

U.S. ambassador says migration policies are ethical issue

ROME - U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican Miguel Diaz said migration policies represent a growing ethical issue for the international community, requiring an examination of root causes and promotion of just laws.

Speaking at a church-run conference in Barcelona, Spain, Oct. 5, Diaz, a migrant from Cuba, addressed more than 350 political and religious leaders from around the world about the tragic situation of migrants and the responsibility of the international community as a whole to address its ethical dimension. A copy of his speech was made available in Rome.

Diaz identified some of the problems facing migrants as economic, social and environmental, and said they tend to impact displaced women and children the most. He said the current economic crisis has increased the vulnerability of migrants to human trafficking and labor exploitation.

"Beyond our current economic crisis, there is also plenty of evidence that points to the link that exists between climate changes (ongoing desertification, land degradation and drought) and migration. In short, there is plenty of evidence to support that the protection of our planet is inextricably linked to the protection of our human family, especially to the survival of migrants," Diaz stated.

Today, Diaz said, "one out of every 35 persons who live on this earth is a migrant," but there is still a largely negative attitude toward migrants, and a lack of solutions for them.

In response to this situation, Diaz said migration should be accepted as both a Christian duty to "uphold the value of unity in diversity" and as a political duty to "safeguard human rights." He said all countries share in this responsibility.

Diaz spoke at the 25th International Meeting for Peace sponsored by the Sant'Egidio Community and the Archdiocese of Barcelona. He began his speech with reference to the biblical story of Abraham and Sarah's hospitality to three strangers, which he

said suggests the ethical responsibility of “welcoming vulnerable populations, especially migrants.”

Today, he said, the injustice faced by migrants represents “a tragic human experience that will likely deepen in the years ahead.”

Diaz drew from his own personal experience as a migrant to underline his point, expressing his own gratitude to the United States for welcoming him as a child. He said his success story illustrates the “positive outcomes” that often occur through acceptance of migrants.

Diaz ended his speech by underscoring the core values of the United States, and said the Statue of Liberty served as a reminder of the country’s promise of openness. It is not just the United States, Diaz said, but the “family of nations” that “must come together to share life-sustaining resources and long-term solutions to human migrations.”