



February 18, 2016

To all the faithful of the Diocese of Prince Albert,

Greetings of peace and love as we journey through this Lenten season reflecting on the invitation from the Holy Father to incorporate spiritual and physical works of Mercy into our daily lives!

As you know from the media, over the last year, thousands upon thousands of refugees continue to flee their homeland in the East searching for safety and peace. This has caused an overall increased awareness of the refugee struggle and an increase in the numbers of people and communities searching for answers on how to support these individuals and families in their time of need.

For decades, in the Diocese of Prince Albert, we have offered different types of support in this area. Currently, our diocesan Office of Refugees has compiled written information that is more 'user friendly' at the parish level that explains the different options of support, which is attached to this letter. Details on current parish involvement from our Diocese have also been included along with diocesan contact information.

The general option of support for individuals and parishes is by donating to the Diocesan Refugee Fund. You are invited to give generously to this fund that is being created by the diocese to assist parishes or groups who are unable to fully finance a refugee, yet who are willing to be responsible for the settlement obligations. Income tax receipts will be available. If you or your community are interesting in offering additional support, it would be good to review the information sheet and contact the diocesan Office of Refugees to receive a better understanding of what type of support you would like to offer.

As we are all the family of God, and together the body of Christ, we must continue to extend our welcome to refugees from Syria, Sudan, Eritrea, Burundi or any other country where persecution because of the Christian faith and war have forced families to leave their homelands. Furthermore, I would encourage any parish or Catholic school group who is a presently a sponsor or is to become a sponsor, to share your story with our diocesan family by again, contacting our diocesan Office of Refugees.

This lent, as our journey leads us closer toward the death and resurrection of Christ, I would ask everyone to spend deep moments in prayer to see how each one of us can continue to respond generously to the needs of our suffering refugee brothers and sisters.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Albert Thévenot M. Afr.
Bishop of Prince Albert

'To help our people rediscover Christ, the incarnate word of God because we are all called to holiness'

INFORMATION ON SPONSORSHIP OF REFUGEES

The Sponsorship of Refugees is divided into **two main categories**:

1. The Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR) program or simply the Government Sponsorship Program
2. The Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program or simply the non-government sponsorship program

In the Government-Assisted Refugee program (GAR), the government provides assistance to thousands of displaced persons every year by funding the Resettlement Program which includes initial reception, orientation, settlement needs, integration and care for a year. In Prince Albert, this government program is provided by the YWCA. Community volunteers help provide additional support and hospitality. In our parishes, we have many parishioners who have welcomed our Catholic refugee brothers and sisters in their homes as well as in our Church family.

In the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program (PSR), Canadian citizens or permanent residents can sponsor under one of the following groups:

1. Community Sponsor (CS)
2. Group of 5 (G5)
3. Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH)
4. Constituent Groups (CG)
5. Co-sponsor

All of these private sponsorships:

- are able to choose the refugees they wish to bring to Canada for protection
- must assume and guarantee overall financial and resettlement responsibilities for a full year or maybe more
- provide financial support of approximately \$13,000.00 per refugee per year
- guarantee resettlement provisions of rent, food, household needs, interpreter, language training, selection of physician and dentist, orientation of banking, transportation, shopping, employment

1. Community Sponsor

It is an organization, church or cultural group that decides to sponsor and demonstrates its ability to meet the required financial and resettlement obligations. A new application must be provided to the Centralized Processing Office-Winnipeg (CPO-W) each time the group wishes to sponsor.

2. The Group of 5 (G5)

They are at least five individuals who are eligible and willing to fulfill the requirements of sponsorship. Each group member must complete a personal financial profile and the group must complete a settlement plan and financial assessment.

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3. The Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH)

It is an incorporated organization that has signed a formal sponsorship agreement with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). Most current SAHs are religious or humanitarian organizations that assume overall responsibility for the management of sponsorship under their agreement.

4. Constituent Groups (CG)

They are usually members of the organization holding the sponsorship agreement. However, each SAH sets its own criteria for recognizing CGs. Interested parties should contact a SAH directly to inquire about sponsoring under its auspices.

5. Co-sponsor

They are interested individuals who become partners in a private sponsorship of a refugee. They should contact a SAH, CG or a CS remembering that each of these has its own procedures for screening and approving a co-sponsor as well as for establishing the division of responsibilities in the settlement plan. The decision to accept an individual or organization as a co-sponsor is the choice of the SAH, CG or CS who submit the undertaking.

The Sponsorship kit and the overseas application kit are available on the CIC website at:
www.cic.gc.ca

Private Sponsorship Refugee applications should be sent to:

Centralized Processing Office -Winnipeg (CPO-W)
269 Main Street, Suite 400 New
Winnipeg, MB R3C 1B2

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DIOCESAN REFUGEE SUPPORT & ACTIVITES

Over the past twenty years, committed volunteers have welcomed and helped integrate some fifty Catholic refugee's families in our parish life. These refugees came from Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, Cameroon, Columbia, Nicaragua, and Eritrea. These people came through a Government Assisted Refugee program.

At the moment, St. Joseph's parish in Prince Albert is opting for the Community Sponsorship program in order to sponsor two young Catholic ladies from Eritrea who are being abused in refugee camps in the Sudan. Their sisters are parishioners in St. Joseph's parish. We have been informed of their plan of action.

Sacred Heart Cathedral is opting for the Group of 5 because it wants to bring two Catholic refugee gentlemen from Eritrea. Their sister is a parishioner at the Cathedral parish. The group notified the Bishop in order to share its refugee story of compassion and mercy.

St. Joseph Calasanctius, North Battleford is currently seeking to become a Constituent Group with the R.C. Diocese of Saskatoon.

Another option is the Diocesan Refugee Fund. This would provide a channel for smaller identities in the diocese to donate for the refugees coming through larger parishes. Income tax receipts would be available.

Presently, the Diocese does not have a Sponsorship Agreement Holder status. If the need or interest would be there, we could setup our Sponsorship Agreement Holder Status. A reserve of at least \$20,000 would be needed to gain this status.

Please contact Louis Hradecki, Director of Social Justice & Refugees:

Email address: socialjustice@padiocese.ca

Phone: 306-922-4747 ext. 233



Louis Hradecki
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R.C. Diocese of Prince Albert



Madeleine Marchildon
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