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Vatican Unveils Theme for World Day of Migrants and Refugees Day Will Be Celebrated at Start of Jubilee Year of Mercy

By Staff Reporter

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For the 102nd World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis has chosen the theme: "Migrants and refugees challenge us. The response of the Gospel of mercy." The theme was made known by the Pontifical Council for the Care of Migrants and Itinerant People in a statement released earlier today.

To be celebrated on January 17, 2016, the day fits 'logically,' the statement noted, in the context of the Jubilee Year of Mercy that will take place between December 8, 2015, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and November 20, 2016, the Feast of Christ the King.

Shedding some insight on the theme, the dicastery's statement explained that its first part 'Migrants and refugees challenge us,' draws attention to the plight of so many men and women, forced to abandon their lands. "One must not forget, for example, the current sea tragedies" whose victims were migrants, it said.

The unrest in the Middle East has brought record numbers of migrants, according to the UN's refugee agency. Already in 2015, the number of those who have died trying to cross the Mediterranean is around 2,000. Thousands more have been intercepted.

"Faced with the obvious risk that this phenomenon is forgotten, the Holy Father presented the plight of migrants and refugees as a reality that must be challenged," it noted, underscoring how Francis exhorts the faithful to not "fall into indifference," but rather make the migrants' cries our own.

The second part of the theme, 'The response of the Gospel of mercy', the council went on to say, links to the phenomenon of migration, the response of the world, but particularly that of the Church. Recalling how during the Jubilee Year, Pope Francis calls on us to do acts of mercy, it added how Francis reminds us how "Christ himself is present among the 'little ones', and that at the end of life we will be judged by our response of love."

The dicastery also expressed its desire that the day be celebrated at a local level, bringing awareness to the situation of migrants and not only for that single day, and its hope that it will inspire faithful to offer concrete signs of solidarity with migrants.

As usual, a papal message will be published on the occasion of the World Day.