

Screening of the documentary 'Soufra' on June 18, 2019, at Movietowne, Port of Spain

Presentation from Archbishop Jason Gordon (read by CCSJ Chair Leela Ramdeen)

My brothers and sisters, thank you for supporting this worthwhile initiative organised by the Archdiocesan Ministry for Migrants and Refugees in commemoration of World Refugee Day which will be observed on Thursday. Although I am unable to be with you tonight, I wish to share a few words with you.

I established this Ministry in May 2018 and mandated that each parish establishes a Parish Ministry for Migrants and Refugees. To date about 20 parishes have done so and many others are working to achieve this goal.

Pope Francis teaches that the earth is our common home and we are a universal family. Together, we are called to build the common good, that is, to create conditions in which each person can realise his or her potential.

I agree with him that providing aid to migrants and refugees is a "great responsibility, which the Church intends to share with all believers and men and women of good will, who are called to respond to the many challenges of contemporary migration with generosity, promptness, wisdom and foresight, each according to their own abilities."

Here in Trinidad and Tobago, there are migrants and refugees, including many children, from over 30 countries. Our response as people of faith requires us to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate all those who have come to our shores seeking peace.

This documentary, Soufra, is a sign of hope. In an era in which there appears to be a globalisation of indifference, and in which many have become numb to the throwaway culture that threatens to overwhelm us, Mariam Shaar's inspirational story shines like a beacon.

Mariam has spent her entire life in a refugee camp just south of Beirut, Lebanon. We cannot help but admire her resilience, determination and perseverance, as she works with Palestinian, Iraqi, Lebanese and Syrian refugee women to realise their

dream of building a catering business which she then expands into a food truck business with a diverse team of refugee women.

Like Mariam and her team, those who come to our shores bring innate gifts with them which they can share with us. We can all flourish if we work together.

Pope Francis recent message for the 105th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2019, emphasises that "migration is not just a matter of migrants. It's about the aspirations and needs common to all people, but from which many are excluded." The presence of migrants "is an opportunity for encounter and for showing concern".

Let us be inspired by Mariam's story and commit to stand in solidarity with migrants and refugees; to recognise their inherent dignity; and to promote the integral human development of all God's people. These are some of the pre-requisites of building a true, inclusive human family. **God bless you all.**

Presentation from CCSJ Chair Leela Ramdeen

Friends,

We are part of one human family. In our efforts to build a fraternal society, we must not forget that while we strive to welcome, protect, promote and integrate those who come to our shores from more than 30 different countries, it is estimated that between 20 – 30% of the citizens in T&T live in crushing poverty.

Our strategy to promote justice must be inclusive. In the Catholic Church we are concerned to promote integral human development, that is, the development of each person and of every person. Sustainable development must be people-centred, and must be about promoting human dignity.

The rising tide should lift all boats. The tragedy is that many do not even have a boat! The challenge we face is to use our resources, limited though they may be, and to use our human ingenuity to build the common good, that is, to create conditions that will enable people to realise their potential.

Pope Francis has rightly said that "Migrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity." The parable of the Good Samaritan should remind us that our neighbour is anyone who has need of us.

As we watch this documentary this evening, let us thank God for the indomitable human spirit that rises up in the breast of human beings even when all the odds

seem stacked against them. This is a story of hope. Let our hearts be filled with hope and leave at the end of the evening committed to put our shoulders to the proverbial wheel and help chart a new course that will welcome the stranger and those on the peripheries of society. Everyone should have a place at the table.

May the Lord inspire us to build His Kingdom here on earth. Thank you.