



Missionary Society of St. Columban

U.S. Regional Administration

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U.S. Columban Region Calls on the U.S. to Respond to the Global Crisis of Migrants and Refugees

December 18, 2017

Never before in human history have so many people been uprooted and displaced from their homes and forced to seek shelter. On International Migrants Day, the United Nations reminds the nations of the world of their responsibility to protect the safety, dignity, and fundamental freedoms of all migrants and refugees.

In this context, we are especially disappointed in the recent announcement from the administration to withdraw the United States from the United Nations Global Compact on Migration, a process set in motion by the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, signed by 193 nations.

The Gospel invites us to welcome the migrant as we would welcome Christ (Matthew 25:35). In more than a dozen countries, including the United States, “Columbans around the world have listened and responded to the cry of migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers. We have been energized and blessed by our work in this area,”¹ and we are committed to “continue accompanying and defending the rights of migrants,”² wherever we encounter them.”

In the words of Amy Woolam Echeverria, International Coordinator for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation for the Missionary Society of St. Columban:

“We know intimately the struggles that migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers around the world face, and we are committed to working for national and global policies that defend and protect their rights. For that reason, we support the process leading to a Global Compact on Migration and a Global Compact on Refugees, and express our deep concern that the U.S. government has withdrawn from that important international process. It is our hope that the United States will reverse its decision and reenter the discussions in the spirit of welcoming the stranger and collaborating globally for the good of all vulnerable people on the move.”

There are 244 million migrants worldwide, including the 65 million refugees, internally displaced peoples, and asylum-seekers.³ We know who they are. We have seen them in heart-breaking pictures displayed in the media, crossing cruel deserts and treacherous

Japan + Korea + Peru + Hong Kong + Philippines + Pakistan + Chile + Fiji + Taiwan + North America

¹ Missionary Society of St. Columban, “Strong and Courageous,” 2006.

² Missionary Society of St. Columban, “Called to Communion,” 2012.

³ New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, 2016, signed by all 193 member states of the United Nations.

seas in search of refuge. More than half of them are children. They are among the most vulnerable members of our human family, and they are fleeing for their lives.

In his World Day of Peace message for 2018, Pope Francis reminds us of the importance of the global compacts on migration and refugees:

“As shared agreements at a global level, these compacts will provide a framework for policy proposals and practical measures. For this reason, they need to be inspired by compassion, foresight and courage, so as to take advantage of every opportunity to advance the peace-building process. Only in this way can the realism required of international politics avoid surrendering to cynicism and to the globalization of indifference.”

“In a spirit of compassion,” the Pope calls on nations “to embrace all those fleeing from war and hunger, or forced by discrimination, persecution, poverty and environmental degradation to leave their homelands.” He added that migrants and refugees are the ones who “are willing to risk their lives on a journey that is often long and perilous, to endure hardships and suffering, and to encounter fences and walls built to keep them far from their goal.”

During this Advent and Christmas season, as we remember the Holy Family’s journey to Bethlehem and their flight into Egypt, we call on the administration to reverse their decision to withdraw from this critical compact and to reaffirm their commitment to welcome and protect migrants.

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For more information

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About the Missionary Society of St. Columban

Columban missionaries serve economically poor and marginalized communities globally, often in countries plagued by poverty, injustice, climate disasters, armed conflict, and religious, inter-ethnic or political persecution. We are called to both serve the needs of migrants and refugees, and to address the root causes of migration so that people and their families have the choice to remain at home.