

# Liliane's Inspiring Journey

I'm Liliane Safi, born in the picturesque city of Bukavu in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. My father was a dedicated nurse who cared for the disabled, and my mother, a loving homemaker, took care of our large family. I have many siblings, and our home was always filled with warmth and laughter. My pursuit of knowledge led me to Kinshasa, where I worked diligently to earn my Information Technology Degree.

Congo, our beloved homeland, is a treasure trove of natural resources, including gold, cobalt, and diamonds. It's a land of abundant water, graced with serene lakes and numerous rivers. Conservation parks teem with a rich diversity of wildlife, among them the majestic mountain gorillas. The climate is predominantly warm, but in the mountains, a refreshing coolness prevails. We experience two distinct seasons: the dry season and the rainy season. Our fertile soil yields bountiful harvests without the need for fertilizers, allowing everything to flourish naturally.



Tragically, the course of our lives took a dark turn when war descended upon our homeland. Homes were reduced to ashes, lives were lost, and countless people were forced to flee, leaving behind the places they cherished. The anguish of my people continues to this day. During those turbulent times, some of my siblings and I were separated, and we haven't seen each other for more than two decades. Regrettably, some of them remain in a refugee camp in Malawi. Fearing for our safety, my daughter and I embarked on a journey to Thailand, seeking refuge, a journey that would change our lives forever.

It was in Thailand that I first crossed paths with ORAT. Our connection began when we warmly received the Cardinal of Bangkok in our church, St. Mark's in Pathum Thani. I dedicated my time to the service of the church, keeping it clean, while my daughter's education was supported by Father Adriano Pelosin. During the Cardinal's pastoral visit, our priest introduced our Congolese community, which consisted of three families. It was then that we penned a heartfelt letter, inspired by my research on the internet that Catholic Churches in Canada were offering support to refugees. In my letter, I made a specific request to the Cardinal: to recommend us to the Archbishop of Toronto, establishing a direct connection for us. The Cardinal, touched by our plea, reached out to the Pope's representative, the Apostolic Nuncio, who, in turn, relayed our request to the Archbishop of Toronto.



With ORAT's assistance, the journey to Canada was set in motion. We shared our story once more and submitted our application, which was then forwarded to Immigration Canada. A group of ORAT officials visited us in Thailand in December 2022, organizing a meeting with us on December 6th, 2022, where I had the privilege of meeting Deacon Rudy, Simolen, and Ildy. This meeting was designed to prepare us for interviews with the Embassy and Immigration Canada to secure a visa.



Our long-awaited arrival in Canada occurred on July 6th, 2023, at Toronto Pearson Airport. The warm embrace of a dedicated newcomer committee greeted us with a fully furnished home and generously stocked cupboards. Our rent was covered, and financial support from St. Vincent de Paul provided us with the means for food, transportation, and other essential needs. They introduced us to fellow parishioners, community organizations, and vital

services such as Service Canada and Service Ontario. My daughter was enrolled in school, and I was connected with Agilec for employment support. Most importantly, our sponsor continued to check in on us, ensuring that our needs were met. Their unwavering support has left an indelible mark on my heart. In just one month, we've achieved so much, and I feel remarkably comfortable. I see a promising future ahead, and I consider it a series of blessings, each coming in its own time according to God's plan. I feel truly fortunate to be here, even as I know there is still much to achieve.

As I reflect on my journey, I am deeply moved by the incredible work ORAT is doing to help refugees around the world. The plight of refugees is undeniably challenging, and their removal from such dire circumstances is a profound relief and liberation. I extend my deepest gratitude to ORAT, which acted as the bridge that led me to my new community at Guardian Angel's parish. I wish you all good health and pray for God's blessings upon you and your families. Countless individuals contributed to my journey, and though I may not know them all, I carry each of you in my heart. Even before I set foot in Canada, I thought of you and your kindness. When Father Prasanth came to bless my new home, I offered him a bottle of sacramental wine, a symbol of my hope that God will bless each and every one of you during Mass. I can hardly express the depth of my gratitude for all that has been done for us, and I am overwhelmed with a sense of thankfulness.