

## **Bishops Call for Migration Summit Say No Church Member Is a Foreigner**

TECUN UMAN, Guatemala, JULY 1, 2009 (Zenit.org).- Bishops of different nations are urging their civil leaders to hold a conference in order to discuss the problems presented by migration and possible solutions.

The prelates stated this in a message released at the close of a June 2-4 meeting of representatives from the bishops' conferences of the United States, Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean.

The conference was held in Tecun Uman on the topic of migration issues, with the goal of finding a way to contribute to policies that respect human dignity and protect life.

The bishops' statement affirmed the current "privileged moment in the history of migration," shown by the efforts of various countries to confront the problem.

"There is no time to lose," the prelates affirmed. Every day migrants confront a "very dangerous journey," in which they "suffer harassments, assaults from smugglers and human traffickers, as well as drug cartels."

The statement underlined the need to attend to the groups of organized crime that "in many cases operate with impunity along the borders" and within many countries.

These violations against the human rights of migrants "have notably increased," it affirmed, and until now the local authorities have not done anything to stop them.

The bishops noted a particular concern for the impact of immigration on familial unity, especially for the children who may be left alone or forced to work in order to sustain the family.

Public welcome

In our countries, they affirmed, "public opinion regarding the phenomenon of immigration is very weak, and there is not a clear consciousness about the problem of human trafficking."

Even worse, they continued, in many cases migrants are seen as "criminals and delinquents."

Citing the principles of the Church's social doctrine, the prelates acknowledged that every person "has the right to reside in their homeland and migrate when their countries do not offer them opportunities for their well being."

They continued, "Although it is true that each country has the right to strengthen its borders to promote internal security, it is also true that we are a Church without borders and that there is a universal common good, which implies a moral obligation for countries to protect the dignity of human beings."

"It gives us great sadness," they stated, "when we see that within our own parish communities the migrants are not welcomed and are cared for as brothers in the faith and members of the same family."

The prelates emphasized, "No one in the Church is a foreigner."

The statement urged civil leaders to come together in a regional summit in order to reach a consensus on the themes of immigration and development, to strategize for cooperative solutions.

The bishops also appealed to all Catholics to welcome migrants into the parish communities, to support them along the "long and tiring journey" they have undertaken.