



Heart to Heart

December 24, 2015 (#225)

THREE SYRIAN REFUGEES VISITED THE CHANCERY OFFICE EARLIER THIS WEEK to meet with Erin Pease, Director of the Diocesan Office for Refugees. One of the three young men arrived on the first plane of Syrian refugees from Beirut, Lebanon, on December 10th. (An interview at Pearson International Airport can be found on our Diocesan website.) They are all sponsored by St. Michael's Parish in Waterloo. The Parish is expecting other arrivals in the coming days. The emotional and life-changing odyssey for two of the young men, brothers, began eight years ago. They expressed their profound gratitude for being welcomed. A big thank you to the Refugee Committee at St. Michael's Parish for such a powerful sign of mercy! The Office for Refugees has been advised by federal authorities that we can expect to welcome more than 25 sponsored Syrian families by the end of February 2016.

THE SPECIAL COLLECTION SPONSORED BY DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE (CCODP), also benefitting the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA) and Aid to the Church in Distress, raised \$500,000.00 which was forwarded to CCODP late last week, in time to benefit from a matching grant from the Canadian government. It means that, because of the generosity of parishioners in the Diocese of Hamilton, a million dollars will assist refugees who are in camps in the Middle East. Thank you to everyone who supported the special collection – the result is impressive!

CHRISTMAS EVE MASSES WILL BE CELEBRATED AT THE BARTON STREET JAIL this afternoon, with the assistance of Jeff Chalmers, Chaplain at the institution. Pope Francis has made every jail cell door into a holy door for the Year of Mercy! *“May the gesture of directing their thought and prayer to the Father each time they cross the threshold of their cell signify for them their passage through the Holy Door, because the mercy of God is able to transform hearts, and is also able to transform bars into an experience of freedom.”* Because they are unable to come to us, I am grateful for the opportunity of going to them.

THE DIOCESAN PARISH MINISTERS ARE HOLDING TWO GATHERINGS the week of January 18th. The first, for Parish Ministers serving north of the 401, will be held at St. Anthony Daniel Parish, Kitchener on Tuesday, January 19th. The second, for those serving south of the 401, will be held at Annunciation of the Lord Parish in Hamilton, on Thursday, January 21st. Both days begin at 10 a.m. with prayer and reflection led by Seminarian Intern, Tim Theriault, on the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. David Dayler will join the groups later in the morning to share resources, programs and activities for the Year of Mercy. Lunch will follow his presentation. Mark your calendars now!

MIDNIGHT MASS AT THE CATHEDRAL BASILICA will be televised tonight by CHCH television again this year. It is sponsored by the Catholic Cemeteries of the Diocese of Hamilton. The program begins at 11:30 p.m. with the singing of carols. The program will be replayed at 8 a.m. on Christmas morning. Special thanks to John Foster, Director of the Catholic Cemeteries, and to CHCH, for making the program possible.

THANK YOU TO SO MANY for your wonderful Christmas greetings and generous gifts! Even more, thank you for your friendship and support throughout the year. I am grateful to God for the very special blessing of being the Bishop of Hamilton – surrounded by such a fine and hard-working Chancery staff, by a “second-to-none” fraternity of Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Ministers, and Religious women and men, and committed and generous parishioners. Goodness abounds in this Diocese! Merry Christmas to one and all!

Our Lady of the Annunciation, pray for us.

Ex corde, + *Douglas*, OMI