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Pastoral communication to the migrants (Reference to African Roman Catholic)

Pastoral Communication to Migrants The African Catholic Church and the Catholic Church at large gives a lot of premium to migrants the world over. The basis for this conduct is rooted in the fact that the story of the birth of Jesus Christ portrays the parents of Jesus as immigrants in Bethlehem from Nazareth (Luke 2: 1-7). The church also believes that Jesus had and still has a lot of love for migrants (Official Documents of the Roman Catholic Church, 2004). To this effect, the church has special pastoral services that they render to migrants the world over, especially in Africa. According to Official documents of the Roman Catholic Church, 2004), “ Today’s migration makes up the vastest movement of people of all times. In these last decades, the phenomenon, now involving about two hundred million individuals, has turned into a structural reality of contemporary society.” This is also a reason, accounting for the attention that the church gives to migrants. However, in order that pastors in the African Catholic Church deliver their pastoral duties successfully and in a way that ensures that the dream of the church is lived, there is the urgent need to address the issue of communication between pastors and migrants. This is because communication forms the basis of every kind of support and help given to migrants. This means that good communication can ensure success whereas bad communication would be tantamount to failure. Steele (2010) posits that “ communication is a process by which information is exchanged”. This skill is essentially important in pastoral services rendered to migrants. However, before a pastor even says ‘ jack’ to communicating with migrants, there are

a couple of factors to consider. In the first place, it is extremely important for the pastor to understand into detail, the cause of the migration. In Africa for instance, a lot of people migrate because of harsh economic, social and political conditions in their countries. There are also a lot more people who migrate to seek greener pastures and some for permanent settlement. In order that a pastor gives the most appropriate form of message to a migrant, it is important that the pastor understands the causes or reason behind the movement. This way, the pastor will be in a better position to prepare just the right message for the right person. After discovering what informed an immigrant's migration and basing on that to choose the right message to communicate to the migrant, the next step to take has to do with choosing a mode of communication. Steele (2010) notes that there are two major forms of communication. These are verbal and non-verbal communication.

Whereas verbal communication entails the use of oral words, non-verbal communication deals purposely with body language. To the pastor, the decision on the kind of communication to use would be informed by the migrant's ability to understand. If the migrant can understand the language of the pastor, it is important that the pastor uses verbal communication. In cases where the pastor does not understand the language of the migrant, interpreters could be used. As much as possible, non-verbal communication should be used as a last resort. This is because non-verbal communication makes understanding difficult and increases chances of misunderstanding (Mighty Student, 2010). Africa as a continent is made up of several

languages and dialects in individual countries, it is therefore important that pastors of the Roman Catholic Church are put in a position where they can

learn more languages. To conclude, the following are important observations
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that should be noted in communicating with migrants. Even in situations where migrants may be found to be illegal migrants, it is important to be very careful not to judge migrants in the cause of communication. Jesus advises Christians in Mathew 7: 1 against judging others. Migrants who are fleeing bad conditions back home need messages that would give them hope in the Lord, in themselves and in the future. Again, communication should not be done as an event but a process that would be long lasting and repetitive. To this effect, follow ups and feedbacks from migrants are very important. This is particular important as feedback is one of the key. Finally, the practice of giving attention to migrants should not end in Africa or any part of the world as far as the Catholic Church is concerned. In 2003 for instance, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc. and Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano issued a communique that outlined the importance the church attaches to pastoral services to migrants. The conference declared that “ No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003). Such a vision is the role that communication must be employed on to play in the church.

REFERENCE LIST Official Documents of the Roman Catholic Church, 2004, The Love of Christ Towards Migrants (*Erga migrantes caritas Christi*), accessed April 5, 2011 <http://circulars.blogspot.com/2010/03/love-of-christ-towards-migrants-erga.html> The Holy Bible Mighty Student 2010, Nonverbal Communication, accessed April 6 2011 Steele j 2010, What is Communication? Speech mastery, accessed April 8 2011 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003, No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope, accessed April 6 2011