

*Liverpool, United Kingdom, 19-23 November 2008*  
*CCEE-SECAM Seminar*  
*Migration as a new point*  
*of evangelisation and solidarity*

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMINAR**

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*“I was a stranger and you made me welcome” (Mt 25:35). Migration as a new point of evangelisation and solidarity*, is the title chosen for this seminar, this second stage of the Quadrennial Project entitled *Communion and solidarity between Europe and Africa in the era of human mobility*, drawn up by the common commission of Bishops from Africa and Europe. The SECAM-CCEE collaboration programme began in 2004 with a Symposium of African and European bishops aimed at deepening common responsibility for evangelisation and human promotion in their own continents and in the world.

Having examined last year at Cape Coast Seminar in Ghana the theme of slavery in history and current forms of slavery, it seemed urgent to us to this year examine the phenomenon of migration. In this meeting we are proposing the theme of human mobility not as a problem, but as a resource and point of evangelisation and solidarity.

The migratory phenomenon of recent decades represents the greatest human movement ever recorded in history. From the 1960s to today it has involved 200 million people. Inevitably, this influences the social and economic structures of our societies, above all in terms of social composition, diversity of religions, cultures, etc. In general there is a tendency to treat immigration as a “problem”, giving rise to allarmist reactions in our society. In a reductive way one speaks of “emigrés” or “non-EEC” people without looking at where they come from, where they belong to, their culture or faith. Therefore it is essential that governments and ecclesial communities find new and not simplistic solutions capable of valuing the different cultural traditions and richness which human mobility brings with it.

“I was a stranger and you made me welcome” (Mt 25:35). It is with this biblical reference, this reminder about the concept of “welcome” that we begin our work. We will try to analyse the biblical and theological perspectives of this theme.

Subsequently we will examine the migratory phenomenon between Africa and Europe within the global context, and then afterwards we will receive reports about the migratory policies put in place by our governments in Europe and Africa.

Saturday evening will instead be dedicated entirely to the Church’s response to these phenomena, fully aware that there are different types of migration which each require a different response.

This will be done through a series of round table discussions which will focus on the needs and pastoral responses provided to different categories of emigrés. We will analyse the situation and pastoral needs of those who have emigrated for political reasons: emigrés seeking political asylum or refugees. We will consider the situation of those who have emigrated for economic reasons: the worker emigrés; and we will also consider the emigré who has come to improve his or her own formation, whether at school or university: the student. We will do this in the full knowledge that these stereotypes do not sum up the variety and complexity of the human and motivational case study of the emigré.

After the first phase, which I would define as “welcoming the emigré”, we will face the theme of “stable” coexistence with the community of emigrés through examples of pastoral approaches in different dioceses where there is a multi-cultural, multi-community element. Therefore we will see how our Churches have equipped themselves for a coexistence which is not just peaceful, but also about collaboration.

To conclude our work we will endeavour to bring together the fruits of our reflection over these few days with the possible drawing up of a common message which we will address to the Church in Europe and in Africa.

In the course of the next few days there will be the opportunity to meet with the local community in the daily celebration of the Eucharist and in the moments of our Seminar open to the public. These are: the public debate on *Slavery in history and new forms of slavery* on Friday 21 November and the whole day of Saturday 22 November.

There are also various visits scheduled: to the Catholic Cathedral of Christ the King, to the Anglican Cathedral, and, as if to bind the Cape Coast and Liverpool Seminars, a visit to the *Merseyside Maritime Museum* which contains a very interesting section devoted to slavery down the centuries.

Thank you for your attention and once again I wish you a profitable meeting.