



Dear Family of Our Lady of the Rosary Parish,

As you know, the City of Chicago has received more than 22,000 men, women, and children who have arrived in the United States seeking asylum. Many began their journey in Central or South America, arriving at our southern border where they were processed and sent to Chicago, among other cities.

This past summer, many of us had the opportunity to meet with these refugee and migrant families who were sheltering at Wright College. We worshipped with them at the 6:00 PM Mass offered in Spanish at St. Pascal Church. We shared supper with them and provided them clothing and other items. Since then, many of parishioners have provided additional meals and items for the migrant families. Many of our guests from last summer, who have since been placed in more permanent housing, return to Our Lady of the Rosary to participate in the Masses we offer at both St. Bartholomew and St. Pascal churches.

As of November 27, 2023, more than 1500 new arrivals are still waiting for shelter placements. Many of the new arrivals are families with infants and small children. Several are being temporarily housed in tents outside Police stations. The City of Chicago reports that on any given day, its homeless shelter system is filled to capacity. To serve both our own homeless population and our new arrivals, the city needs to increase the capacity of our shelter system. We simply cannot allow anyone, let alone families with babies and small children, to sleep outside during a Chicago winter's night.

The Archdiocese of Chicago has been in dialogue with City and County officials over the use of its unused or underused buildings to provide temporary shelter for migrant families awaiting placement. As part of those discussions, we offered two unused buildings on the St. Bartholomew campus for consideration - the convent and the empty school building on Addison Street. We are pleased to learn the City has chosen St. Bart's as its first temporary shelter location with the Archdiocese for a renewable six-month term to house migrant families. The city will fully operate the shelters and pay the expenses involved in their use, including the costs for security, insurance, utilities, and energy. It is their intention to shelter families in these buildings. Both buildings will be staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Those sheltering at the sites will be subject to curfew regulations. The Chicago Police Department will have an increased presence in the area.

I fully support this endeavor to save lives and to ease suffering of the refugee families who are facing the harshness of a Chicago winter. In faith, hope, and charity, I ask you to also support this response to the emergency we face.

In the near future, representatives of the City of Chicago will hold an information session for our parishioners and neighbors about the shelter at St. Bartholomew. The location for the meeting will be in the Church of St. Bartholomew. The date and time of the meeting is still to be determined.

Based on my experience of your generosity this past summer, I am confident you will show the same hospitality to our new guests as you showed to those, we had among us in past months. May our Blessed Lady, our heavenly patron, her spouse, St. Joseph, and the Holy Child Jesus, once refugees themselves, obtain for you many blessings because of your kindness.

Father Mike O'Connell, Pastor