



## ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

240 E. ONONDAGA STREET, SYRACUSE, NY 13202-2608

September 24, 2024

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we approach the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, celebrated on September 29th, I invite you to join me in reflecting on the plight of those who are forced to leave their homes in search of a better life.

I have had the pleasure to personally meet with migrants who are farmworkers and refugees from various countries who are simply seeking to provide a better life for their spouse and children. In my meetings, I have learned of the difficulties and dangers of their travels to the United States and their desire and commitment to find work to provide for their families.

The Church has a long and rich tradition of welcoming and supporting migrants and refugees. Our faith teaches us that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, and that we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves. This commandment is especially relevant to those who are vulnerable and in need.

In light of the theme "God walks with his people" chosen by Pope Francis for this year's World Day, let us remember that every encounter with a migrant or refugee is an encounter with Christ. As the Holy Father reminds us, their journeys mirror the biblical Exodus, with God as their guide and companion.

In Onondaga County, Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement has settled nearly 1000 refugees since October 1, 2023. Over the past two years they have also continued to assist walk-in Ukrainians arriving through United for Ukraine totaling more than 900 refugees. In addition, the agency continues to assist Afghans through the Services to Afghan Survivors of Combat (SASIC) program. Currently 150 Afghans are active with the services offered by that program. The employment rate for these newly arriving refugees and humanitarian parolees is high. The Catholic Charities of Onondaga County employment office is making over 30 job placements a month. Almost every recently arrived refugee family has at least one working adult.

*Faith • Hope • Charity*

On this World Day, let us recommit ourselves to the work of justice and peace. We can do this by:

- Welcoming migrants and refugees into our communities.
- Advocating for policies that protect the rights of migrants and refugees.
- Providing financial and material assistance to migrants and refugees.
- Praying for an end to the suffering of migrants and refugees.

By working together, we can make a difference in the lives of those who are displaced. Let us be a beacon of hope for migrants and refugees and let us show the world that we are a people of compassion and solidarity. In the words of our Savior, Jesus Christ: “For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited me in” (MT 25:35).

May God bless you and your families.

In the Name of Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Douglas J. Lucia". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. Douglas J. Lucia  
Bishop of Syracuse