



Archdiocese
of Toronto

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UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL DELIVERED

**Remarks from Bishop Vincent Nguyen
Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Toronto**

Press Conference - Launch of "Project Hope" - September 8, 2015

Good morning. Thank you for your presence today. I am Bishop Vincent Nguyen, an Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Toronto. I was born in Vietnam and came to Canada as one of 60,000 Vietnamese refugees in the 1980s. I escaped on a 13-metre fishing boat with 19 other people, leaving behind my father and 6 siblings. After five days at sea, a group of pirates attacked our boat, stripped us of our clothes and took any possessions of value. Three days later, a ship rescued us and brought us to Japan, where I lived in a refugee camp for 18 months.

I was able to settle in Canada thanks to the efforts of the Presbyterian Church. So many faith communities supported the Vietnamese refugees fleeing the country at that time. I know, firsthand, the kind of emotions and experiences the current wave of migrants face – it is not an easy journey and they need our help.

As Canadians, we need to do all that we can to reach out to those uprooted from their homeland. We need to find the compassion that is within each one of us to assist victims of war and persecution and those who do not enjoy religious freedom in their own countries. If we can build a culture of compassion, it will make our country stronger.

I would encourage all Canadians, especially those who are immigrants themselves, to reach out and support initiatives like those announced this morning. I also express my gratitude to the 160 churches in the Archdiocese of Toronto and all those that have already, through their humble witness, welcomed refugee families.

Pope Francis has spoken of the church being a field hospital, serving those who turn to us for help. This is such a moment. Compassion, mercy and outreach – let us we put our faith into action and offer the hand of friendship and love to those who turn to us.

Thank you.