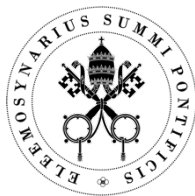


- COURTESY TRANSLATION -



Vatican, 28 January 2020

Your Eminence,
Your Excellency,

In concluding the Angelus of September 6, 2015, Pope Francis appealed to parishes, religious communities, monasteries and sanctuaries throughout Europe to welcome at least one family of refugees each, expressing the Gospel in a concrete way.

On the same occasion, the Holy Father also requested the support of all the continent's Bishops: "I address to my brother Bishops of Europe, true pastors, that in their dioceses they support my appeal, remembering that Mercy is the second name of Love: 'What you have done for the least of my brothers, you have done for me'. (cf. Mt 25:46)".

After his trip to Lesbos in April 2016, keenly aware of the situation of dramatic overcrowding and suffering in which more than 20,000 refugees experience on that island and many thousands more in the various hot spots in Greece, the Pope has never failed to help them, trying to open humanitarian corridors for their transfer to other European countries with full respect of their dignity. The Holy Father's constant concern has been demonstrated on the numerous missions carried out to the Aegean islands by Cardinal Krajewski and Cardinal Hollerich.

Thus, after the first group of 21 refugees brought to Italy by the Holy Father on his return journey from Lesbos and welcomed by the Holy See, other families have been able to leave the island in recent years to achieve, after so much waiting and suffering on the margins of which they had already survived for a long time, a happy integration into European society. This is the case of two families who were welcomed by the Archdiocese of Luxembourg in November 2019 and 33 other refugees - with 10 more to come by January 2020 - in Rome, whose reception was managed by the Office of Papal Charities and the Community of Sant'Egidio, which agreed the legal-administrative procedures for their transfer with the Greek authorities.

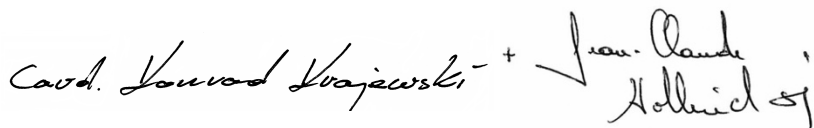
A path has therefore been cleared that could give back hope to about 20,000 adults and over 1,100 unaccompanied minors who have been stuck indefinitely in temporary camps and precarious structures, who are in Europe but outside European society.

Encouraged by the Holy Father's words, this path has become - as well as a Christian duty - a heartfelt invitation for the whole Church to awaken new, evangelical energies of welcome in each of the member countries of the European Union, where the respective Episcopal Conferences should agree on a project for a humanitarian corridor from Lesbos and the other first reception camps in Greece, in collaboration with their individual governments.

Recently begun experiences in some countries have shown that the chances of a positive reception are higher than hoped for; in fact, many minors have been welcomed into families, while adults and families have been well received by the religious communities, parishes and families who have made themselves available for this service.

We would like to conclude this appeal, once more with the words of Pope Francis, who at the meeting with the refugees who arrived through the humanitarian corridor from Lesbos on December 19: "How can we fail to hear the desperate cry of so many brothers and sisters...? How can we "go further", like the priest and the Levite of the parable of the Good Samaritan, making ourselves responsible for their death? Our sloth is a sin!" ... "we must help and save, because we are all responsible for the life of our neighbour, and the Lord will ask us to account for this at the moment of judgment."

We too - together with the Holy Father - thank the Lord "for all those who have decided not to remain indifferent" and with courage will open a new path to restore dignity and a future for so many of our brothers and sisters.



H.Em. Konrad Card. Krajewski
Almoner of Papal Charities

H.Em. Jean-Claude Card. Hollerich SJ
*Archbishop of Luxembourg
President of the Commission of the
Bishops' Conferences of the European
Union (COMECE)*



H.Em. Michael F. Card. Czerny SJ
*Under Secretary of the Dicastery for
Promoting Integral Human Development*

(Annexed are the guidelines for implementing a project to welcome refugees from Greece)

Guidelines on the procedure for the transfer of asylum seekers and refugees from Greece to a European country.

The main legal basis for the project is Article 17 of the Dublin Agreements (the Dublin III Regulation No 604/2013), which stipulates that a Member State which is not obliged to examine an asylum application may nevertheless offer to do so by notifying the Member State responsible (in our case, Greece).

The Dublin III Regulation states in general terms that refugees cannot apply to reside in a Member State other than the one that has granted them international protection, but does not prevent Member States other than the one that granted them international protection from granting them a permit to reside on their own territory.

1. Episcopal Conferences invite dioceses to state their willingness to accept families or individual refugees, specifying the number according to their availability and resources.
2. On the legal basis of Article 17 of the Dublin III Regulation, each Episcopal Conference urges its Government to offer Greece the voluntary assumption of responsibility for the examination of asylum applications (or, in some cases, for the continuation of the protection of refugees already recognized), so that through the competent bodies, generally the Ministries of the Interior, this is done for the benefit of a specific number of refugees established on the basis of the availability expressed by the individual dioceses.
3. Assuming this action is taken by the Government, the Episcopal Conference will undertake measures to ensure that the beneficiary refugees will be provided with hospitality and support for social integration for a certain period of time, at the end of which it is expected that the beneficiaries will have become completely or at least partially autonomous.
4. The Community of Sant'Egidio will identify the potential beneficiaries of the project, then agreeing with each Episcopal Conference concerned the names of the beneficiaries to be hosted, based on their vulnerability and respecting as far as possible the requests and expectations of the individual dioceses. Before starting the reception process, each Episcopal Conference, through its own focal person, will set out with the Community of Sant'Egidio the modalities of this support, including the specific needs of the people to be hosted, agreeing on the start date.

5. Once the agreements have been made and the confirmations referred to in the previous point have been received, the Episcopal Conferences shall forward the names of the beneficiaries to the national authorities responsible for the implementation of the Dublin III Regulation with a view to their transfer and reception.

6. The competent national authority of the host country may thus communicate to the Greek authority responsible for the implementation of the Dublin III Regulation the names of the beneficiaries of the project for which it voluntarily intends to take responsibility. Transfers from Greece will take place for small groups of beneficiaries or for individual cases in agreement with the institutional bodies of the countries concerned and the Episcopal Conferences.

7. In cases where the beneficiaries are asylum seekers, Greece has agreed to cover the costs of the transfer. For those who have already received international protection status from Greece, the costs of the transfer will have to be covered by the Bishops' Conferences themselves. The latter case will involve a lesser number of persons identified on the basis of specific needs such as, for example, reunification with relatives, maintaining the unity of family groups, or special care needs.

For any information and communications regarding the project, please contact the Community of Sant'Egidio, which carries out this activity with the Office of Papal Charities, at the following e-mail address: info@santegidio.org (for the attention of Daniela Pompei, the Community of Sant'Egidio's Director for immigrants, refugees and Romani people).