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First Sunday of Lent  
March 5, 2017

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## Pastor's Column

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### **I Was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me...**

In the Scriptures from the Gospel of Matthew 25:31-46, we are given the "Judgment of the Nations."

In this passage, Jesus identifies himself with the poor, the hungry, the naked, and the stranger.

There are no qualifications of the poor, the hungry, the naked, and the stranger by ethnicity, race, or religion!

Very simply, he says: "I am the poor, I am the hungry, I am the naked, and I am the stranger. What you did or not do for them, you did or did not do for me."

It is on this that we will be judged!

In September of 2015, Pope Francis asked every Parish in Europe to sponsor a Syrian Refugee Family. Our Parish felt that this call should be extended not only to Europe, but to the entire world, to the United States of America, especially in our present political climate.

And so STM has responded to the call!

With the help of Catholic Charities of San Diego, we have been linked to a Syrian Refugee Family.

Just six weeks ago, the family arrived in San Diego! They arrived just a few days before the Immigration Ban ordered by President Trump. (Presently the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has refused to reinstate the President's Executive Order barring travelers from seven predominantly Muslim nations from entering the United States.)

This family is from war-torn Aleppo, Syria. After four years of war, the family fled to Turkey and lived in a Refugee Camp for 18 months.

The father has a B.A. degree and is an accountant, his wife is an aspiring clothing designer, and they have five children.

Life in the Refugee Camp consisted of undergoing an almost daily extreme vetting process before being allowed into the U.S. to be sponsored by Catholic Charities.

A couple of weeks ago, a few of us met them in their tiny apartment in El Cajon. We asked: "How can we help you?"

The father responded: "You can give me a fish or you can teach me to be a fisherman. I would like you to teach me to be a fisherman!"

The father is an accountant with a B.A. degree in Economics, but he is willing to take any work he can find while learning English and the American Accounting system. His wife is a stay-at-home mom who would like to earn money designing and selling clothing.

The parents' first priority for their children is to make sure that they continue to learn English and that they continue with their education in order to be productive U.S. citizens.

Our Parish is committed to welcome Jesus, the stranger, this family, into our country and into our lives.

Obviously, much is needed to help them to settle into life here and to begin a new normal routine.

Please take time to read the flyer in today's bulletin. See if you may have an item you are no longer using that may be significant to this family. They have many, many needs as they begin a new life in the United States.

Know that I am grateful that you are willing to take Matthew 25:31-46 seriously.

Once again, as our Parish is saying to the Stranger, "Welcome," we are saying to Jesus, "Welcome!"

Whatever you may be able to do to help this family will be very much appreciated.

Thank you so much for your continued generosity!

We will provide frequent updates to you about the family, their ongoing needs, and their progress as they transition from refugees to U.S. citizens.

In the near future, they will be coming to St. Thomas More for a visit and you will be able to personally welcome them to the United States.

*F. Mike*

# Our Syrian Refugee Family

You are invited to join fellow Parishioners in supporting this family.

A father, a mother, and five children fled Aleppo, Syria, in May 2014. They registered in Turkey as refugees in June 2015 and lived in a refugee camp until they arrived in the USA three weeks ago.

They went through an 18-month, almost daily, extreme vetting program by the U.S. Government and by Catholic Charities, their sponsoring agency. They are so happy and grateful to be here!

It is important for them to reside in El Cajon for better public transportation, job opportunities, emotional support from other middle-eastern refugees, and easy access to services provided by Catholic Charities, San Diego.

When we visited them, Fr. Mike introduced us and asked how we could help them.

The father responded: "You can give me a fish or teach me to be a fisherman. I would like you to teach me to be a fisherman!" He is an accountant but will take any work he can find while learning English and the American accounting system.

That being said, we soon became aware that the family needs many, many things. Because of previous generosity of some of our Parishioners, we had monies to purchase some immediate necessities: toiletries, food, housewares, cleaning supplies, and school supplies. (The children were not able to attend school for five years during the war and in the refugee camp.)

We will update you regularly on how the family is doing and what their ongoing needs might be. They are very excited to visit us and thank us in person!

Please review the other side for specific items you can help provide.

Thank you!

—*Lisa and Patrick Attardo*  
*Sr. Maureen Brown, CSJ*



## I was a stranger and you welcomed me...



# Ways You Can Help Our Syrian Family

- ◆ WalMart, Sears, or Best Buy gift cards from our Scrip Program for clothing, grocery, and small household items.
- ◆ Monetary donations for rent, utilities, internet service, etc. (you might consider a monthly donation)
- ◆ Computers (Windows-based) for their ESL (English as a Second Language) classes and school work
- ◆ Educational/teaching materials, maybe from home-schooling activities, and school supplies
- ◆ Larger items (you may just have these items in storage or ready to be replaced):
  - TV with stand
  - Refrigerator
  - Washer/dryer
  - Microwave
- ◆ Their greatest desire and dream is to have a van that would allow the father greater flexibility to find work and to transport his family of seven (and a booster seat for their youngest).
- ◆ For all large items, please text a photo to Lisa Attardo at 760-884-7863 with approximate dimensions so we can show the family and make sure it will fit in their small apartment.
- ◆ A hand-printed note (easier for them to read) welcoming them to our country and offering prayers of support!

If you would like to part of the steering committee or become involved more directly with the family, please contact Lisa Attardo. We will also be on the plaza after Mass this weekend and next!

Lisa Attardo: cell/text 760-884-7863 or [lisaattardo@yahoo.com](mailto:lisaattardo@yahoo.com)  
Patrick Attardo: cell/text 760-884-7862  
Sr. Maureen Brown: 760-758-4100 x131 or [maureenb@stmoside.org](mailto:maureenb@stmoside.org)

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## WE/I WOULD LIKE TO HELP OUR SYRIAN REFUGEE FAMILY

You may bring this form to our table, the Parish Office, or put it in the offertory collection.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/Email: \_\_\_\_\_

We/I would like to make a monetary or gift card donation.

Description/amount: \_\_\_\_\_

We/I would like to donate small or large items.

Description: \_\_\_\_\_

We/I would like to be part of the steering committee.

Other comments/questions: \_\_\_\_\_