



Dear Brothers

On Sept. 25, the Church celebrated World Migrant and Refugee Day. The Church's initiative goes back a long way, to 1914, when it was established in Italy to support the Holy See's initiatives toward Italian migrants, particularly the Pontifical College for Italian Emigration. Actually, the idea had already come to St. John Baptist Scalabrini, who in 1892 had proposed the third Sunday of Lent as a day to gather support in the Italian dioceses for the work he had founded a few years earlier, but nothing came of it.

In the civil society, World Migrant Day has a more recent origin. Started in the Philippines in 1997, choosing December 18 as the date to commemorate the day on which the United Nations adopted the International Convention on the Rights of All Migrants and their Families in 1990, it was then brought to the attention of the United Nations, which proclaimed it by a General Assembly resolution adopted on December 4, 2000. This civil initiative is therefore characterized by its emphasis on migrants' rights.

But what rights are we talking about? Let us start with the fundamental right, the right to live, and therefore the right not to die of migration. This is something that is raised often but not enough. The pope often recalls this when he speaks of the Mediterranean as the largest cemetery in the world, a cemetery that cannot be visited and where the flowers on the graves are entrusted to the waves. But people die of migration in many other places. Recently 27 dead migrant bodies were found in the Chad desert. Since 2014, 5600 migrants have died in crossing the Sahara. Also from a few days ago is the news of 27 migrants from Ethiopia found dead in Zambia. And the list could go on. These are always tragedies involving the irregular and unsafe channels of migration.

Dying is a natural and inevitable occurrence. But dying from emigration should be avoidable. It would suffice to provide adequate and safe channels for emigration, recognizing that human mobility cannot be stopped by red tape and giving substance to the proclaimed principles of which international agreements are full.