are dealing with an influx of hundreds of thousands of people from very different cultural and religious backgrounds. The migration represents an ethical and social issue as well as a pastoral challenge for the Church. This fact should encourage the Christian community to reflect on and undertake well-conceived and targeted actions. We cannot put off these issues until tomorrow.

The Church urges the faithful to stand in solidarity with the refugees. First of all, we need long-range actions aimed at eliminating the reasons of that phenomenon. It is necessary to make an effort to remove the causes of this situation. What is needed is greater international cooperation to resolve

the conflicts that caused bloodshed and diminish other causes that motivated people to leave their homes. Efforts are needed to promote conditions that would allow them to remain in their homeland or, if they have already left it, to encourage them to return to it.

Keywords: the Church, social teaching of the Church, refugees, migrants, *ordo caritatis*, *dig-nity*, *human rights*, *duties*, *threat to life*, *solidarity*

Note about the Author: Fr. Prof. Tadeusz Borutka, priest of the Diocese of Bielsko-Żywiec, lecturer of Catholic social science and sociology of religion at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow. At the same time he is head of the Department of Sociology of Religion at the Faculty of Social Sciences. He serves as a diocesan assistant of the Catholic Action and a diocesan pastor of lawyers. Author and reviewer of numerous books and articles, he supervised and reviewed numerous Master's and Bachelor's (*Sacrae Theologiae Licentiatus*) theses as well as doctorates and habilitations.

PROBLEMATYKA MIGRANTÓW I UCHODźCÓW W ŚWIETLE SPOŁECZNEGO NAUCZANIA KOŚCIOŁA W KONTEKŚCIE WYDARZEŃ ROKU 2015

Abstrakt

W minionym wieku migracje stały się szeroko rozpowszechnionym zjawiskiem, które ma wpływ zarówno na kraj pochodzenia, jak również na kraje tranzytowe i docelowe migracji. Staje się to ogromnym problemem i szczególnym wyzwaniem dla polityków, ekonomistów, socjologów i demografów. Problem migracji dotyka milionów ludzi. Jest ona też problemem dla Kościoła, który służy całej ludzkości, i który musi sobie z nią radzić i wychodzić naprzeciw jej wymaganiom w duchu ewangelicznej miłości.

Bezprecedensowa zeszłoroczna migracja osiągnęła niewyobrażalne wcześniej rozmiary. Obecnie mamy do czynienia z napływem setek tysięcy ludzi pochodzących z zupełnie odmiennych kontekstów kulturowych i religijnych. Migracja jest problemem etycznym i społecznym, a także wyzwaniem duszpasterskim dla Kościoła. Ten fakt powinien zachęcić wspólnotę chrześcijańską do refleksji i przedsięwzięcia dobrze przemyślanych i celowych działań. Nie możemy odkładać tych spraw na jutro.

Kościół zachęca wiernych to solidarności z uchodźcami. W pierwszym rzędzie należy podjąć długofalowe działania eliminujące przyczyny migracji. Wymaga to pewnego wysiłku. W tym celu konieczna jest większa współpraca międzynarodowa, aby rozwiązać konflikty powodujące rozlew krwi i zmniejszyć inne przyczyny skłaniające ludzi do porzucenia swojej ojczyzny. Konieczne są wysiłki ukierunkowane na promocję takich warunków, które pozwolą im na pozostanie w ojczyźnie albo – w przypadku gdy już ją opuścili – zachęcą do powrotu.

Słowa kluczowe: Kościół, społeczne nauczanie Kościoła, uchodźcy, migranci, *ordo caritatis*, godność osoby, prawa człowieka, obowiązki, zagrożenia życia, solidarność