

On Baby Jesus, the Refugee

"The Child ... Must First of All and Always Be Considered a Person"

VATICAN CITY, JAN. 17, 2010 (Zenit.org).- Here is a translation of the address Benedict XVI gave today before and after praying the midday Angelus.

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Dear brothers and sisters!

This Sunday we celebrate the World Day of Migrants and Refugees. The presence of the Church at the side of these persons has been constant through time, reaching singular heights at the beginning of the last century: We need only think of Blessed Bishop Giovanni Battista Scalabrini and St. Frances Cabrini.

In my message for this occasion I called attention to young migrants and refugees. Jesus Christ, who as a newborn lived through the dramatic experience of being a refugee because of Herod's threats, taught his disciples to welcome children with great respect and love. The child too, in fact, whatever his nationality or the color of his skin, must first of all and always be considered a person, the image of God, to promote and protect against every marginalization and exploitation.

In particular, it is necessary to take every care that minors who live in a foreign country are protected by legislation and above all watched over in the countless problems that they must face. While I strongly encourage the Christian communities and organizations that are engaged in assisting young migrants and refugees, I exhort everyone to keep alive an educative and cultural sensitivity toward them, according to the authentic Gospel spirit.