



Message for May 1st, 2025 – open letter

## MIGRATIONS, THE RIGHT TO WORK, AND INTEGRATION

As we approach May 1st, International Workers' Day, the Catholic Church in Quebec renews its commitment to ensuring the dignity of every person. This year, in a global context marked simultaneously by increasing migrations and protectionism, we believe it is important to highlight the contribution of migrants to our society, and to remind ourselves of the importance of providing them with decent work that fosters their integration.

In daily conversations, we often hear that we are already doing enough, or even too much, for migrants in Quebec. In public debate, their needs are sometimes even placed in competition with those of vulnerable people. This suspicious perception should be replaced by a sincere and constant concern for the dignity of each individual. In this way, we will be able to offer, here, the kind of hospitality that we would like to enjoy elsewhere, should we migrate in our turn.

### A look at the current situation

Migration occupies an important place in public debate in Quebec. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the essential role played by a number of foreign-born workers in the health, agriculture, and food sectors was highlighted with empathy. Today, these same “guardian angels” are sometimes held responsible for critical situations whose causes are in fact complex: the housing crisis, the decline of the French language, inflation, overcrowding in hospital emergency rooms, the lack of day-care places, the lack of space and teaching staff in schools, etc.

Many community organizations denounce this instrumentalization of migrants as scapegoats, and the inequities they have to endure: closed work permits for temporary migrant workers, considerable delays for asylum seekers to gain access to a work permit, non-recognition of diplomas, major cuts in francization – the list goes on and on of what undermines the dignity of these people.

With Pope Francis, we are putting forward an approach to hospitality based on four action verbs: welcome, protect, promote, and integrate. In 2006, the Canadian bishops wrote that “Catholic teaching sees a fundamental inversion of values in laws and policies that give precedence to the national interest over the human dignity of individuals”.

In today's Quebec context, this teaching may come as a surprise, even a cause for concern, to those who believe that Quebec society's "capacity for integration" is now exceeded. Yet, in this respect, Pope Francis also insists on "the need to foster a culture of encounter, by multiplying opportunities for intercultural exchange, documenting and disseminating 'good practices' of integration, and developing programs to prepare local communities for integration processes."

### **Doing more**

Today, in addition to supporting the integration of Christian migrants in all parishes, the Church also supports integration initiatives led by community organizations regardless of faith.

Because of the fundamental dignity of all people, no one should be treated as a mere means in a partisan joust or an economic project. Let us avoid any instrumentalization of migrants, and instead ask ourselves how we can treat everyone with dignity.

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