



Message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees
His Grace Most Reverend Francis Leo
Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto

29 September 2024

God walks with His People.

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This year the Universal Church is celebrating the World Day of Migrants and Refugees on Sunday, September 29 and the theme this year is: “God walks with His people.”¹ Migrants and refugees are some of the most vulnerable persons in our society. Sadly, accounts of separation from loved ones, violence, persecution, and massacres are commonplace, leaving for many an indelible mark of pain and suffering as they flee their homeland. Amidst their fears, travesties and broken hearts, we are reminded that “God walks with His People.”

When the theme for this year’s World Day of Migrants and Refugees was announced, the “itinerant dimension of the Church” was highlighted and “a particular focus on our migrant brothers and sisters, as a contemporary icon of the journeying Church” was further proposed.² The image of the Church on a journey as a “contemporary icon” speaks to far more than our solidarity with migrants and refugees, it speaks to our union with God—a path to sanctity that imitates the loving example of Jesus Christ who calls us to the abundant life by living our humanity in Him to the fullest and inviting others to do likewise on the journey heavenward.

God does not watch from a distance, but enters into our human condition, our human suffering, and in turn invites us to enter into His love and the communion of the Holy Trinity. On this mystery of the Incarnation and a sharing in the divine life offered to us, Pope Francis reminds us, “God not only walks *with* his people, but also *within* them, in the sense that he identifies himself with men and women on their journey through history, particularly with the least, the poor and the marginalized. In this we see an extension of the mystery of the Incarnation.”³

As a pilgrim Church we are called to identify with the weakest and marginalized. We are reminded of Our Lord’s words, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Matt. 8:20). We too recognise that our true home is in heaven, and as such we know that God not only walks with us, but He also identifies with us, with our humanity—the Word became flesh (Jn. 1:14). The Incarnate Word further identifies

¹ Holy See Press Office, *Communiqué of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development: Theme of the 110th World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, 22 February 2024.

² Holy See Press Office, *Communiqué of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development: Theme of the 110th World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, 22 February 2024.

³ Pope Francis, *Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 110th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2024*, 24 May 2024.



with the weakest in our society which included the migrant and refugee— “I was a stranger, and you welcomed me... just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (cf. Matt. 25:31-46).

As a community of faith, the Church has celebrated the World Day of Migrants and Refugees since 1914, expressing her concern, support, and solidarity. Recently the Archdiocese of Toronto has witnessed increasing numbers of migrants and refugees with many municipalities struggling to keep up with the shelter and food demands of those who have been displaced. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the parishes and communities across the Archdiocese of Toronto that have helped refugees over the past several years and the outstanding Gospel work being done at the Office for Refugees, Archdiocese of Toronto (ORAT). On Sunday September 29 at 11:30 a.m. a special Mass at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Mississauga will be celebrated, praying for all migrants and refugees recognising their right to the basic necessities of life and to journey in faith and security. We seek the intercession of Sts. Frances Xavier Cabrini and John Baptist Scalabrini (patron saints of migration) and St. Josephine Bakhita (patron saint of refugees) and continue our support and solidarity with our brothers and sisters in need. May you be blessed powerfully and abundantly for the love you bare to others out of love for Jesus Himself.

Sincerely Yours in Jesus with Mary,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francis Leo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Rev. Francis Leo
Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto