

Hindu – Catholic Dialogue of Canada

Expression of Support in Canada’s Role in Welcoming Refugees

“Be one for whom the guest is God.” –*Taittiriya Upanishad*
“Just as you have done to the least of these, you have done to me.” –*The Gospel of Matthew*

Hospitality is among the most sacred values in many religious traditions, including Hinduism and Christianity. Today, conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and many other parts of the world have created a significant refugee crisis, whose impact is felt in Western Asia, Europe and North America. In light of this crisis, we—the Hindu-Catholic Dialogue of Canada—feel called to reaffirm the importance of hospitality in receiving the stranger and welcoming the refugee.

Canada is widely recognized as one of the most multicultural countries in the world. The Catholic and Hindu communities value this diversity and wish to maintain harmonious relations. For these reasons, and in response to the call for interreligious dialogue articulated by the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, in concert with the Hindu Federation of Canada and other members of the Hindu community, established a national Hindu-Catholic Dialogue. We have been meeting regularly since 2011.

Along with other leaders in inter-religious dialogue, we believe we have reached a fork in the road in our collective journeys as individuals, societies, and nations where it is no longer sufficient simply to tolerate one another, but to share in a deep, mutual understanding of one another’s traditions, devotions and spiritual insights. To us, dialogue is not merely an exchange of pleasantries or glossing over our very real differences; it is an opportunity for encounter, for the deepening of relationships and for hospitality. We, once strangers, have become friends. Though this may entail some risk and vulnerability as we learn to open ourselves to one another, we believe that our shared objective of seeking understanding and enrichment through dialogue is the best means to promote harmony and solidarity between our respective communities and in the wider society.

Over the past five years of conversation, we have shared dialogue sessions on growing up Hindu or Christian in contemporary Canada, on the rising phenomenon of the religious “nones”, and on our shared concerns for the transmission of our respective traditions to the next generation. Equally, we share traditions of empathy and compassion for the disenfranchised among us – traditions which run deep in our histories – and we extend a welcoming hand to those fleeing conflicts in their homelands.

“Be one for whom the guest is God.” Echoing these words of the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, the members of the Hindu-Catholic Dialogue of Canada call on ourselves and all Canadians to offer our prayers to those reeling in response to war, terror, and hate. We urge all Canadians to respond with openness, care and generosity to those refugees who find their ways to our shores, and indeed to all strangers in our midst. Dialogue and encounter are among our most important resources for meeting the demands of the present refugee crisis. **February, 2016**