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E-Newsletter
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Editorial

Dear fellow readers,

With renewed hope we retake our communication to share the main activities that we are promoting.

In line with the letter from Father Alessandro Gazzola, General Superior of the Missionaries of St. Charles Scalabrini, for the International Migrants Day that we are publishing in this edition, addressing the current crisis migrants are facing and countries for migration governance, “as missionaries, we try to fulfill our commitment to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the various crossing paths. First we listening, second, we put in place the initiatives or structures”.

In this volume we present some legal ways and structures SIMN is promoting to assist in the definition, implementation of policies and programs to protect and promote the dignity and rights of migrants and their families.

Fr. Leonir Chiarello, cs, Executive Director
Fr. Mario Zambiasi, cs, Deputy Executive Director

Message from the General Superior of the Scalabrini Missionaries for the 102nd World Day of Migrants and Refugees, January 17, 2016

Migrants and Refugees Still Challenge us

It is now more than a century that the Church has dedicated a day of reflection and prayer for migrant humanity, wishing to draw the attention of the faithful, and of all men and women of good will, to this portion of the people of God on their earthly journey. Recently, however, every day of the year was marked by the phenomenon of migrations or of asylum seekers: millions of men, women and children, too often unaccompanied, are confronting us: in them, forced to set out on a journey without the certainty of reaching the desired goal, we are challenged to glimpse the familiar face of the Son of God and to do each one his/her own duty.

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New Home for Migrants on the Border Between Peru and Chile

On the one hand many situations of crisis, indeed too many, persist, along with conflicts that do not allow “escape routes” within one’s country, on the other hand, there is a growing indifference and widespread insensitivity to the arrival of so many desperate people and often even to their dying just steps away from safety. As a consequence, this human tide is relegated to inhuman peripheries, increasingly more and more removed from our attention. “How can we not see in all this the effects of that ‘culture of waste’ which endangers the human person, sacrificing men and women before the idols of profit and consumption?”, Pope Francis asked himself pointedly last Monday in a speech before the diplomatic corps.

In my view, the road to resolving this passes only through a side-by-side commitment to the migrant, asylum seeker and refugee, with a combined intervention aimed at facilitating their inclusion in society, making everyone able to share in building his/her future and totally rejecting a ghetto and de-humanizing culture. As missionaries, we try to meet migrants, asylum seekers and refugees on the several roads they cross, listening first to them, and, secondly, putting in place initiatives or structures. It is by doing this that the “casas del migrante” were originated along various borders, and we have created a networking system with those who, even in civil society, walk along paths similar to ours. With amazement we have seen grow and have fostered the participation of young people in local initiatives of generous service as well as their availability in international volunteering; we saw with gratitude that many missions, born to take care of Italian immigrants, have accepted to be guided in being open to new migrant brothers and sisters.

» Hospitality and solidarity, after all, are the foundations of a strong culture and society and are signs of human and Christian maturity, which are essential for the real and tangible culture of encounter, so often invoked by Pope Francis, and able to prevent the risk of fundamentalism and extremism. The Holy Year of Mercy is for all of us the opportunity and the constant reminder to build up together a renewed communion with every human being migrating on this planet.

Rome, January 14, 2016

Tacna, Peru - November 25, 2015. On November 24, 2015, in Tacna, Peru, a few kilometers from the border with Chile, the new home for migrants, Santa Rosa de Lima was inaugurated. The event was celebrated with a mass followed by the blessing of a commemorative plaque. This House was a joint project of the Diocese of Tacna and Moquegua and the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles - Scalabrinians, supported by the Conference Episcopal Italian (CEI), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN).

The event was attended by about 100 people, including Bishop Marco Antonio Cortez Lara, Father Agenor Sbaraini, top regional Scalabrinian missionaries in the Region of Maria Mother of Migrants, the Bishop of the Diocese of Tacna and Moquegua, Mr Jeremy MacGillivray, on behalf of the Peru Office of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as well as government authorities and representatives of civil society from Tacna (Peru) and Arica (Chile).

Monsignor Marco Antonio emphasized the need to “keep the door open, as a sign of welcome and progress”; When the migrants make their journeys, they deserve a path without obstacles. “We insure homes, cars and even animals; However, we don’t have the same guarantees for solidarity and brotherhood”. Then Mr MacGillivray stressed cooperation with SIMN already established in other countries and now in Peru. Finally, Father Isaldo Bettin c.s., Director of the Home of the Migrant in Tacna, presented a brief history of the Scalabrinian presence in the region, highlighting the continuity of the project keeping borders safe and supportive.

Father Mário José Zambiasi, Deputy Chief Executive of SIMN, emphasized that “now the immigrants have a comfortable space in the center of the Andean corridor, away from the many uncertainties of the journey” and commented that, “With this new House, SIMN continues to expand its outreach in the mission of protecting and promoting the dignity of migrants and their families”.



DIGNITY STOLEN AND RETURNED

Message of Father Flor Maria Rigoni at the Inauguration of the New Facilities of the Migrant Shelter: Belén de Tapachula - December 14th, 2015

Maybe the title can lead us into a trap of interpretation. Yes, because probably the reader considers it an outrage that was resolved in a judicial case of a reported rape when justice and due damages were paid.

No, it's simply the opening of a school of art and crafts for refugee-seekers and victims of trafficking, so that they may be included in the work force and in society. A school that is born by the common will of the Scalabrini House of the Migrant of Tapachula, Chiapas, the Government of Mexico, through the National Institute of Migration with the support of SIMN. The idea came to us from the model developed in Santiago de Chile by the integrated Welcoming Center for Migrants (CIAMI) of the Scalabrini missionaries, which at that time was led by Father Leonir Chiarello. Migrants and refugees obtained the opportunity of a profession and, at the same time, a standardization of migration practices.

This project has been led by UNHCR, a large Mexican company, and the goodwill of many people and institutions which have lent to them, by the Providence of God, a hand and a face.

It is an outstretched hand towards all those who have been dispossessed in this life of the basic dignity of being a human being with a name, a surname, and with the possibility of raising one's head and engaging in dialogue. Migrants in general, as well as other categories of people, spend their lives on the periphery of history, invisible, because we consider them as "Don Nadie", consequently, they are utterly rejected and despised.

Those from Central America today do not migrate for economic reasons: this is a reminder of the past. Central America is now in turmoil, defeated by the total confusion which accompanies an undeclared civil war, where death has no name or face, or justification. There is no declared army on the guerrilla front: you are surrounded by gunmen who play Russian roulette with you and every movement can unleash a shot in your direction. They seem to me shadows carrying each other's coffins: a mobile cemetery without crosses. God himself seems to have died with his people, hugging children and elders, women and adults: there death wields a maddened sickle.

In just ten days we have received sixty registrations for six courses offered by the House: Hall of Beauty, cutting and cosmetology, refrigeration and air conditioning expertise, computer skills and English literacy. Registered persons are men and women who are

seeking refuge in Mexico. This is a statistical fact that we cannot ignore. Mexico is becoming the door where people seek to stay as a refugee and be protected. The numbers have more than doubled and the political and sociological aspect of the moment is the commitment of the Government towards a new alliance.

The scenes of today, with dozens of people around the Casa del Migrante waiting for the authorization of COMAR (Mexican Commission for Aid to Refugees), which can last for more than 3 months, will be upcoming. UNHCR tries to so far provide lodging for those participating in long-term courses, paying the rent for houses or apartments in Tapachula.

The school has 32 beds for women and their children up to 8 years-of-age. The diplomas given by the CECATI, have federal recognition and it is possible to achieve, through the National Institute of Migration, a humanitarian visa, if the applicant does not meet all requirements for COMAR.

When I speak of returned dignity I am referring to the possibility that invisible migrants, whose lives are defined by instability, and whom society and civil rights ignore, can stand on their own, take hold of their lives and realize opportunities that they did not previously have for their land or their family. It is a pilot project and our dream is that it can multiply on any number of additional borders and along varied migratory routes.

Sometimes dreaming is allowed, and the ashes that came before transform the dream.

P. Flor Maria Rigoni, c.s.
Director del Albergue Belén de Tapachula

Message from Bishop Leopoldo Gonzales, Bishop of Tapachula, in his message sent to Father Flor María Rigoni on the occasion of the inauguration of the new facilities of the House of the Migrant: "In our Diocese today opened the door of mercy, with which we started the Jubilee year, upon which the Pope has summoned us into the Year of Mercy. At the same time you open the doors of this reception center. "They may seem to be different doors, but in reality are the same: it is the door to the mercy of God".



SIMN Welcomes New Program to Protect Central American Refugees, Offers Assistance in Identifying Persons At-Risk

In comments January 15, 2016 - Reverend Leonir Chiarello c.s., executive director of the Scalabrinian International Migration Network (SIMN), welcomed the announcement by the U.S. government to launch a new refugee processing program in Central America for families and unaccompanied children fleeing violence in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.

On January 13, Secretary of State John Kerry announced the initiative, which, according to reports, could offer resettlement to up to 9,000 persons a year to the United States and other countries in the region. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) would collaborate with the United States and other governments in the region in implementing the program.

“This is a welcome development,” said Fr. Chiarello. “It not only offers these vulnerable populations an alternative to taking a dangerous journey to find safety, it shows that these women and children are indeed refugees and should be offered international protection.”

The Scalabrinian network, which operates 35 migrant shelters globally, has hosted nearly 600,000 migrants in their shelters in Central America and Mexico over the past three decades.

“From our experience in the region and from the stories we hear from those in our shelters, the primary force pushing them is the endemic violence in their home countries,” Fr. Chiarello added.

Fr. Chiarello offered the assistance of the Scalabrinian shelters network in identifying at-risk children and families who would qualify for refugee status in the new program.

“We have eyes and ears on the ground and the refugees tell us their terrifying stories,” Fr. Chiarello stated. “It is our hope that we could collaborate with the governments and the United Nations in directing those in danger to this new and important program.”

SIMN Joins the Demand for Humanitarian Protection from Escalating Violence in Central America

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Jan 25, 2016 – The Scalabrinian International Migration Network (SIMN) and more than 270 organizations sent a letter to President Obama asking his administration to grant Temporary Protected Status (TPS), a form of temporary immigration relief, to undocumented immigrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras in light of pervasive violence and environmental disasters that prevent them from safely returning to the region.

“TPS is grounded in clear statutory authority that was established by Congress 25 years ago to respond to humanitarian crises like we are seeing in the Northern Triangle,” said Royce Murray, policy director at Heartland Alliance’s National Immigrant Justice Center. “Knowing the violence that is occurring in these countries, and how their governments have failed to keep their own citizens safe, it would be unconscionable to deport anyone there at this time. It is exactly the type of situation TPS is intended to address.”

The letter sent asks the administration to employ TPS protection as an additional component of a comprehensive humanitarian response to the Central America refugee crisis, in addition to the U.S. State Department’s recently announced plan to establish third-country refugee processing centers in Central America.

More than 17,500 people died in homicides in 2015 in the Northern Triangle, a geographic region the size of the state of Oregon and home to just under 30 million people. For the past six years, all three countries have ranked within the world’s top four countries for rates of femicide, while El Salvador and Guatemala have had the highest homicide rates in the world among children. A recent report by the Immigrant Legal Resource Center estimates that over 750,000 Central Americans would benefit under a TPS designation.



Six months later ... the Painful Episode of Colombians Deported from Venezuela Continues

Six months after President Santos declared that he would defend “firmly” thousands of citizens deported from Venezuela, a group of 27 families, including 44 children and adolescents, they sleep on the street after the grant of leases of \$750,000 pesos granted by the Colombian Government.

By order of the Venezuelan Executive since last August, thousands of Colombians were deported, 24 Venezuelan municipalities in state of exception and 5 border crossings closed.

Affected people argue they have not achieved economic stability during the time that lead back in their homeland, due to which, many of them are in our border trying to dig to carry food to their homes and others have had to go to the solidarity of their known ones. They also complained that they have had serious drawbacks, some live crowded together, they don't have a home nor work. “Everything was left it in Venezuela, where we were for living for more than 10 years”, said one of them.

The Church as civil society has been responding in solidarity to the humanitarian situation of the deportees and forced returnees from Venezuela, in particular through the Diocesan Center for Migrations of Cucuta that for 37 years has been providing accommodation and assistance to migrants, displaced people and deportees, under the direction of the Scalabrinian missionaries.

Father Francesco Bortignon, c.s., through an agreement with the Mayor of Cúcuta opened the doors to the 27 families (100 people) who had camped in the Santander park. The lodging was agreed, on January 12 of January, for a week of emergency.

During that week the missionaries of St. Charles - Scalabrinians covered the totality of the costs of food and lodging in supportive way, with the support of the World Food Programme (WFP). It should be noted that in the Migration Center is being conducted deep and urgent work of remodeling, for the improvement and expansion of attention to migrants, scheduled for December, 2016, for this reason it's not in optimal conditions for its use at the moment. In addition, at that time, it had hosted 50 people, victims of recent acts of forced displacement, refuge or forced return, so overcrowded conditions and health problems were going to occur.

“The City Hall may not, the Governor is not involved; the only one who has the authority to the solution is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but this does not want to touch the subject because they

know that this concerns more than 18,000 people,” says Father Bortignon, who more than once has had to deal with similar situations in his mission as Director of the Center for Migration.

Leaving the State Fund solution, the Church has faced the humanitarian emergency: 100 people came out of the Center on the morning of January 20 and camped on the street. From January 22, more than 40 children, adolescents and 6 women, eat breakfast, lunch and dine in the Center (along with other moms who accompany children). In addition, they open doors for water service, showers and toilets for everyone; the Jesuit service for Refugees (SJR) and WFP collaborate with feeding costs.

In addition to the above, and in a more comprehensive vision, JRS and the Scalabrinian missionaries call that “the authorities speed up the serious barriers to the access and permanence of children and adolescents in the school system, such as Civil registration, Sisben, certification of notes of the studies developed in Venezuela and legalization of documents”.

A further concern of the Scalabrinian missionaries is enrolment and retention of children in class: the support of uniform and school supplies is urgent since families do not have the resources. This project already has support of the Scalabrinian missionaries and SJR, but need more support from the civil society and especially the Government.

Over time, the memory is short and commitments are made to be elusive to a reality that is the daily life of desolated people who came to their country looking for solidarity and support which they found while they were “news”, but the avatar of circumstances has left them little by little into oblivion, while the drama that accompanies them remains latent reminding them the “indignation in which they were submitted when they were expelled from Venezuela just for being Colombian”...

Cristina Castillo Carrillo



SIMN Participates in the Consultations of Civil Society Initiative MICIC

Geneva, January 30, 2016 - On January 28th and 29th of 2016, was held, at the US permanent mission to the United Nations, the International Consultation convened by the Civil Society Initiative MICIC (Migrants In Countries In Crisis, by its acronym in English). The objective was to explore and define practices to protect and assist migrants caught in crisis countries caused by conflict or natural disasters.

The MICIC Initiative emerged in 2013 through the joint efforts of the United States and the Philippines, and currently has the participation of Australia, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Ethiopia and the European Union. These countries are supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Office of the Special Representative for International Migration United Nations General Secretary. Through a consultative and collaborative process, the MICIC collects relevant information from a variety of sources to define principles, guidelines and practices to identify measures to improve protection and assistance to migrants who are caught in humanitarian crises caused by conflict or natural disasters. States, international organizations and civil society can use these guidelines as a reference tool for programming and policy development.

Its Executive Director, Father Leonir Chiarello, represented the Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN) at the consultation, who was the rapporteur of the working group who handled the topic of *monitoring and evaluation of actions and humanitarian post-crisis lessons*.

SIMN also participated in the regional consultation of civil society in Latin America, held in Costa Rica on February 16, 2016, prior to the regional consultation on governments, held in this city on February 17th and 18th of 2016.

“Saving lives and protect the physical integrity and human dignity of people caught in humanitarian crises caused by conflicts and natural disasters, it’s the central aim of this initiative in which governments, international organizations and civil society, including our Scalabriniana Network collaborate” says the executive director of SIMN.

Center for Migration Studies Reports Decline of the US Undocumented Population Since 2008

New York, NY January 20, 2016 – In a critical new report released today, the Center for Migration Studies of New York (CMS) finds that the US undocumented population has fallen below 11 million for the first time since 2004. The report also offers evidence that the Mexican-born undocumented population continues to decline, falling by more than 600,000 since 2010. The paper further describes trends in the undocumented population over the past few years for selected countries of origin and states of residence.

Major findings in the report include:

- The total US undocumented population continued to decline in 2014, and has fallen by more than a million since 2008;
- The undocumented population in the majority of US states declined after 2008; however, eleven states reached their maximum population in 2014, including Texas;
- With the exception of Alabama and possibly Georgia, restrictive state immigration laws in 2010-2011 had little impact on undocumented population trends;
- The Mexican-born undocumented population was about 600,000 smaller in 2014 than it was in 2010;
- About 250,000 fewer undocumented immigrants from Mexico lived in California in 2014 compared to 2010; and
- From 1980 to 2014, the legally resident population from Mexico grew faster than the Mexican undocumented population.

The annual estimates for 2010 to 2014 were derived by CMS based on statistics on the foreign-born population collected in the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS). The estimates for years prior to 2010 are based on estimates published in CMS’s International Migration Review (Warren and Warren, 2013), and are available upon request.

“Despite the claims of an ever-rising, out-of-control US undocumented population,” said Donald Kerwin, CMS’s Executive Director, “the number of undocumented has fallen each year since 2008. In addition, the number and percentage of foreign-born persons with legal status has increased. These trends should be applauded by partisans on all sides of the immigration debate.”



SIMN Offers Written Testimony to U.S. House Hearing on Unaccompanied Children and Families Fleeing Central America

Washington D.C. February 5, 2016. - On February 4, 2016, the Scalabrinian International Migration Network (SIMN) submitted written testimony to the House Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security of the U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee on the plight of unaccompanied children and families fleeing violence in the northern triangle countries of Central America.

The statement outlined SIMN's views on the nature of the populations escaping the region and policy responses which would humanely respond to the growing crisis. "From our experience with these persons," the testimony read, "it is clear that they are fleeing threats and violence in their communities, towns, and cities."

Citing a recent study by the Center for Migration Studies of New York (CMS), the testimony contrasted the decrease in undocumented migration from Mexico and other Latin American countries to the United States with a five percent increase in persons from the northern triangle region--Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

"The CMS study is consistent with the fact that the migratory flow from these three nations over the past five years is driven by different factors than other countries in Central America," the testimony read. "Violence, persecution, and the breakdown of the rule of law, as well as the lack of opportunity, are among the push factors from the northern triangle nations."

The testimony outlined several policy recommendations to help address the refugee situation, including the expansion of refugee resettlement in the area and collaboration with SIMN in identifying and referring children and families at risk to the program. It also urged the designation of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for the nationals of the three countries in the United States, in order to protect them from enforcement actions recently launched by the U.S. Administration. Finally, it urged long-term assistance to the region to create opportunities for young persons in the region to have hope for a future.

"The SIMN's houses of migrants and shelters work each day with these vulnerable children and families," the testimony concluded. "It is clear to our network that this crisis will not end soon. We look forward to working with the U.S. government and Congress in resolving this crisis as soon as possible."



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