

Welcome Remarks to introduce the workshop

The Chargé d'affaires of the Apostolic Nunciature to Uganda, the representative of the Prime Minister, The Chairman of the Uganda Episcopal Conference, the delegates of the Dicasteries of Communication and of the Integral Human Development from Rome, the President of Signis International and the leaders of Signis Africa, and all of you, invited guests and participants,

on behalf of the Commission for Social Communications of the Uganda Episcopal Conference, I am honoured and happy to warmly welcome you to Uganda. Indeed, Welcome to Uganda, the pearl of Africa, the land of martyrs, the present home to over one and a half million refugees.

We are here for a Training Workshop for Catholic Journalists in Africa on: Acquiring Skills for Efficient and Effective Coverage and Reporting of Migrants, Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Climate-displaced people, Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and Victims of Human Trafficking in Africa

Well, that is surely quite a lot for us to deal with! We shall be guided by experts and speakers who will show us the challenges and illustrate the various dimensions of these complex and interrelated topics. They will put in front of us numbers, statistics, problems and challenges, tragic situations, which call for an urgent and adequate action.

I trust that we shall not discuss them in a cold and aseptic way, from outside, as an object of study out there, far away, in the different countries we come from. We cannot, even if we wanted. In fact, it is these people, the migrants, the refugees, who brought us here together from all corners of Africa. They are the reason we are here. Therefore they must be here with us these days, in this hall. Present in our eyes, through the often dramatic photos and clips we have seen, alive in our mind and memories, through the stories we have heard from them, or read about them, and above all present in our hearts. May this be not just a workshop about and for them, but with them, in deep sympathy with them, listening, in order to capture what they would like to communicate to us, and through us - through our media - to the people of our countries.

Out of this personal and at the same time common experience of communion with them and among ourselves, we shall hopefully discover more clearly during these days **What** is the message that we need to give to our people and **How** to communicate it, taking up our specific responsibility and task as journalists.

We are representing here the Catholic media of our countries. Uganda has a number of diocesan bulletins and publications, magazines, 10 diocesan radios and 9 stations of

Radio Maria plus the television. Each one of our countries has more or less the same instruments of communication. In our diversity, we have in common the same responsibility and task: to make our readers, listeners and viewers understand and respond to the challenges and opportunities put in front of us by the complex phenomena which are the object of our workshop. It is not an easy task. We are addressing different groups of people: those who see migrants and refugees as a threat to their welfare, others who are indifferent and ignore the problem as something which is not their business, and also those who, with a good heart and will, try to do something about it but, when faced by the enormity of the problem get discouraged and eventually give up. We have to contribute to bring about a change of mind set, a true conversion, a new way of looking at things in the light of our Christian faith.

The question is: How are going to do it?

In journalism and in the media world we all know that **How** we communicate is of paramount importance. We need to know and master the ways and skills through which we can share our message in the most effective way. Covering migration, refugees, human trafficking and so on requires a special and adequate approach. Our workshop has exactly the specific aim to provide us with such skills.

But whatever new skills we learn we must make sure to use them to transmit the Good News. This is **the What**, the specific and unique core content of our communication, which goes deeper and beyond the message of all the other news agencies, NGOs, social and government organizations. Let me insist on this point.

What we are asked to communicate to our people is the Christian vision of the human being. Our journalism cannot just be information. It must also form people, educate and help them to discover our common, deep and true identity. In the light of faith, before being members of a specific tribe, citizens of a given country, we are all beloved children of God, members of his family, with the same dignity and rights. Therefore, refugees and migrants are family. We are brothers and sisters. Revisiting and strengthening the traditional cultural value of the "enlarged family" may help us.

This awareness of being "one family" needs to grow and be strengthened. We have the responsibility of educate our people, especially the youth, showing them that migration is not just a problem that needs some sort of first aid intervention like after a car accident, or putting some ointment and a plaster on a wound. It is a chance given to all of us - migrants/refugees and hosts,- to grow in solidarity and fraternity, sharing difficulties and becoming more and more who we are, brothers and sisters, able to live and work together, building a new, integrated and better society in solidarity and peace.

Yes, ours is a work of education. *Educare*, from Latin, pulling out and strengthening what God has already put in each man and woman, creating us in his own image and likeness, that is, able to love, with a heart open to welcome all the children of God as our brothers and sisters. This workshop gives us also a chance for a sincere examination of conscience. Are we fulfilling our duty and mission as Catholic journalists or are we missing the main point of our task?

We have begun our meeting with a prayer, asking God to guide us with His Spirit and to help us to look at migrants and refugees in the light of faith, with the eyes and heart of Jesus full of compassion and love. Indeed, faced with the magnitude of the problems and challenges at hand, it is clear that only God's grace and assistance will help us to make of these days not just a workshop but a concrete step forward in our own personal growth and make us able to give a better qualified and effective service to our people and -Church towards the building of a more integrated and fraternal

Today is the 11th of July 2023. Ten years and three days ago, the 8th July 2013, in his first trip outside Rome, Pope Francis went to the Italian island of Lampedusa, to pray and launch a wreath of flowers into the sea where hundreds of migrants had drowned while desperately trying to reach Europe. Since then, during these past ten years, many more thousands of migrants have lost their lives looking for a better future.

Three days ago, on the anniversary of his trip, the Pope has repeated in a letter to the bishop of that diocese, his appeal for more solidarity, stating that that "the death of the migrants is the shame of our society." I am sure that the Apostolic Nuncio and the *Prefect* delegate of the Dicastery of Communications will remind us of the many appeals and documents by which the Holy Father calls the Church and all the society to face our responsibility. Personally, I would like to conclude my introductory remarks to this workshop echoing here the biblical question that Pope Francis put to the faithful during his homily in Lampedusa: "**Where is your brother?**"

We know the answer. We do not need to go around looking for our brothers and sisters. They are coming to us, they are already here, knocking at our door, crossing our borders. What are going to do?

As Christian media practitioners let us make sure that we do our part, taking up our responsibility to listen to and give voice to the cry of these people, contributing to change things and build a better society, where everybody is welcome and at home

"Where is your brother?" A very happy and fruitful workshop to all of us!

Bishop + Joseph Franzelli

Kampala, 11 July 2023

OPENING PRAYER

God, our loving Father, source of life and love, we thank you for communicating and sharing with us your love through Jesus, your Son who become our brother and Saviour. Fulfilling your plan of salvation through his death and resurrection, he founded the Church, entrusting her to continue proclaiming the Good News of your love to all peoples throughout the world.

We further thank you in a special way for calling us to play our part and specific role in this mission, through the means of social communications.

As we gather here from all corners of Africa for this workshop, fill our hearts and minds with the gift of your Holy Spirit. Let your Spirit enlighten us and show us the most appropriate and effective ways in which we can better communicate to the people of our countries your concern for the plight of your children in need, the Migrants and Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Climate-displaced people, Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and Victims of Human Trafficking in Africa.

We invoke upon us and our workshop the intercession of our Mother Mary, now addressed in the litanies also as *Solacium migrantium*, Comfort or Solace of the migrants, together with the intercession of the Martyrs of Uganda and all the African Saints. Above all, we ask all this through Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord, as we repeat the prayer he taught us, for your kingdom to come and your will be done, transforming our world into a place where all your children may feel at home and welcome, living together in harmony and peace.

OUR FATHER...