

Pope Appeals to European Churches to Take in Refugees



Vatican City, September 7 (RHC)-- Pope Francis has called on churches across Europe to welcome refugee families, as tens of thousands of refugees are flooding the continent from their war-stricken homelands. "I appeal to the parishes, the religious communities, the monasteries and sanctuaries of all Europe to ... take in one family of refugees," the Pope said on Sunday.

The United Nations estimates 300,000 people have left the Middle East and North Africa for Europe this year, but 2,500 have died in their attempt, mainly through dangerous voyages across the Mediterranean in rickety boats. Media reports, however, say 350,000 have crossed into Europe this year.

"Faced with the tragedy of tens of thousands of refugees fleeing death on account of war and hunger, and who are traveling toward a hope for life, the Gospel calls us to be 'neighbors' to the smallest and abandoned, [and] to give them a concrete hope," the Pontiff said.

He called on European religious communities to receive one refugee family each, adding that two parishes in the Vatican will take in a family of refugees each in the coming days. "Every parish, every religious community, every monastery, every sanctuary of Europe, take in one family," the Pope added.

Over the past few days, thousands of asylum seekers have left Hungary, where they had been stuck for days, for Austria and Germany after Berlin and Vienna officials voiced their readiness to receive them.

People also took to the streets on Saturday in several European cities, including Paris, the German cities of Wurzburg and Wuppertal, and the Swiss city of Zürich, to show their solidarity with thousands of asylum seekers who have come to the continent after fleeing their violence-stricken homelands.

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