



Archevêque de Montréal

## A PASTORAL LETTER FROM MONTREAL'S ARCHBISHOP CHRISTIAN LÉPINE: *On Protecting and Restoring Family Unity*

July 11, 2025

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

In these times marked by unprecedented human displacement, I appeal to you with a call to solidarity rooted in the Gospel. A painful reality weighs heavily on our Christian conscience: refugee families who remain separated for years—sometimes through the majority of a child's formative life.

### **The Family: A Sacred Gift from God**

Scripture teaches us the dignity and beauty of family bonds. In the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus reminds us:

***“Have you not read that the Creator from the beginning ‘made them male and female’? ... So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.”*** — Matthew 19:4–6

This Word of the Lord reveals that the unity of the family is not merely a social convention—it is a divine design. The family is where life begins, where it grows, and where it takes root in love. It is the first sanctuary of hope.

### **The Church's Call**

The late Pope Francis, in his 2018 message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, urges us to “promote and protect family unity—including extended families—regardless of economic criteria.” He also drew attention to the particular vulnerability of migrant children, especially when they are separated from their parents.

Here in Canada, many families live with the heartbreak of prolonged separation. Some have been apart for four or five years—or even longer—waiting for reunification.

### **A Cry That Cannot Be Ignored**

Allow me to share the moving testimony of a refugee father:

***“My daughter was four years old when I held her in my arms for the last time. She will be ten when she's finally allowed to join me. I'm losing half of her childhood while I try to build our future here.”***

This cry from the heart speaks to us all. How can we remain unmoved in the face of such suffering? How can we justify denying parents these precious years with their children? This is not only a bureaucratic matter—it is a question of humanity, of justice, of faith.



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### **Our Response as Disciples of Christ**

As baptized Christians, we are called to be witnesses of unity, mercy, and peace. The Church's social teaching reminds us that *"the family is the sanctuary of life"* (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 231), and that *"the well-being of the family is inseparable from the common good of society"* (no. 229).

### **A Call to Fraternal Charity**

Beloved brothers and sisters, the words of Saint John resound with urgency today:

***"If someone has worldly possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but refuses them compassion, how can the love of God remain in them?"*** — 1 John 3:17

These families are our brothers and sisters. Their hope for reunion must also become our hope—and our commitment. In prayer, in speech, and in action, each of us can help raise their voices and support efforts toward a more just and compassionate path to family reunification.

### **Entrusting All Families to Mary**

May Mary, Mother of all families—who herself experienced exile with Joseph and the Child Jesus—intercede for every family separated by borders. May she inspire us with the courage to reject indifference and to walk boldly the path of compassion and justice.

**I entrust this intention to your prayers and assure you of my own. May God bless you and keep you in His love.**

+ Christian Lépine

✠ **Christian Lépine**

Archbishop of Montreal

#### **Citations:**

- Gospel of Matthew 19:3–6 – *Jerusalem Bible*
- Pope Francis, Message for the 2018 World Day of Migrants and Refugees: *"Welcoming, Protecting, Promoting, and Integrating Migrants and Refugees,"* August 15, 2017
- Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Vatican City, 2004, nos. 229 and 231
- First Letter of John 3:17 – *Jerusalem Bible*