

DATE: September 23, 2015
TO/À: All priests and Parishioners
FROM/DE: Bishop's Office
SUBJECT / OBJET: Syrian Refugee Crisis and Parish Initiative

I would like to inform you of the following regarding initiatives at the parish level for the Syrian Refugee Crisis

Sponsorship

The Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie and parishes are not eligible and are not approved as sponsors for refugees entering Canada. As a result no sponsorship in any format from any Parish is permitted. This specifically means that no contracts, undertakings or commitments for the Parish or any committee can be initiated.

In addition, the parishes are not to provide any financial commitment, or obligations for refugees. No collections for **parish sponsorship or participation in joint sponsorship** is permitted. However I encourage parishioners, *as individuals or in groups*, to sponsor refugees in their own names and through their own initiatives. Most regrettably the government has declined the Diocese as an eligible sponsor and reminded us of the tax regulations around eligible donations to the Church.

I recommend any interested individuals or groups to consider working through the Archdiocese of Toronto and the established *PROJECT HOPE* program. **The Office for Refugees of the Archdiocese of Toronto** is among our country's largest offices for refugees. Its staff generously provides advice, support and assistance to groups wishing to initiate sponsorship or resettlement. Its webpage is [https://www.archtoronto.org/about-us/departments-\(o-z\)/Office for Refugees](https://www.archtoronto.org/about-us/departments-(o-z)/Office%20for%20Refugees).

Refugee Collection

At the pastor's discretion, I am authorizing a one-time Special Collection for the benefit of the Syrian Refugees. These funds are to be collected in a separate collection and personal envelopes used with the donors name and address noted so income tax receipts can be issued *by the parish*. The proceeds of the collection will then be forwarded to the Diocesan Financial Office no later than October 16, 2015, and all funds received will be sent to **The Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP)**. The objective is to have all funds that are collected participate in the Federal Government's Syrian Refugee Crisis Fund for matching dollar for dollar benefits. Attached you will also find my earlier communication on this matter.

Thank you for your consideration given to this matter.

Ted Hargreaves
Diocesan Financial Administrator

†Jean-Louis Plouffe
Bishop of Sault Ste. Marie



RESPONDING AS CATHOLICS TO THE REFUGEE CRISIS

An open letter to the faithful of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie by Bishop Jean-Louis Plouffe

My dear brothers and sisters,

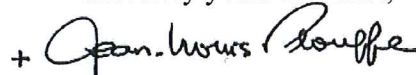
These past weeks all of us have been haunted by the images of refugees flooding into Europe from Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East and Africa.

A year ago, speaking before the United Nations General Assembly, the Secretary of State for the Holy Father, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, repeated the Pope's constant appeal to us and to the international community to *"take action to end the humanitarian tragedy now underway"* by *preventing war, stopping aggressors, protecting populations and helping victims*.

As our world and our country debate how best to respond, we as Catholics must ask what we might do personally and in our local communities. Here are a few suggestions on ways to help with this tragic, overwhelming and complex problem.

1. **Sponsor a refugee family.** Should you, with your diocese, parish or community organization wish to learn more about sponsoring a refugee family, you can obtain information and suggestions from:
 - **The Catholic Refugee Sponsors' Council** which brings together personnel from a number of diocesan and other Catholic offices involved in refugee sponsorship. Its focus is to assist in providing coordination, advocacy and information for Catholic refugee sponsoring organizations. Its website is <https://catholicrefugeesponsors.wordpress.com/>.
 - **The Office for Refugees of the Archdiocese of Toronto** is among our country's largest offices for refugees. Its staff generously provides advice, support and assistance to groups wishing to initiate sponsorship or resettlement. Its webpage is [https://www.archtoronto.org/about-us/departments-\(o-z\)/Office_for_Refugees](https://www.archtoronto.org/about-us/departments-(o-z)/Office_for_Refugees).
2. **Donate.** Our Church in Canada is blessed with several aid and development agencies which do outstanding international work and are deeply involved in assisting Syrian and other refugees and displaced persons. Their work is only possible through the generous donations and support of many Catholics as well as other people of good will. For more information on each organization, and how you can contribute, contact:
 - **Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace**, <http://www.devvp.org/>
 - **Aid to the Church in Need – Canada**, <http://www.acn-aed-ca.org/>
 - **CNEWA Canada**, <http://www.cnewa.ca/home.aspx?ID=26&pagetypeID=12&sitecode=CA>
 - **Canadian Jesuits International**, <http://www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/project-theme/refugees/>
3. **Combat prejudices and fears.** Major obstacles facing refugees involve apathy, indifference, and prejudices. How can our hearts and doors remain closed to those being persecuted and in crisis? This is an important moment for us to deepen our faith, extend charity, and summon hope.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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+Jean-Louis Plouffe
Bishop of Sault Ste. Marie