

# The Story of a Parish Refugee Committee

## *St. Martin of Tours, Mississauga*

My name is Marina Vivar-Dy, a parishioner and volunteer at St. Martin of Tours Parish



in Mississauga, Ontario. Over the years, I've had the privilege of being involved in various volunteer organizations within our parish community. In 2021, our Pastor, Fr. Gijo Muthanattu, informed the Finance Committee, of which I am a member, about an upcoming presentation by representatives from the Archdiocese of Toronto's Office of Refugees (ORAT).

On November 16, 2021, Sr. Noemi Silva and Luciano Moro from ORAT visited our parish to discuss Project Hope, an initiative aimed at resettling refugees, particularly those facing persecution due to their religious beliefs (i.e., Christians). During their presentation, we learned about a family from Pakistan who had been approved and granted refugee status by the Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Moved by their plight, our Pastor, Fr. Gijo, generously agreed to sponsor this family, appointing me to lead the Refugee Committee.

Recognizing the urgency of the situation, our team of five swiftly mobilized to handle various aspects such as budgeting, administration, resource allocation, and organization. With the invaluable guidance and support from ORAT, Deacon Rudy, and Project Hope, we diligently completed the required documentation and liaised with relevant organizations to facilitate the family's settlement in Canada.

After months of meticulous planning and coordination, February 9, 2022, marked a joyous occasion as the family finally arrived in Canada. Alongside Fr. Gijo and Enzo Baldan, a fellow committee member, I had the honor of welcoming them and accompanying them to their new home. Our commitment to the family did not end with their arrival. We provided ongoing assistance, guidance, and support, ensuring their seamless integration into Canadian society. From arranging medical appointments for their son to assisting with government forms and helping them navigate the nuances of Canadian life, we remained steadfast in our dedication.

Despite the challenges we encountered along the way, our perseverance paid off. Today, I am pleased to share that the family is thriving—they are settled, employed, and making meaningful contributions to the Canadian community.

In times of adversity, we drew inspiration from Psalm 18:6, *“In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.”*