



27 October 2025

Dear brothers and sisters,

May Jesus and Mary be in your souls.

As we journey through this Holy Year of Jubilee under the theme “Pilgrims of Hope,” we are called to deepen our faith and solidarity with one another, especially those who suffer for the name of Jesus. It is in this spirit of hope that I call to your attention Red Wednesday taking place on 19 November upcoming, a day dedicated to raising awareness of the persecution faced by our Christian brothers and sisters around the world. Organized by Aid to the Church in Need (ACN-Canada), a Pontifical Charity, this initiative illuminates churches and landmarks in red as a symbol of the blood shed by martyrs. In a world marked by division and strife, Red Wednesday serves as a reminder that we are pilgrims together, trusting in God’s promise of renewal and peace, even amid trials.

The scale of Christian persecution today is staggering and calls for our urgent attention and fervent prayer. According to the [most recent report from Aid to the Church in Need](#), grave violations of religious freedom occurred in 62 countries affecting nearly 5.4 billion people, or 64.7% of the world’s population. An additional 24 countries are “under observation” due to rising intolerance, extremism, or state interference, potentially impacting 750 million people world-wide. In various regions of Africa, Asia and South America, believers face imprisonment, forced displacement, church burnings, and even death. The report indicates that religious persecution contributed to over 123 million people being forcibly displaced, including 73.5 million internally displaced persons. These sobering realities underscore the threat to the faith in hostile environments, yet they also inspire us to hope, for as pilgrims of hope, we know that Christ’s resurrection triumphs over every form of darkness and injustice.

As we prepare to mark Red Wednesday, I extend a warm invitation to join in a special Mass at St. Michael’s Cathedral Basilica on November 19 at 5:30 p.m. This liturgy will be celebrated by His Excellency, the Most Reverend John Boissonneau, Auxiliary Bishop of Toronto, offering us an opportunity to pray together for our persecuted brothers and sisters worldwide and to stand in unity as the Body of Christ. ACN-Canada has also prepared many resources including a Rosary for Persecuted Christians that can be found on their website: acn-canada.org/red-wednesday.

In closing, I urge you to keep all Christians enduring persecution in your prayers, that they may find strength in the Cross and consolation in the Eucharist. May we, as pilgrims of hope, remain steadfast in our belief that a day will come when all can worship God freely, without fear or hindrance. Let us seek the powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, who stood faithfully at the foot of the cross, to guide us in this endeavour and envelop the suffering in her maternal care.

Yours sincerely in Jesus with Mary,

Frank Cardinal Leo
Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto