Message for Red Wednesday
18 November 2026
His Eminence Frank Cardinal Leo
Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

May Jesus and Mary be in your hearts.

I am writing to you on the occasion of Red Wednesday, which this year is observed on 18 November 2026. Organized by Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), Red Wednesday is an international campaign that draws attention to the persecution of Christians across the world and the denial of religious freedom suffered by millions of our brothers and sisters as well.

The day began in 2015 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil when the statue of Christ the Redeemer was illuminated in red to draw attention to the persecution of Christians in Iraq. Since then, Red Wednesday has grown with both sacred and secular buildings illuminated in red across the globe. Here in the Archdiocese of Toronto, St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica is lit in red on this day. I invite you to also light your homes, community dwellings and parish churches in red as a sign of prayerful solidarity with those who suffer for the faith.

There is a temptation to think of persecuted Christians as distant figures whose suffering belongs to another place or another time. Through Baptism we are all members of one Body in Christ (cf. 1Cor 12:12-13). "If one member suffers, all suffer together" (1Cor 12:26), when one member remains faithful, the whole Church is strengthened by that witness. The courage of Christians who continue to pray, worship, and proclaim the Gospel despite threats to their freedom and their lives is not only an inspiration—it is a gift to the entire Church.

Christian hope does not deny the reality of suffering. Rather, it proclaims that suffering united to Christ is never the final word. Throughout history, the blood of the martyrs has become the seed of new Christian life (cf. Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 50), revealing the power of God to bring light from darkness and life from death (cf. Jn 12:24-26). The persecuted Church continues to proclaim this truth today; even in places where churches are destroyed or communities scattered, the Gospel cannot be extinguished, because Jesus remains faithful to his people (cf. Mt 16:18; 2Tim 2:11-13).

While we enjoy in Canada the freedom to gather for the Eucharist, carry a Bible openly, or speak about Christ without fear of imprisonment or death, many hide their faith through silence or

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indifference to avoid discomfort. The example of those who endure persecution asks each of us a simple but profound question: “How deeply do I trust the Lord?” (cf. Mt 10:28-33). The witness of those who are persecuted encourages us to renew our own commitment to the Catholic faith, to prayer, charity, forgiveness, and joyful witness in the ordinary circumstances of daily life (cf. Phil 1:27-30).

Red Wednesday is more than a day of remembrance; it is an invitation to deeper unity and solidarity (cf. Heb 13:3). Through our prayers, sacrifices, and participation in the celebration of the holy Eucharist, we accompany those who suffer for the faith. I pray that our own hearts may be ever more courageous and that we never forget that the Church is one family (cf. Eph 4:4-6). If you, your family, parish, or community wish to show your solidarity with those who suffer for the faith, please visit Aid to the Church in Need Canada for more information or to register your participation.

May the Blessed Mother cast her mantle of protection upon us all.

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