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Spiritans Ministry with the Displaced

Durban Declaration – 2007

Our Spiritan ministry with the displaced (Asylum Seekers, Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced People) is essentially a ministry of presence in which we rely on the guidance and consolation of the Holy Spirit. It flows first from a communal life rooted in prayer, mutual support and sharing. International communities offer living witness to a commitment to overcome that which divides us and to live together in fidelity to the gospel.

Our firm belief in the God-given dignity of each person leads us to welcome and accompany the displaced. It is based on a holistic understanding of the person that addresses pastoral, material and social needs. The pastoral dimension is centered on the sacramental and spiritual life of those to whom we minister. The material and social dimensions encompass a broad spectrum of activities, which are carried out in collaboration with the displaced themselves, and in cooperation with the local church and like-minded people and agencies. The goal of our ministry is to empower the person and to heighten awareness of the dignity of the displaced as children of God, in their own eyes and in the eyes of others.

We walk in solidarity with the displaced, challenging the unjust acts and structures with which they are confronted. At the same time we call them to undertake the difficult work of forgiveness and reconciliation among themselves and with their brothers and sisters in their community of origin. We also encourage them to live in harmony with the people in their host community while we challenge their hosts to welcome the stranger in their midst. In this way together we witness to the kingdom of God growing among us as we work to build a society of true and lasting peace. In this work the Christian community has an essential role to play.

As Spiritans we undertake ministry with the displaced as an expression of our commitment to the poor and the oppressed, and of our willingness to accept difficult works. We find encouragement and spiritual nourishment by seamlessly combining prayer and apostolic works in a practical union with God, and in the solidarity of the Spiritan family.

It is our hope that through a ministry of binding the wounds our presence with the displaced helps them to experience the compassion of Christ himself. We draw inspiration for our ministry from the account of the two apostles on the road to Emmaus, both overcome with despair because of the death of Jesus. We therefore seek to transform the lives of those to whom we minister by helping them to re-interpret their experiences in the light of their own faith, just as Jesus did for the two disciples. In this way together we experience new life through the restoration of hope. ■



Photo by Derek Speirs