

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL  
FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE

*GUIDELINES FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF GYPSIES*

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Chaplains/Missionaries

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Bridge-communities

Gypsy pastoral agents

## A FINAL WISH

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## ABBREVIATIONS

*AAS Acta Apostolicae Sedis*

*AG* Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*

*CCEO Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium*

*CD* Second Vatican Council, Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*

*CIC Codex Iuris Canonici*

*IM* Pope John Paul II, Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 *Incarnationis Mysterium*

*LG* Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*

*PG* Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Bishop, Servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the Hope of the World *Pastores gregis*

*PL Patrologia Latina*, Migne

RM Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate *Redemptoris Missio*

UR Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*

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## PRESENTATION

In the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*[1] Pope John Paul II entrusted to the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People the task of ensuring “that in the particular Churches refugees and exiles, migrants, nomads, and circus workers receive effective and special spiritual care, even, if necessary, by means of suitable pastoral structures”. Therefore, the Church considers that the situation of *Gypsies* needs a specific pastoral care, which should be realized for their evangelisation and human promotion.

If we take into consideration the recent past – as far as the fulfilment of this duty is concerned –, we would remember the Fifth World Congress of the Pastoral for Gypsies[2], held in Budapest in 2003, organized by our Dicastery. It gave us the opportunity to expand and deepen the theological and ecclesiological aspects of this ministry. Since then the *Lineamenta* of the present document has passed through the hands of several experts, including Gypsies themselves, pastoral agents, Bishops, and of course the Members and Consultors of our Dicastery. Finally various Dicasteries of the Roman Curia were able to examine the text and give their observations, so as to situate this specific ministry in the broader framework of the Church's universal mission.

The need for *Guidelines* was evident right from the very beginning, but it is only now that the time is ripe for this publication. The Document is addressed not only to all those who - whether Gypsies or not - are involved in this specific pastoral field, but also to the whole Church (see. *Guidelines* 4).

Even if the *Guidelines* refer to *Gypsies*, (known concretely as Roma, Sinti, Manouches, Kalé, Gitans, Yéniches, etc.), the Document is likewise applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to other categories of nomadic populations, who share similar conditions of life. In any case, nomadism is not the only characteristic of Gypsies, also because many of them are now permanently settled or semi-settled. In fact, it is their ethnicity, their culture and age-old traditions, which are here taken into account. Therefore the local Churches, in countries where Gypsies live, can find pastoral inspiration in these *Guidelines*, but they have to adapt them to the circumstances, needs and requirements of each group (*ib.* 5).

Many are the signs of a positive evolution in the traditional Gypsy way of living and thinking. For instance, there is the growing desire to be educated and obtain professional training, formation, a greater social and political awareness, expressed by forming associations and even political parties, increasing participation in the local and national administration in some countries, empowerment of women in social and civic life, an increase in vocations to permanent diaconate, to the priesthood and the religious life, etc. In this perspective, it is consoling to keep in mind the contribution of social promotion and specific pastoral care undertaken by the Catholic Church in the past decades, particularly thanks to the encouragement on the part of Paul VI and John Paul II. Moreover, it was certainly with collective pride

that on 4 May 1997 the Gypsies assisted at the beatification of the Spanish martyr Ceferino Jiménez Malla<sup>[3]</sup>, the first Gypsy to be beatified in the history of the Church (*ib.* 21).

“From birth to death, the condition of each individual is that of the *homo viator*”<sup>[4]</sup>, said the Servant of God Pope John Paul II;- and this is demonstrated, as an icon in the lifestyle of Gypsies. Yet, there is, - indifference or opposition towards them. One goes from habitual prejudices to signs of rejection, often without any reaction or protest from those who witness them. This has caused them untold suffering and persecution, especially during the last century. This should stir everyone’s conscience and arouse solidarity towards this people. The Church recognizes their right to have their own identity, and works to achieve a greater justice for them, respecting their culture and healthy traditions. But rights and duties go together, and therefore also the Gypsies have duties towards other peoples.-

Hence, these *Guidelines* are, a sign of the Church’s particular concern for Gypsies who need a specific pastoral care that gives special attention to their culture which, of course, must pass through the paschal mystery of death and resurrection. On the other hand, this is true for all cultures. Indeed, the universal history of evangelisation affirms that the spread of the Christian message has always been accompanied by a process of purification of cultures, regarded as a necessary process of elevation. Therefore, an indiscriminate defence of all aspects of Gypsy culture, without making due distinctions or taking into consideration related evangelical judgements, is not beneficial. However purification does not mean emptying it, but implies some degree of integration with the surrounding culture: it is an intercultural process (*ib.* 39). Hence reconciliation and communion, between Gypsies and those who are not, encourage legitimate interaction between cultures.

Moreover education, professional training, and personal initiatives and responsibility are indispensable prerequisites for achieving a dignified quality of life for Gypsies, all elements of human promotion. Equal rights for men and women should likewise be promoted, eliminating all forms of discrimination. Equality calls for respect for the dignity of women, the elevation of feminine culture, social promotion, etc., but at the same time preserves the strong sense of family existing among Gypsies (*ib.* 40). In this sense any attempt to assimilating the Gypsy culture, and dissolving it in that of the majority, should be rejected (*ib.* 51).

In this context, the Document calls to mind that although the launching of human promotion projects is primarily the responsibility of the State, it may be advantageous and even necessary for the Church to be involved in such concrete initiatives, while leaving room for Gypsies to play a leading role. It is instead part of the Church’s fundamental mission to inform public authorities of the condition of hardships in which the Gypsy populations live. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that “a people’s development does not derive primarily from money, material assistance or technological means but from the formation of consciences and the gradual maturing of ways of thinking and patterns of behaviour. Man is the principal agent of development, not money or technology”<sup>[5]</sup> (*ib.* 55).

Going back to evangelisation of Gypsies, in these *Guidelines* this appears as a mission of the whole Church, because no Christian should remain indifferent to a situation of marginalization with respect to ecclesial communion. Therefore the pastoral care for Gypsies, exactly because of its specific character, requires careful and intense formation for those who are directly involved in it, whilst a welcoming attitude should be shown by the Christian communities (*ib.* 57). This combination of the particular and the universality is fundamental.

The proclamation of the Word of God will then be received more easily, if it is announced by someone who has shown them solidarity in daily-life situations. Moreover, in catechesis, it is important to include a sharing that allows Gypsies to express how they perceive and live their relationship with God. Therefore, it is necessary to translate liturgical texts, prayer books and the Bible into the languages used by the various ethnic groups in the different regions. Likewise, music – appreciated and played by Gypsies – is an extremely effective aid to pastoral care that should be promoted and developed during meetings and liturgical celebrations. This is true also for all audiovisual aids offered by modern technology (*ib.* 60).

Moreover, these *Guidelines* show that, in the life of Gypsies, pilgrimages have a special place, because they provide ideal opportunities for family reunions. Often the “holy places”, which are pilgrimage destinations are in fact often connected with family history. Thus an event, a vow, a prayer journey, are lived as an encounter with the “God of (their) Saint” that also strengthens the loyalty of a group. Besides, pilgrimages provide those who take part in them with an experience of Catholicity that will lead from the “Saint” to Christ and to the Church (*ib.* 70).

Finally, considering the risk – unfortunately confirmed by unpleasant facts - of Gypsies falling victim to sects, the Document expresses the conviction that the new ecclesial movements could play a special role in this specific pastoral care. In fact, with their strong community awareness and openness, the availability and special cordiality of their members, they could offer concrete welcome and also promote evangelisation. In this sense, both national and international Catholic Gypsy associations play a major role, provided they maintain a constant contact and communion with the Pastors of the local Churches and the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (*ib.* 77).

We hope that these *Guidelines* will meet the expectations of all those who were waiting for the publication of a comprehensive pastoral Document on the ministry to our nomadic brothers and sisters.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. “The mission that Christ entrusted to his Church is addressed to all men and nations, ... [so that], by the example of her life and by her preaching, by the sacraments and other means of grace, she can lead them to the faith, the freedom and the peace of Christ. Thus there lies open before them a free and trustworthy road to full participation in the mystery of Christ” (*AG* 5). The universality of this mission prompts the Church to reach even peoples who are geographically more remote, and also be concerned for those who, although living in countries of ancient Christian tradition, have not yet received the Gospel, or have received it partially, or have not entered yet into full ecclesial communion.

2. Among the latter, a large portion of the Gypsy population can surely be included. For centuries they have lived in traditionally Christian countries, but they have often been marginalized. Marked by

suffering, discrimination and often also by persecution, they have nevertheless not been forsaken by God “who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth” (*1 Tim 2:4*). Indeed, especially in recent decades, Divine Providence has been able to increase the attention paid to this people by stirring the hearts and minds of many pastoral agents who have generously dedicated their lives to evangelising them, despite experiencing themselves some degree of misunderstanding.

This attention has gradually spread throughout the various regions inhabited by Gypsies, with increasing involvement of priests from the local Churches, who subsequently got organized at the national and the diocesan levels. Many international meetings have also been held to study and promote the pastoral care of Gypsies, as the attention paid to them also by civil society increased. Thus emerged a pastoral situation that is undoubtedly part of the Church’s missionary thrust. Urged by the Holy Spirit, the Church intends to bring about a decisive change in this area, through a commitment to support and encourage it, and by dedicating the necessary material, human and spiritual resources.

3. The pastoral commitment undertaken and the sharing of ideas and experiences, have thereby led to the identification of a whole set of behaviours, goals to be achieved, difficulties to be overcome and resources to be obtained, which have been gathered together in an *instrumentum laboris* prepared by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. Opinions on the text and contributions were requested from various pastoral agents – including Gypsies – involved in evangelising this population. They considerably enriched and modified the Document. After a further extensive survey, the final draft was prepared, taking into account also those ecclesial organs that are not directly involved, so as to place the pastoral care of Gypsies within the broader framework of the Church’s universal mission.

4. The publication of this Document is intended to be an unequivocal reaffirmation of the Church’s commitment to the benefit of this population. New paths to be taken are proposed in various countries and particular Churches, in order to open up communities to these brothers and sisters. General pastoral criteria regarding action and goals to be achieved are also laid down. This Document thus marks a key moment in the history of evangelisation and human promotion of Gypsies, after Pope Paul VI’s meeting with them in Pomezia<sup>[6]</sup>.

It is therefore addressed not only to priests and agents engaged in this specific pastoral care, but also to the whole ecclesial community – which cannot remain indifferent to this issue – and to Gypsies themselves. As the journey towards full communion between Gypsies and those who are not has only just begun, or rather, has yet to be embarked on in many countries, everyone is called to a profound conversion in mind, heart, and attitude. This is the primary driving force behind such a communion, aware that at the root of any situation of rejection and injustice lies the painful reality of sin.

5. Given that the Gypsy population is highly diverse, local Churches must adapt the criteria, guidelines and suggestions contained in this Document to the concrete reality at a given time and in a given place. Moreover, great care must be taken not to render uniform a situation that is in itself varied. Therefore, even when the Document refers to the Gypsy people, it means gypsy populations, made up of different ethnic groups. Consequently, when referring to language, tradition and other elements that make up the Gypsy identity, the plural should normally be used. However, this is not always possible and could even be restrictive, because there are in fact various common elements that converge into a specific way of being and constitute the fundamental make-up of this identity.

To indicate these populations globally, together with their complexity, this Document uses the term “Gypsies”, which however refers to the whole group of these brothers and sisters of ours, whether travelling or sedentarized, respecting their person and their culture. Nevertheless, we can not forget that the underlying specific situation is not homogenous or general. Indeed, it encompasses various ethnic groups including Roma, Sinti, Manouches, Kalé, Gitans, Yéniches, etc. In fact, many of them prefer to be known and called by the name of their ethnic group. Gypsies, on the other hand, use the word *gaǵé* (singular: *gaǵó*) to designate everyone who is non-Gypsy, and in this sense the word is used here without any discrimination.

6. Finally, it should be pointed out that in various countries there are many nomads whose origins go back to groups of shepherds, fishermen, or nomadic hunters and others (Travellers, for example). Thus their way of life and anthropological characteristics differ from those of Gypsy populations. However, local Churches in countries where such nomads exist could also find pastoral inspiration in these guidelines, obviously adapting them to the circumstances, needs and requirements of each group.

## CHAPTER I

### NOT WELL KNOWN AND OFTEN MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS

#### **A long journey**

7. Gypsies are “people on the move”, whose world view originates in nomad culture, which is difficult to appreciate in depth from the standpoint of a settled way of life. The Gypsy world is still largely based on an oral culture; Gypsies do not have a written culture and there is no record of their wanderings. Therefore, they do not come within the classic category of migrants, among whom they generally risk ending up being classified. Indeed, accounts of their origins and wandering are external and marginal, and the Gypsy reality has been studied only recently. Their age-old resistance to any census – often a harbinger of deportation – and the fact that sedentarized Gypsies are usually not counted in censuses as Gypsies, makes it more difficult to provide an accurate headcount and track their geographical distribution.

8. Nevertheless, it can be said that the Gypsy population is always on the increase as a result of large families, although today there is a tendency to a downturn in numbers.

Gypsy communities are usually settled in rundown districts, on plots of wasteland, in shantytowns, on badly organized sites, or in areas on the outskirts of *gaǵé* towns and villages. However, families with greater resources settle on purchased plots of land, where they pitch a “tent” with their caravans. There are also those who have sedentarized, who have higher levels of education and academic degrees, and can be well integrated in society.

Today, in highly industrialized countries, we are witnessing a new wave of Gypsy migration from the poorer countries of central Europe and the Balkans. Such immigrants are often rejected by local residents, creating also an awkward situation for local public officials; they even receive a lukewarm reception, or downright rejection, from other Gypsies already settled in western countries. However, there is a grater capacity to welcome now compared with the past, and there is greater social awareness among the public authorities.

#### **Rejection: an opposition of cultures**

9. An inclination to wander is common to all these populations, and this mentality also persists among those who have long since settled down. In fact, the latter make up the majority. This way of life, which by nature is legitimate, has always aroused opposition in host societies. In many countries this takes the form of constant misunderstanding, also nourished by a lack of knowledge concerning the characteristics and history of Gypsies.

Although benefiting from citizenship of the countries in which they are settled, in reality Gypsies are often considered and treated as second-class citizens. The stereotyped images they are given are taken as patent truth and this persistent ignorance fuels a latent and dangerous rejection, and hinders and falsifies dialogue, which is necessary among a nation's ethnic groups.

10. Considered by many as harmful aliens and insistent beggars, public opinion usually clamours for nomadism to be banned. Throughout history this has resulted in persecutions that have been justified almost as a health measure. The history of these people is thus sadly marked by corporal punishment, imprisonment, deportation, forced settlement, slavery or other measures apt to ultimately achieve their annihilation.

11. Moreover, the persecution of Gypsies largely coincides with the formation of big nation States. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, together with the Jews, they were subjected to the racial persecution perpetrated by the Nazis, but not only by them. Their deportation to concentration camps, and even the extermination of thousands and thousands of people, usually elicited only isolated protests. More recently, political instability in various countries has contributed to further burdening Gypsies. A case in point: under tragic circumstances, the war in the Balkans showed that this population continues to be rejected by the majority of citizens. Indeed, in various countries they were subjected to acts of physical aggression, which once again, in a tragic vicious circle, fuelled misunderstanding and violence.

### **A peculiar mentality**

12. Gypsy identity is not easy to pin down, undoubtedly because it is dynamic, even changeable, and brought to light by the troubled relations between Gypsies and *gaǵé*. It is not even possible to refer with certainty to an ancestral homeland where Gypsies would be supposed to have their roots. It is also difficult to identify an overall and relatively uniform ethnic group from which it might be possible to trace the origins of this population. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify a number of elements which, if taken as a whole, make up a peculiar way of being, perhaps unregulated and without definite characteristics, but which can be identified as a mentality and an existential attitude.

It can therefore be noted that this essentially features an inclination towards travel and wandering that a *gaǵó*, even if a migrant, does not have. *Gaǵé* may uproot themselves momentarily to establish themselves in another place deemed to be better, but in general, they tend not to repeat the experience of uprooting and migration. Gypsies instead are naturally inclined towards travel and moving around.

13. This remains true even though the majority of Gypsies, as already mentioned, are now settled or semi-settled. This new way of life does not undermine the Gypsies' perception that they are different from the *gaǵé*. The fear of being absorbed and of losing their identity strengthens their resistance to assimilation, and also, in a certain sense, to integration itself.



Their long history of isolation and difference from the surrounding culture, the persecutions suffered, and misunderstanding on the part of *gažé* have also left their mark on the Gypsy identity, in the form of mistrust of others and a tendency to cut themselves off, aware that they can only fall back on their own resources to survive in a hostile society.

14. However, the family is at the centre of Gypsies' lives. Being a Gypsy means being vitally and strongly rooted in the family, where collective memory and awareness shape everyone and educate the young, despite being in the midst of the *gažé* world that surrounds them and at the same time keeps them at a distance. Therefore, elders in the family are greatly respected and venerated, because they bear wisdom. The deceased are remembered for a long time, and in a certain sense their presence is always kept alive. Gypsies also honour the "extended family", comprised by a network of many related families, which creates an attitude of great solidarity and hospitality, especially towards members of the same ethnic group.

The desire to remain free, to have space and time for self-fulfilment within one's family and ethnic group, is therefore deeply rooted in the Gypsy mentality. Indeed, the desire for and appreciation of freedom, as a fundamental condition of existence, may be considered as a cornerstone of their *Weltanschauung*.

15. Religiosity is also a key element of Gypsy identity. Relationship with God is taken for granted and takes the form of an emotive and immediate relationship with the Almighty, who looks after and protects family life, especially at times of sorrow and anxiety. This religiosity usually has its place in the majority religion or confession of the country where they live, whether it be Lutheran, Reformed, Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim or other, often without too many questions asked about their differences.

### **A great change**

16. The trend towards sedentarisation was further accentuated during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in various regions this facilitated children's schooling and consequently an increase in literacy among the Gypsy population. The greater contact with the *gažé* world which ensued also contributed to Gypsies' progressive adoption of modern technology, such as motorised transport, TV, and even information technology.

Consequently, the shift from a horse-drawn cart to a caravan towed by a car paradoxically increased semi-sedentarisation. Cars enable coverage of large distances in one day, without the need for wives and children to accompany the household head or men who were carrying out their professional activities. Moreover, a prolonged stay enables regular school attendance for children in families in which the parents have understood how the world is changing and had themselves suffered from a sense of inferiority due to illiteracy.

In some countries we may even see fairly widespread inclusion of Gypsies in areas of employment once reserved for *gažé*, especially in the artistic field. Moreover marriages between Gypsies and *gažé* have become more frequent, and there has also been significant change in the field of promotion of women, although a great deal still needs to be done to achieve equality between the sexes.

17. Despite the tensions that sometimes occur between different groups, and a traditional lack of constant and specific efforts to mobilize and join forces in order to achieve an objective, in some countries Gypsies have set up associations to undertake collective bargaining to their advantage. It is not uncommon to see

*gažé* friends offer their expertise to help Gypsies make themselves heard and take charge of their own future. These associations provide an increasingly effective response to legislation that limits freedom of movement or ignores Gypsies' identity and restricts their legitimate rights. Obviously, such associations do not have the same strength everywhere, but the movement exists, is growing and deserves support.

18. However, this evolution is just beginning and varies greatly from one country to another. In other words, the overall situation of the Gypsy population, which has been marked by centuries of isolation, still generally lags far behind the *gažé* society, with the great changes that have taken place therein over the last century. This also has serious economic and employment consequences. Indeed, the previous conditions of a predominantly rural society enabled a kind of symbiosis between Gypsies and *gažé* society, thanks to their trades connected with horse-breeding, metalworking, small-scale handicrafts, music and travelling shows. Today, however, the technological and industrial transformation of the host society has left little economic leeway, and Gypsies are obliged to give up their traditional trades, which are now obsolete, and seek a livelihood in low paying activities that are often at or beyond the limits of legality.

19. Nor should the influence of secularisation – which is steadily spilling over from *gažé* into Gypsy society – be underestimated. Traditional religiosity is therefore under urgent pressure from a society that has turned its back on God or denies Him, and when they are not welcomed by a Christian community, Gypsies easily fall prey to sects or the so-called “new religious movements”. This constitutes a further urgent call to open our arms to a population that, despite everything, constantly yearns to meet God.

Furthermore, the current idolatry of affluence that is prevalent among *gažé* obviously does not encourage them to give up their comforts, nor to reach out to these brothers and sisters who need to get out of poverty and isolation and find their place in contemporary society.

### **A situation that calls for a response**

20. All of this makes indifference or opposition towards this nomadic population particularly painful. Gradually and very slowly a few communities have opened up to receive Gypsies still too few to enable them to discover the motherly and brotherly face of the Church. Signs of rejection therefore persist, usually without eliciting any reaction or protest from those who witness them.

On the contrary, this situation should stir the consciences of Catholics by arousing feelings of solidarity towards Gypsies. The Church therefore feels called upon to acknowledge the gypsy journey in the course of history and is addressed by that culture. The Church should therefore recognize their right to “want to live together”, by raising and sustaining awareness in order to achieve greater justice for Gypsies, in the context of mutual respect for cultures, and stepping in the footsteps of Christ in response to the expectations of this population in its search for the Lord.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THE SOLICITUDE OF THE CHURCH**

21. It should be borne in mind, however, that during the second half of the last century some priests gradually came closer to Gypsies, with the development of a specific pastoral care on their behalf in some countries. Moreover, the Second Vatican Council urged bishops to show special concern “for those among the faithful who, on account of their way or condition of life, cannot sufficiently make use of the common and ordinary pastoral service of parish priests or are quite cut off from them.” These faithful also include “Gypsies” (*CD* 18). Such special interest was confirmed by Pope Paul VI, during the famous meeting at Pomezia mentioned earlier, when he said to Gypsies: “You are at the heart of the Church!” Christian dignity, in their way of life, received further recognition with the beatification of Ceferino Jiménez Malla (1861-1936), known as “Pelé”, a Spanish Gypsy who belonged to the Kalós nomadic group.

However, the way of evangelisation, of genuine reconciliation and communion between Gypsies and *gaḡé* can only stem from biblical reflection, in the light of which also the gypsy world would find its own Christian insight. Careful reading of Holy Scriptures is therefore necessary to guide us towards the way of properly incorporating the pastoral care for Gypsies within the context of the Church’s mission.

### **God’s Covenant and the wanderings of humankind**

22. Shepherds and their predominantly wandering lives have a privileged position in biblical revelation. At the origin of the people of Israel the figure of Abraham stands out. The first instruction he received from God was: “Leave your country, your kindred and your father’s house for a country which I shall show you” (*Gen* 12:1). Abraham “set out without knowing where he was going” (*Heb* 11:8), and from then on his life was marked by continuous moves “by stages” (*Gen* 13:3), “living in tents” (*Heb* 11:9) as an immigrant (see *Gen* 17:8), aware that even his descendents would be “exiled in a land not their own” (*Gen* 15:13). In confirmations of the Covenant made between God and Abraham, the image of the wanderer appears as privileged sign of the human party: “Walk in my presence, be perfect” (*Gen* 17:1).

23. The chosen people was subsequently entrusted to the leadership of Moses, who “when he was grown up, [...] refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter and chose to be ill-treated in company with God’s people rather than to enjoy the transitory pleasures of sin” (*Heb* 11:24-25). Moses received from God the task of liberating the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt to bring them to the Promised Land, and this came about through a long journey during which they “were wandering in the desert in the wastelands, (and) could find no way to an inhabited city” (*Ps* 107:4).

Indeed, confirmation of God’s Covenant with his people came during this wandering on Mount Sinai. This was represented by the ark, containing the symbols of the Covenant, which moved with the people and accompanied them on their way to the Promised Land. Under these conditions, even though beset by hunger and thirst and by the enmity and lack of welcome on the part of the peoples around them, the Israelites had the protection and favour of God. This will later be remembered and sung in psalms, thus: “God, when you went forth before your people, when you marched through the desert, Selah, the earth quaked, the heavens shook, before God, the One of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel” (*Ps* 68:8-9). The nostalgia for those days that shaped the soul of Israel was kept alive in later times, as evoked by the pilgrimages that the Israelites were duty-bound to undertake to the City where the Ark of the Covenant was kept in the Temple.

24. Moreover, wandering is a characteristic of the behaviour of any person in relating with God. In the psalms “those whose way is blameless” are those “who walk in the law of Yahweh”, and “who walk in

his ways” (*Ps* 119:1-3), “where I live in exile” (*Ps* 119:54). “Whoever walks without blame” (*Ps* 15:2) experiences how much God restores his strength and guides him along the right path (see *Ps* 23:3). Likewise, Paul reminds us that “as long as we are at home in the body we are exiled from the Lord” (2 *Cor* 5:6).

Holy Scripture also presents the mystery of Christ as an exodus of the Son of the Father into the world and his return to the Father. The earthly life of Jesus was marked by wandering from the outset, with the flight from the persecution of Herod to Egypt and the return to Nazareth. Luke's gospel also bears witness to his annual pilgrimages to the Temple of Jerusalem (see *Lk* 2:41), and his entire public ministry was marked by moves from one region to another, so much so that “the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (*Mt* 8:20). The same Paschal mystery itself is directly presented in John's gospel as his hour “to pass from this world to the Father” (*Jn* 13:1). Jesus knew that he had come from God and was returning to God (see *Jn* 13:3). This exodus of the Son sent by the Father through the work of the Holy Spirit also calls on men and women to set out on a journey of “paschal exodus” towards the Father.

25. Therefore, the exodus is not yet concluded as “the history of the Church is the living account of an unfinished pilgrimage” (*IM* 7). Continuing the Old Testament tradition and the life of Christ, who “carried out the work of redemption in poverty and under oppression”, the Church, the people of God on their journey towards the Father, “is called to follow the same path in communicating to men the fruits of salvation” (*LG* 8). Like “the new Israel which while going forward in this present world goes in search of a future and abiding city (see *Heb* 13:14)” (*LG* 9), it “presses forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God”<sup>[7]</sup> and “moving forward through trial and tribulation, the Church is strengthened by the power of God's grace” (*LG* 9). Indeed, the Church reveals a mobility, as witnessed by its eschatological nature, which feeds its polar tension towards the *eschaton* of its fulfilment. Consequently, the condition of the individual Christian is also like a great pilgrimage towards the Kingdom of God: “From birth to death, the condition of each individual is that of the *homo viator*” (*IM* 7).

### **A life of wandering and the Christian perspective**

26. In this way the wandering lifestyle, whether actually lived or as a *Weltanschauung*, becomes a perpetual reminder that: “there is no permanent city for us here; we are looking for the one which is yet to be” (*Heb* 13:14). It is like an ecclesial sign that is firmly anchored in biblical revelation, whose various existential forms are found in the living tissue of the Church. The form that Gypsies live figures amongst these, both in its various historical manifestations and in current situations.

27. Indeed, among the values that in some way define their lifestyle, those that resemble biblical features are outstanding. Marked by persecution, exile, absence of welcome, even rejection, suffering and discrimination, Gypsy history is shaped as a permanent wandering that distinguishes Gypsies from others and preserves them in their nomadic tradition, such that they do not generally allow themselves to come under the influence of the surrounding environment. This has given rise to an identity with its own language, culture, religiosity, customs, and a strong sense of belonging, with its related bonds. Thanks to Gypsies and their traditions, mankind is enriched with a true cultural heritage, which is transmitted mainly through nomadic life. Indeed “their wisdom is not written in a book, is no less eloquent for this reason”<sup>[8]</sup>.

28. Abandoned often by men but not by God, Gypsies have put their trust in Providence, with such a deep conviction that it could be considered part of their “nature”. The Gypsy way of life is after all a living witness to inner freedom before the shackles of consumerism and false security based on people’s presumed self-sufficiency. Furthermore the popular saying, “God helps those who help themselves”, should be borne in mind.

Their wandering is, in any case, a permanent and symbolic reminder of life’s journey towards eternity. In a very special manner, Gypsies live what the whole Church should, namely to be on a continuous journey toward another country – the true and only one – even though each one should do his utmost in carrying out his work and duties.

### **The Catholicity of the Church and the Pastoral Care for Gypsies**

29. Consequently, the Church should show a particular concern for Gypsies. Indeed, as they are a particular group among God’s pilgrim people, they deserve a special pastoral attitude and an appreciation of their values. In addition, this pastoral care is called for and required as an internal need of the catholicity of the Church and its mission. Indeed, with Christ, from whom it proceeds, any kind of discrimination disappears: “For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh, ... that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it” (see *Eph 2:14-16*).

30. Therefore, in the Church, instrument of the Lord’s mission, through which he remains present, “all men are called to belong to the new people of God” (*LG 13*). The Church’s vocation is to be present in all nations of the earth, because from every race the Lord takes the citizens of his Kingdom which is of a heavenly rather than of an earthly nature (see *LG 13*). Everyone should be welcomed there, with no place for marginalisation and exclusion. The Church, in fact, turns specifically to “the poor and the afflicted. For them, she gladly spends and is spent (see *2 Cor 12:15*), sharing in their joys and sorrows, knowing of their longings and problems, suffering with them in death’s anxieties” (*AG 12*).

31. Therefore, the Catholicity of the Church, whilst having the vocation to reach every person of any position, is not solely extensive but - more inwardly and decisively – also qualitative, *i.e.* with the ability to penetrate different cultures and to make the anguish and hopes of all peoples its own, so as to evangelise and at the same time enrich itself with the varied cultural wealth of mankind. The one and only Gospel should thus be proclaimed appropriately taking account of the different cultures and traditions, thus pursuing “the same motive which led Christ to bind Himself, in virtue of His Incarnation, to certain social and cultural conditions of those human beings among whom He dwelt” (*AG 10*).

32. These catholic roots mean that any kind of discrimination in carrying out its mission would be a betrayal of the Church’s ecclesial identity. In the footsteps of its Founder – the One sent by God “to bring glad tidings to the poor, ... to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord” (*Lk 4:18-19*) –, the Church thus seeks means that are ever more appropriate to proclaim the Gospel to Gypsies in a lively and effective way. This is the new evangelisation, which Pope John Paul II so often invited us to engage in.

33. Indeed, from the catholic dimension of mission flows the ecclesial capacity to find and develop the necessary resources to facilitate the many social forms in which human communities are organised. In

this way salvation is available to everyone. Mindful of St Paul's warning - "Woe to me if I do not preach (the gospel)!" (*1 Cor 9:16*), the Church therefore spares no effort and sacrifice to concretely reach all people. This history is also marked by initiative and creativity to make more incisive proclamation, which often challenges mentalities and structures that have become obsolete, with time.

The current situation in which Gypsies find themselves, subject to the rapid changes in contemporary society, unbridled materialism and false proposals, even if it makes reference to the Transcendent, urgently pushes for pastoral action, so as to avoid both static withdrawal and the flight towards sects or the dispersal of its own religious heritage, swallowed up by materialism that smothers any reference to the Divine.

### CHAPTER III

#### EVANGELISATION AND INCULTURATION

34. Given the hoped-for new evangelisation and reconciliation and communion between Gypsies and *gaḡé*, "Gypsy diversity" should be adequately appreciated, by freely acknowledging its existence, yet without severing the bridges of contact with *gaḡé* culture. Indeed, a fair and healthy balance in appreciating this diversity is essential for achieving an appropriate relationship between evangelisation, inculturation and human promotion.

##### **Evangelisation aimed at inculturation**

35. As salvation affects the whole person, evangelisation obviously should not neglect cultural, linguistic, traditional, artistic and other aspects, which shape human beings and peoples as a whole. In doing so, the Church "takes nothing away from the temporal welfare of any people. On the contrary it fosters and takes to itself, insofar as they are good, the ability, riches and customs in which the genius of each people expresses itself. Taking them to itself it purifies, strengthens, elevates and ennobles them" (*LG 13*). The genuinely Catholic spirit of evangelisation also leads to mutual enrichment, given that "each individual part contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole Church. Through the common sharing of gifts and through the common effort to attain fullness in unity, the whole and each of the parts receive increase" (*LG 13*).

36. Now, this vision includes some guidelines for the animation of pastoral action among Gypsies. This means not only accepting their legitimate claim to a specific identity and the right to be included, as they are, in the vital tissue of civil and ecclesial society, but also genuine appreciation – affective and effective – of the authentic values of their tradition, which should not only be respected but also defended. Moreover, from this soteriological perspective, the culture of this population should be interpreted from within as an element to be integrated into the divine design of redemption.

37. The peculiarities of the Gypsy *Weltanschauung* and their specific way of life is not easily comparable with other social realities. Therefore, the Gypsy situation is fully included among those to which the missionary practice of the Church, expert in humanity, has applied the axiom "the right sort of means and actions must be suited to any state or situation" (*AG 6*). From this stems the need for and expediency of a specific pastoral care for Gypsies, which is not reduced to the easy solution of simply urging them to "integrate themselves" within the ranks of other Christians. Such care should above all be aimed at their evangelisation and promotion.

It is therefore to be noted that the ordinary territorial ecclesiastical structure for spiritual care does not usually allow this population to accomplish an effective and long-lasting integration in the ecclesial life and community. Shrewd insight is therefore needed to achieve the right balance in adapting ordinary pastoral orientation to the particular requirements of each situation.

38. Indeed, the specific nature of Gypsy culture makes evangelisation merely “from the outside” unacceptable to them. This can easily be perceived as an intrusion. In line with true catholicity, the Church itself must become, in a certain sense, a Gypsy among Gypsies, so that they can participate fully in the life of the Church. This calls for a pastoral behaviour that is marked by sharing and friendship. Therefore, it is essential that specific pastoral agents immerse themselves in the Gypsy way of life, sharing its conditions with them, at least for a certain period of time. What the Church requires from those working in mission territories is applicable to these agents in a very special way. It means that they “should know the people among whom they live, and should converse with them, that they themselves may learn by sincere and patient dialogue what treasures a generous God has distributed among the nations of the earth” (*AG* 11).

### **The Gypsy culture’s purification, elevation and fulfilment in Christ**

39. A genuine encounter between the Gospel and Gypsy culture cannot, however, indiscriminately legitimise every aspect of the latter. Indeed, the universal history of evangelisation affirms that the spread of the Christian message has always been accompanied by a process of purification of the cultures with which it came in contact, a purification that should actually be regarded as a necessary aspect of their Christian elevation. It should not therefore come as a surprise that, together with the “acceptance” of that culture, the Church also directs pastoral care towards overcoming those aspects that cannot be shared by the Christian vision of life or which, in one way or another, constitute obstacles along the path to reconciliation and communion between Gypsies and *gaḡé*. A narrow attitude towards these obstacles, or an indiscriminate defence of all aspects of Gypsy culture, without making due distinctions and the related evangelical discernment, are therefore not beneficial to the cause of evangelisation itself.

40. In this context, it should be pointed out that safeguarding their traditions should not become for Gypsies an excuse to justify isolating and refusing the rightful progress of *gaḡé* society. Reconciliation and communion between Gypsies and *gaḡé* therefore includes legitimate interaction between cultures, and in this process Gypsies should also take the initiative. It should be noted that the present general composition of society does not give room for necessary progress to cultures that remain isolated from the main course of development. Even though, obviously, many situations of social injustice are ultimately rooted in sin, it should at the same time be acknowledged that situations of social underdevelopment do not always stem from the bad will of the other social strata, but also from the structure of the social tissue, which calls for integration as a condition for progress.

41. Another characteristic of contemporary society is the need for education, professional training and personal initiative and responsibility, which are indispensable prerequisites for achieving at least a respectable quality of life. Such values should be appreciated and upheld, especially by parents. Indeed, a large part of the Gypsy population is still burdened by a heritage where such awareness is lacking, partly as a result of isolation. While often they cannot and should not be blamed for this, such as deficiency needs to be overcome, especially in consideration of the future generations.



In this context equal rights for men and women should be promoted and all forms of unjust discrimination eliminated. This, of course, does not imply upsetting the family institution, which unfortunately occurs when this equality is misunderstood and the differences between men and women are not acknowledged in a culture of reciprocity. Equality calls for respect for the dignity of women, the elevation of female culture, social promotion, etc.

42. The strong sense of family, which is so deeply rooted among Gypsies, must not allow offences received personally or collectively to become permanent resentment that is handed down from generation to generation, thereby perpetuating enmity between families and/or ethnic groups.

Honesty and righteousness in the field of work are also civic and Christian values that should never be disregarded. Activities that produce “easy money”, on the borderline or even beyond legality, should therefore definitely be given up. It should be understood that such an action causes significant harm to Gypsies themselves, and to the population surrounding them, as it contributes to fuelling the prejudices of *gaǵé*.

### **Cultural interaction**

43. Purification of Gypsy culture, however, should not imply emptying it. Yet, together with respect for and appreciation of its legitimate values, the process of integration into the culture of the surrounding society should be strongly encouraged. This implies a welcoming attitude by the latter. For reasons relating to Christian charity and requirements of civil society, any lack of encounter or opposition between Gypsy and *gaǵé* cultures needs to be overcome. This demands a substantial change in mentality in both the ecclesial and the civil milieu.

44. The education given in *gaǵé* schools plays a vital role in this process. In fact, standard textbooks often portray a historical and sociological perception of the Gypsy population based on prejudices handed down from generation to generation, thereby perpetuating the general attitude of distrust. Likewise, information propagated by the mass media seldom makes the general public aware of the positive values in the Gypsy culture. They more often disseminate negative news which further damages the Gypsy image. The keen and increasingly widespread desire to have minorities respected, should instead be brought about also in this area, without any kind of discrimination. What is valid for all minorities should also be applied to Gypsies. Therefore, a great deal of work is still needed to open up, to inform and to break down mistrust, which is exacerbated by acritical literature that is sadly widespread in our society and encourages an attitude of rejection.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **EVANGELISATION AND HUMAN PROMOTION**

#### **The unity of the human family**

45. Through Adam, God reveals himself as Creator and Father of all men and women who make up a single family, the whole of humanity. Each person is created in the image of God (see *Gen 1:27*), in solidarity with others. Therefore, the relationship between God and the human being, even when unfortunately it is not acknowledged, remains vital, the foundation of the dignity of the human person.



Through the gift of life, God unceasingly shows his love as Creator, just as through his words and deeds, his passion and resurrection, Christ reveals the living presence of this creating and redeeming love. In this way, humanity, consisting of the sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters in the Son of God, is called to live together as one family enriched by the gifts of each person and the characteristics of each people. Everyone is asked to build a mankind in brotherhood, called to witness that the Kingdom of God is already present in the Risen Lord and his Church, its beginning and seed (see *LG* 5).

### **Gypsies' human and civil rights**

46. The unity of the human family is also shown in the recognition of the dignity and freedom of each person, whatever may be their race, country of origin or religion, in a relationship of solidarity with everyone. The human person is infinitely precious because Christ offered his life for each one. He is the firstborn son of this new humanity, greatly loved by the Father. After the triumph of the Resurrection, which marks the end of hatred and death, He sent his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth and love, the Spirit of freedom and peace, who reconciles us with our enemies, takes us away from indifference and draws us closer to all members of the human family.

47. Every person, who is unique and irreplaceable, is therefore called, in mutual respect to fulfil his own potential, to develop himself in exercising his rights and duties and earn his living from his own work. So that this may become an everyday reality, any personal or collective decision should come from the person, in his relations with others, taking into account political and economic living conditions. The priority to love others, as proclaimed and lived by Christ, should thus lead Christians to love all other human beings unconditionally, and with Him take on the role of servant. This is how he fought, without violence, that will to power which particularly subjugates the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters to the point of annihilation.

48. The task to be undertaken – so that Gypsies, who are particularly vulnerable, may be considered and accepted as full members of the human family – is therefore great and pressing. Genuine and long-lasting peace, which should be a characteristic of this human family, as a reflection of the divine family (the Holy Trinity), cannot come about without justice and development. The dignity of the Gypsy population must therefore be safeguarded and its collective identity respected, initiatives for its development encouraged<sup>[9]</sup> and its rights defended.

### **A peculiar minority among minorities**

49. To fully understand the often tragic history of this population, not only its condition as a minority within society should be taken into account, but also its peculiarity with regard to other minorities. Indeed, Gypsies are a particular minority because they are not settled in any specific area, and have no country of origin to give them any support they might need. This lack of political guarantees and civil protection makes the life of Gypsies very difficult. Whilst the arrival of other populations in search of refuge and safety has brought about the mobilisation of a given number of persons, an influx of Gypsies usually brings about rejection. Nevertheless, the waves of Gypsy refugees clearly demonstrate that they also come from poor countries where, in addition, discrimination is often accompanied by repeated violence. Such a situation can only be dealt with if governments draw up common, comprehensive and shared policies to take Gypsies away from indigence and rejection.

50. Therefore, it is vitally important that international organisations take an interest in helping Gypsies. Likewise, national governments should respect this minority among minorities and recognise it by helping to eliminate the still widespread incidents of racism and xenophobia that result in discrimination regarding employment, housing and access to education.

The Church too – through the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, the Representatives and Observers of the Holy See at International Organisations, and the ecclesiastical authorities in various countries – is called on to mediate so that the decisions of the national and international Organisations in favour of Gypsies may be welcomed by local authorities and have an influence in everyday life.

### **Conditions for integral development**

51. Education is a fundamental and indispensable condition for development. While in the past the predominately wandering life of Gypsies made systematic schooling of youngsters difficult, today the obstacles to be overcome are more related to the type of education given. Their integration – where possible – within the normal educational process would help to overcome any shortcomings. When semi-sedentarization or nomadism makes systematic and normal education impossible, joint initiatives by governments, Gypsy associations, and also the Church, are needed to provide instruction to Gypsy children in some other way.

52. Likewise, it is necessary to consider all the aspects of development that these populations should benefit from, such as professional training for young people, access to healthcare, decent housing conditions and social security. However, if Gypsy history is not taken into account, social action will tend to take the stance that it is a question of dealing with social deviation. After all, Gypsies may easily be considered as anti-social elements to be brought back as soon as possible within the fold of majority society. This would deny the discrimination that Gypsies have been subjected to for centuries and the recognition of the specific nature of their culture would not be achieved.

What is needed, instead, is to give central importance to respect for every human being – collectively speaking too – especially if conditions of life have made him fragile. This gives rise to some criteria that should be taken into account when dealing with development projects for Gypsy communities. If such projects systematically relegate Gypsies to the status of welfare beneficiaries, they risk missing their objective from the outset. Undoubtedly, circumstances may call for adequate welfare assistance, but genuine promotion should go well beyond that until Gypsies become truly responsible for the resources needed for their own development.

53. Planning ways for development also requires an adequate understanding of the distinct notions of integration and assimilation. Indeed, the former should definitely be encouraged, as it is aimed at a complete inclusion of Gypsy life and traditions in harmony with the other cultures, in a context of respect for its own. On the contrary, any attempts at assimilation, which lead to the annihilation of Gypsy culture dissolving it in the majority culture, should be firmly rejected. Gypsies who are included in the *gaĝé* society should continue to be themselves, and therefore maintain their own identity.

Awareness of the situation of their communities from within is also necessary. All too often, however, public authorities – under pressure from cruel events that end up perturbing public opinion, or by the activities of Gypsy associations and individuals who condemn the sub-human living conditions of these

families – risk taking hasty decisions regarding the measures to be taken. On the contrary, it is necessary to work seriously together with those concerned, taking into account the way of life, traditions and specific nature of Gypsies' work.

54. In this context, Gypsy associations are important as useful interlocutors when drawing up development plans. Such associations should be helped to acquire expertise and reliability regarding initiatives, in order that they may represent the whole population and be consulted by public authorities when preparing far-reaching projects, aimed at improving housing, camp sites, schooling, and the living conditions of the sedentarized, the partially sedentarized and those on the move.

### **The Christian perspective of promotion**

55. Although the launching of human promotion projects is primarily the responsibility of the State, it may be advantageous and even necessary for the Church to be involved in concrete initiatives of this kind, with room for Gypsies to play a leading role. However, it is more aptly part of the Church's fundamental mission to make public authorities aware of the hardships experienced by the Gypsy population.

56. However, it should be borne in mind that “a people's development does not derive primarily from money, material assistance or technological means, but from the formation of consciences and the gradual maturing of ways of thinking and patterns of behaviour. Man is the principal agent of development, not money or technology” (*RM* 58).

## **CHAPTER V**

### **PARTICULAR ASPECTS OF THE PASTORAL CARE OF GYPSIES**

57. The evangelisation of Gypsies is a mission of the whole Church, because no Christian should remain indifferent to a situation of marginalisation or separation from ecclesial communion. Although the pastoral care of Gypsies has its own specific nature, and requires careful and specific formation for those directly involved in it, a welcoming attitude should be shown by the whole Catholic community. Therefore, the awareness of all the People of God needs to be raised, not only to overcome hostility, rejection or indifference, but also to achieve an openly positive behaviour towards our Gypsy brothers and sisters.

#### **Specific aspects of this Pastoral Care**

58. For an adequate planning of the pastoral care of Gypsies, the anthropological dimension is of vital importance, also because Gypsies are particularly open to the “sensitive” impact of an event, especially if it regards the family environment. Their relationship with history continues to be fundamentally emotive. Indeed, their points of reference in time and space are not determined by geography or the calendar, but rather by the emotional intensity of a meeting, a job, an incident or a celebration. Their reactions are immediate and guided by intuition rather than abstract thought. This calls for great insight, initiative and creativity when planning pastoral action.

#### ***Approach and means of communication***

59. Due to Gypsy mentality, pastoral action will be more effective when carried out among small groups. Personalized and shared faith experience is easier in this way, with everyone taking part in the same events, analysing them in the light of the Gospel, and relating individual experiences of an encounter with the Lord. In such groups Gypsies are among themselves, and in their culture, and their personal commitment and lay responsibility are appreciated. On the other hand, anonymity that depersonalises greatly reduces the potentialities of pastoral care.

60. The Word of God proclaimed to Gypsies in the various fields of pastoral action is more likely to be well received if it is proclaimed by someone who has concretely shown solidarity with them in everyday situations. Moreover, in the specific area of catechesis, it is important always to include dialogue that allows Gypsies to express how they perceive and live their relationship with God. Actual experiences are often more meaningful than redundant ideas, in which they could get lost.

61. Moreover, an assessment must be made of the appropriateness of translating liturgical texts, the Bible and prayer books into the languages used by the different ethnic groups in various regions. Likewise, the use of music – which is greatly appreciated and often used by Gypsies – at pastoral meetings and liturgical celebrations is an extremely effective aid that should be encouraged and developed. Finally, given that Gypsies have a highly developed visual memory, printed and video teaching aids, with meaningful pictures, and the whole range of material offered by modern technology – if well adapted to the Gypsy mentality – can provide invaluable, and even indispensable, assistance.

### ***Sacramental Pastoral Care***

62. Family requests for the sacraments come within a context concerning the mutual relationship between the Church and Gypsies. Thus prefer to address their request to the *rašaj* (priest) or the parish team that has proved to be welcoming and open towards them, undoubtedly because its members have also shared painful and dangerous moments of their lives with them. Before giving a hasty reply, it is necessary to find out what kind of relationship exists between the Gypsy family and the local Christian community. This assessment will determine the genuineness of the request, and should influence the preparation for and administration of the sacrament.

63. Baptism is usually the most commonly requested sacrament. However, it is necessary to develop the spiritual accompaniment of the family and the baptised person so as to be able to complete the entire process of Christian initiation. The response provided already to the first request for baptism will be decisive and have a lifelong influence.

At any rate, dialogue in preparation for the celebration of baptism should be based on everyday Gypsy life. Otherwise, there is a risk of using religious language that has nothing to do with their lives, to which they will adhere only externally. A godfather or godmother should also be chosen with care. This role implies acceptance of a privileged relationship with the family, its extension. Therefore, their presence during the preparation is highly desirable, although this is not always easy to achieve.

64. Inadequately prepared baptisms and the imposition of requirements that are valid for *gažé*, as if Gypsies were “habitual” members of a local community, should be avoided. If the celebrant has not been specifically trained for catechesis that is adapted to Gypsies, it is a good idea to consult the nearest Gypsy Chaplain. Care should be taken in the use of words during the celebration, in order to nourish and develop the faith of parents, godfathers, godmothers and all other members of the family present. Not all the

words that might be used by *gaǵé* are understood by Gypsies. The images used do not have the same impact in a different worldview.

Nevertheless, baptism should be celebrated in the presence of members of the whole People of God. As is the case with other Catholics, a Gypsy family, in its own way, will be associated with the preparation and the celebration. This may result in an experience of Catholicity that could start up a new relationship between Gypsies and *gaǵé*, even more so if the relationships established during the preparation are subsequently maintained, including sharing in their daily life experience.

65. Pastoral care regarding confirmation, a sacrament that is almost unknown among the Gypsy community, is important, especially for young people. Preparation for confirmation allows to make up for previous inadequacies in Christian initiation, based on the catechumenal model, educating candidates towards a free and informed belonging to the Church. Whilst introducing the baptised person to full participation in the life of the Spirit, the experience of God and witness to the faith, confirmation also enables him to discover the meaning of his Church membership and missionary responsibility. It is also vital to give importance to the community, the other “subject” of the sacrament. Thus should be included in the catechesis, in an intergenerational manner, so that on the occasion of celebrating “its confirmed members”, the community itself may experience the grace of a new Pentecost, itself being confirmed by the breath of the Holy Spirit in its Christian vocation and evangelising mission.

66. The source and culmination of communion in Christ and with the Church is the Eucharist, a memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord. This sacrament, too, has not yet been fully understood by Gypsies. Nevertheless, it has an important repercussion in the tradition of some Gypsy groups regarding holy banquets, which are normally held in honour of a family’s Saint protector or for the peace of the deceased. In this context, God is praised for graces received and food is shared, first, bread and wine, which are often blessed by the father of the host family. This experience of communion in a banquet, at which Gypsies affirm their membership to their own community, could be permeated with continuous references to God as the source of all goods that give meaning and value to life. Thus it becomes a starting point for gradual introduction into the Christian community gathered together in prayer. This takes place above all in the Eucharistic liturgy, where the sacrament can be revealed and celebrated as the sharing of the same bread of life, at the Father’s table, in an encounter with the paschal mystery, celebrated in the Eucharist which is a memorial of Christ who became a gift for us. In exchange, we give ourselves to God and to our neighbour, as a gift in charity.

67. The sacrament of penance and reconciliation, although generally disregarded in its sacramental form, has a pertinent link to Gypsies, who have the custom of constantly and publicly asking God to forgive their shortcomings. It is also related to the conception and the mode of action by which tradition regulates reconciliation, when readmitting a member of the community who has been declared “impure” and expelled for serious infringements of the ethical code. The sacrament then becomes a visible sign of a process of conversion, in which, on the one hand, Jesus gives, through the ministry of the Church, the merciful forgiveness of the Father, which is inseparable from reconciliation with our brothers and sisters. On the other, it is the human response, sustained by the grace of the Holy Spirit, which leads to an upright moral conscience that adheres radically to God.

68. Marriage is inscribed in Gypsy culture and tradition with rituals that vary according to the group to which the person belongs, but are substantially equivalent. This means that the two contracting parties

assume all conjugal rights and duties before the community, which sanctions the validity of the union, as a permanent *status* in which the ethical and natural values of freedom, fidelity, indissolubility and fertility are substantially safeguarded. The union of marriage is here understood as being totally different from any mere sexual union, and is therefore regarded as an extraordinary event, which comes close to the Catholic view of marriage. Consequently, for the baptised, it could be considered as a significant basis for the future sacrament, with the “form” that is required by the Church. Sacramentally renewed in this way, the family, which is at the heart and foundation of Gypsy culture and social structure, is a fertile ground for the formation of small Christian communities, with a view to gradually achieving their full participation in the life of the Church among the variety of charismas and ministries.

69. Not only is the anointing of the sick a sacrament that is not practised, but it is also unknown as a sacramental sign of Christ and as prayer of the whole Church for the sick. Rejection of this sacrament is due to the false belief that it is connected with death. From this flows the urgent need for evangelisation of suffering, in which the sick person, united with Christ, who took upon himself the burden of the sickness of mankind (see *Mat 8:17*), lives the experience of his or her illness as a trusting abandonment to God the Father and as a generous openness to solidarity with other suffering people. In this way he prepares himself to receive the gift of healing, which God may work in the depths of the soul, radiating some its effects on the body. The sacrament may find an effective starting point in the considerable attention given to the sick, and in particular to the dying, who are brought “home” from the hospital so that they can still enjoy the love and tenderness of the family and the community.

The liturgy for the dead, which is insistently requested for fear that the deceased person might not feel sufficiently honoured, is called to purify and bring to perfection in the light of the paschal mystery, the traditional veneration of the dead, carried out in all groups as a community, intensely and generously, although in different ways.

### ***Pilgrimages***

70. Pilgrimages are a form of devotion that is greatly appreciated by Gypsies, and are attractive opportunities for their families to meet together. Often the “holy places” where they meet their “Saint” are connected to family history. An event, a vow, a prayer journey, experienced as a personal encounter with “the Saint’s God”, forge a group’s loyalty. If the Church, thanks to the presence of Chaplains, religious or laypersons, shares and understands Gypsy prayer, administers baptism to them or blesses a marriage, the pilgrimage would prepare those who take part for an experience of Catholicity that will lead from the “Saint” to the person of Christ, and to ecclesial ties with *gaǵé*.

Even baptisms, prepared in places of pilgrimage, can be celebrated more profoundly and authentically, as they are more familiar and are chosen beforehand by Gypsies themselves. On such occasions, through catechesis adapted for adults, it is also possible to penetrate better the faith in Christ, having their religiosity as the starting point.

71. The Way of the Cross, which is carried out and repeated especially during pilgrimages, is usually highly appreciated. It is experienced as a penitential celebration that Gypsies can animate more easily, as the stations of Christ’s Way of the Cross immediately speak to their hearts, directing their attention to the suffering in their lives and inviting them to work for reconciliation between *gaǵé* and Gypsies. The devout recitation of the Rosary is also part of pilgrims’ prayer.

Moreover, the presence of priests, religious and laypersons, who share their lives for a few days, provides an opportunity for numerous meetings and conversations during which they speak out and bear witness to their faith, nourished by a shared Gospel. These occasions also provide opportunities for contacts with *gaǵé*, believers or non-believers, which often change the negative image that Gypsies have in public opinion and eliminate generalised prejudices.

72. This is why it is a good idea to promote all kinds of pilgrimages, especially international ones, where lived Catholicity can be experienced more easily. Likewise, regional pilgrimages, which are more accessible to poor families, should be supported. Although these less-known pilgrimages do not usually have the function of formation, they can convey a liking for the Gospel and thus nourish everyone's faith. They also provide a good opportunity to promote large-scale pilgrimages, through the witness of families that have already taken part in them and experienced unforgettable moments and new encounters.

73. Finally, the communities responsible for shrines that are open to everyone should coordinate Gypsy pilgrimages and get in touch with leaders of the corresponding pastoral teams, especially if local people are not used to Gypsy culture and traditions. This also enables an evaluation of any reactions from the inhabitants of the town or village where the shrine is located, or in the neighbourhood, in order to examine the situation and plan any necessary intervention. Unless action is taken beforehand, the lodging of families and the parking of caravans may give rise to tensions, which will leave bad memories for a long time.

## **Challenges of the Pastoral Care for Gypsies**

### ***Moving from suspicion to trust***

74. Merely approaching Gypsies with love and the desire to proclaim the Good News is not sufficient to create a relationship of trust between Gypsies and *gaǵé* pastoral agents. History matters and as a consequence of all the wrongs they have suffered, the Gypsy population has remained suspicious of any initiative that tries to penetrate its world. Overcoming this initial attitude may come about only through concrete manifestations of solidarity also by sharing its life.

Any manifestation and act of mutual forgiveness also strengthens trust and solidarity, and encourages establishment of good relations between Gypsies and *gaǵé*. It was in this context that Pope John Paul II addressed the faithful, on 12 March 2000, and asked forgiveness for the sins committed against Gypsies by sons and daughters of the Church in the course of history<sup>[10]</sup>.

### ***The path from various beliefs to faith***

75. As is the case with *gaǵé*, many Gypsies have been baptised but not evangelised. According to the vision of Christian faith, "belief in God" alone does not suffice, because it is necessary to come to a genuine acceptance of Jesus Christ and his message. The passage from various beliefs to faith may also begin by means of catechumenal itineraries, which lead the baptised to a joyful encounter with the Lord.

This effort to reach a mature Christian faith should eliminate the misleading credulity that often leads to the practice of fortune-telling, and more generally to superstition. Mistaken ideas about the meaning of liturgical rites should also be overcome. In this context, requests for sacraments motivated by mistaken or incomplete intentions – such as the desire to ensure a child's physical health – should be put back on the right track.

### ***Ecclesiality, ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue***

76. A mature faith is also an ecclesial faith, living constantly within the Church. Whilst contact with members of other Christian denominations and other religions could be an opportunity for enrichment, certainly changing to become a member of another Church or ecclesial Community does not foster the growth of faith, since between them and the Catholic Church there are mighty differences not only of an historical, sociological, psychological and cultural character, but especially in the interpretation of revealed truth (see [UR](#) 19). Likewise, frequenting two or more Churches at the same time, which implies an anomalous rift between faith and its celebration in worship, should be avoided.

77. It is also necessary to differentiate accurately Christian denominations from sects and “new religious movements”. The latter may possibly attract the innate religiousness of Gypsies – even by using methods permeated with non-evangelical proselytism – but they do not constitute a genuinely ecclesial entity. Therefore, everything possible should be done to prevent Gypsies from falling into such sectarian traps.

However, it should be taken into account that their frequent migrations bring them into contact with *gaǵé* and Gypsies belonging to other denominations and religions, and this gives rise to the need to ensure that pastoral care has the right ecumenical and inter-religious perspective, both in the way the evangelical message is presented and in relationships with believers of other denominations and religions.

78. The new ecclesial movements that the Holy Spirit has awakened in the Church could play a special role in this specific pastoral care. With their strong sense of community, openness, and the accessibility and cordiality characteristic of their members, they could indeed provide a concrete space for the emotive religious expression of Gypsies, and also encourage better evangelisation among them through mutual interaction.

Similarly, it would be useful to create a space for international and/or national Catholic associations in the specific pastoral care for Gypsies. However, such organisations should maintain a constant relationship of communion and collaboration, according to the circumstances, with the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, and with the local Church and the national Office that deals with nomadic people.

### ***Secularisation***

79. It is to be noted that secularisation, which is widespread in many societies today, increasingly affects Gypsies, especially those who are more integrated within *gaǵé* society. The impact with this phenomenon finds them less prepared to face it, because their situation of separation from the rest of society had until now spared them from this danger. Now, however, they face the impact almost suddenly. Secularisation has also a particular effect on the young people, who are attracted more easily by the false prospects it offers. This harms the religiosity they experienced at home with their families. Increasingly, Gypsy young people come into contact with their *gaǵé* peers, who often show no interest in religion. This raises in young Gypsies questions that are unknown to their parents. The latter are not well prepared to answer such questions, which they had never asked themselves, because for them the existence of God had always been taken for granted. This makes the pastoral care of Gypsy youngsters an urgent matter to be given priority.

## **CHAPTER VI**



## PASTORAL STRUCTURES AND AGENTS

80. Without prejudice of the primacy of charity, which enkindles in persons and institutions the desire to encourage full communion of every single human being and community with Christ, including Gypsies, it is necessary to reflect on which type of structures are most appropriate to start with, there where it has not yet begun, or to improve pastoral care for, among and with Gypsies. Since we are before a complex and multi-faceted reality, and the situation of the different particular Churches are quite varied, the general guidelines that follow are to be applied to the concrete local situations with the appropriate adaptations. Moreover, a distinction must be made between implementation at the local level and implementation that extends throughout an entire country or region or even to the universal Church, although the relative coordination and necessary hierarchical communion should be well taken care of.

### **The Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant people**

81. On 28 June 1988, in the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*[11], Pope John Paul II entrusted the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People with the task of bringing “the pastoral concern of the Church to bear on the special needs of those who have been forced to leave their native land or who do not have one. It also sees to it that these matters are considered with the attention they deserve” (art. 149). “The Council ensures that in the particular Churches refugees and exiles, migrants, nomads, and circus workers receive effective and special spiritual care, even, if necessary, by means of suitable pastoral structures” (art. 150 § 1). This Dicastery is, therefore, a new expression of the care constantly manifested by the Church in past decades, with the subsequent establishment of various organisms and offices operating within the Roman Curia.

82. Concrete implementation of the mandate entrusted to the Dicastery is carried out through the day-to-day work of animating, promoting and coordinating pastoral care, as well as through various activities regarding the apostleship of nomadic people. The Pontifical Council therefore addresses the Bishops’ Conferences, the corresponding Hierarchical Structures of the Oriental Catholic Churches – respecting the competence of the Congregation concerned - and the regional and continental Federations of Bishops’ Conferences, as well as the individual Dioceses/Eparchies, to foster specific implementation of this pastoral care. Moreover, to encourage the spread and sharing of concrete experiences in the various local Churches, this Dicastery itself organises congresses, meetings and international seminars, and participates, to a reasonable extent, in those convened by other entities. Furthermore, direct contacts are maintained with various international bodies engaged in human promotion and in the pastoral care of nomadic people.

### **Bishops' Conferences and corresponding Hierarchical Structures of the Oriental Catholic Churches**

83. Given the specific nature of the pastoral care for Gypsies, the Bishops’ Conferences and corresponding Hierarchical Structures of the Oriental Catholic Churches, in the countries where Gypsies live, must have a special attention specifically for Gypsies, through its Commissions for the pastoral care of migrants and itinerant people. In distributing available human and material resources, Bishops’ Conferences and corresponding Hierarchical Structures of the Oriental Catholic Churches should ensure that the pastoral care for Gypsies is not subjected to discrimination, but is dealt with in proportion to its importance, also in the context of other minorities.

The tasks of the relative Commission include not only the coordination of local religious offices, but also the efforts to raise awareness among the faithful and priests regarding the situation of Gypsies. Bishops will thus pay due attention to this pastoral care during a session of their permanent formation (see [PG 24](#)). Furthermore, it would be necessary to promote and supply information, within communities, with the support of all Pastors, even though the Episcopal Promoter – or his substitute – has received a specific mandate which, in any case, he is unable to perform single-handedly. Taking account of the geographical distribution of the Gypsy population, it might also be advantageous to have some degree of pastoral coordination at the regional or continental level, besides the national one.

### **The Episcopacy and the pastoral care of Gypsies**

84. From the reciprocal relationship of immanence between the Universal Church and individual particular Churches (see [LG 13](#))<sup>[12]</sup> derives a Catholicity that unites and shapes both ecclesial dimensions. Each individual particular Church is thus Catholic in itself, with a Catholicity that is translated into cordial communion. The Church “which speaks all tongues, understands and accepts all tongues in her love, and so supersedes the divisiveness of Babel” ([AG 4](#)), joins, penetrates and assumes human diversity in full Catholicity (see [AG 6](#)).

85. The duty of Bishops is therefore to maintain and deepen the unity of the particular Churches in their mission, by acknowledging and appreciating any human experience that is open to the religious and transcendental dimension, with particular concern for those faithful who are marginalized. The Gypsy minority should therefore attract their pastoral attention, such that the “international” characteristic of this population will not result in a lack of awareness at the local and regional levels.

86. As custodians *par excellence* of communion, Bishops will concretely safeguard Gypsy unity and identity, and their union with the autochthonous ecclesial community. Indeed, if the particular Church does not respect their identity, neither would it be able to build its own unity. Likewise, a requirement of ecclesial communion is that Gypsies should feel that the local Church, where they live, is their own. The Pastors will seek therefore to stimulate such a feeling. A practical expression of this ecclesial communion is undoubtedly sincere and authentic dialogue between the various stable autochthonous communities and Gypsies. Once again it is the duty of Bishops to foster and facilitate such communication, taking full account of everyone’s values, culture and identity.

### **Possible pastoral structures for personal jurisdiction**

87. The special nature of Gypsy pastoral care is such that a particular or local Church may find itself unable - mainly due to lack of suitable pastoral agents - to carry it out effectively. An inter-diocesan or national/synodal Office, which reports to the Bishops’ Conference or to the corresponding Hierarchical Structure of the Oriental Catholic Church, is therefore needed to take care of fair distribution of resources, in the broadest sense of the term, the training of pastoral agents, coordination and relations with similar pastoral institutions in other countries, etc. In this respect an entity that guides pastoral care could be useful, or even necessary, to effectively follow the work and living conditions of Chaplains and other pastoral agents, without prejudice to the authority of diocesan Bishops.

88. The dimension of the “Gypsy phenomenon” and its peculiarities do not always facilitate an effective pastoral response that is exclusively based on the institution of the diocesan or inter-diocesan Chaplaincy. An overall, long-lasting, and safer solution with an adequate degree of autonomy – always in harmonious

agreement with local Church authorities – could be sought within the framework of pastoral structures provided for by the legislation and practice of the Church[13].

### **The episcopal promoter**

89. Within each Bishops' Conference or the corresponding Hierarchical Structures of the Oriental Catholic Churches concerned, an "Episcopal Promoter" should be appointed for the pastoral care for Gypsies. Preferably, he should have sufficient personal formation to penetrate and understand the specific nature of Gypsy society, as this can not be reduced to what is commonly stated or held. Obviously, the Episcopal Promoter needs to keep in close touch with the national team, and will also bring them the vision of the Universal Church in relation with the local Church, so as to enable a grasp of the overall dimension that goes beyond the changeable relationship between Gypsies and society, and between Gypsies and the Church. He should be particularly concerned about Gypsies, and support the pastoral action carried out in their favour by Chaplains and parish priests. He is also responsible for informing Bishops of the presence of Gypsies in their Dioceses/Eparchies – and vice versa – and maybe inviting them to find a priest, religious or layperson to raise concern for the evangelisation of Gypsies. In those countries where Gypsies are numerous and increasing, one of his first tasks is to create a pastoral structure at the national/synodal or regional level, or within a specific Church *sui iuris*, or to strengthen the existing ones.

### **The National Office**

90. Even though the national "Chaplaincy", or equivalent "Office", is not organised in a standard way, it normally includes a National Director, and maybe one or two assistants, depending on the number of Gypsies and the size of the geographical area in which they are present. National or similar meetings, attended by Gypsies and *gaǵé* priests, religious and laypersons, allow important issues regarding this population to be dealt with and proposals for ecclesial pastoral action to be put forward. In this context, the Episcopal Promoter's direction is indispensable. Fundamental in any activity, however, is the tendency to make Gypsies responsible for their own lives. National Directors or their equivalent should have an extensive knowledge of the Gypsy population, with an international view, and experience in the field and of teamwork.

91. If necessary, the National Director, or his equivalent, should also encourage – if necessary – the creation of regional and diocesan/eparchial teams with the task of analysing common experience, both to achieve greater justice for Gypsies, and to improve the quality and continuity of religious assistance and catechesis. Annual courses of formation will also be offered to Chaplains, religious and laypersons. It is also opportune to organise periods of permanence with Gypsy families and communities, to get an insight into their mentality, network of relationships, relative poverty and existing assets and deficiencies. This is a difficult but enriching experience. The National Office or its equivalent could also support the creation of "schools of faith" for gypsy couples and families, who are called to participate in the Christian animation of their community in a more concrete fashion.

### **Chaplaincies/Missions**

92. So as to not exclude anyone from ecclesial communion, a well tested experience puts beside the pastoral structures set up on a territorial basis (mainly the parishes) other structures catering to various categories of people in need of specific pastoral care. Therefore, in the Church we can find

Chaplaincies/Missions for migrants, refugees, university students, the sick in hospitals, prisoners, the world of sports, the performing arts, etc. This context is evoked because here there is a place for a Chaplaincy that carries out specific pastoral care for Gypsies, equipped with all the necessary resources to fulfil its mission.

### **Chaplains/Missionaries**

93. Exercising a specific pastoral ministry with Gypsies requires special training under the guidance of the Episcopal Promoter, with the coordination of the National Office or similar structure, in communion with the diocesan/eparchial Bishops concerned. This task of forming priests for the Gypsy world requires an efficient and well-qualified national team or its equivalent. The number of Chaplains should be proportionate to the number of Gypsies living in any given place. Such pastoral care obviously also involves local parish priests, who should not place the entire burden of apostolic engagement with Gypsies on the shoulders of Chaplains/Missionaries responsible for such specific pastoral care. In any case, a great synergy and spirit of collaboration should develop between the Chaplains/Missionaries and parish priests. Indeed, the latter are particularly responsible for building pastoral awareness towards Gypsies in the parish community, and should also be willing to let Chaplains/Missionaries help them in their ministry among Gypsies.

94. Since ministry in Chaplaincies/Missions for the specific pastoral care of Gypsies is a particularly difficult task, priests destined to it should be assisted and encouraged.

There should be coordination between territorial and personal pastoral care. Parish priests and Chaplains/Missionaries should therefore strive to obtain a fruitful dialogue between themselves. It is also important that seminaries and institutes of formation for the religious, in the countries concerned, should provide some basic and general notions regarding the pastoral care of Gypsies, in general.

95. The decree of the Pontifical Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Tourism of 19 March 1982, contained a list of seven special faculties enjoyed by Chaplains of certain categories of faithful including Chaplains of nomads (faculties that were extended also to priests who are appointed to act in their place, in case of their absence or impediment).

It should be borne in mind that when this decree was issued, in addition to the 1917 *CIC*, the Instruction *De pastoralis migratorum cura* of the Sacred Congregation for Bishops (22 August 1969) was in force. No. 36 § 2 of this Instruction stipulated that the appointment of such Chaplains should take place via a rescript from the Sacred Congregation for Bishops.

However, in considering the faculties of Chaplains/Missionaries dedicated to the pastoral care for Gypsies, it is necessary to bear in mind not only the canons of the new Code of 1983 and those of *CCEO* regarding the individual issues related to the faculties involved, but above all the fact that Chaplains/Missionaries are appointed by the competent Ordinary/Hierarchy pursuant, for example, to *CIC* can. 565 and of *CCEO* can. 585. As such, the faculties are connected to a given Diocese/Eparchy, with the exception of the faculty to hear confessions now given normally *ubique terrarum*[14].

The only faculty left out, therefore, is that of reserving the Blessed Sacrament in caravans, although here too the norm of *CIC* can. 934 grants the Ordinary a greater possibility of action than did can. 1265, of the

1917 Code. In any case, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care for Migrants and Itinerant People can grant a similar indult, under certain conditions.

### **Pastoral agents at the service of gypsy communities**

96. Pastoral agents – men and women, Gypsy or *gažé* couples, laypersons, deacons, men religious who are not priests and women religious – are called to put themselves at the service of Gypsies, taking on a precise responsibility, and eventually with a “mission letter” from the Bishop or the person in charge of the pastoral structure set up for this purpose. The diocesan/eparchial Bishop should acknowledge and define the service requested, taking care of entrusting their formation to the national/synodal, or regional, team, under the guidance of the Episcopal Promoter.

97. In general, it should be borne in mind, for purposes of formation, that even pastoral agents who have established permanent relationships with Gypsy families are not easily accepted or recognised by the local community, nor are they always immediately accepted by the Gypsies themselves. Such agents will have to strengthen their contacts in order to get to know their history and situation and to understand the network of relationships in a Gypsy neighbourhood or on a campsite.

Pastoral agents should also try to set up a reflection team that includes Gypsies, which is not easy to accomplish, especially at the start. This is why many pastoral agents get tired and discouraged, because they find themselves alone in analysing and bearing the burden of their experiences. On the border between two different cultures, they should be able to rely on a welcoming Christian community that seeks, also thanks to them, to reach out to Gypsies and journey with them, so that the universal Christian brotherhood that is proclaimed may become a reality.

### **Bridge-communities**

98. In such situations that have proved to be objectively difficult, the so-called bridge-communities, consisting of *gažé* pastoral agents who share the life of a Gypsy community, have turned out to be a valid expression of organic unity and should therefore be encouraged. In fact, the sharing of everyday life is often worth more than many speeches, which is why such bridge-communities are almost indispensable so that even Christian communities would be freed from prejudices and generalised condemnation of Gypsies and accept to meet them.

In this area, intervention by the Episcopal Promoter and the diocesan/eparchial Bishop is particularly decisive so that such bridge-communities would be supported and encouraged, and at the same time not become an easy justification for the lack of interest on the part of other Christians. For the same reason, the Episcopal Promoter and the diocesan/eparchial Bishop should be systematically informed about the work of the bridge-community.

### **Gypsy pastoral agents**

99. Pastoral care that is well set up should naturally result in Gypsies themselves playing a key role, and therefore becoming apostles among their own people. In this way these words of Pope Paul VI, although said in another context, would be fulfilled: “It will require an incubation of the Christian “mystery” in the genius of your people in order that its native voice, more clearly and frankly, may then be raised harmoniously in the chorus of the other voices in the Universal Church”[\[15\]](#).

However, in general, Gypsy lay people engaged in pastoral care prefer an open-ended and renewable task, because their conditions of life, more than those of other people, are subject to the uncertainties of human existence. When, for example, the poverty of some families turns to be unbearable, it becomes impossible for them to carry out their apostolic responsibility, since the urgent need for them to struggle for survival requires all of their efforts. Moreover, the lack of responsiveness of the milieu, when the layperson is considered as an envoy of the *gažé*, may lead them to give up their service as it entails the risk of exclusion from their Gypsy community of origin.

100. The formation of Gypsy lay people for pastoral duties is in any case a priority that binds the future of the Church. It is not an easy matter as it presupposes a personal relationship with a priest, religious or layperson who habitually lives in contact with one or more Gypsy families, and who has recognised the willingness and generosity of a person or a couple that are well accepted in their own milieu and whose influence is evident. Their formation, however, should not be carried out apart from the family, whose reactions and perceptions should be carefully taken into consideration. Ideally this should take place with other Gypsy people or couples who have accepted this invitation.

The animation team should assess regularly the group's evolution and its impact on the Gypsy milieu. The experience of Catholicity will lead to an evaluation of whether Gypsies speak easily, discovering more and more that faith is a personal relationship with Christ, who is gratuitous love for each person. The Christian community that accompanies the animation team should also ask itself about the quality of the welcome that it gives and its expectations. The initiative should therefore be reciprocal and a source of a Christian experience that shares through words and in the condition of life that lay people are not usually accustomed to.

101. With such gypsy "protagonism", prayer will gush forth so that the Holy Spirit may inspire generous priestly, diaconal and religious vocations among Gypsies, which are necessary if we are to speak of a genuine *implantatio Ecclesiae* (implantation of the Church) in Gypsy milieu. Adequate vocational promotion among Gypsy people is therefore needed, bearing in mind that "the Church drives deeper roots in any given sector of the human family when the various faithful communities all have, from among their members, their own ministers of salvation" (*AG* 16).

#### A FINAL WISH

102. We hope that these guidelines meet the expectations of all those who wished to have an overall pastoral orientation in the ministry among our nomadic brothers and sisters. Welcoming Gypsies undoubtedly constitutes a challenge for the Church. Indeed, the widespread presence of nomadic people is also a constant invitation to live our earthly pilgrimage with faith and to carry out charity and Christian communion so that any indifference or animosity in their regard would be overcome. Indeed, in his Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* Pope John Paul II invites us to "promote a spirituality of communion"<sup>[16]</sup>, which above all means sharing other people's joy and suffering, sensing their wishes and taking care of everyone's needs, so as to offer everyone a true and deep friendship<sup>[17]</sup>.

Rome, from the offices of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2005, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.



**Stephen Fumio Cardinal Hamao**  
*President*

**Agostino Marchetto**  
*Titular Archbishop of Astigi*  
*Secretary*

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- [1] Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*, art. 150, § 1: *AAS* LXXX (1988), 899.
- [2] V World Congress of the Pastoral Care for Gypsies – Budapest –, Appeal N. 8, see: *People on the Move*, December 2003, N. 93 Supplement.
- [3] See Romualdo Rodrigo, OAR, *Gypsy Saint Ceferino Jiménez Malla* (1861 – 1936), Rome 1997.
- [4] Pope John Paul II, Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 *Incarnationis Mysterium* (29 November 1998), N. 7: *AAS* XCI (1999), 135.
- [5] Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), N. 58: *AAS* LXXXIII (1991), 306.
- [6] Pope Paul VI, *Homily*, 26 September 1965: *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, III (1965) 492.
- [7] St Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XVIII, 51, 2: *PL* 41, 614.
- [8] Pope John Paul II, *Speech to the participants in the Third International Congress on the Pastoral Care of Gypsies*, 9 November 1989: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II* XII, 2 (1989) 1195.
- [9] See Pope John Paul II, *Speech*, 16 September 1980: *People on the Move* 56 (1990) 128.
- [10] See *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition in English, N. 12 - 22 March 2000, 4.
- [11] *AAS* LXXX (1988) 841-934.
- [12] Also see Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some aspects of the Church understood as Communion*, N. 89: *AAS* LXXXV (1993) 842-844.
- [13] See Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (7 December 1965) N. 10: *AAS* LVIII (1966) 1007-1008 and Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes* (7 December 1965) N. 20, note 4: *AAS* LVIII (1966) 971, and N. 27, note 28: *ibid.* 979. Similarly, see Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America* (6 November 1999) N. 65, note 237: *AAS* XCI (1999) 800 and Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa* (28 June 2003) N. 103, note 106: *AAS* XCV (2003) 707. See *CIC* canons 294-297.
- [14] Differently from the situation in force with the Code of 1917, in the Latin Church many of the faculties mentioned in the said decree (of 19 March 1982) may currently be granted by the Ordinary of

the place to any priest: the faculty to celebrate Holy Mass twice on weekdays and three times on feast-days (*CIC* can. 905 § 2); the possibility of celebrating a Mass in the afternoon of Holy Thursday for the faithful who cannot participate in the Mass *in Cena Domini* (*Missale Romanum*); the faculty to hear Confessions anywhere (*CIC* canons 566 § 1 and 967 § 2) and to administer the sacrament of Confirmation (*CIC* can. 884 § 1). As regards the faculty to absolve in the sacramental forum from *latae sententiae* censures which have not declared and are not reserved to the Apostolic See, it does not appear to be so relevant, because it refers to the faculties which come under the ordinary executive power of the Ordinary/Hierarch under the norm of *CIC* can. 1355 § 2 and *CCEO* can 1420 § 1, and, therefore, it can be delegated to third party in virtue of *CIC* can. 137 § 1 and *CCEO* can 998 § 1. With regard to the restrictive norms to be observed in the Catholic Oriental Churches, these can be deduced from the respective canons of *CCEO* and the particular right of each individual Church *sui iuris*.

[15] Pope Paul VI, *Homily at Kampala in Uganda*, 31 July 1969: *AAS* LXI (1969) 577.

[16] Pope Paul VI, *Homily at Kampala in Uganda*, 31 July 1969: *AAS* LXI (1969) 577.

[17] See *ibid*.