

**Justice and Peace Europe
Beach of Algeciras, 19th of September 2009.
Homily of Monsignor Gérard Defois**

We are here to remember all those people who came and died on this beach. They believed in a better life in Europe, they sank before even touching our land.

Are our borders simply places to come and die? Aren't they simply walls, barbed wire fences erected between men, just like in Ceuta? Aren't they supposed, traditionally to be a place for meeting others, a place where two cultures open up to each other and talk to each other to gain mutual enrichment?

We are especially touched and moved by these dramas. We feel this tragedy in our flesh, not because we have good, Christian feelings, but because we know we are a travelling and nomadic people – we were so yesterday, and we will be tomorrow. We are pilgrims, in the original sense of the world, people who cross borders.

We are the people who Abraham called out to when he said "Go from your land, from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land I will show you". We are the heirs of those people who walked through the desert to the Promised Land. For all those who have ended up running aground at the gates of Europe, this has become the Land of Desolation. They have died here, along with their dreams.

The Mediterranean, sea, so rich in exchanges over the course of history, has become a place of fracture. For those migrants who leave from the coast of Africa, the passage across the Mediterranean has come to symbolise death, in the same way that the crossing of the Red Sea for the Hebrew people symbolised freedom.

We cannot remain silent. We cannot stand accountable for a Europe that is built on erecting barriers and walls. Because that was not what its founding fathers, Schuman and Adenauer wanted. Two world wars meant that these men knew the

cost of rejecting others. We have opted for solidarity. For them, difference was not a burden but something they recognised as a source of wealth. These are not simply foolish, naïve words. Objective analyses prove that immigration has globally positive effects on the development of the “receiver” country. Cultural exchange gets things moving and is enriching; it becomes the future of a living culture, able to permanently try out something new.

And at a time of a globalisation of exchange, migration appears like the missing link in our ties of interdependence.

We need to be daring enough to build a policy of solidarity and selflessness so that man can be man and our societies can become territories of humanity, freedom, responsibility and fraternity.

God knows that we cannot stifle the cries of the world’s misery.

God knows that we cannot suppress so much that we are in denial of hope and thwarted enthusiasm.

God knows that we cannot ignore so many dreams that filter into the torrents of our arrogance.

Europe, land of the gospel, remember the values of the heart and the of love.

Europe, land of humanity, will you be able to give witness of a solidarity without frontiers, without walls, without barbed wire?

Europe, land of memory, dare to join forces in justice with those that you have deprived of the promises of peace.