

## There are too many of them! How can we possibly cope?

- The impression that the numbers of arrivals are impossible to cope with seems to be widespread. There are reasons, sometimes justified reasons, to think that way:
  - The media coverage of migration routes is often dramatic and – for good reasons – focuses on the growing number of migrants using unusual and often life-threatening routes to Europe. More significantly, the words *crisis*, *wave*, *aliens*, *threat* or *combat illegal migration* and the illegal and unsafe methods of travel of so many migrants increase the negative outlook and the impression of an invasion.
  - Migrants often travel in groups for various reasons. They often seek to enter countries through the same points. They often seek asylum in the same nations and are often grouped in the same welcome centres. This concentration is certainly a burden for the public forces and administration, as well as local budgets, as the German situation has shown in 2015.
- However we need to take into account several sobering other factors:
  - It should be reminded that the dramatic, fear-provoking scenes on TV of men, women and children walking, climbing and swimming across thousands of kilometres with their families, suggestive of an invasion, are the result primarily of political choices. First, the war, insecurity and failed states at home. But second, Europe's migration (or rather, *anti-migration*) policies. In other words, if thousands forcibly displaced people walk or take the boat, it is because they are denied the possibility of getting a visa and then to board a plane.
  - According to the UNHCR, there are more than 60 million exiles in the world. There are high predictions of about two million of them who will seek asylum in Europe in 2015-2016, meaning that 97% of the world's exiles will remain outside of Europe. Supposing that happened, and they were all granted asylum, the newcomers would represent an increase of roughly 0,005% of the total population if we only count "Western Europe."
- One of the founding principles in the European Union is the principle of solidarity. It basically means that a nation should be willing to meet the needs of all others, and all nations for one. It also entails meeting the need of those peoples and nations who are less fortunate and supporting them in becoming more self-reliant and stable. Were this principle applied, it should lead to a policy of burden sharing among the EU Member States to cope with the numbers of asylum and welcome procedures. It also should lead to support for solutions in countries of origin and transit. The western European nations, who represent the wealthiest group of economies in the world and are among the strongest political influences internationally, should surely consider this as within their reach.
- We should welcome, rather than bemoan, the fact that these new arrivals are a challenge for our societies. These exiles coming to Europe present our countries but especially the Church with a Gospel opportunity for sharing Christ's love.