Statement in Honor of World Refugee Day 2017  
Tim Marx, President and CEO, Catholic Charities of Saint Paul and Minneapolis  
June 20, 2017

Today is World Refugee Day, a day we honor the 65 million people around the world who have been uprooted from their homes. Refugees come from all corners of the world and have survived the unimaginable on their journey to safety. Some arrive here in Minnesota, an unfamiliar place, often recovering from trauma and unfamiliar with our language and systems...yet determined to build a better life.

During a recent visit to Greece, Pope Francis met with refugees and said:  
“God created mankind to be one family; when any of our brothers and sisters suffer, we are all affected. We all know from experience how easy it is for some to ignore other people’s suffering and even to exploit their vulnerability. But we also know that these crises can bring out the very best in us....Yes, so much more needs to be done! But let us thank God that in our suffering he never leaves us alone. There is always someone who can reach out and help us.”

I am pleased that Catholic Charities does just that, reaching out and helping refugee men, women, and children every day. Our dedicated New American Services team—including June Jordan, Aimee Barbeau, Diana Elhard, Mohamed Mohamud, Marie Schuetze, Danica Simonet, and Bwet Taw--work to help the world’s most vulnerable people, offering a warm welcome and helping them navigate our community as they begin to establish roots here in Minnesota.

And this is a part of who we are: Catholic Charities has been resettling refugees to Minnesota since World War II, including 24,000 refugees since 1975—people who have come here from more than 25 countries and have enriched our communities.

This year, though, has been particularly challenging for refugees in our country. A series of executive orders and subsequent legal challenges in the courts have caused fear and made their future even more uncertain. (You can read our Catholic Charities statement about the Executive Order here: https://www.cctwincities.org/response-to-executive-order-on-refugees/ )

Yet we at Catholic Charities will continue to “welcome the stranger” and stand in solidarity with refugees as we work toward justice. To that end, we invite you to join us next month at the Twin Cities World Refugee Day Festival, which will take place on Sunday, July 16, at Loring Park in Minneapolis between 1:00-5:00 p.m. Catholic Charities is an event sponsor and will host an information table there. The Festival will highlight the stories, arts, and cultures of the 100,000+ refugees in Minnesota and the diversity of cultures, experiences, and assets they bring to our community. You can find out more about the event—which is free and open to the public—here: http://tcworldrefugeeday.org/, and we hope to see you there!

Today on World Refugee Day we honor refugees. We honor their courage. We honor their strength. And we celebrate the common humanity that binds us all together as one human family.

Thank you.