



## **Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!**

We at the Office for Refugees would like to extend to you and your family our warmest wishes for a blessed and Holy Christmas and a joyful New Year.

We would also like to extend our thanks to the many countless volunteers who have given of their time, talent and treasure to ease the plight of refugees.

May the Lord bless you for your kindness!

## **Religious Persecution’s Red Letter Day**

*Source: Convivium December 2, 2020*

We wanted to share the following article with you that speaks to the suffering of Christians in many parts of the world, and the efforts of the Church to draw attention to the terrible suffering



faced by so many. Many thanks to Susan Korah for covering this important story and to Convivium for publishing her report. The following is a link to the original article, which we have presented below in full.

<https://www.convivium.ca/articles/religious-persecutions-red-letter-day/>

The red-lit facades of Mary Queen of the World Cathedral in Montreal, St. Michael’s Cathedral in Toronto, and the Embassy of Hungary in Ottawa stood silhouetted against the dark November sky, in silent tribute to the 260 million Christians around the world who suffer injustice, discrimination and violent attacks because of their faith.

Initiated in 2016 by the UK chapter of Aid to the Church in need, a pontifical international Catholic charity, Red Wednesday is now observed in many countries including Canada.

But the Canadian government has yet to wake up to the global crisis, despite the efforts of organizations such as Aid to the Church in Need Canada, which coordinated the Canadian event.

In the year of the pandemic we need to be reminded that anti-religious persecution is increasing significantly,” said Marie-Claude Lalonde, National Director of Aid to Christians in Need (ACN) Canada, the Canadian chapter of the charity. “This year’s theme is ‘don’t close your eyes to persecution.’

Besides calling on churches and other organizations in Canada to light their buildings in red, ACN Canada organized a webinar that reiterated some alarming statistic and highlighted *Continued on page 2*

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## Religious Persecution's Red Letter Day

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testimonials from witnesses who have had first-hand experience of the plight of Christians in their countries.

Sister Micheline Lattouf of Lebanon, one of the speakers at the webinar presented statistics reflecting severe persecution in the Middle East:

260 million Christians are persecuted because of their faith, January 2019 (Open Doors)

In Syria, Christians are currently fewer than 500,000, compared to 1.5 million in 2011 (ACN)

In Iraq, the number of Christians is less than 150,000 compared to 1.5 million before 2003 (ACN)

“These figures really tell us about a crisis, a massive exodus that could change the demography of the region,” Sister Lattouf said. “It’s an exodus caused by fear, persecution and the search for a stable, secure life and a better future for the next generations.”

The precipitous decline started in 2003, after the fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and accelerated rapidly during the terrifying years following the fall of Mosul to Isis extremists in 2014.

Of her own country, Lebanon, the last outpost of Christianity in the Middle East, Sister Lattouf contended that the situation is no better.

“We are currently living through catastrophic times. One crisis on top of another. First, the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis. Since 2011, 1.5 million displaced persons for 4.5 million inhabitants. Then the October protests, a financial crisis, and a huge devaluation of the Lebanese pound,” she said.

She added that all these factors, together with the confinement imposed by COVID-19 in a country without social safety nets, had hit the Christian population extra hard, and many are looking to emigrate.

“This is another form of persecution,” she said.

Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama of Nigeria, another webinar speaker said: “The Boko Haram (extremist Islamist group) insurgents are still rampaging. Most of the kidnapped (Christian) girls have not been found and are still in captivity.”

Father James Chaman, Director of the Peace Centre in Lahore, Pakistan, spoke of the latest menace faced by Pakistani Christians—a wave of kidnapping, forced conversion and forced marriages of young Christian girls to older Muslim men. Father Chaman’s statement was reinforced by Rev. Majed El Shafie, President of

One Free World International, a Toronto-based human rights organization dedicated to the protection of persecuted minorities.

In an interview with Convivium shortly after the Red Wednesday webinar, he cited the case of Huma, a Pakistani Christian girl of 14, who has been abducted, raped and forced to marry a Muslim. Her family faces the terrifying prospect of never seeing her again.

We are putting a legal team to help her and support her family financially,” Father Chaman said, adding that his organization is struggling to raise funds during the economic downturn caused by COVID-19.

With ACN and other organizations shining a glaring light on the issue of Christian persecution, the question arises whether the Canadian government is responding to the problem.

As William Wilberforce said in an impassioned anti-slavery speech to the House of Commons in 1791, “You may choose to look the other way, but you can never say again you did not know.”

The Canadian government is one of those that needs to open its eyes to the problem and act in defence of the most persecuted religious group in the world.

## ArriveCAN and Sponsored Refugees

*Source: RSTP Bulletin - December 04, 2020*

As of November 21, 2020, all persons entering Canada by air, including sponsored refugees, need to submit the following information via ArriveCAN before they board their flight:

- Their contact and travel information;
- Details of their quarantine plan; and,
- A COVID-19 symptom self-assessment.

After arrival in Canada, they must use ArriveCAN or call the 1-833-641-0343 toll-free line to:

- Confirm they have arrived at their place of quarantine within 48 hours of entering Canada; and,
- Complete a daily COVID-19 symptom self-assessment during their quarantine period.

IRCC is aware of the challenges sponsored refugees may have using ArriveCAN pre and post-arrival, including not having access to a mobile device or a computer and/or a internet or data connection, as well as well as the possibility of not having the language or digital literacy skills to provide the requested information. IRCC is currently working with the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and their resettlement partners to identify solutions to these challenges. *Continued on page 3*

## ArriveCAN and Sponsored Refugees

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**Question:** What option do sponsored refugees select for the “Document Type” field when providing their information via ArriveCAN?

**Answer:** *The Single Journey Travel Document (SJTD) is currently being added to the list of selectable documents in ArriveCAN. In the interim, sponsored refugees should select the “Passport” option for this field, their country of birth or nationality in the “Country of Issue” field and enter the number for the SJTD in the “Document Number” field (the number starts with the letter “T”).*

**Question:** Can sponsors assist sponsored refugees with submitting their information pre-arrival?

**Answer:** *Yes, where possible, sponsors can assist sponsored refugees with submitting their information via ArriveCAN.*

**Question:** Will sponsored refugees be denied boarding if they have not submitted their information via ArriveCAN?

**Answer:** *No, sponsored refugees will still be permitted to board their flight if they are not able to submit the required information via ArriveCAN before boarding. If the information is not submitted before boarding, the airline may provide the refugees with a paper form to complete or a paper form will need to be completed on arrival in Canada.*

## An Interview with Catherine LeBlanc Miller, CG Chair of Corpus Christi Parish

The following is an excerpt from an interview of Catherine LeBlanc Miller, CG Chair from Corpus Christi Parish in Toronto.



*Photo: Catherine LeBlanc Miller and the parish refugee committee*

“Catherine LeBlanc Miller is a member of a sponsorship group with Corpus Christi Church in Toronto, Canada. As active sponsors since 2015, her group demonstrates diversity in its truest sense, with members varying in race, age, and professional background. This sponsorship group is a testament to the power of sponsorship and agents of change that we can all be. Catherine shares her experience with sponsorship in Toronto Canada.

### **Can you tell me about your sponsorship group?**

I’m the “leader” of the group as it were, although we have a strong team of leaders and we are all leaders in our workplaces, community, and so on. Corpus Christi Church is located in the East end of the city of Toronto. While the city itself is diverse ours is a predominately white community.

We’re a group of seven. We actually began five years ago with a group of about 25 and learned the hard way that that

number is far too large to keep people engaged and to manage decision making and so on. So, we are seven. Two men, five women. Two males are black. The women are white. My husband is actually one of those males so, we have one couple too. In terms of age, our group includes a young Muslim man, 30 years old who in fact was one of the first people who we sponsored. He’s in second year university, and he certainly adds a huge benefit to us because he can tell us, from the newcomer perspective, what might be helpful for us to do or not do. Then we have one of the women in our group who is 50, and the rest of us are 60+. So, we are an older group. A retired university professor, a retired geologist, I’m a political staffer, my husband is a cinematographer in television and film, a legal aid lawyer, and a diagnostic expert as well.

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## An Interview with Catherine LeBlanc Miller, CG Chair of Corpus Christi Parish

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### What motivated you to become involved in sponsorship?

I was motivated to become involved in the same way I become involved with many things. And that is, I was asked. And, not in a direct way, not in a direct personal way, but there was literally a pitch from the pulpit. I was sitting at Mass, and there was a launch of an archdiocese wide campaign to sponsor Syrian refugees. It sounded like an interesting initiative. And the Syrian refugee crisis was certainly in the news. I didn't know much about it otherwise but I thought this might be a thing I can help with. So that got me involved five years ago.

We weren't all at the same Mass. In Corpus Christi Parish, we had a number of folks responding immediately and others over time and so on. Some of the members in our group are from a neighboring parish. But it took off pretty quickly – I'd say in a matter of weeks people were keen to learn what this was and how they could help.

### Describe some of the responsibilities you had to undertake as a sponsor

We sort of defined them in a range of topics, to sort of divvy up the workload and make sure we didn't miss something. The roles are generally assigned to one or two people in the group. There is flexibility based on availability of the members and specific contacts or resources which members may be able to access. Having a diverse group helps in sharing responsibilities and to allow the newcomer to make different connections. Some matters such as health may be best discussed with someone from the same gender or someone the newcomer has built a strong relationship with. The fundamental responsibility is to be an advocate, an ally, a confidante. To be effective, you have to build trust with the refugee so you can support and guide them when they arrive as a newcomer.”

### Education Updates

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ORAT has migrated all of its information sessions to an on-line webinar platform. Until further notice, ORAT will no longer hold any in person information sessions.

A webinar is an on-line virtual event. It is an educational or instructive session that includes audio and visual communication between a speaker and attendees.

The initial registration will continue to be done through ORAT's Eventbrite. Registered attendees will receive a confirmation link 48 hours before the webinar begins.

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/o/office-for-refugees-archdiocese-of-toronto-orat-6063562891>



### ORAT Website

Please visit ORAT's website to find details about our mandate, goals, and policies, as well as to obtain immigration forms and info session materials.

<https://www.archtoronto.org/refugee/>

The Office for Refugees is Supported by



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