



Address of the President to the members of the Council of the International Catholic Migration Commission

8 March 2018

Distinguished members of the Council,

Thank you for entrusting me with the great responsibility of being your President. As I said in my presentation to you, I am committed, without reservation, to the core tenets of peace and justice, love and compassion, that drive ICMC and shape every aspect of its engagement.

I pledge to uphold those principles in my work for you; to advocate for them at every opportunity; to defend them when they are under attack; to be tireless in my efforts to ensure that ICMC is able to do, *even better*, what it has always done so well – give voice to the powerless; the marginalised, the dispossessed.

Members of the Council: we must make no mistake about the enormity of the challenge that confronts us. The task ahead is not one for the fainthearted. We live in a time of great stress and uncertainty. I am shaken by the ongoing, rapid and widespread loss of faith in multilateral cooperation and multilateral institutions. I am distressed that commitment to fundamental principles of human rights and justice – commitments I believed to be set in stone – are wavering. I am deeply worried that countries which have been long standing leaders in our epic battles for equality, rights and non-discrimination have fallen silent, or worse.

Our work, our mandate, is central to this new political and social reality. As I pointed out in my presentation, **migration** has become the flashpoint. Migration is the lens through which governments and communities are interpreting and responding to the world.

While this new reality makes ICMC's task much more difficult, it also makes it immeasurably more important. The Holy Father's engagement on the migration issue has given the Catholic Church – through ICMC – an **unprecedented opportunity** to speak its truth loudly, clearly and consistently. To provide urgently needed **global leadership** that will work to reinforce the moral and spiritual guidance being provided by the Holy Father.

As your President, I will take the lead in speaking this truth. But our responsibility is a collective one. I will be looking to you all to use your influence in new and powerful ways to promote the ICMC message. We have truth and humanity, love and compassion on our side. Failure is not an option.

I now turn to the newly elected members of the ICMC Governing Committee:

- Archbishop Ntamwana
- Bishop Muandula
- Rev. Fr. Joseph
- Bishop Cruz Santos
- Archbishop Hesse
- Ms Ries
- Bishop Ortiz Mondragon
- Bishop Vacca Ramirez
- Cardinal Collins
- Mr Canny
- Rev. Fr Kalakech
- Bishop Bertin
- Rev. Sr Loughry
- Rev Feliz Acosta

I congratulate you all on your appointment. And I congratulate our Secretary-General, Msgr. Vitillo, on the ratification of his position. It is a fine team and one that I am so very proud to lead.

My immediate priority, in the coming months, will be to speak to as many of you as possible – preferably in person. You are the beating heart of this organization and I aim to listen – and to learn as much as I can from all of you.

I will also reach out to ICMC's partners. The struggle we are engaged in requires a full army, not a single battalion. We must continue and strengthen our engagement with critical players including IOM and UNHCR; the Bishops Conferences and the many Catholic organisations that operate on the front line. But we must also be brave and creative in seeking new partnerships: with governments; with intergovernmental organizations; with civil society and with the private sector. ICMC must strive to be part of every important conversation about the issues in which we are involved. Not because we *want* to be there, but rather because we have something unique and valuable to contribute.

And my final words in this brief presentation are for the Secretariat. After more than a quarter of a century in the international system I acknowledge, with deep appreciation, the unsung heroes whose work makes things happen. And in this group, I include everyone – from the support staff in the field to the Secretary-General and his team in Geneva. You all have your place and it is a critical one. Without you, ICMC would not exist. As *your* President, I recognise your role and I pledge my commitment to work alongside you.

And *from* you – I, alongside your Secretary-General, will expect the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct. On this point, there are no exceptions. The broader world that ICMC inhabits is under intense scrutiny – much of it seriously overdue. We must be scrupulous and absolutely transparent at every turn. Those we have committed to serve deserve nothing less. Everyone connected with ICMC must see him or herself personally responsible for delivering – and living out – the organization's vision and the values that uphold it.

I conclude my address with a few lines from a meditation of Cardinal John Henry Newman. My mother ensured that each of her seven children was able to recite this particular devotion by the time of their first Communion. I will forever be grateful for the wisdom and grace behind that simple act, not least because it has become part of who I am. This is a prayer for all of us. But it is also a prayer for the women, men and children that ICMC is working so hard to protect and defend.

*God has created me to do him some definite service
He has committed some work to me that he has not committed to another
I have my mission
I may never know it in this life – but I will be told it in the next
I am a link in a chain – a bond of connections between persons
He has not created me for naught
I shall do good
I shall do his work
I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it, if I do but
keep His commandments.
Therefore, I will trust Him. Whatever, wherever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in
sickness, my sickness may serve Him; in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him; if I am in
sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him.
He does nothing in vain; He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends, He may throw
me among strangers, He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide the future from
me – still He knows what He is about.*

Members of the Council: thank you, once again for entrusting me with the formidable task of being your President. I have absolutely no doubt that we are all engaged in our “definite service”. I have no doubt that working together, we will challenge the “globalization of indifference” by helping to give voice to those who cannot make themselves heard.

God bless us all.

**Anne T. Gallagher AO
President, International Catholic Migration Commission
Australia, 8 March 2018**