

## **Dr. Agnes Thomas to Lead Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto**

TORONTO, ON March 27, 2023 - Dr. Agnes Thomas, the incoming Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto (CCAT), describes herself as a bridge builder who is humbled by – and grateful for -- the opportunity to serve her neighbour.

With extensive experience working with diverse groups, including young people, women, and immigrants and migrants, Dr. Thomas has spent time in her career both in hands-on, frontline interactions with clients as well as in administrative work that has included mentoring and staff development, long-range planning, and community education.

“I am called to be here,” she says of her new role. “My strong suit is to be a servant, helping others to succeed. I think of leadership as creating impact and influence, bringing people together in a spirit of synergy and collaboration and helping them to reach their potential. If your people are good, your community will be great. I am appreciative that we are not working *for* people but *with* people.”

As an example of her philosophy, she cites her work at Catholic Crosscultural Services, a CCAT member agency, where she served as Executive Director for five years before accepting her new role at CCAT. While much of her time there overlapped with COVID-19, the agency experienced significant growth under her leadership.

“People took ownership at a challenging time because they were empowered,” says Dr. Thomas.

She notes that Catholic Charities is at a “crossroads,” as the world begins to move forward from COVID-19 and CCAT welcomes Archbishop Francis Leo as its new Chair. The core values underpinning the 110-year-old organization, however, remain timeless and values-driven. Catholic Charities, she says, is built upon Catholic Social Teaching and lead with a constant awareness of “what we needed to do to welcome and create spaces that are safe for some of society’s most vulnerable people.”

CCAT’s board of directors and 21 member agencies are excited to begin working with the new Executive Director.

“Dr. Thomas has consistently demonstrated her commitment to serving those most in need,” says CCAT President Maureen Leon. “We are excited to welcome her to the Catholic Charities family where, under her leadership, we know that the legacy of serving the most marginalized and vulnerable in our communities is in good hands.”

Dr. Thomas began her career in 1993 at L’Arche International, the global organization devoted to building communities for people with developmental and physical disabilities, where she worked for more than a dozen years in India, the United States and Canada.

After moving to Toronto, she joined local charity Yonge Street Mission, where her duties included developing initiatives and self-help groups for immigrant women and families and serving as an executive council member of Toronto South Local Immigration Partnership. Prior to joining Catholic Crosscultural



Services, she was Director of Community Development and Programs at the Jane/Finch Centre, fostering and promoting innovative programs and services.

Dr. Thomas earned her PhD at the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, and her doctoral dissertation was entitled *Immigrant Women and Their Work in the Informal Economy in Toronto*. Her PhD followed a Master of Arts degree from York University, a Bachelor of Arts degree from Mahatma Gandhi University in Kerala, India, a diploma in social development from the Coady International Institute at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia, and ongoing professional development.

She currently lives in Scarborough with her husband, Santhosh, and their three children.

Dr. Thomas, in her free time, is a busy volunteer, serving as a student mentor for OISE. In addition, she sits on a variety of boards and committees in the Toronto area.

She also has continued in her role as teacher, teaching university courses on community transformation and religion and migration.

"Teaching makes me a better listener," she says.

Dr. Thomas begins her new role as Executive Director of Catholic Charities on April 13. Please join us, as we welcome her to Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto.

