

105th World Day of Migrants & Refugees

Sunday, September 29, 2019 marked the 105th World Day of Migrants & Refugees, a day dedicated by the Catholic Church to remember and pray for those who suffer as migrants and refugees. The theme announced by His Holiness Pope Francis for this year's World Day of Migrants and Refugees is "It is not just about migrants". In his message, Pope Francis reminds us that "every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age. The Lord entrusts to the Church's motherly love every person forced to leave their homeland in search of a better future. This solidarity must be concretely expressed at every stage of the migratory experience... This is a great responsibility, which the church intends to share with all believers and men and women of good will..."

In the Archdiocese of Toronto, this day was commemorated with a Solemn Mass, which took place at St. Philip Neri Catholic Church in North York. Archbishop Emeritus of Lahore Pakistan, Lawrence Saldanha presided, with Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick, Auxiliary Bishop of Toronto, and a large number of clergy concelebrating. In his homily, Bishop Kirkpatrick spoke on the Gospel parable of Lazarus and the rich man, and on Pope Francis' message for this day. He exhorted the faithful to continue their work to care for and protect those who suffer as migrants and refugees.

The presentation that immediately followed the Mass, focused on the suffering of the Pakistani Christian refugee community, many of whom have fled to Thailand, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. A video



that was created specifically for this event was presented to the roughly 250 people in attendance. The video and accompanying presentation by Archbishop Saldanha underscored the suffering of this community and the various factors driving the oftentimes brutal persecution of Christians and other religious minorities in Pakistan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis, Conservative MP for the riding of Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan,



shared the Conservative Party's vision for Refugee Sponsorship, and in particular the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program.



Archbishop Emeritus
Lawrence Saldanha



Mr. Garnett Genuis
Conservative MP



Deacon Rudy Ovcjak
*Office for Refugees,
Archdiocese of Toronto*

families stranded in Thailand. In July, a small team from the office travelled to Bangkok to meet with 65 of these Pakistani Christian families, both Catholic and Protestant. His Eminence, Thomas the Archbishop of the cost of

Cardinal Collins, Toronto, set aside \$250,000 to assist with resettling some of these families to Canada. An additional \$250,000 is expected to be contributed by Catholic parishes throughout the Archdiocese. The combined funds will support the sponsorship of 18 of the 65 families. Work is underway to reach out to Catholic bishops and sponsoring organizations across Canada, to ask for their assistance to sponsor the remaining families. To date, eight Catholic Dioceses have indicated their willingness to sponsor one or more families. These include the Dioceses of: Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Peterborough, Halifax and others. Efforts are also underway to reach out to Protestant communities and to potential donors to ask for their assistance.

The event marked an important milestone on the way to saving these 400 desperate and suffering Pakistani Christian families.



If you are interested in sponsoring a family or in contributing towards this cause, please contact the Office for Refugees at (416) 934-3400 x804 or by email at oratrefugeeoffice@archtoronto.org.