

St. Clement Parish to Sponsor Refugees from Burundi

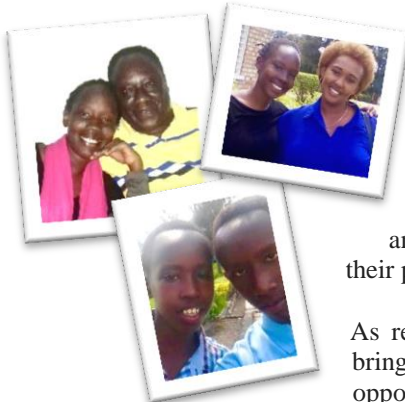
After much prayerful consideration, and in consultation with the Archdiocese of Ottawa, the Parish has agreed to act as Sponsorship Agreement Holder for a Burundian Refugee family. St. Clement has successfully undertaken two refugee sponsorships in the past: once in 1979 as a result of the war in Vietnam and again in the early 1980's in the midst of the political crises in Poland.

The Canadian Government mandates that the Sponsorship Agreement Holder (St. Clement Parish) assumes responsibility for the family for a period of 1 year after their arrival in Ottawa; however, the Ndabaniwe family has already guaranteed the \$30,900 in a trust fund deposited with the Archdiocese of Ottawa to pay for their food, clothing, accommodation and other settlement costs. Additional support would come from the parish to provide general settlement assistance in their transition to a new country and culture.



The Ndabaniwe family have been St. Clement Parishioners for several years. In March 2015, their native country of Burundi, in Central Africa, broke out in civil war. As a result, Global Affairs Canada has issued an *“Avoid All Travel Advisory”* for the country. It’s extremely dangerous for people not supporting the current political regime. People are fleeing for their lives. It is reminiscent of the Tutsi genocide atrocities that occurred in 1994 in Rwanda.

Their immediate relatives, Jean-Pierre Mutabazi, his wife Aline, and their 3 children, Jounilla, Luxin, and Julio managed to flee Burundi and are currently in a neighboring country. They are somewhat safe for now and have obtained UN Official Refugee status, but their lives are on hold.



Pierre Nkurunziza, the current Hutu president of Burundi, was first elected in 2005. In early 2015, he forced the courts and parliament to change the constitution so he can serve a third mandate. Tutsi and moderate Hutu refused to allow this and started protesting. The response from the government has been extremely violent and many people have lost their lives. The militia have targeted members of the media, public servants, army members, young teens, and young adults. Even worse, young women are viciously attacked to intimidate their parents and brothers.

As refugees themselves, the Ndabaniwe family, who are also Tutsi’s, are trying to bring their relatives to Canada so they can begin to rebuild their lives and provide an opportunity for their children. The Mutabazi’ are a French speaking Catholic family and are learning English.

We have been receiving the advice and assistance from the Catholic Centre for Immigrants and the Archdiocese of Ottawa including other dioceses who have successfully sponsored refugees. The Application process is known to take a long time (est. 3-4 years) and nothing guarantees its success. It will be important that St. Clement parishioners be asked to pray for the success of this undertaking. When the Mutabazi family finally arrives, we will help them settle and ensure the newcomers integrate in both the parish and life in Canada.



Fr. Erik Deprey, F.S.S.P.
Pastor