



---

# ANNUAL REPORT JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE



WELCOMING LANDS AND OPEN HEARTS

# 2023-2024

WELCOMING LANDS AND OPEN HEARTS

# Table Of Content

- 03 Message from the national director
- 04 Message from the chairman of the Board
- 05 Awareness
- 06 Advocacy
- 07 Sponsorship
- 08 Pastoral Support
- 09 Financial report
- 10 Our upcoming projects
- 11 Acknowledgements



# MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR

## NORBERT PICHÉ



"... the material world is for everyone, without borders. A common table with a tablecloth large enough for all, like this Eucharist. Everyone in their place, so that everyone comes to the table to eat." I'm quoting Rutilio Grande SJ, a great friend of Oscar Romero, who was murdered a few years before Romero because he disturbed people in the way Jesus did. The world presents us with a very different image: that of inadequacy. We are hammered with the message that there are not enough resources for everyone. But Jesus fed 5,000 people with two fish and five loaves of bread. Isn't that a call to do things differently, to trust in God and in the values of generosity and sharing?

In our Western countries, Canada included, our governments certainly don't think that the table is big enough to accommodate many refugees. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), at the end of June 2024, there were more than 122 million forcibly displaced people in the world, including 32 million refugees, i.e. people who had crossed an international border and were under the UNHCR's mandate. Of these 32 million, the UNHCR estimates that 2.4 million are highly vulnerable and in urgent need of resettlement. However, our Western countries resettled only 85,000 (4%) during the first half of 2024.

Canada is not doing badly compared to other Western countries, having resettled almost 23,000 over the same period. But it has already announced a drop for the years to come, when the number of refugees around the world is only increasing. Canada should show leadership by increasing the number of refugees it accepts.

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Canada is looking to expand the table of which Father Rutilio Grande speaks. During the 2023-2024 year, the Jesuit Refugee Service welcomed 40 refugees. We organised meetings that enabled refugees to get to know each other and make new discoveries. You can find them in the following pages. We also manage to expand this table thanks to our simulation exercise, *A Journey into Exile*, which helps non-refugees better understand what it's like to be a refugee and then want to make room at the table for them.

I would like to thank all our volunteers who give so much of their time, the members of the Board of Directors for their commitment, the members of the team for their dedication, the Jesuits of Canada and all our donors; without all of you, the table would be very small indeed.

## NORBERT PICHÉ

National Director  
for JRS Canada



# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

## LISSAINT ANTOINE, SJ.

In his message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, delivered on January 14, 2018, entitled *Welcoming, Protecting, Promoting and Integrating Migrants and Refugees*, Pope Francis wrote: "Every immigrant who knocks on our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the stranger of every age, welcomed or rejected. The Lord entrusts to the maternal love of the Church every human being forced to leave their homeland in search of a better future".



At the Jesuit Refugee Service of Canada, we recognize that every time we welcome a refugee, we welcome Christ himself. As he says in the Gospel: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

This conviction is at the heart of our commitment. It is rooted in one of the four Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAP) of the Society of Jesus: "to walk with the excluded... the rejected, the vulnerable, the displaced". Inspired by this call, we commit ourselves to welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating refugees.

We experience this encounter with Christ through our daily mission, notably by taking part in advocacy actions to promote the reception of some 23,000 refugees in Canada from among the 2.4 million people identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as being in a situation of extreme vulnerability, out of the 122 million forcibly displaced people in the world.

Our work aims to improve the living conditions of refugees, both abroad and in Canada. It also includes activities to raise awareness of the reality of displaced people and concrete support for their resettlement, in the hope that Canada will continue its commitment to welcoming more refugees.

In this spirit of fraternal and maternal love entrusted to the Church by the Lord, Jesuit Refugee Service Canada welcomed 40 refugees in 2023-2024, helping them to settle in and setting up activities to foster their integration and well-being. We sought to offer them a space for meeting, fraternity and conviviality, so that they could not only rebuild their lives, but also feel fully welcomed.

We also shared the maternal love of the Church with non-refugees through our simulation exercise "A Journey into Exile", which allows participants to experience, for a short time, what refugees go through before arriving in their host country.

In the following pages, you will discover the fruits of this mission.

Many thanks to our tireless JRS team, volunteers and refugee committee for their commitment to making every welcome a true encounter with Christ. Thanks also to our donors who enable us to share the love the Lord has entrusted to us.

Happy reading!

**LISSAINT ANTOINE, SJ.**  
Chairman of the Board





# AWARENESS-RAISING



The fiscal year from July 2023 to June 2024 marked a significant period for our project, *A Journey into Exile*, for four key reasons.

First, our team successfully completed the guidebook *On the Move: A Guide to Accompany Refugees*.

This publication, the result of a year-long discernment and production process, is designed to raise awareness about refugees and inspire readers to take meaningful action. The guidebook has been actively promoted across the United States and Canada, further amplifying its reach and impact.

Second, over the year, the project delivered 64 sessions, engaging a total of 1,642 participants—an all-time high in the history of *A Journey into Exile*. Given the ever-increasing anti-refugee sentiments and policies in the US and Canada, demand for our simulation exercise encourages us to raise awareness in both countries.

Third, we significantly diversified our partner organizations in both Canada and the U.S. This included collaborations with NGOs, high schools, universities, parishes, and even the federal government in Canada.

Fourth, through our collaborative initiative with JRS USA, *On the Move*, we expanded our engagement with high schools, universities, and parishes. Encouraged by the overwhelmingly positive feedback for our simulation exercise in both countries, we began discerning the future direction of our project.

As part of this process, we initiated plans to share our simulation exercise with other JRS offices worldwide. This would allow interested JRS offices to localize the content and deliver it effectively within their own communities.



# Advocacy

Sponsorship organisations in Quebec have spent much of 2023-24 under fire from the Ministry of Immigration Francisation and Integration,(MIFI).

The MIFI appears to have adopted a very narrow version of the Quebec immigration regulations governing the group sponsorship program. Numerous organisations in Quebec have been placed under review, either for their 2022 or 2023 files. This was also the case for our 2023 files. The allegations relate to collaboration with co-sponsors in the files. The department has summoned the organisations for in-depth interviews and has stated that these long-standing collaborations are no longer acceptable. In the rest of Canada, however, these same practices are not a problem.



With the support of the Network of Sponsorship Organizations in Quebec ("Réseau des Organismes et Groupes de Parrainage au Québec" or ROGPRAQ), the umbrella organization for refugee and immigrant serving organizations in Québec (Table de concertation au service des réfugiés et immigrants - TCRI) and the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), organisations have come together in the hope of reversing these government measures. Letters to the minister, press conferences, meetings, etc., have all been used to try and save the files for 2022 and 2023 and ensure the continuity of the program.

An illustration of a family consisting of a woman, a young girl, and a man, all carrying large green suitcases. The woman is on the left, wearing a green patterned dress. The girl is in the center, wearing a pink and white striped shirt and blue pants. The man is on the right, wearing a blue jacket and dark pants. They are walking towards the right. The background is a solid blue color with a green vertical bar on the left and an orange square on the right.

# Sponsorship

For the Jesuit Refugee Service Canada, sponsorship of refugees is of vital importance, providing essential support to those who have been forced to flee their home countries due to conflict or persecution. In addition to meeting the immediate needs of refugees, sponsorship promotes intercultural understanding and solidarity within the host community. The program also enables established refugees to be reunited with family members or friends who are also refugees.

Between July 2023 and June 2024, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) welcomed 40 people from Syria, Eritrea, Burundi, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan into its sponsorship program. This is the culmination of many years of work on 15 files.

Thanks to the help of Canadians across the country, Jesuit Refugee Service Canada was able to show solidarity with our Afghan colleagues. Several JRS Afghanistan staff and their families were welcomed by communities in Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. After finding refuge in Pakistan, six families were resettled in Canada.

This would not have been possible without the support of JRS International and JRS USA, as well as our local partners, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Toronto, St. Ignatius Parish in Winnipeg, St. Paul's College in Winnipeg, Holy Canadian Martyrs Parish in Ottawa, Saint-Rémi Parish in the town of the same name, and the Syrian Solidarity Project of Roussillon in Saint-Constant.



# PASTORAL SUPPORT



## Accompanying with dignity and hope

Each year, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) fervently reaffirms its commitment to stand alongside refugees, offering them support and solidarity in their search for dignity and security. Faithful to one of the four Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAP) of the Society of Jesus, 'Walking with the excluded and marginalised', the JRS embodies this mission through concrete and humane actions.

Between July 2023 and June 2024, the JRS had the privilege of welcoming 15 new arrivals. These people, who have been through countless hardships, were warmly welcomed at the airport by our dedicated team, who ensured that they felt immediately safe and cared for all the way home.

As part of this support, the JRS organised home visits for 28 individuals and families. These invaluable encounters were an opportunity to forge sincere links, to discover the stories of courage of the sponsored individuals and to share our own journey in a spirit of fraternity and conviviality.

These exchanges not only help us to better understand their needs, but also to celebrate their first steps towards successful integration, while providing solutions to the challenges they face. Driven by the desire to offer holistic support, JRS also provided pastoral care, touching the hearts and minds of 8 people.

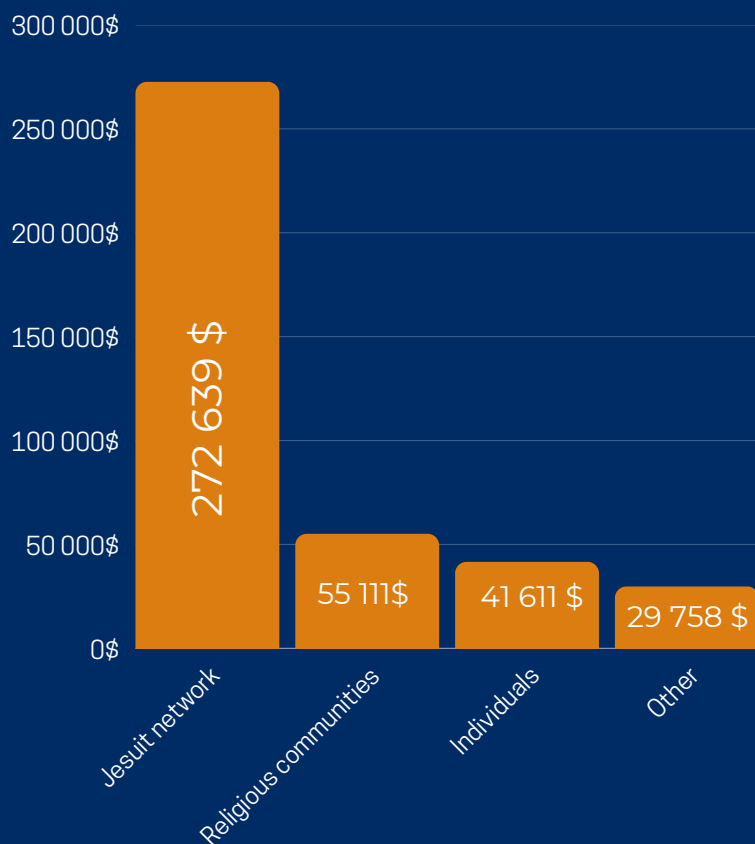
In addition, the JRS has organised a number of activities that are rich in encounters and sharing, demonstrating the importance of community and mutual aid. These events, attended by around 85 people - team members, refugee committee members and refugee families - created a space for exchange, dialogue and self-fulfilment.

These precious moments illustrate that the JRS is not just an organisation dedicated to the resettlement of refugees in Canada, but a large family united by the values of love and solidarity.





# FINANCIAL REPORT

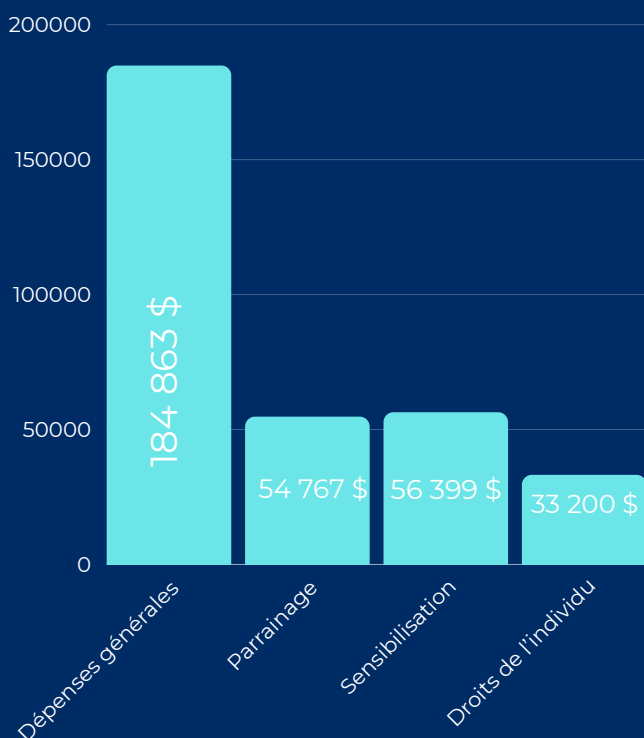


## Income

During the **2023-2024** year, the JRS generated income of 399,119\$ a significant portion of which came from the Jesuit network (the Jesuit Province of Canada, JRS-USA, the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States and Jesuit Missions).

Several other religious communities and individuals have also made significant contributions to our revenues.

**We would like to thank you on behalf of all the refugees we serve. Without you, all this work would be impossible.**



## Expenses

During 2023-2024, our expenses amounted to 329 229 \$. We therefore had a surplus of nearly \$70,000.



# OUR UPCOMING PROJECTS

## Activities

Thanks to the Refugee Committee, JRS is in the process of planning new activities that will allow long-standing and newly arrived refugees, sponsors and volunteers to meet in a relaxed atmosphere to build friendly and lasting relationships.

The first of these activities is the autumn outing. Participants in this activity will have the opportunity to take a walk in the countryside and admire the splendid colours of the autumn leaves. They will then go apple picking in an orchard in the afternoon after a sandwich picnic. The second planned activity is a pot-luck meal to signal the arrival of the New Year in January. Everyone will be invited to bring food typical of their native country and share it with the others. There will also be games to liven up the evening. In spring, the planned outing is to a sugar shack. This Quebec tradition is a must for anyone unfamiliar with it.

Finally, we are planning our first fundraising event in May to raise funds for the JRS. The idea is to showcase one of the ethno-cultural communities we have sponsored each year.



## A Journey into Exile

Next year, we're adding a new feature to our simulation exercise. Participants will be able to experience *A Journey into Exile* as part of a retreat. They will be able to explore exile as it was experienced by displaced people in the Bible and by displaced people today.

In addition, after several months of conversations with federal government officials, we will be presenting our exercise to federal civil servants once in English and once in French. There is interest in disseminating our exercise within the federal public service.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This mission would not be possible without the support of many people. I could never name them all, but they know who they are.

Firstly, there are the members of the JRS Canada team. These are people who see this work as more than a job; they see it as a vocation. We also have our volunteers, who spend several hours a month visiting refugees and organising activities through our Refugee Committee. And let's not forget the members of our Board of Directors, who give us our general direction.

I'd also like to acknowledge the support of our partners in the mission, such as Loyola High School in Montreal and Christian Life Community (CLC), who are always ready to collect necessities for our refugees. Finally, I'd like to thank our many donors who believe enough in our mission to contribute financially. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen; thank you to the religious congregations; thank you to the Jesuit institutions, in particular the Jesuit Province of Canada.

It takes a whole community to welcome a refugee! Each one of you is a member of that community.



Jesuit Refugee Service Canada  
25 Jarry St.  
Montreal (Quebec) H2P 1S6  
<https://canada.jrs.net>

