

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL  
FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE

GUIDELINES  
FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE ROAD

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## Presentation

These Guidelines for the pastoral care of the road, which is looked after by a specific Department of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, are the outcome of a great endeavour entailing listening, reflection and insight.

The Document breaks down into four quite separate parts, taking account of the specific nature and scope of issues connected with the road as a place for pastoral care. The first part is devoted to road users (motorists, lorry drivers, etc.) and railway users, and to the people who work in the various related services. Parts two and three concern street women and street children, respectively, and the fourth regards the homeless (tramps).

This Document is dedicated to all the above-mentioned people, but account should also be taken of pavement dwellers and street vendors, as well as the link between the road and tourists, pilgrims, gypsies, circus and fairground workers and street actors.

Some of these categories of people have already been dealt with in three Documents published by the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Itinerant People over the last ten years: *Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of Gypsies*<sup>1</sup>, *Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of Tourism*<sup>2</sup>, and *The Pilgrimage in the Great Jubilee Year of 2000*<sup>3</sup>.

These Guidelines are aimed at bishops, priests, religious and other pastoral workers, as a further step towards a pastoral care that pays increasing attention to all expressions of human mobility, and is integrated within ordinary, local and parochial pastoral care.

Renato Raffaele Cardinal Martino

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<sup>1</sup> PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, *Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of Gypsies*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2005.

<sup>2</sup> PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, *Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of Tourism*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2001.

<sup>3</sup> PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, *The Pilgrimage in the Great Jubilee Year of 2000*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 1998.

## PART ONE

### THE PASTORAL CARE OF ROAD USERS

#### I. The phenomenon of human mobility

1. Moving from place to place, and transporting goods using different means, have characterised human behaviour since the beginning of history. Mobility and wandering are therefore expressions of human nature and of our cultural development.

2. The transportation of goods and people is increasing at a dizzy pace, sometimes taking place under difficult conditions and even putting life at risk. Our lives are conditioned by the car, as mobility has become an idol, which the car symbolises.

Roads and railways should be at the service of the human person, as tools for facilitating life and the integral development of society. They should constitute a communication bridge between peoples, thereby creating new economic and human spaces. Indeed, it is true that “a great deal of a country’s lifeblood moves along its roads”<sup>4</sup>.

3. A modern phenomenon, full of consequences, which is part of this mobility, and the progress that derives from it, is traffic in general, and especially road traffic. Traffic has gradually increased, as a requirement of a society that is continually developing, and also due to the ever faster and bigger means of locomotion used for transporting people and goods.

#### *Road traffic and human progress*

4. Roads are no longer just communication routes; they have become places where we spend a great deal of our lives, also in developing countries. We only need to consider the many uneven roads travelled on by unsafe and overloaded means of transport, which constitute a grave danger for everyone, especially at night.

5. In addition to traffic congestion, people are directly exposed to dangers deriving from other related problems, such as noise, air pollution and intensive use of raw materials. We must tackle these issues and not just passively put up with them, partly in order to limit the costs of modernisation that are becoming unsustainable. In this context, it is a good idea to call for a commitment to avoid unnecessary car use.

6. Undoubtedly, road vehicles give us many advantages. They provide a rapid means of transport for people (getting to places of work and study, weekend outings with the family, going away on holiday, meetings with friends and relatives). The same goes for the transport of goods. Vehicle use benefits social life and economic development and gives many people an opportunity to earn an honest living.

7. Another positive aspect is the possibility for self-improvement deriving from getting to know other cultures and people with different religions, ethnicities and customs<sup>5</sup>. Transportation unites peoples, facilitates dialogue and gives rise to socialisation and personal enrichment via new discoveries and encounters.

8. Means of transport are particularly useful when they enable sick and injured people to be rescued, thus making urgent treatment easier and more accessible. They may also promote the exercise of Christian virtues – prudence, patience, charity and helping one’s fellow men and women

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<sup>4</sup> POPE PIUS XII, *Speech to the “Fédération Routière Internationale”*: Speeches and Radio Messages of Pope Pius XII, vol. XVII (1955) p. 275.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. CARDINAL ANGELO SODANO, *Pontifical Message for World Day of Tourism 2005*: L’Osservatore Romano, 21 July 2005, p. 5.

– in both a spiritual and corporal level. Finally, they may also provide an opportunity to come closer to God, as they facilitate discovery of the beauties of creation, the sign of his boundless love for us.

Travellers' spirits may also be uplifted by contemplating the various religious symbols to be seen along a road or railway. These include churches, bell towers, chapels, column tops, crosses and statues, as well as places of pilgrimage which may now be reached more easily by using modern means of transport.

9. Therefore, road and rail transport are a good thing, as well as being indispensable requirements of contemporary life. If we make good use of means of transport, accepting them as gifts granted to us by God, which are also fruits of the work of his industrious hands and intelligence, we may take advantage of them for our own human and Christian development.

## **II. The Word of God illuminates the road**

10. From Christian commitment in places of road and rail transport, which we call Pastoral Care of the Road, also arises the duty to draw up and promote a fitting and corresponding expression of "spirituality", rooted in the Word of God. Such spirituality sheds the necessary light to give meaning to the whole of life, stemming precisely from the experience of road and rail transport. The contemporary phenomenon of mobility should be experienced by Christians, by exercising the theological and cardinal virtues. For the faithful, the road also becomes a path to holiness.

### *Notes from the Old Testament*

11. The Bible contains continuous migrations and wanderings. The Patriarchs, Abraham (cf. *Genesis* 12:4-10), Isaac (cf. *Genesis* 26:1,17,22), Jacob (cf. *Genesis* 29:1; 31:21; 46:1-7)) and Joseph (cf. *Genesis* 37:28) led a wandering existence. When their descendants had become a numerous people, Moses led them out of Egypt (cf. *Exodus* 12:41), crossing the Red Sea (cf. *Exodus* 14) and wandering in the desert (see *Exodus* 15:22).

12. In the experience of mobility, full of risks and tragedies, the People of God are always assisted by the special protection of Yahweh (see *Exodus* 13:21). The repeated unfaithfulness of the Israelites to the Covenant would later lead to a far more distressing journey, the deportation to Babylon (cf. *2 Kings* 24:15). After long years of exile, God's faithfulness was manifested in the proclamation of Cyrus, which gave the opportunity of the joyful return journey to the Promised Land (cf. *2 Chronicles* 36:22-23; *Psalms* 126 [125]).

13. The psalmist (cf. *Psalms* 107 [106]:7) indicates the "straight way" on which the Lord leads, whilst the prophet Isaiah calls for preparation of the highway of the Lord (cf. *Isaiah* 40:3). The importance given by the Bible to the theme of wandering – of travelling – also clearly emerges from the fact that the term "way" is used as a metaphor to indicate all kinds of human behaviour. The Scriptures insistently exhort the choice of "straight ways", and not "to stand in the way of sinners" (*Psalms* 1:1), and to walk in the ways of the Lord (cf. *Deuteronomy* 8:6; 10:12; 19:9).

### *Notes from the New Testament*

14. The New Testament contains numerous references to travelling and journeys, such as those carried out by Mary and Joseph before the birth of Jesus, and the continuous travelling of Christ during his public life and the journeys of the apostles. The evangelists present the life of Christ as a continuous journey. He went through towns and villages proclaiming the Gospel and healing "every disease and sickness" (cf. *Matthew* 9:35), whilst a lengthy section of Luke's Gospel (9:51-19:41)

tells us of the Lord on his way to Jerusalem, where he was to bring his “exodus” to fulfilment (cf. *Luke 9:31*)<sup>6</sup>.

**15.** The parables also contain ways and journeys, such as the parable of the Good Samaritan, which is immediately applicable to the Pastoral Care of the Road (cf. *Luke 10:29-37*), and the parable of the prodigal son who set off “for a distant country” (*Luke 15:13*) and then returned to his father (cf. *Luke 15:13-20*). We also recall the man who “went on a journey” and entrusted his property to his servants (cf. *Matthew 25:14-30*).

**16.** Jesus also sent his disciples out onto the road. Indeed, he sent them out, two by two, to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom (cf. *Mark 6:6-13*), while in Luke’s Gospel the mission of the seventy-two disciples (cf. *Luke 10:1-20*) suggests a universal extension of the subsequent one, made explicit when the Risen Christ sends out the apostles, saying: “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (*Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19; and Luke 24:47*). Indeed, they would be witnesses “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (*Acts 1:8*). This universal mission would entail countless journeys, as attested by the Acts of the Apostles, undertaken by Peter (cf. *Acts 9:32-11:2*) and Paul (cf. *Acts 13:4-14:28; 15:36-28:16*).

**17.** Overall, the Bible thus presents us the situation of human mobility, with its risks, satisfactions, and troubles, and affirms its link with God’s redeeming plan. Thus we may see travelling not only as physical movement from one place to another, but also in its spiritual dimension, due to the fact that it puts people in touch with each other, thereby contributing to the realisation of God’s plan of love.

### *Christ is the Way, He is the Road*

**18.** John’s Gospel presents some particularly important expressions regarding the spirituality of the road, in the realisation of God’s plan. Lord Jesus says: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (*John 14:6*). By presenting himself as the “way”, Christ shows us that everything should be directed towards the Father. The statement, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (*John 8,12:*), confirms that Jesus and his message are the luminous way to direct our lives towards the Father. Whoever follows the Lord, and fulfils his Word, will go forward along the way of life.

**19.** Those who know Jesus Christ are careful on the roads. They don’t only think about themselves, and are not always worried about getting to their destination in a great hurry. They see the people who “accompany” them on the road, each of whom has their own life, their own desire to reach a destination and their own problems. They see everyone as brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of God. This is the attitude that characterises a Christian driver.

**20.** It has been shown that one of the roots of many problems relating to traffic is spiritual. For believers a solution to these problems may be found in a vision of faith, in the relationship with God, and in a generous option in favour of life, which is also borne out by behaviour that respects the lives of others, and the rules established to protect them, on the road.

“Indeed, the inspired pages of both Testaments could be drawn upon, but especially the Gospels and the Apostolic Letters, an anthology of precepts, which might well form a *corpus* of moral criteria and even a manual of etiquette and good manners for road use. This would support and strengthen the regulations of the Highway Code and give it inspiration, which the purely negative and preventive statement of its rules cannot have. Until road users are led to consider their responsibilities in this positive and encouraging light, which find their true justification in the

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, Instruction *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, no. 15, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2004.

superior and indefeasible values of conscience, it will be impossible to achieve desirable moralisation”<sup>7</sup>.

### III. Human aspects

The particular psychology of drivers

**21.** A vehicle is a means of transport that may be used in a prudent and ethical way, for “coexistence”, solidarity and serving others, or it may also be abused.

*Escape from everyday reality and the pleasure of driving*

**22.** When driving a car some people start up the engine to join a race, in order to escape from the troubling pace of everyday life. The pleasure of driving becomes a way of enjoying the freedom and independence that normally we do not have. This also leads to the practice of road sports, cycling, motorcycling and motor racing, in a healthy spirit of competition, even though risks are entailed.

**23.** Sometimes the prohibitions imposed by road signs may be perceived as restrictions of freedom. Especially when unobserved and unmonitored, some people are tempted to infringe such limitations, which are in fact designed to protect them and other people. Some drivers thus consider the duty to respect certain prudent regulations that reduce traffic risks and dangers as humiliating. Others deem it intolerable – almost a curtailment of their “rights” – to be obliged to follow patiently another vehicle that is travelling slowly, because, for example, road signs prohibit overtaking.

**24.** The fact that a driver’s personality is different from a pedestrian’s personality should be taken into account. When driving a vehicle, special circumstances may lead us to behave in an unsatisfactory and even barely human manner. Let’s now consider the principal psychological factors that influence drivers’ behaviour.

*The domination instinct*

**25.** The domination instinct, or the feeling of arrogance, impels people to seek power in order to assert themselves<sup>8</sup>. Driving a car provides an easy opportunity to dominate others. Indeed, by identifying themselves with their car, drivers enormously increase their own power. This is expressed through speed and gives rise to the pleasure of driving. This makes drivers wish to experience the thrill of speed, a typical manifestation of their increased power.

The free availability of speed, being able to accelerate at will, setting out to conquer time and space, overtaking, and almost “subjugating” other drivers, turn into sources of satisfaction that derive from domination.

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<sup>7</sup> POPE PAUL VI, *Speech on the moralisation of road use*: Teachings of Pope Paul VI, vol. III (1965) p. 499 .

<sup>8</sup> In a Pastoral Exhortation on road safety, the SOCIAL COMMISSION OF THE FRENCH BISHOPS’ CONFERENCE stated: “According to psychologists, drivers often use their vehicles in an irresponsible, and therefore dangerous, way. Cars, lorries and motorcycles thus become an expression of power, intolerance, display and sometimes even violence. Drivers may manifest feelings and attitudes that they do not adopt in normal life... Therefore, such lack of road safety constitutes a scandal that should give rise to reflection by all drivers of vehicles and urge them to change their behaviour”: FRENCH BISHOPS’ CONFERENCE, *Sécurité routière: un défi évangélique*, 24 October 2002: [www.cef.fr/catho/actus/communiqués/2002/commu20021029securiteroutiere.php](http://www.cef.fr/catho/actus/communiqués/2002/commu20021029securiteroutiere.php).

### *Vanity and personal glorification*

**26.** Cars particularly lend themselves to being used by their owners to show off, and as a means for outshining other people and arousing a feeling of envy. People thus identify themselves with their cars and project assertion of their egos onto them. When we praise our cars we are, in fact, praising ourselves, because they belong to us and, above all, we drive them. Many motorists, including the not so young, boast with great pleasure of records broken and high speeds achieved, and it is easy to see that they cannot stand being considered as bad drivers, even though they may acknowledge that they are.

### Unbalanced behaviour and related consequences

#### *Various manifestations*

**27.** Unbalanced behaviour varies according to individuals and circumstances, and may include impoliteness, rude gestures, cursing, blasphemy, loss of sense of responsibility, or deliberate infringement of the Highway Code. For some drivers, the unbalanced behaviour is expressed in insignificant ways, whilst in others it may produce serious excesses that depend on character, level of education, an incapacity for self-control and the lack of a sense of responsibility.

#### *A non-pathological phenomenon*

**28.** Such excesses may occur in a large number of normal people. Such unbalanced behaviour, which may have serious consequences, nevertheless comes within the scope of psychological normality.

**29.** Driving brings inclinations to the surface from the unconscious that usually, when we are not on the roads, are “controlled”. When driving, however, imbalances emerge and encourage regression to more primitive forms of behaviour. Driving should be considered by the same standards as any other social activity, which presupposes a commitment to mediate between one’s own requirements and the limits imposed by the rights of others.

Cars tend to bring out the “primitive” side of human beings, thereby producing rather unpleasant results. We need to take these dynamics into account and react by appealing to the noble tendencies of the human spirit, to a sense of responsibility and self-control, in order to prevent manifestations of the psychological regression that is often connected to driving a means of transport.

## **IV. Moral aspects of driving**

### *Driving means coexisting*

**30.** Coexistence is a fundamental aspect of human beings and roads should therefore be more human. Motorists are never alone when they are driving, even when no one is sitting beside them. Driving a vehicle is basically a way of relating with and getting closer to other people, and of integrating within a community of people. This capacity for coexistence, of entering into relations with others, presupposes certain specific qualities in a driver: namely self-mastery, prudence, courtesy, a fitting spirit of service and knowledge of the Highway Code. Selfless assistance should also be provided to those who need it, by giving an example of charity and hospitality.

### *Driving means controlling oneself*

**31.** A person’s behaviour is characterised by the capacity to control and master oneself, and not be carried away by impulses. The responsibility for cultivating this capacity for self-control and mastery is important, both in terms of a driver’s psychology and the serious damage that may be caused to the life and wellbeing of persons and goods in case of accident.

### *Ethical aspects*

- 32.** In its evolution as a social factor, driving behaviour has sometimes developed on the fringes of ethical regulations, thereby – we note – generating a sharp contrast between the constant state of progress of transport and the continual and chaotic increase in road traffic, which has negative consequences for drivers and pedestrians.
- 33.** In order to lay the foundations for ethical principles that should govern all aspects of road users’ “professionalism”, consideration must above all be given to the dangers to persons and goods deriving from road traffic. Such dangers exist for drivers and their passengers, as well as for drivers of other vehicles. Failure to comply with basic ethical rules prevents road users from enjoying their own personal rights and also puts their property at risk.
- 34.** The duty to protect goods may be compromised not only by careless driving, but also by not maintaining a vehicle or means of transport in safe mechanical order, by neglecting periodic technical check-ups. The duty to have vehicles serviced should be respected.
- 35.** There are also cases of driving when physically or mentally incapacitated, under the influence of alcohol and other stimulants or drugs, or in a state of exhaustion or somnolence. Danger also derives from citycars, which are driven by youngsters and adults who do not have driving licences, and the reckless use of motorbikes and motorcycles.
- 36.** Taking all this into account, public authorities lay down a series of criminal laws in order to safeguard rights and prevent damage caused by accidents. Unfortunately, in practice, the obligatory nature of such regulations goes unnoticed. All too easily, drivers are barely aware or even ignorant of this fact, precisely because these regulations come within the scope of criminal law, thus relating to events that are deemed extraordinary rather than ordinary. This more easily puts drivers in a position of acting against the law, in the hope of not being apprehended by the authorities responsible for enforcement.
- 37.** It is obvious in this respect that education in favour of a culture of life, in defence of the “thou shalt not kill” commandment, is increasingly necessary. Likewise, the following initiatives are highly beneficial: the various road safety campaigns; improvement of public transport; road routes that are designed to be safe; adequate road signs and paving; elimination of unmanned level crossing; and creation of a public sense of responsibility via specific associations and the collaboration of road service personnel with road users.

### *Driving a vehicle and the risks entailed*

- 38.** Drivers on the road should be fully aware, without dreading such a situation, that an accident may occur at any time. Despite the generally high quality of today’s roads in developed countries, it is foolish to drive “thoughtlessly” as if such dangers did not exist. Our attitude when driving should be the same as if we were using dangerous tools, and therefore being very careful.
- 39.** Statistics bear this out. In 2001, global output of motor vehicles amounted to 57 million, compared with 10 million in 1950. During the 20th century approximately 35 million people lost their lives in road accidents, whilst around one and a half billion were injured. In 2000 alone, deaths amounted to 1,260,000, and it is also noteworthy that around 90% of accidents were due to human error. The harm caused to the families of those involved in accidents, as well as the protracted consequences for the injured, who all too often are permanently disabled, should also be borne in mind. In addition to harm to persons, the enormous damage to material goods should also be taken into account.
- 40.** This all adds up to a real disaster, and poses a serious challenge to society and the Church. It is not surprising that the UN General Assembly seriously tackled this issue at a plenary session in

April 2004, which was specifically aimed at raising public awareness regarding the extent of the problem with a view to making precise recommendations on road safety<sup>9</sup>.

41. Pope Paul VI said: “Too much blood is spilt every day in an absurd competition with speed and time. Whilst international organisations willingly devote themselves to reconciling painful rivalries, magnificent progress is being made in conquering space and adequate means are being sought to tackle the scourges of hunger, ignorance and disease, it is distressing to think that all over the world countless lives continue to be sacrificed every year to this unjustifiable fate. Public awareness should awake and consider this problem in the same light as the most determined, who arouse the enthusiasm and interest of the whole world”<sup>10</sup>.

#### *The obligatory nature of road regulations*

42. When drivers endanger their own and other people’s lives, and the physical and mental wellbeing of persons, as well as considerable material goods, they are guilty of a serious shortcoming, even when such behaviour does not cause accidents, because, in any case, it entails serious risks. It should also be pointed out that the majority of accidents are precisely caused by such carelessness.

43. The Church’s teaching on these issues is very clear: “The often tragic consequences of infringements of the Highway Code give them an intrinsically obligatory nature that is far more serious than is generally thought. Motorists cannot merely rely on their own vigilance and ability to prevent accidents, but should rather maintain an appropriate margin of safety, if they wish to be free of carelessness and avoid unforeseeable difficulties”<sup>11</sup>. Indeed, “rightly, civil laws regarding human coexistence support the great law of *Non occides*, thou shalt not kill, which stands out in the timeless Ten Commandments, and is a holy precept of the Lord for everyone”<sup>12</sup>.

44. Therefore, “through strict observance of the Highway Code, everyone should be committed to creating a ‘road culture’ based on widespread understanding of everyone’s rights and duties and behaviour consistent with its implications”<sup>13</sup>.

45. Theological, ethical, legal and technological principles support the moralisation of road use. “Such principles are based on the respect due to human life, to the human person, which is inculcated from the very first pages of Holy Scripture. The human person is sacred: it is created in the image and likeness of God (cf. *Genesis* 1:26), and redeemed through the immeasurable price of Christ’s blood (cf. *1 Corinthians* 6:20; *1 Peter* 1:18-19), and has been introduced within the Church and the Communion of Saints, with the right and the duty of mutual, effective and sincere charity towards one’s brothers and sisters, according to the command of the Apostle Paul: ‘Love must be sincere ... Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves’ (*Romans* 12:9-10)”<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. *General Assembly Plenary Meeting and Expert Consultation on the Global Road Safety Crisis*, 14 -15 April 2004.

<sup>10</sup> POPE PAUL VI, *Speech to participants at the “International dialogue for the moralisation of road use”*: Teachings of Pope Paul VI, vol. III (1965) p. 500, cf. also POPE BENEDICT XVI, *Angelus Domini* of Sunday, 20 November 2005: *L’Osservatore Romano* 21-22 November 2005, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> POPE PIUS XII, *Speech to the “Fédération Routière Internationale”*: Speeches and Radio Messages of Pope Pius XII, vol. 17 (1955) p. 275 and BELGIAN BISHOPS, PASTORAL LETTER, *Morale de la circulation routière*, Malines, 15 January 1966 : *Pastoralia*, no. 8, 21 February 1966, sheet 1, back page, col. II.

<sup>12</sup> POPE JOHN XXIII, *The respect of life as the foundation of effective road discipline*: Speeches, Messages and Talks of Pope John XXIII, vol. III (1961) p. 383.

<sup>13</sup> POPE JOHN PAUL II, *A road culture. Against the too many accidents*: Teachings of Pope John Paul II, vol. X, 3 (1987) p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> POPE PAUL VI, *Speech to participants at the “International dialogue for the moralisation of road use”*: Teachings of Pope Paul VI, vol. III (1965) p. 499.

### *The moral responsibility of road users*

46. Obviously, careless motorists, motorcyclists, cyclists and pedestrians do not wish for the fatal consequences of an accident they cause, nor do they intend to harm the life and property of others. However, as these consequences are the product of a conscious action, we may rightly speak of moral responsibility.

“For a bad effect to be imputable it must be foreseeable and the agent must have the possibility of avoiding it, as in the case of manslaughter caused by a drunken driver”<sup>15</sup>. When driving without the requisite conditions (for example, carelessly, or lacking the necessary capacities), one endangers life and goods, which presupposes infringement of moral law, due to the voluntary nature of the act.

47. The moral responsibility of road users, both drivers and pedestrians, derives from the obligation to respect the Fifth and Seventh Commandments: “Thou shalt not kill” and “Thou shalt not steal”. The gravest sins against human life, deriving from the Fifth Commandment, are suicide and murder, but this commandment also requires respect for one’s own and other people’s physical and mental wellbeing.

Careless absent-mindedness and negligence are acts that go against such commandments, and their degree of moral seriousness is measured in terms of how foreseeable, or to some extent intentional, they are. This means that, beyond the prohibition of directly killing, wounding or maiming, the Lord’s commandment forbids any act that might bring about such harm indirectly. The same goes for any damage caused to one’s neighbour’s goods.

48. Moral law prohibits exposing anyone to grave danger, without serious grounds, as well as refusing assistance to a person in danger. In addition, the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that “the virtue of temperance disposes us *to avoid every kind of excess*: the abuse of food, alcohol, tobacco or medicine. Those incur grave guilt who, by drunkenness or a love of speed, endanger their own and other’s safety on the road, at sea, or in the air”<sup>16</sup>.

## **V. The Christian virtue of drivers and their “Ten Commandments”**

### *Charity and serving one’s neighbour*

49. Back in 1956 Pope Pius XII exhorted motorists: “Do not forget to respect other road users, be courteous and fair with other drivers and pedestrians and show them your obliging nature. Pride yourselves in being able to master an often natural impatience, in sometimes sacrificing a little of your sense of honour so that the courteousness that is a sign of true charity may prevail. Not only will you thus be able to avoid unpleasant accidents, but you will also help to make the car a more useful tool for yourselves and others that is capable of giving you a more genuine pleasure”<sup>17</sup>.

50. This pontifical exhortation is echoed much later by the Belgian bishops who requested drivers to show “proof of courtesy and charity, by giving way with an understanding attitude to the awkward manoeuvres of learner drivers, paying attention to the elderly, children, cyclists and pedestrians and controlling themselves in the case of infractions committed by other people. Christian solidarity encourages all road users to exercise greater sensitivity, and to help the injured and the elderly, with particular care given to children and the disabled. And attention to the body should also be accompanied by spiritual assistance, which is no less urgent in many cases”<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1737, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 1999.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* no. 2290.

<sup>17</sup> POPE PIUS XII, *To the members of the Rome Automobile Club*: Speeches and Radio Messages of Pope Pius XII, vol. XVIII (1956) p. 89.

<sup>18</sup> BELGIAN BISHOPS : l. c., sheet 2, front page, col II.

**51.** The exercise of charity by drivers has a dual dimension. The first regards looking after one's vehicle, which means making sure that it is safe from a technical point of view, so as not to knowingly put one's own or other people's lives at risk. Taking care of one's vehicle also means not expecting more from it than it is able to give.

The second dimension regards love of travellers whose lives should not be endangered by incorrect and careless manoeuvres that may cause harm to both passengers and pedestrians. The word "love" is used here to mean the many forms taken by genuine charity, namely respect, courtesy, consideration, etc. Good drivers courteously give way to pedestrians, are not offended when overtaken, allow someone who wishes to drive faster to pass and do not seek revenge.

### *The virtue of Prudence*

**52.** This virtue has always been presented as one of the most necessary and important with regard to road traffic, as stated in the following text: "Another virtue that may not be overlooked is prudence. This calls for a suitable margin of precaution to deal with the unforeseen events that may occur at any time"<sup>19</sup>. Obviously, someone who allows their attention to be diverted whilst driving by a mobile phone or television is not behaving in accordance with prudence.

**53.** Still on the theme of prudence: "Road users should not drive too fast, and should calculate a wide margin of time, which is theoretically and psychologically necessary to brake. They should not overestimate their own abilities and quickness, and should constantly monitor their attention and conversation. In this regard, travelling companions should also be aware of their responsibility"<sup>20</sup>.

### *The virtue of Justice*

**54.** Undoubtedly, any human relationship should be governed by justice, even more so if life is at stake. Ever since it became interested in the traffic issue, the Church has referred to this virtue. In this regard, the following exhortation says: "Justice requires that drivers have a full and precise knowledge of the Highway Code. Indeed, those who use the roads should know the regulations and take them into account. Furthermore, drivers are obliged to demonstrate that they are in a suitable physical and psychological condition. If they are inebriated, they should never get behind the wheel of a car nor be authorised to do so. Like anyone else, they are obliged to be sober: in fact, alcohol creates a state of euphoria and reduces mental capacity to the extent of giving rise to fatal accidents"<sup>21</sup>.

**55.** In respecting justice, "road users should provide reparations for any damage caused to others. If, according to their conscience, they are responsible for such damage, they should do their best until the victim, or close relatives, have been adequately compensated. If the harm is produced completely unintentionally, they should still feel obliged, in accordance with their conscience, to compensate the victim in compliance with the law, and in case of dispute and trial, they should respect the sentence"<sup>22</sup>.

**56.** Furthermore, we should also encourage the families of victims to forgive their aggressors, as a sign, albeit difficult, of human and Christian maturity. In this process of forgiveness, it is useful, even necessary, to have spiritual support from a chaplain or pastoral agent and to celebrate an appropriate "Day of Pardon"<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> SPANISH EPISCOPATE, Pastoral Exhortation *Espiritu cristiano y tráfico*, no. 7: Ecclesia, no. 1481, 21 July 1968.

<sup>20</sup> BELGIAN BISHOPS: l.c.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, column I

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Cf. "The Day of Pardon": L'Osservatore Romano 13-14 March 2000, pp. 8-9.

## *The virtue of Hope*

**57.** Hope is another virtue that should characterise drivers and travellers. Indeed, whoever undertakes a journey always sets out with the hope of arriving safely at their destination to carry out business, enjoy the countryside, visit famous or nostalgic places or return to the embrace of loved ones. For believers, the reason for such hope, whilst taking account of the problems and dangers of the road, lies in the certainty that, in our journey towards a goal, God accompanies us and keeps us from danger. Due to God's company, and thanks to the collaboration of other people, we reach our destination.

**58.** Whilst God is the rock of Christian hope, Catholic devotion has found many intercessors before Him, His and our true friends, the Angels and Saints of God, to whom we entrust ourselves to surpass the dangers of the journey, by divine grace. We recall Saint Christopher (Christ's Bearer), the presence of the Guardian Angel, and the Archangel Raphael who accompanied Tobias (*Tobias* 5:1 ff.), whom the Church regards as the protector of travellers. Also significant are the titles given to the Blessed Virgin Mary in relation to travelling. Indeed, we invoke her as the Madonna of the Way, the Pilgrim Virgin, icon of the migrant woman<sup>24</sup>.

**59.** Resorting to our Heavenly Intercessors should not make us forget the importance of the sign of the cross, to be made before setting out on a journey. With this sign we put ourselves directly under the protection of the Holy Trinity. Indeed, this directs us above all to the Father, as origin and destination. In this regard, we recall the words of the psalm: "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways" (*Psalms* 91 [90]:11).

The sign of the cross thus entrusts us to our guide, Jesus Christ (cf. *John* 8:12). The Emmaus encounter (cf. *Luke* 24:13-35) reassures us that the Lord meets everyone along the road, lodges in the houses of those who invite him, travels with us and sits beside us.

Finally, the sign of the cross takes us back to "the Holy Spirit, who is Lord and gives Life"<sup>25</sup>. To those who call on him, he illuminates the mind and grants the gift of prudence to reach one's destination. This is confirmed by the hymn, *Veni Creator*: "*Ductore sic te praeviso, vitemus omne noxium*" ("If you are the one who guides us, we will avoid anything that might harm us").

**60.** During a journey it is also beneficial to pray vocally, especially taking turns with our fellow travellers in reciting the prayers, as when reciting the Rosary<sup>26</sup> which, due to its rhythm and gentle repetition, does not distract the driver's attention. This will help to feel immersed in the presence of God, to stay under his protection, and may also give rise to a desire for communal or liturgical celebration, if possible at "spiritually strategic" points along the road or railway (shrines, churches and chapels, including mobile ones).

## *Drivers' "Ten Commandments"*

**61.** In any case, with the request for motorists to exercise virtue, we have drawn up a special "decalogue" for them, in analogy with the Lord's Ten Commandments. These are stated here below, as indications, considering that they may also be formulated differently.

- I. You shall not kill.
- II. The road shall be for you a means of communion between people and not of mortal harm.
- III. Courtesy, uprightness and prudence will help you deal with unforeseen events.

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE Instruction *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, no. 15: 1.c.

<sup>25</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 485: 1. C.; POPE JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Dominum et vivificantem*, no. 66: AAS LXXVIII (1986) p. 896.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Homily at Rome's "Leonardo da Vinci" Airport*: Teachings of Pope John Paul II, vol. XIV, 2 (1991) p. 1351; cf. also PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE *il Rosario dei Migranti*, Vatican Publishing House, Vatican City 2004.

- IV. Be charitable and help your neighbour in need, especially victims of accidents.
- V. Cars shall not be for you an expression of power and domination, and an occasion of sin.
- VI. Charitably convince the young and not so young not to drive when they are not in a fitting condition to do so.
- VII. Support the families of accident victims.
- VIII. Bring guilty motorists and their victims together, at the appropriate time, so that they can undergo the liberating experience of forgiveness.
- IX. On the road, protect the more vulnerable party.
- X. Feel responsible towards others.

## **VI. The Church's mission**

### *Prophecy in a serious and alarming situation*

**62.** Condemnation of serious and unjust situations, such as those caused by traffic, is part of the Church's mission, and therefore realisation of its prophetic mission. The number of accidents in which pedestrians bear a grave responsibility is also worrying. The danger of certain car races, and illegal racing on city streets, which create serious risk, should also be condemned.

**63.** It is quite common when accidents occur to blame the state of the road surface, a mechanical problem or environmental conditions. However, it should be underlined that the vast majority of car accidents are the result of serious and unwarranted carelessness – if not downright stupid and arrogant behaviour by drivers or pedestrians – and are therefore due to the human factor.

### *Road safety education*

**64.** Faced with such a serious problem, both the Church and the state – each in their own area of responsibility – should go beyond condemnation and seek to raise overall public awareness regarding road safety and promote corresponding and appropriate education of drivers, as well as other travellers and pedestrians, with all possible means.

**65.** In broader terms, it should be borne in mind that three elements are needed to carry out an action well: knowing what is to be done; having the desire to carry it out; and, finally, having sufficiently developed a series of reflexes and habits needed to carry it out precisely, accurately and swiftly. This also applies to road safety education, which should involve intelligence, willingness and habitual behaviour.

**66.** In this regard, the Church should concern itself with raising awareness and promoting road safety education that takes account of the three elements mentioned: knowing what is to be done, in awareness of the danger, responsibility and obligations deriving from it for drivers and pedestrians; wishing to carry out the action with care and dedication; and, finally, developing sufficient reflexes and habits for precise action that does not entail risk or carelessness.

**67.** To achieve such ends, in addition to family commitment, the educational potential of parishes, lay associations and ecclesial movements, especially for children and youngsters, should not be neglected.

**68.** All this means calling attention to and encouraging what might be called “road ethics”, which is not different from ethics in general, but is its application.

### *Target audiences*

**69.** An important matter is determining to whom such road safety education should be addressed, taking into account primarily those who are “actively” concerned. As traffic is an issue relating to the common good, the solution to the problem of training motorists, motorcyclists,

cyclists and pedestrians involves a whole series of actors and social organisations, as well as individuals and the family, society in general and public authorities.

**70.** Individuals have an ethical obligation to respect traffic regulations and, therefore, they should have knowledge, gained from training aimed at deepening their sense of responsibility. The role of the family in road safety education is clear and vital, and is part of the experience that must be conveyed to children for a good general education.

For its part, society has the obligation and the right to deal with this issue, because it concerns the common good. The term society is used in its wider and diversified meaning, as it encompasses, for example, schools, private companies, clubs, institutions and the press. The term society also means public authorities and civic administration, whose intervention in this field, as in any others, should be governed by the principle of subsidiarity<sup>27</sup>.

**71.** Among those “passively” concerned by education, children come first. From a very early age they should be prepared to deal with traffic, an environment where they will spend part of their lives, for two fundamental reasons.

Above all, because teaching children how to move in the midst of traffic means giving them the best means for protecting their own lives. Indeed, many children die on the roads each year, and many others, without losing their lives, are left disabled and physically and/or mentally marked for ever. Moreover, road safety education for children is the best way of guaranteeing a safer and more upright future generation.

**72.** Stress should also be placed on the irreplaceable role of school, which trains and informs. Above all at school children can achieve a lasting grasp of the ethical foundations of traffic problems and the reasons behind traffic regulations. School is where they learn that traffic issues are part of the wider field of the problems of human coexistence, of which the most urgent regards respect for other people. School teaches aware self-restraint in the use and enjoyment of common goods, and is where courtesy and nobility of spirit in human relations should be learnt.

**73.** School is the institution to which both the family and the State entrust a very important part of their educational duties. This makes it one of the most powerful and irreplaceable instruments for comprehensive training of the person, and failure to fulfil this duty to provide road safety education would create a dangerous training gap that would be hard to fill.

**74.** An important road safety education opportunity is offered to driving licence candidates. This is a specific training phase, of obvious importance, especially if the person concerned has not received any previous road safety education. Driving schools have a great responsibility, as do the public authorities that are responsible for regulating driving tests.

**75.** Finally, the large number of road users need training, not only drivers, but also non-driver pedestrians, most of whom have not received adequate road safety education. As many of them are elderly people, they have slower reflexes to deal safely with traffic. Therefore, they are at greater risk of having an accident.

#### *Appeal by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*

**76.** As the *aggiornamento* of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council took place, preceding Church teaching resounded. Realizing the social changes of the 20th century and warning against pure individualism, the Council also drew attention to the traffic issue, in these terms: “Profound and rapid changes make it more necessary that no one ignoring the trend of events or drugged by laziness, content himself with a merely individualistic morality. It grows increasingly true that the

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. POPE PAUL VI, *To participants at the 7th Congress of the National Association of Welfare Bodies: Teachings of Pope Paul VI*, vol. II (1964) p. 333.

obligations of justice and love are fulfilled only if each person, contributing to the common good, according to his own abilities and the needs of others, also promotes and assists the public and private institutions dedicated to bettering the conditions of human life... [However] many in various places even make light of social laws and precepts, and do not hesitate to resort to various frauds and deceptions in avoiding just taxes or other debts due to society. Others think little of certain norms of social life, for example those designed for the protection of health, or laws establishing speed limits; they do not even avert to the fact that by such indifference they imperil their own life and that of others”<sup>28</sup>.

**77.** In seeking to respond in an adequate and pastoral fashion to the challenges of the contemporary world, we catch sight here of what is in some ways a vast and renewed field of apostolate, which requires duly trained and active pastoral agents. We are referring, for example, to the expression of pastoral care towards lorry drivers, who transport goods over long distances; car and bus drivers; tourists travelling by road or on trains; those responsible for traffic safety; and filling station attendants and motorway restaurant staff.

**78.** This is also a field of new evangelisation, so dear to the heart of Pope John Paul II. This sector also gives rise to an urgent appeal to seek new paths to bring the Gospel onto the routes of the world – road and rail networks – which are new Areopagi for proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ the Saviour.

## **VII. Pastoral Care of the Road**

**79.** Faced with this urgent evangelising commitment in industrial and technologically advanced society, and also taking developing countries into account, the Church wishes to arouse a renewed awareness of obligations concerning the pastoral care of the road and moral responsibility regarding infringement of highway regulations, in order to prevent as far as possible the fatal consequences that derive from it. The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council requests bishops to have “a special concern for those among the faithful who, on account of their way of life, cannot sufficiently make use of the common and ordinary pastoral care of parish priests or a quite cut off from it”<sup>29</sup>.

### *Evangelisation within the context of the road*

**80.** Evangelisation within the context of the road addresses this special area, by facilitating everywhere the advance of the Joyful Proclamation and the administration of the sacraments, spiritual direction, counselling and the religious formation of motorists, road transport professionals, passengers and everyone who is in some way connected to roads and railways.

Joint efforts should be made to raise awareness of the ethical requirements that derive from traffic and support initiatives and commitments aimed at promoting ethical and human values regarding roads and railways, so that mobility may be an element of communion amongst people.

The Gospel message of love applied to the road issue should be spread within society, thereby strengthening travellers’ awareness of their moral obligations, as well as fostering a sense of responsibility in order to ensure compliance with legislation, thus avoiding offences and damages to third parties.

**81.** This pastoral care is addressed, in varying degrees, to everyone connected with roads and railways, including not only road users but also people who make their living in this sector. This pastoral care aims to come close to people in their specific environment, to help them coexist in peace, exercise mutual solidarity and unite them with God, thus contributing to bringing this sector more closely in line with the Christian message, and thereby make it more human.

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<sup>28</sup> SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 30: AAS LVIII (1966) pp. 1049-1050.

<sup>29</sup> SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Pastoral Mission of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 18: AAS LVIII (1966) p. 682.

This entails rediscovering and putting into practice the virtues of road use, above all charity, prudence and justice. The media could be very useful in this task, especially radio which also provides good company to travellers.

Catholic Radio Stations should play a more active role in this field, including through songs and non-superficial content, and by taking advantage of its personal training potential.

**82.** Regarding such specific pastoral care, several initiatives already exist in various countries, some of which are truly creative and capable of achieving good concrete results. Such initiatives include chapels (fixed and mobile) along motorways, and periodic celebration of liturgies at major road hubs, motorway restaurants and lorry parks. Other initiatives regard retail outlets for religious items and Christian information centres for travellers and workers at railway and bus stations; meeting places in parishes, on motorways and at borders; and activities arranged by priests and religious and even lay pastoral agents.

Also included are the spiritual care of road transport workers and their families; motorcycle clubs; rallies and similar gatherings, the blessing of vehicles, the European Car Free Day; national, diocesan and parochial celebrations of the Day of those injured on the roads, or of forgiveness; and collaboration with the pastoral care of tourism and of pilgrimages and other human mobility sectors, and with traffic police chaplains, driving schools and so on.

**83.** Appropriate response to these pastoral challenges also comes under the responsibility of Bishops' Conferences and the corresponding Structures of Oriental Catholic Churches. Such an apostolate requires a minimum amount of organisation, or at least a national, diocesan/eparchial or local reference point that provides institutional references to the work of this incipient specific pastoral care. It might also be appropriate to appoint a National Promoter for this pastoral care, and maybe to start, some Diocesan Delegate, entrusting the responsibility of the relative pastoral activity to a priest or a deacon, even if not on a full-time basis.

In any case, this also requires a more missionary ecclesial awareness on the part of the pastoral structures linked to the territory, which is able to imagine and carry out a "pastoral care on the move", a pastoral care also of mobility, with a view to achieving real and effective integrated pastoral care. Indeed, "the mobility of the pastoral charity of the Church should be corresponding to the mobility of the modern world"<sup>30</sup>. It would be a good idea to hold meetings at various levels of pastoral agents engaged in this specific apostolate of the road, in order to exchange information and experiences that would help to maximise benefits in this field of new evangelisation<sup>31</sup>.

**84.** Mobility and its problems – a true sign of the times – which are characteristic of contemporary society throughout the world, today pose an important and pressing challenge for institutions and individuals, as well as for the Church which has a mission in this respect. Believers in the Son of God who became man to save humanity cannot remain indifferent before this new horizon that is opening up for evangelisation, including the integral promotion of each and every person in the name of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>30</sup> POPE PAUL VI, *Allocutio*: AAS LXV (1973) 591.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, *1st European Meeting of National Directors of the Pastoral Care of the Road*, Final document: [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/migrants/rc\\_pc\\_migrants\\_doc\\_20021209\\_road\\_leur\\_pressrelease\\_it.shtml](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/rc_pc_migrants_doc_20021209_road_leur_pressrelease_it.shtml); IDEM, *1st International Meeting on the Pastoral Care of Street Children*, Final document: People on the Move XXXVII (2005) Suppl. 98, 97 and IDEM, *1st International Meeting on the Pastoral Care for the Liberation of Street Women*, Final document: People on the Move XXXVIII (2006) Suppl. 102, 119.

## PART TWO

### PASTORAL MINISTRY FOR THE LIBERATION OF STREET WOMEN

**85.** “Customers” approach street women from their cars, which may even be where the trading of their bodies takes place. Pastoral care of the street should examine these situations, which are unfortunately common, and pay special attention to people who “live” in the streets.

**86.** The teaching of Pope John Paul II, which condemns the exploitation of women, encourages this pastoral commitment: “Then too, when we look at one of the most sensitive aspects of the situation of women in the world, how can we not mention the long and degrading history, albeit often an ‘underground’ history, of violence against women in the area of sexuality? At the threshold of the Third Millennium we cannot remain indifferent and resigned before this phenomenon. The time has come to condemn vigorously the types of *sexual violence* which frequently have women for their object and to pass laws which effectively defend them from such violence. Nor can we fail, in the name of the respect due to the human person, to condemn the widespread hedonistic and commercial culture which encourages the systematic exploitation of sexuality and corrupts even very young girls into letting their bodies be used for profit”<sup>32</sup>.

**87.** Pope Benedict XVI teaches that female prostitution could be considered as one of the forms of trafficking in human beings with these precise words: “Trafficking in human beings – especially women – ... flourishes where opportunities to improve their standard of living or even to survive are limited. It becomes easy for the trafficker to offer his own ‘services’ to the victims, who often do not even vaguely suspect what awaits them. In some cases there are women and girls who are destined to be exploited almost like slaves in their work, and not infrequently in the sex industry, too. Though I cannot here closely examine the analysis of the consequences of this aspect of migration, I make my own the condemnation voiced by John Paul II against ‘the widespread hedonistic and commercial culture which encourages the systematic exploitation of sexuality’ (*Letter to Women*, 29 June 1995, no.5). This outlines a whole programme of redemption and liberation from which Christians cannot withdraw”<sup>33</sup>.

#### I. Some key points

##### *Prostitution is a form of slavery*

**88.** Prostitution is a form of modern slavery, which may also affect men and children. Unfortunately, it has to be noted that the number of prostitutes in the world has risen dramatically, due to a set of complex economic, social and cultural reasons. First of all, it is important to recognise that sexual exploitation and prostitution linked to people trafficking are acts of violence, which constitute an offence to human dignity and a serious violation of fundamental rights.

**89** It should also be taken into account that, in many cases, the women involved in prostitution have experienced violence and sexual abuse since childhood. They are drawn into prostitution by the hope of obtaining sufficient means for looking after themselves and their families, the need to

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<sup>32</sup> POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to Women*, no. 5: Teachings of Pope John Paul II, vol. XVIII, 1 (1995) p. 1875. Here we may recall “Jesus’ attitude to the women whom he meets in the course of his Messianic service reflects the eternal plan of God, who, in creating each one of them, chooses her and loves her in Christ” (cf. *Ephesians* 1:1-5) ... *Each of them from the “beginning” inherits as a woman the dignity of personhood*: POPE JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, no. 13: AAS LXXX (1988), 1685. We also recall POPE JOHN PAUL II’s *Message for World Migration Day*, 1995, no. 3, with the theme of *Solidarity, welcome, safeguarding from abuse and protection of women*: Teachings of Pope John Paul II, Vol. XVII, 2 (1994) p. 118.

<sup>33</sup> POPE BENEDICT XVI, *Message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, 2006, *Migrations: a sign of the times*: People on the Move XXXVII (2005) no. 99, p. 52.

deal with debts or the decision to abandon situations of poverty in their countries of origin, thinking that work offered abroad may change their lives. The sexual exploitation of women is clearly a consequence of various unjust systems.

**90.** Many prostitutes in the so-called developed world come from poor countries, and in Europe, as elsewhere, many have fallen victim to people traffickers to meet a growing demand from sex “consumers”.

#### *Migration, people trafficking and human rights*

**91.** The link between migration, people trafficking and rights is defined in the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially Women and Children<sup>34</sup>.

People who emigrate to deal with the necessities of life and the victims of people trafficking share many aspects of vulnerability, but significant differences also exist between migration, people trafficking and smuggling. Women that are indebted and unemployed as a result of macro-development policies who emigrate to survive and help their families or communities are in a very different situation from female victims of people trafficking.

**92.** In order to develop an effective pastoral response it is important to know which factors drive or draw women into prostitution, the strategies brokers and exploiters use to keep them under their control, the routes they take from their countries of origin to reach the countries of destination and the institutional resources that are required to deal with the problem. The international community and many non-governmental organisations increasingly seek to tackle criminal activities and protect the victims of people trafficking, by developing a wide range of initiatives to prevent the phenomenon and rehabilitate its victims in terms of social integration.

#### *Who are the victims of prostitution?*

**93.** The victims of prostitutions are human beings, who in many cases cry out for help, to be freed from slavery, because selling one’s own body on the street is usually not what they would voluntarily choose to do. Of course, each person has a different story to tell, but a common thread of violence, abuse, mistrust and low self-esteem, as well as fear and lack of opportunities, runs through them. They all bear deep wounds that need healing, whilst they seek relationships, love, security, affection, self-assertion and a better future for themselves and their families.

#### *Who are the “customers”?*

**94.** The customers too are people with deeply rooted problems, and in a certain sense are also slaves. Most of them are over 40. However, a growing number of young people, aged between 16 and 24, are among the “customers”. Also on the increase is the number of men looking for prostitutes, more to dominate them than for sexual satisfaction. In social and personal relations, such people experience a loss of power and “masculinity” and are unable to develop relations of mutual respect. These men seek out prostitutes for an experience of total domination and control over a woman, even though only for a short period of time.

**95.** The “customers” need help in solving their most intimate problems and in finding suitable ways of directing their sexual tendencies. “Buying sex” does not resolve the problems that arise primarily from frustration and lack of authentic relationships, and from the loneliness that characterises so many life situations today. An effective measure towards cultural change with respect to prostitution could derive from associating criminal law with social condemnation.

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime*, 15 November 2000.

**96.** In many cases, relationships between men and women are not on an equal footing, because violence, or the threat of it, gives men privileges and power that may make women silent and passive. Women and children are often driven onto the street, or drawn to it, by the violence they have suffered from men in their homes, who in turn have “internalised” models of violence linked to ideologies which have crystallized in the social structures. It is particularly sad to note the participation of women in oppression and violence done to other women within criminal networks linked to prostitution.

## **II. The Church’s duty**

### *Promoting the dignity of the person*

**97.** The Church has a pastoral responsibility to defend and promote the human dignity of persons exploited by prostitution and to advocate for their liberation, even providing economic, educational and formational support for this purpose.

**98.** In response to these pastoral needs, the Church denounces injustice and violence perpetrated against street women, and calls on all men and women of good will to deepen their commitment to sustaining their human dignity, by putting an end to sexual exploitation.

### *Solidarity and proclamation of the Good News*

**99.** Renewed solidarity among Christian communities and religious congregations, ecclesial movements, new communities, and Catholic institutions and associations is needed in order to raise the visibility of the pastoral care of women exploited for prostitution. Such care is at the heart of unequivocal proclamation of the Good News of full liberation in Jesus Christ, namely of Christian salvation.

**100.** In taking care of the needs of women over the centuries, religious congregations – especially female ones – have always paid attention to the signs of the times, rediscovering their value and the relevance of their charismas in new social contexts. Today, women religious – in faithful meditation on the Word of God and the Church’s social teaching – are seeking new ways of bearing witness to the dignity of women.

They offer also to street women a wide range of aid services, in welcome centres, lodging and safe houses, with programmes of formation and education. Members of Contemplative Orders also show their solidarity by giving support through prayer, and when possible, financial assistance.

**101.** Specific training courses are needed for pastoral agents to develop skills and strategies aimed at combating prostitution and trafficking in human beings. Such programmes are important initiatives aimed at committing priests, religious and lay people to prevention of the problem and social reintegration of the victims. Collaboration and communication between their Churches of origin and destination are essential<sup>35</sup>.

### *A multi-dimensional approach*

**102.** A multi-dimensional approach is needed to carry out ecclesial action to liberate street women. This should involve both men and women and place human rights at the centre of all strategies.

**103.** Men have an important role to play in working towards the achievement of sexual equality, in a context of reciprocity and fair differences. The exploiters (usually male “customers”,

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, nos. 70-72 and related legal and pastoral regulations Arts. 1 § 3; and 19 § 1: 1.c.

traffickers, sex tourists, etc.) need to be enlightened regarding the hierarchy of the values of life and human rights. They should also consider the Church's clear condemnation of their sins and the injustice they commit. This is also valid for homosexual and transsexual trade.

**104.** Bishops' Conferences, and the corresponding Structures in Oriental Catholic Churches, in countries where prostitution is widespread, as a result of people trafficking, should condemn this social evil. It is also necessary to promote respect, understanding, compassion and an attitude of abstaining from judging – in the right sense – women who have fallen into the network of prostitution.

Bishops, priests and pastoral agents should be encouraged to tackle this slavery from a pastoral point of view, in ecclesial ministry. Religious congregations should also seek to focus on the power of their institutions and join forces to inform, educate and act.

**105.** All pastoral initiatives should concentrate on the Christian values of mutual respect and healthy family and community relations, as well as on the need for balance and harmony in interpersonal relations between men and women.

The various projects aimed at assisting the repatriation and social reintegration of women who are prisoners of prostitution are also in urgent need of adequate financial support. Meetings should take place of religious associations that operate in various parts of the world for the purposes of such assistance and liberation.

With regards to “clients”, it is vital for the clergy to get involved in and give support to both the formation of young people – especially men – and the complex action of human rapport, formation and spiritual guidance.

**106.** Full cooperation should take place between public and private organisations to bring about the elimination of sexual exploitation.

Collaboration is also needed with social communication media in order to ensure correct information on this extremely serious problem. The Church would like to see the presentation and application of laws that protect women from the evil of prostitution and people trafficking, and it is also important that it does its utmost to achieve effective measures against humiliating portrayals of women in advertising.

Finally, Christian communities should be encouraged to collaborate with national and local authorities to help street women find alternative means of making a living.

### **III. Rehabilitation of women and “customers”**

**107.** From pastoral relations with victims, it is evident that “treating” them is a long and difficult process. Street women need to be helped to find accommodation, and a family and community atmosphere in which they feel accepted and loved, and where they may start to rebuild their lives and futures. This enables them to regain respect and self-esteem, the joy of being alive and to start a new life without feeling they are being pointed at.

The liberation and social reintegration of street women require acceptance and understanding from the community, whilst the road to recovery of these women is smoothed by genuine love and the offer of various opportunities aimed at satisfying their need for security, achievement and a better life. The treasure of faith (cf. *Matthew* 6:21), if it is still alive within them despite everything, or its rediscovery, will help them enormously, as it has the power of the goodness and certainty of the love of God, who is merciful and great in love.

**108.** Potential “customers”, on the other hand, need enlightenment regarding the respect and dignity of women, interpersonal values and the whole sphere of relationships and sexuality. In a society in which money and “wellbeing” are ideals, adequate relations and sexual education are necessary for the comprehensive formation of people. This type of education should illustrate the true nature of interpersonal relations based not on selfish interest and exploitation, but rather on the dignity of the person, which should be respected and appreciated, above all as the image of God (cf.

*Genesis* 1:27). In this context, believers should bear in mind that sin is an offence against the Lord, to be avoided with all one's might, entrusting oneself with confidence to the action of Divine Grace.

#### *Education and research*

**109.** It is important to study the problem of prostitution with a Christian vision of life. This is to be done with groups of youngsters in schools, parishes and families with a view to developing correct judgements regarding human and Christian relations, respect, dignity, human rights and sexuality.

Formators and educators should take account of the cultural context in which they operate, but should not let an inappropriate sense of embarrassment prevent them from engaging in appropriate dialogue on these issues, in order to raise awareness and instil due concern regarding the abuse of sexuality.

**110.** The cause of violence in families and its effect on women should be considered and studied at all levels of society, especially regarding their impact on family life. The practical consequences of "internalised" violence should be clearly identified, regarding both men and women.

**111.** Education and growth of awareness are vital in tackling injustice in relations between the sexes and creating equality between them, in a context of reciprocity, and taking account of rightful differences. Both men and women need to become aware of sexual exploitation and know their rights and relative responsibilities.

For men, in particular, initiatives should be proposed that deal with the issues of violence against women, sexuality, HIV/AIDS, paternity and the family in relation to respect and charity towards women and young girls, via reciprocal relations, and an examination that includes fair criticism of those traditional customs linked to masculinity.

#### *Catholic Social Teaching*

**112.** The Church should teach and spread its social doctrine, which lays down clear behavioural guidelines and encourages fighting for justice<sup>36</sup>. Committing oneself at various levels – local, national and international – for the liberation of prostitutes is therefore a true act of a disciple of Jesus Christ, an expression of authentic Christian love (cf. *1 Corinthians* 13:3). It is vital to develop people's Christian and social awareness through preaching the Gospel of salvation, catechetical teaching and various formational initiatives.

Special formation aimed at seminarians, young religious and priests is also needed so that they may have the appropriate skills and attitudes to be priests, with genuine love, of women who are prisoners of prostitution and of their "customers".

### **IV. Liberation and redemption**

#### *Giving aid and evangelisation*

**113.** The Church may provide a wide variety of services to the victims of prostitution, including: housing, reference points, medical and legal assistance, advisors, vocational training, education, rehabilitation, defence and information campaigns, protection from threats, links with families, assistance with voluntary return and reintegration in their countries of origin, and help with obtaining visas when return to their country of origin turns out to be impossible.

Above and beyond these services, the encounter with Jesus Christ, the Good Samaritan and Saviour, is a decisive factor of liberation and redemption, including for the victims of prostitution (cf. *Mark* 16:16; *Acts* 2:21; 4:12; *Romans* 10:9; *Philippians* 2:11; and *1 Thessalonians* 1:9-10).

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2004, no. 19.

**114.** Approaching street women and girls, in order to redeem them, is a complex and demanding undertaking, which also entails activities aimed at prevention and raising awareness of the problem in the countries of origin, transit and destination of the women who are victims of trafficking.

**115.** Reintegration initiatives are indispensable in the countries of origin for women returnees. Defence and information are also important, such as in a “network of links”. Strengthening of all the groups involved in pastoral care in this field is needed, namely volunteers, associations and movements, religious congregations, dioceses, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), ecumenical and inter-religious groups, etc.

National conferences of men and women religious are encouraged to appoint persons in this pastoral sector to act as links for networks operating within and beyond their countries.

## PART THREE

### THE PASTORAL CARE OF STREET CHILDREN

**116.** Here we would like to recall the following words of Pope John Paul II: “Let us give children a future of peace! This is the confident appeal which I make to men and women of good will, and I invite everyone to help children to grow up in an environment of authentic peace. This is their right, and it is our duty... In some countries children are forced to work at a tender age and are often badly treated, harshly punished, and paid absurdly low wages. Because they have no way of asserting their rights, they are the easiest to blackmail and exploit”<sup>37</sup>. In a telegram to the Director General of the International Labour Organisation the Holy See added: “No one can remain indifferent to the suffering of countless children who fall victim to intolerable exploitation and violence, not just as a result of the evil perpetrated by individuals but, often, as a direct consequence of corrupt social structures”<sup>38</sup>.

**117.** The United Nations Organisation solemnly affirmed that “the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom and solidarity”<sup>39</sup>.

Therefore, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People also addresses its pastoral care to the boys and girls who live on the street.

#### **I. The phenomenon, its causes and possible initiatives**

##### *The phenomenon*

**118.** Street children are one of the most difficult and worrying challenges of our century for both the Church and civil society. It is a problem of unexpected magnitude, regarding around 100 million children, and is on the increase almost everywhere. It constitutes a real social emergency, as well as a pastoral one.

**119.** Even when they manifest full awareness of the seriousness of the problem, mobilisation of public institutions is inadequate to achieve efficient prevention and rehabilitation measures. The prevailing attitude among civil society is often one of social alarm, triggered by potential threat to law and order. Humanitarian, solidarity-based – and even Christian – attitudes towards the problem are slow to emerge. Consequently, specific pastoral care is even more lacking.

**120.** Strictly speaking, street children are those with no ties to their families, which means that they have made the street their place of abode, and are often forced to sleep there, in a wide range of situations. Some of them have undergone the traumatising experience of a family break-up and have been left on their own, whilst others have run away from home after being neglected or mistreated.

Some have rejected their family home, or been thrown out of it because they are involved in some form of deviant behaviour (drugs, alcohol, stealing and various makeshift activities to survive), and others have been persuaded with promises, seduction or violence, by adults or criminal gangs, to live on the streets.

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<sup>37</sup> POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1996*: Teachings of Pope John Paul II, XVIII, 2 (1995) p. 1331.

<sup>38</sup> CARDINAL ANGELO SODANO, Secretary of State, *Telegram to the Director General of the International Labour Organisation on the occasion of application of Convention no. 182 on the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour*: Teachings of Pope John Paul II, XXIII, 2 (2000) pp. 921-922.

<sup>39</sup> UNO, *International Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 1989, Foreword.

This often happens to foreign youngsters forced to prostitute themselves, or to foreign unaccompanied minors forced into begging, or even prostitution. These children are often known to the police and have frequently spent time in prison.

**121.** Different from “street children” are those who spend a great deal of time in the streets, even though they are not deprived of a “home” and ties with their family. They prefer to take each day as it comes, with little or no sense of responsibility regarding education and the future, frequenting disreputable groups, usually away from their families, even though they can still find a bed to sleep at home. Nevertheless, their numbers are worrying, also in developed countries.

#### *The causes of the problem*

**122.** There are many causes at the root of this social problem that is taking on increasingly alarming dimensions. The primary causes include: increasing family breakdown; tensions between parents; aggressive, violent and sometimes perverse behaviour towards children; emigration, which entails uprooting from everyday life and consequent disorientation; conditions of poverty and hardship that destroy dignity and deprive people of the wherewithal to survive; the spread of drug addiction and alcoholism; and prostitution and the sex industry, which continue to take an extraordinary toll of victims, often driven by terrible violence to the most brutal kind of slavery.

Other factors are wars and social disorder that upset normal life, including for minors, and the spread, primarily in Europe, of a “culture characterised by pleasure and transgression” – which should not be underestimated – in environments marked by a lack of reference values, in which young people in general suffer from loneliness and an ever deeper sense of the emptiness of existence.

#### *Initiatives and their objectives*

**123.** The more alarming the extent of the problem gets and the more lacking the effective presence of public authorities is, the more appreciated and valuable are intervention by the private social and voluntary sectors. Associations in the Church and those based on Christian inspiration, with the new movements and communities, are active and efficient, but unfortunately they are inadequate before such a wide range of needs and, usually, disconnected from a comprehensive pastoral plan.

Dioceses and national Bishops’ Conferences, or the corresponding structures of Oriental Catholic Churches, should deal with this problem in pastoral way, taking into account both prevention and rehabilitation of the children.

**124.** There is substantial agreement on objectives among the variety of concrete initiatives regarding this issue. Such objectives include returning street children to a normal way of life, which entails their reintegration within society, but above all within a family environment, if possible in their original families, or otherwise in community facilities, but always of a family type.

A priority commitment is to help children regain their self-confidence, self-esteem, sense of dignity and consequent personal responsibility. This will give rise to a genuine desire to resume schooling and take up vocational training with a view to obtaining employment, so that they may develop – with their own strengths and not just by depending on others – respectable and rewarding life projects.

**125.** Many different kinds of intervention are possible, such as so-called direct involvement in the street, which provides for contact with the children in the places where they gather, in order to establish a relationship of empathy and trust that gives them access to educators and day centres aimed at promoting essential conditions so that the children may live in a dignified fashion.

There are also support initiatives to meet children’s basic needs: canteens, cloakrooms, social and healthcare assistance, and education and training facilities, namely kindergartens, schools and vocational training courses. Residential welcome centres have also been set up, where

education and formation are provided, but above all leverage is made on human accompaniment with additional support from psycho-educational disciplines.

**126.** In some cases, spiritual accompaniment, based on the Gospel, takes place within the scope of activities aimed at reintegrating children within their original families or in new adoptive communities.

Finally, we should mention the wider-ranging activities that reach civil and ecclesial society, not merely to inform, but also to raise awareness and involve people, above all in the work of preventing the phenomenon and supporting children who have returned to their natural environment. Moreover, there are training and refresher courses for workers and volunteers, aimed at guaranteeing a high degree of professionalism.

## **II. Issues regarding methods**

### *A multi-dimensional approach*

**127.** As far as method is concerned, the primary objective is integration of the various initiatives: teamwork for all workers; parallel commitment of support for parents if they can be contacted and get involved in collaboration; reintegration of children in schooling and vocational training; building and extension of friendship networks, including beyond the welcome centres; sports and recreational activities and those that encourage children to take on active roles of responsibility and be creative.

**128.** Commitment with street children is certainly not easy, and may sometimes appear inconclusive and frustrating, which may lead to the temptation to give up and withdraw. In these cases, it is necessary to hold fast to the fundamental motivations that have driven those involved to undertake this well-deserving work. For believers, these are first of all motivations of faith.

However, it is worth focusing attention on people who have had a very positive experience, and those who rightly maintain that the work produces satisfying results in many, and sometimes the majority, of cases. With prudence and patience this should be confirmed over time, with, for example, lasting rehabilitation and normalisation of an individual after five years. A relapse may occur, with a return to the street, but children who were initially irresponsive to the work of educators may also get on the path leading to recovery and the values that were previously proposed to them without success, later on.

## **III. The task of evangelisation and human promotion**

### *A specific pastoral care*

**129.** Obviously, greater awareness of the seriousness of the problem is needed and a more systematic commitment to deal with it, including in the ecclesial sphere where humanitarian initiatives in favour of street children should be accompanied by a general primary task of evangelisation. It is therefore a good idea to formulate a specific pastoral care for these children, characterized by the proposal of new strategies and means aimed at putting them in contact with the liberating and healing power of Jesus, a friend, brother and teacher. Qualified pastoral ministry of first or new evangelisation is necessary and irreplaceable for recovering and enhancing the religious dimension, which is fundamental in all people.

**130.** Educators and pastoral workers stand before a twofold path and means of intervention. The first is directly aimed at a religious and specifically evangelical proposal, so that children, once they have entered into this area of faith and human values may free themselves from the conditioning and instability that brought them to the street. The second regards rehabilitation of children in order to give them back balance and normality, and full human identity.

This patient work is accompanied by religious proposals and references, insofar as this is compatible with the conditions of the children themselves, and the country where they live. These itineraries do not oppose each other, because they may both turn out to be effective.

**131.** The religious proposal is fundamental within the comprehensive picture of an intervention for the purpose of rehabilitation. The problem shared by a large portion of “street people” is not just indigence or drug addiction, alcoholism or deviance, violence or criminality, AIDS or prostitution, but rather the terrible evil of the “death of the soul”. All too often, even though in the full bloom of youth, these people are “dead inside”.

#### *A pastoral care of meeting, a new evangelisation*

**132.** Therefore, it is necessary to take up the urgent appeal for a new evangelisation, which often echoed throughout the pontificate of Pope John Paul II. Only an encounter with the Risen Christ can give back the joy of the resurrection to those living in death. Only the encounter with He who came to dress the wounds of broken hearts (cf. *Isaiah* 61:1-2; *Luke* 4:18-19) may bring about deep healing of the devastating injuries of being traumatised and petrified by too many frustrations and too much violence endured.

**133.** It is important to pass from the pastoral care of waiting to the pastoral care of meeting, welcoming, by acting with imagination, creativity and courage, to reach children in the new places where they gather, in streets and squares, as well as – in a broader perspective – in the various clubs, in the discotheques and in the “hottest” areas of our metropolises. We should reach out to them with love to bring them the Joyful Proclamation and bear witness through our own life experience that Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

**134.** It is indispensable to bear witness to the light of Christ who illuminates and opens up new ways for people who feel immersed in darkness. It is high time to reawaken the vocation of service and mission in the Christian community, in a growing and heartfelt awareness of the redeeming power of faith and the sacraments. Too many children continue to die in the streets, while many people remain indifferent.

Not to respond to the concerned call for new evangelisation with great commitment is a real sin of omission. Therefore, it is important to include in pastoral projects wide-ranging initiatives that bring the first proclamation to those who are “faraway”, that also gives street children the chance to discover that someone loves them and to be accompanied in seeking a new relationship with their own selves, with others, with God, and with the community to which they belong or has adopted them.

#### **IV. Some concrete proposals**

**135.** Experiences that have already been tried out recommend the following:

- Creation of groups and communities (parish and otherwise) where young people may get to know and live the Gospel in a radical way, by directly experiencing its healing power.
- Establishment of permanent prayer schools in parishes and the various ecclesial structures, which give a fresh boost to the contemplative and missionary dimension of different groups.
- Formation of evangelisation teams able to bear enthusiastic witness to the Wonderful News that Christ came to bring us, as well as “missionary” children who bring the embrace of the Risen Christ to their peers and to the “new poor”, or slaves in our world.
- Formation, in dioceses and eparchies, of young people who are increasingly professionally qualified and able to pool their artistic and musical talents to create new performances featuring content inspired by the Gospel.
- Creation of formation centres for street evangelisation.
- Setting up of alternative places where youngsters may gather, which offer proposals that are permeated with values and meaning.

- Establishment of counselling centres, prevention initiatives and evangelisation in schools.
- Commitment to use the mass media as precious tools for “proclaiming the Gospel from the rooftops” (cf. *Matthew* 10:27).
- Establishment of new communities and groups that welcome and accompany children on a long and difficult path of inner healing, based on the Gospel, with the love that Christ taught us, a love that is not satisfied with “doing charity”, but which takes upon itself the cries, the anguish, the wounds and the death of the little ones and the poor, a love that is ready to lay down one’s life for his friends.

## V. The educator’s icon

### *Jesus the Good Shepherd and the disciples of Emmaus*

**136.** Even educators, who do not start out from a strong and explicit religious proposal, may have an inner attitude inspired by the Gospel, which is well expressed by a triple evangelical icon. First of all, the icon of Jesus before the adulteress (cf. *Luke* 7:36-50; *John* 8:3-11): the master is respectful and affectionate; he does not judge nor condemn the person, but encourages her to change her life through his attitude.

The second icon is that of the Good Shepherd (cf. *Matthew* 18:12-14; *Luke* 15:4-7) who goes off in search of the lost sheep (even more so if it is a little lamb). He invites us not to await, and much less expect, that the sheep itself will find its way back to the fold. These, therefore, are the obligatory and desirable steps for a pastoral care of street children: observe, listen and understand from within this world that is so mysterious (the Good Shepherd knows his sheep); take the initiative for the meeting, go onto the streets, so that the children would sense that we are at ease also in the places where they have chosen or been forced to live (the Shepherd leaves the fold and goes); build with him a spontaneous relationship, which is warm with affection and interest, a genuine friendship that needs no words to express it because it shines through in every gesture (the Shepherd carries the sheep on his shoulders and celebrates with his friends when he finds it).

The third icon is that of the disciples of Emmaus (cf. *Luke* 24:13-35) who finally open their eyes before the Risen Christ and at the prospect of resurrection, after having undertaken a journey during which not their eyes but their hearts – which became burning – are opened to the News of the Gospel.

### *One final goal*

**137.** Obviously, with this inner attitude the second educational path mentioned above (see no. 130) has a lot in common with the first one, and above all they have one final goal. The two paths also share the same method, regarding the following fundamental aspects:

- Arousing trust and self-esteem, so that the children may understand and experience that they are important for the educator as he or she is for them. This is the indispensable starting point so that children may take the first steps towards another way of life, with conviction and decisiveness. They need to be accompanied in discovering the Love of God through the concrete experience of feeling welcomed, unconditionally accepted and personally love for what they are. This face-to-face contact should also be continued after children have been entrusted to the care of other educators or left the reception centre.
- Room should be given to those being educated until they have an active role in the community, with an awakened sense of responsibility and freedom, so that they may feel at home in the community. This requires that in the “home” warmth, spontaneity and friendly proximity continue to prevail, more than order, discipline and written rules.
- A personal relationship should be cultivated with each child. Whilst methodologies and general rules are useful, all children are unique cases, with worlds and backgrounds of their own. Many children have shown intelligence and energy in surviving in extremely difficult situations, proving

themselves to be capable, creative and clever. Benefit should continue to be drawn from such resources, which are more or less manifest in their personalities, in order to guide them in “changing track”, and help them become active in shaping their own lives and not just passive recipients of pastoral rehabilitation. Educational programmes have the important task of leading children to rediscover and take advantage of their own positive potential, put their talents to good use and develop their own capacities as much as possible.

- Aiming at getting children to internalise and make the educational project profoundly their own, to the extent of becoming – perhaps after a few years – a source of help and encouragement for other street children to follow their way. So, collaborating with their educators, the children themselves become active subjects in this specific pastoral care.

- Commitment on behalf of street children should be acknowledged as a privileged way of serving the Lord and meeting with Him. Indeed, He said: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (*Matthew 25:40*).

## **VI. Pastoral agents**

### *Preparation*

**138.** Clearly, the best of the resources engaged in this field should be employed in the professional and spiritual formation of pastoral agents, who should have great human maturity, able to forgo immediate success and to trust that the outcome of their efforts may appear later on, perhaps after periods in which everything seems lost. They should have a great capacity for acting in harmony and collaboration with other educators.

### *Together for a joint commitment*

**139.** If possible, engagement with children’s original families should be envisaged. Such an engagement should positively affect family dynamics, and should be aimed at supporting it, rebuilding the family structure and gradually accompanying and reintegrating the children in their family nucleus of origin.

**140.** Joint work should be pursued, not only within one’s own educational and pastoral structures, but also with those engaged locally in the same service, or who are in any case concerned.

Collaboration therefore with other forces, including non-ecclesial ones – but which have genuine human insight – should be sought and welcomed, as well as with public entities, even when one cannot or, by choice, do not intend to count on their funding.

**141.** Nevertheless, great care will be taken to ensure that substitute initiatives by associations and volunteers do not create, in those who intervene, a mentality and pretext for lack of commitment. Also from the Church, when necessary, constructive criticism and prophetic condemnation of unjust and inhuman situations should complement the function of proposing and encouraging.

### *Networking with a minimum of pastoral structure*

**142.** Furthermore, existing local networking possibilities should be sought out to exchange good experiences, and also to find possible support for people starting out from those who already have considerable experience.

**143.** Street children are a reflection of the society in which they live. Pastoral agents should help society become aware of its responsibility, and foster a sense of healthy concern regarding these children. The local Church and Christian communities should have the same concern.

**144.** For such mobilisation in favour of street children, it would be very useful to set up a special office (or a section of an existing one, such as the pastoral care of human

mobility, or the apostolate of the street), in connection with the apostolic commitment to young people and the family, at Bishops' Conferences and the corresponding S

- 145.** structures of the Oriental Catholic Churches and/or dioceses/eparchies most concerned by the problem.

It is also desirable that organised, incisive proposals with ongoing commitment be introduced into general pastoral projects. Such proposals should pay special attention to the "pastoral care of the road", for which specific agents should raise the awareness and increase the action of parish and ecclesial communities, in a quest for significant responses that are able to respond to the urgency of the problem, and to the Word of the Lord: "Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me" (*Matthew* 18:5).

## PART FOUR

### THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE HOMELESS (TRAMPS)

**145.** With its preferential option for the poor and needy<sup>40</sup>, the Church encourages Christians to accompany and serve these people whatever their moral or personal situation might be. To realise the extent of poverty in the world, including those with no roof over their heads, it suffices to consider the number of homeless people who live in big cities<sup>41</sup>.

#### I. The beneficiaries

**146.** Poverty has an aspect that is manifested in the people who live and sleep on the street or under bridges. These people represent one of the many faces of poverty in today's world. They include tramps; people forced to live in the street because they have no accommodation; foreign immigrants from poor countries who sometimes, even though they have a job, cannot find a place to live; the elderly without a home; and, finally, people – usually young – who have “chosen” a wandering life, either alone or in groups.

**147.** Amongst people living on the street, foreigners deserve a special mention. In general, they are young people who are homeless only during the initial period of immigration due to lack of appropriate facilities. They feel humiliated by the experience, but accept it as an obligatory phase in achieving a better future.

#### *Causes of the situation*

**148.** Moreover, in recent years in industrialised countries, especially in the old Europe, due to the crisis of the welfare state and difficult economic conditions (for example, in eastern Europe), many people no longer receive welfare support from the State. Old-age pensions are insufficient, the right to housing is disregarded, in many cases unemployment benefit does not exist, and healthcare costs are high. Consequently, many people end up living on the streets at some point in their lives.

This situation may also be caused by eviction, unresolved family tensions, loss of employment or illness. Such factors – when necessary support is lacking – may turn those who were leading “normal” lives into people without necessary means.

#### *The precariousness of the situation*

**149.** It is important to understand that, contrary to what is often thought, living on the street is not always a choice. Indeed, life on the street is hard and dangerous, a daily struggle for survival. It is even less opting for freedom. In fact, the homeless are highly vulnerable because they are forced to depend on others even for basic needs, and are exposed to aggression, cold and the humiliation of being chased away because they are unwanted.

**150.** This occurs with increasing frequency as the number of homeless poor grows, yet places where they may find shelter (for example, in stations, on benches, under arcades and under bridges) are decreasing. At the same time, we are also seeing a gradual change in attitude towards them. The plight of the poor no longer moves people, they have become a problem of law and order, and

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. 3rd GENERAL LATIN AMERICAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE, held in Puebla de los Angeles, Mexico, in 1979: *Puebla. L'Evangelizzazione nel presente e nel futuro dell'America Latina*, no. 1142, Editrice Missionaria Italiana, Bologna 1979.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to Cardinal Roger Etchegaray on the problem of the homeless*: Teachings of Pope John Paul II, vol. X, 3 (1987) p. 1352 and PONTIFICAL COMMISSION “IUSTITIA ET PAX”, *Che ne hai fatto del tuo fratello senza tetto? La Chiesa e il problema dell'alloggio*, EDB, Bologna 1988, pp. 6-7.

irritation towards beggars is increasing, partly because in some cases begging is on an organised scale.

**151.** People who live on the street are looked on with wariness and suspicion, and being homeless is the start of gradually losing one's rights. It is more difficult to obtain welfare, almost impossible to find work, and no longer possible to obtain identity papers. These poor people become a nameless and voiceless crowd, unable to defend themselves and find the necessary resources for a better future.

The Word of God censures any form of irritation or indifference towards poor people (poverty fatigue), reminding us that the Lord will judge our lives by assessing *how* and *how much* we have loved the poor (cf. *Matthew 25:31-46*). According to Saint Augustine, we are requested to help any poor person so as not to run the risk of denying someone who might be Christ himself<sup>42</sup>.

### *The dignity of persons*

**152.** Even though in a state of need and hardship, the homeless are people with a dignity that should never be overlooked, with all its consequences.

Initiatives on behalf of the homeless should be innovative, in order to finally break the binomial of a simple response to need and looking beyond in the attempt to recognise the value of the person.

**153.** This means taking what homeless people have as a starting point – their abilities rather than their shortcomings. In this context, pastoral agents should take advantage of even small signs of changes.

**154.** It is also important to recognise “differences”, which should be integrated, and limits, which should not bring about a feeling that the other person is different, a man or woman of inferior rank. Personalising an initiative also means determining what can, and what cannot, be done.

In this regard, some people talk of the “right to crisis”, which directly affects pastoral agents who manage a helping relationship. They, in turn, feel in some way injured or wounded. The “differences”, and potential crises, lead a support structure to emerge from an isolation that may come about, and to activate a working network with the various local services.

**155.** In addition, if we look at developing countries, we see a rising number of beggars, who are often sick, blind, leprosy, or have AIDS, and therefore excluded from their villages and families, forced to live on the sidewalks, by clever means and from begging.

## **II. Methods of approach and means of assistance**

**156.** Thanks to God, appropriate – albeit insufficient – pastoral responses are provided by parishes, Catholic groups, ecclesial movements and new communities. Some people seek out such needy brothers and sisters, and this encounter has created a friendship and support network, which has given rise to generous and stable solidarity initiatives.

**157.** Looking for homeless people, and meeting them, leads to overcoming their isolation, as well as protecting them from cold and hunger. Food and hot drinks, a kind of “mobile meal”, blankets and other items that relieve their needs, are brought to them.

**158.** Reception centres have also been set up, which provide a range of organised initiatives to meet the many requirements of needy people: information and counselling; distribution of food and clothing items; personal hygiene facilities (showers, laundries, hairdressers); and health clinics.

**159.** Also to be considered is the fact that the homeless often lose the opportunity to benefit from public services because, as a result of their situation, they no longer have a fixed address and do not have identity papers. This state of “official non-existence” should be tackled – with municipalities

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<sup>42</sup> *Date omnibus, ne cui non dederitis ipse sit Christus*, PS. AUGUSTINUS, *Sermo 311*: P.L. 39:2342 ff.

and civic authorities – by seeking to establish a fixed address for them, perhaps at a welfare community or reception centre. The same solution could be used to provide them with a postal address.

**160.** Regarding the offer of food, giving something to eat to the hungry (cf. *Matthew 25:35*) is an ancient human value that is widespread in all cultures, because it is directly linked to recognising the value of life. The scandal of the poor Lazarus and the rich man, in the famous parable of Jesus (cf. *Luke 16:19-30*), is also echoed in Jewish and Islamic cultures, also in connection with matters relating to hospitality. The hungry thus cross-examine everyone's conscience – secular people and believers – in the context of a culture of solidarity<sup>43</sup>.

**161.** Regarding all kinds of canteen, a free, hot and copious meal should be served in a familiar and welcoming atmosphere. Those who come to eat need to satisfy not only the material need for food, but are above all in need of kindness, respect and human warmth, which are often denied to them. Ideally the service should be provided by volunteers, who give their free time to help.

Attention to each person's dignity is also expressed by paying attention to the surroundings and the courteous attitude of the volunteers who serve at table. Guests' dietary habits should also be taken into account, in respect of their religious traditions, for example.

**162.** In this situation volunteers experience a special relationship with poor people, almost to the extent of establishing family and friendship relations, which many of the homeless have lost or never had. This also means that the homeless can have a beautiful Christmas dinner – almost a family one – which is becoming a tradition in many places.

#### *Christian solicitude*

**163.** This reveals the link between the road and its relative specific pastoral care with its origin, Christ our Lord and the mystery of His incarnation, and with the Church and its preferential option for the poor, who should be evangelised, obviously with respect for everyone's freedom of conscience. Moreover, the poor also evangelise us (cf. *Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:18-19*).

**164.** In this regard, the merciful work of burial should not be overlooked. For those who die that have no family, pastoral workers should ensure that a funeral is held. Once a year it would also be good idea to remember, with people who live in the street, those who were known and have passed on to a better life, recalling their names one by one. May their names be recorded in the book of life!

**165.** At the end of this wandering along the various pathways of the pastoral care of the road, our contemplative gaze turns towards, Mary, Mother and Our Lady, with the prayer dedicated to pastoral agents in the fourth glorious mystery of the Rosary of Migrants and Itinerant People: “[...] so that in their work they may not be directed by purely personal and material considerations ... [nor] overwhelmed by feelings of insecurity, anxiety and loneliness, but find consolation in the loving heart of Mary, assumed into Heaven”<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, Instruction *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, n. 9: l. c.

<sup>44</sup> PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, *The Rosary of Migrants and Itinerant People*, 28: 1.c.

*Rome, from the offices of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, on 24 May 2007, in memory of Our Lady of the Way.*

Renato Raffaele Cardinal Martino  
*President*

+ Agostino Marchetto  
*Titular Archbishop of Astigi*  
*Secretary*