



IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
AND ST. JOSEPH PARISH

A family of families

March 18, 2017

Announcement To Be Read After All Masses Regarding ICSJ's Refugee Family Sponsorship

Good morning/afternoon, my name is _____ and I have been part of an ongoing ICSJ effort to help bring a refugee family to our City.

There are 65 million refugees today—the highest level since WWII—who have been forcibly uprooted by war, persecution, ethnic and religious strife. That number 65 million is equivalent to the entire population of Great Britain!

I am one of a small group of Parishioners who has been working with Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program which has 40 years of experience helping refugees reach America and settling here in Chicago. But with few refugee families being able to immigrate to our country as of late, we have been patiently—and not so patiently— waiting and hoping that we still are able to receive a family.

Inserted into our Bulletin this week is a flyer explaining that, despite the back and forth of the current refugee ban, there are a few families who have been carefully and extensively vetted and possess the needed visas who have been able to make it through to our country.

And this is our exciting news today! We just learned on THURSDAY that one of these families, from Afghanistan, will be arriving at O'Hare on the afternoon of March 29 under the joint sponsorship of CCs and OUR PARISH!

So what does a co-sponsorship mean and what does it involve?

While the long-term goal is to help this refugee family become self-reliant as quickly and thoroughly as possible, there are many barriers we need to contend with to achieve that end.

Leaving one's home country, learning a new language, adjusting to a different culture are very difficult hurdles. Financial responsibilities add to this stress. So, with Catholic Charities, we help to alleviate those struggles by assisting with rent and basic needs—that's the material part—and also by providing friendship to the family in the early months.

So, first things first. We need to raise about \$8,000 within the next two weeks to help pay for the first three months of rent, the security deposit and the cost of furnishing the family's apartment.

This is the contract we have with Catholic Charities: They will be responsible for finding the apartment, applying for Social Security and other public benefits, placing the family in English classes, ensuring children are enrolled in school and helping in job placement. We provide the necessary financial assistance and—equally important— the emotional, cultural, mentoring, friendship component so necessary to a refugee family. Things like helping with their English, exploring their neighborhood and the city, introducing them to American stores and products as well as the CTA, and so forth.

Let me tell you a little bit about the family we will be sponsoring. The father and mother are both in their 30s; the father served as an interpreter to the US Military—thus, we are assuming with the battles that are still raging in that country by the Islamic State and the Taliban—3,500 civilians killed in the past 12 months— there was pressure to get him safely out of the country. He speaks English, of course, and we are hoping he has passed a bit of that down to his four kids: three boys age 10, 8 and 3 and a daughter that is 6. We'll see. But that is not a major worry; it is amazing how compassion and care can circumvent any language barrier!

Now this is where you come in. Our calculations tell us that if EVERY family in our Parish donates a minimum of \$25, we will reach our goal of \$8,000. Thus, the envelopes attached to the flyer and in the back of the Church if you missed picking up a Bulletin. You can also donate online (www.icsjparish.org/refugee-effort). You can use the envelope today or take it home to write a check and return it next weekend. With spring break this week, we need to emphasize raising the funds next weekend, as well.

The generous response of our Parish to this project has been overwhelming. Parishioners have emailed they want to contribute both financially and personally. Current and ex-teachers and ESL specialists offer to help the kids with their English. Others to be a guide around the neighborhood and city or suggesting a visit once or twice a month to the apartment.

In his St Patrick's day homily at Old St Pat's earlier this week, Cardinal Cupich wondered "*what happens to the soul of a nation of immigrants and refugees that fails to respond to our current crisis. It is important,*" he continues, "*to own what happens to those we neglect, marginalize and dispose of, but also to own what happens to us in doing so.*"

I will be in the back of the church after Mass to answer any questions or, hopefully, to take your name and email if you want to consider helping in some capacity.

Thank you all for listening.