

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE



Message for World Tourism Day 2014

(September 27)

“Tourism and Community Development”

1. Like every year, World Tourism Day is celebrated on September 27. An event promoted annually by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the theme for this year’s commemoration is *“Tourism and Community Development”*. Keenly aware of the social and economic importance of tourism today, the Holy See wishes to accompany this phenomenon from its own realm, particularly in the context of evangelization.

In its Global Code of Ethics, the UNWTO says that tourism must be a beneficial activity for destination communities: *“Local populations should be associated with tourism activities and share equitably in the economic, social and cultural benefits they generate, and particularly in the creation of direct and indirect jobs resulting from them.”*¹ That is, it calls on both realities to establish a reciprocal relationship, which leads to mutual enrichment.

The notion of “community development” is closely linked to a broader concept that is part of the Church’s Social Teaching, which is “integral human development”. It is through this latter term that we understand and interpret the former. In this regard, the words of Pope Paul VI are quite illuminating. In his Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, he stated that *“the development we speak of here cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, it must be well rounded; it must foster the development of each man and of the whole man.”*²

How tourism can contribute to this development? To this end, integral human development and, thus, community development in the field of tourism should be directed towards achieving a balanced progress that is sustainable and respectful in three areas: economic, social and environmental. By “environmental”, we mean both the ecological and cultural context.

¹ World Tourism Organization, Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, 1 October 1999, Art.5, para.1

² Pope Paul VI, Encyclical “Populorum Progressio”, 26 March 1967, n.14

2. Tourism is a key driver of economic development, given its major contribution to GDP (between 3% and 5% worldwide), employment (between 7% and 8% of the jobs) and exports (30% of global exports of services).³

At present, the world is experiencing a diversification in the number of destinations, as anywhere in the world has the potential to become a tourist destination. Therefore, tourism is one of the most viable and sustainable options to reduce poverty in the most deprived areas. If properly developed, it can be a valuable instrument for progress, job creation, infrastructure development and economic growth.

As highlighted by Pope Francis, we are conscious that “*human dignity is linked to work,*” and as such we are asked to address the problem of unemployment with “*the tools of creativity and solidarity.*”⁴ In that vein, tourism appears to be one of the sectors with the most capacity to generate a wide range of “creative” jobs with greater ease. These jobs could benefit the most disadvantaged groups, including women, youth or certain ethnic minorities.

It is imperative that the economic benefits of tourism reach all sectors of local society, and have a direct impact on families, while at the same time take full advantage of local human resources. It is also essential that these benefits follow ethical criteria that are, above all, respectful to people both at a community level and to each person, and avoid “*a purely economic conception of society that seeks selfish benefit, regardless of the parameters of social justice.*”⁵ No one can build his prosperity at the expense of others.⁶

The benefits of a tourism promoting “community development” cannot be reduced to economics alone: there are other dimensions of equal or greater importance. Among these include: cultural enrichment, opportunities for human encounter, the creation of “relational goods”, the promotion of mutual respect and tolerance, the collaboration between public and private entities, the strengthening of the social fibre and civil society, the improvement of the community’s social conditions, the stimulus to sustainable economic and social development, and the promotion of career training for young people, to name but a few.

3. The local community must be the main actor in tourism development. They must make it their own, with the active presence of government, social partners and civic bodies. It is important that appropriate coordination and participation structures are created, which promote dialogue, make agreements, complement efforts and establish common goals and identify solutions based on consensus. Tourism development is not to do something “for” the community, but rather, “with” the community.

³ Cf. World Tourism Organisation & World Council on Travel & Tourism, Open Letter to Heads of State and Government on Travel and Tourism

⁴ Pope Francis, Address to Managers and Workers at the Steel Mills of Terni and the Faithful of the Diocese of Terni-Narni-Amelia, 20 March 2014

⁵ Pope Francis, Papal Audience, 1 May 2013

⁶ “Rich countries have shown the ability to create material well-being, but often at the expense of man and the weaker social classes.” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 2 April 2004, n.374)

Furthermore, a tourist destination is not only a beautiful landscape or a comfortable infrastructure, but it is, above all, a local community with their own physical environment and culture. It is necessary to promote a tourism that develops in harmony with the community that welcomes people into its space, with its traditional and cultural forms, with its heritage and lifestyles. And in this respectful encounter, the local population and visitors can establish a productive dialogue which will promote tolerance, respect and mutual understanding.

The local community should feel called upon to safeguard its natural and cultural heritage, embracing it, taking pride in it, respecting and adding value to it, so that they can share this heritage with tourists and transmit it to future generations.

Also, the Christians of that community must be capable of displaying their art, traditions, history, and moral and spiritual values, but, above all, the faith that lies at the root of all these things and gives them meaning.

4. The Church, expert in humanity, wishes to collaborate on this path towards an integral human and community development, to offer its Christian vision of development, offering “*her distinctive contribution: a global perspective on man and human realities.*”⁷

From our faith, we can provide the sense of the person, community and fraternity, solidarity, seeking justice, of being called upon as stewards (not owners) of Creation and, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, continue to collaborate in Christ’s work.

Following what Pope Benedict XVI asked of those committed to the pastoral care of tourism, we must increase our efforts in order to “*shed light on this reality using the social teaching of the Church and promote a culture of ethical and responsible tourism, in such a way that it will respect the dignity of persons and of peoples, be open to all, be just, sustainable and ecological.*”⁸

With great pleasure, we note how the Church has recognized the potential of the tourism industry in many parts of the world and set up simple but effective projects.

There are a growing number of Christian associations that organize responsible tourism to less developed destinations as well as those that promote the so-called “solidarity or volunteer tourism” which enable people to put their vacation time to good use on a project in developing countries.

Also worth mentioning are programs for sustainable and equitable tourism in disadvantaged areas promoted by Episcopal Conferences, dioceses or religious congregations, which accompany local communities, helping them to create opportunities for reflection, promoting education and training, giving advice and collaborating on project design and encouraging dialogue with the authorities and other groups. This type of experience has led to the creation of a tourism managed by local communities, through partnerships and specialized micro tourism (accommodation, restaurants, guides, craft production, etc.).

Beyond this, there are many parishes in tourist destinations that host visitors, offering liturgical, educational and cultural events, with the hope that the holidays “*are of benefit to their human and*

⁷ Pope Paul VI, Encyclical “*Populorum Progressio*”, 26 March 1967, n.13

⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, Message for the VII World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Tourism, Cancún (Mexico), 23-27 April 2012.

*spiritual growth, in the firm conviction that even in this time we cannot forget God who never forgets us.”*⁹ To do this, parishes seek to develop a “friendly pastoral care” which allows them to welcome people with a spirit of openness and fraternity, and project the image of a lively and welcoming community. And for this hospitality to be more effective, we need to create a more effective collaboration with other relevant sectors.

These pastoral proposals are becoming more important, especially as a type of “experiential tourism” grows. This type of tourism seeks to establish links with local people and enable visitors to feel like another member of the community, participating in their daily lives, placing value on contact and dialogue.

The Church’s involvement in the field of tourism has resulted in numerous projects, emerging from a multitude of experiences thanks to the effort, enthusiasm and creativity of so many priests, religious and lay people who work for the socio-economic, cultural and spiritual development of the local community, and help them to look with hope to the future.

In recognition that its primary mission is evangelization, the Church offers its often humble collaboration to respond to the specific circumstances of people, especially the most needy. And this, from the conviction that “*we also evangelize when we attempt to confront the various challenges which can arise.*”¹⁰

Vatican City, July 1, 2014

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⁹ VII World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Tourism, Final Declaration, Cancún (Mexico), 23-27 April 2012.

¹⁰ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation “*Evangelii Gaudium*”, 24 November 2013, n.61