



MISSION PERMANENTE
DU SAINT-SIÈGE

AUPRÈS DE L'OFFICE DES NATIONS UNIES
ET DES ORGANISATIONS INTERNATIONALES

Dear Friends,

Geneva, 8 July 2013

The Permanent Mission of the Holy See in Geneva, Caritas Internationalis, the International Catholic Migration Commission, and Jesuit Refugee Service jointly present for your consideration and action the attached document "Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders."

The document was prepared by an inter-religious group, convened by the High Commissioner for Refugees at the conclusion of his Dialogue on Faith and Protection in December 2012. The drafting group was asked to reflect on common principles, shared among religious traditions, which foster the protection, nurturing, and acceptance of persons who have been forcibly displaced. A more detailed description of the process and participants can be found in the final 2 paragraphs of the document in the section entitled "background."

The resulting document consists of 16 pledges to be made by Leaders of Faith Communities regarding the duty of their respective religious traditions to welcome the stranger. The second section of the document constitutes a brief listing of religious principles that support this common understanding and demonstrate why religious leaders can adhere to and share the pledges. Simply put, the reason is that the affirmations are common to all and that each religious tradition demands such a response from its adherents.

We see this as a necessary document that calls for steps to be taken to combat xenophobia (outright attacks, for example) or dehumanization (references to "illegals", for example) of forcibly displaced people. Certainly, the sharing of this document provides an opportunity for bishops, pastors, principals and administrators of Catholic institutions to affirm that welcoming the stranger is a moral duty, for themselves and the entire community of faith.

Perhaps the document can be used in catechesis or as the basis of homilies or other talks. We invite your initiative in this regard and only ask that you send us some information on the steps you have taken to promote welcoming the stranger in your respective countries and/or areas of responsibility. These reports can be as simple as a link to a webpage, or a video, a news story, or tools developed locally to recognize that welcoming the stranger is a responsibility of our faith. Please send the above-mentioned reports, via e-mail to: Geneva@jrs.net

Thank you for your assistance in this very important project.

Archbishop Silvano M. TOMASI, c.s. Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer,
Permanent Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations, Geneva

His Eminence Oscar Andrés RODRIGUEZ-MARADIAGA, President, Caritas Internationalis

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