



SACRED HEART CHURCH OF THE FIRST PEOPLES

10821-96 Street, Edmonton, AB T5H 2J8



ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS AT MASKWACIS

*Madam Governor General,
Mr Prime Minister,
Dear indigenous peoples of Maskwacis and of this land of Canada,
Dear brothers and sisters!*

I have been waiting to come here and be with you! Here, from this place associated with painful memories, I would like to begin what I consider a pilgrimage, a penitential pilgrimage. I have come to your native lands to tell you in person of my sorrow, to implore God's forgiveness, healing and reconciliation, to express my closeness and to pray with you and for you.

I recall the meetings we had in Rome four months ago. At that time, I was given two pairs of moccasins as a sign of the suffering endured by indigenous children, particularly those who, unfortunately, never came back from the residential schools. I was asked to return the moccasins when I came to Canada; I brought them, and I will return them at the end of these few words, in which I would like to reflect on this symbol, which over the past few months has kept alive my sense of sorrow, indignation and shame. The memory of those children is indeed painful; it urges us to work to ensure that every child is treated with love, honour and respect. At the same time, those moccasins also speak to us of a path to follow, a journey that we desire to make together. We want to walk together, to pray together and to work together, so that the sufferings of the past can lead to a future of justice, healing and reconciliation.

That is why the first part of my pilgrimage among you takes place in this region, which from time immemorial has seen the presence of indigenous peoples. These are lands that speak to us; they enable us to *remember*.

To remember: brothers and sisters, you have lived on these lands for thousands of years, following ways of life that respect the earth which you received as a legacy from past generations and are keeping for those yet to come. You have treated it as a gift of the Creator to be shared with others and to be cherished in harmony with all that exists, in profound fellowship with all living beings. In this way, you learned to foster a sense of family and community, and to build solid bonds between generations, honouring your elders and caring for your little ones. A treasury of sound customs and teachings, centred on concern for others, truthfulness, courage and respect, humility, honesty and practical wisdom!

Yet if those were the first steps taken in these lands, the path of remembrance leads us, sadly, to those that followed. The place where we are gathered renews within me the deep sense of pain and remorse that I have felt in these past months. I think back on the tragic situations that so many of you, your families and your communities have known; of what you shared with me about the suffering you endured in the residential schools. These are traumas that are in some way reawakened whenever the subject comes up; I realize too that our meeting today can bring back old memories and hurts, and that many of you may feel uncomfortable even as I speak. Yet it is right to remember, because forgetfulness leads to indifference and, as has been said, “the opposite of love is not hatred, it’s indifference... and the opposite of life is not death, it’s indifference” (E. WIESEL). To remember the devastating experiences that took place in the residential schools hurts, angers, causes pain, and yet it is necessary.

It is necessary to remember how the policies of assimilation and enfranchisement, which also included the residential school system, were devastating for the people of these lands. When the European colonists first arrived here, there was a great opportunity to bring about a fruitful encounter between cultures, traditions and forms of spirituality. Yet for the most part that did not happen. Again, I think back on the stories you told: how the policies of assimilation ended up systematically marginalizing the indigenous peoples; how also through the system of residential schools your languages and cultures were denigrated and suppressed; how children suffered physical, verbal, psychological and spiritual abuse; how they were taken away from their homes at a young age, and how that indelibly affected relationships between parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren.

I thank you for making me appreciate this, for telling me about the heavy burdens that you still bear, for sharing with me these bitter memories. Today I am here, in this land that, along with its ancient memories, preserves the scars of still open wounds. I am here because the first step of my penitential pilgrimage among you is that of again asking forgiveness, of telling you once more that I am deeply sorry. Sorry for the ways in which, regrettably, many Christians supported the colonizing mentality of the powers that oppressed the indigenous peoples. I am sorry. I ask forgiveness, in particular, for the ways in which many members of the Church and of religious communities cooperated, not least through their indifference, in projects of cultural destruction and forced assimilation promoted by the governments of that time, which culminated in the system of residential schools.

Although Christian charity was not absent, and there were many outstanding instances of devotion and care for children, the overall effects of the policies linked to the residential schools were catastrophic. What our Christian faith tells us is that this was a disastrous error, incompatible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is painful to think of how the firm soil of values, language and culture that made up the authentic identity of your peoples was eroded, and that you have continued to pay the price of this. In the face of this deplorable evil, the Church kneels before God and implores his forgiveness for the sins of her children (cf. JOHN PAUL II, Bull [*Incarnationis Mysterium*](#) [29 November 1998], 11: AAS 91 [1999], 140). I myself wish to reaffirm this, with

shame and unambiguously. I humbly beg forgiveness for the evil committed by so many Christians against the indigenous peoples.

Dear brothers and sisters, many of you and your representatives have stated that begging pardon is not the end of the matter. I fully agree: that is only the first step, the starting point. I also recognize that, “looking to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient” and that, “looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening” ([*Letter to the People of God*](#), 20 August 2018). An important part of this process will be to conduct a serious investigation into the facts of what took place in the past and to assist the survivors of the residential schools to experience healing from the traumas they suffered.

I trust and pray that Christians and civil society in this land may grow in the ability to accept and respect the identity and the experience of the indigenous peoples. It is my hope that concrete ways can be found to make those peoples better known and esteemed, so that all may learn to walk together. For my part, I will continue to encourage the efforts of all Catholics to support the indigenous peoples. I have done so on other occasions and in various places, through meetings, appeals and also through the writing of an Apostolic Exhortation. I realize that all this will require time and patience. We are speaking of processes that must penetrate hearts. My presence here and the commitment of the Canadian Bishops are a testimony to our will to persevere on this path.

Dear friends, this pilgrimage is taking place over several days and in places far distant from one another; even so, it will not allow me to accept the many invitations I have received to visit centres like Kamloops, Winnipeg and various places in Saskatchewan, Yukon and the Northwest Territories. Although it is not possible, please know that all of you are in my thoughts and in my prayer. Know that I am aware of the sufferings and traumas, the difficulties and challenges, experienced by the indigenous peoples in every region of this country. The words that I speak throughout this penitential journey are meant for every native community and person. I embrace all of you with affection.

On this first step of my journey, I have wanted to make space for memory. Here, today, I am with you to recall the past, to grieve with you, to bow our heads together in silence and to pray before the graves. Let us allow these moments of silence to help us interiorize our pain. Silence. And prayer. In the face of evil, we pray to the Lord of goodness; in the face of death, we pray to the God of life. Our Lord Jesus Christ took a grave, which seemed the burial place of every hope and dream, leaving behind only sorrow, pain and resignation, and made it a place of rebirth and resurrection, the beginning of a history of new life and universal reconciliation. Our own efforts are not enough to achieve healing and reconciliation: we need God’s grace. We need the quiet and powerful wisdom of the Spirit, the tender love of the Comforter. May he bring to fulfilment the deepest expectations of our hearts. May he take us by the hand and enable us to advance together on our journey.

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS AT SACRED HEART

Dear brothers and sisters, good evening!

I am happy to be here among you and to see once again the faces of the various indigenous representatives who came to visit me in Rome several months ago. That visit meant a lot to me, and now I have come to visit your home, as a friend and pilgrim in your land, in this church where you gather to praise God as brothers and sisters. In Rome, after I listened to your stories, I stated that “any truly effective process of healing requires concrete actions” ([*Address to Representatives Indigenous Peoples in Canada*](#), 1 April 2022). So I am pleased to see that in this parish, where people of different communities of the First Nations, the Métis and the Inuit come together with nonindigenous people from the local area and many of our immigrant brothers and sisters, this process has already begun. This place is *a house for all*, open and inclusive, just as the Church should be, for it is the family of the children of God, where hospitality and welcome, typical values of the indigenous culture, are essential. A home where everyone should feel welcome, regardless of past experiences and personal life stories. I also want to thank you for the concrete closeness you show to many poor people – it is very moving – for they are numerous, even in this rich country, through your works of charity. That is what Jesus asks of us, for as he tells us over and over in the Gospel: “Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (*Mt 25:40*). Jesus is there present.

Yet we must not forget that in the Church too, the wheat is mixed with weeds. And precisely because of those weeds, I wanted to make this penitential pilgrimage, which I began this morning by recalling the wrong done to the indigenous peoples by many Christians and by asking with sorrow for forgiveness. It pains me to think that Catholics contributed to policies of assimilation and enfranchisement that inculcated a sense of inferiority, robbing communities and individuals of their cultural and spiritual identity, severing their roots and fostering prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes; and that this was also done in the name of an educational system that was supposedly Christian. Education must always start from respect and the promotion of talents already present in individuals. It is not, nor can it ever be, something pre-packaged and imposed. For education is an adventure, in which we explore and discover together the mystery of life. Thanks be to God, for in parishes like this, day by day, through encounter, foundations are being laid for healing and reconciliation. Here I would add another point. In a special way, I want to thank the Bishops for their work in making my visit possible, as well as your visit to Rome. A united Episcopal Conference is able to do great things and produce much fruit. Many thanks to the Episcopal Conference!

Reconciliation. This evening, I would like to share with you some reflections on this word. What does Jesus tell us when he speaks about reconciliation, or when he

prompts us towards it? What does reconciliation mean for us today? Dear friends, the reconciliation brought by Christ was no agreement to preserve outward peace, a sort of gentlemen's agreement meant to keep everyone happy. Nor was it a peace that dropped down from heaven, imposed from on high, or by assimilating the other. The Apostle Paul tells us that Jesus reconciles by bringing together, by making two distant groups one: one reality, one soul, one people. And *how* does he do that? Through the cross (cf. *Eph 2:14*). Jesus reconciles us with one another on the cross, on the "tree of life", as the ancient Christians loved to call it.

You, my dear indigenous brothers and sisters, have much to teach us about the symbolism and vital meaning of the tree. Joined to the earth by its roots, a tree gives oxygen through its leaves and nourishes us by its fruit. It is impressive to see how the symbolism of the tree is reflected in the architecture of this church, where a tree trunk symbolically unites the earth below and the altar on which Jesus reconciles us in the Eucharist in "an act of cosmic love" that "joins heaven and earth, embracing [...] all creation" (*Laudato Si'*, 236). This liturgical symbolism reminds me of the magnificent words spoken by Saint John Paul II in this country: "Christ animates the very centre of all culture. Thus, not only is Christianity relevant to the Indian people, but Christ, in the members of his Body, is himself Indian" (*Liturgy of the Word with the Native Peoples of Canada*, 15 September 1984). On the cross, Christ reconciles and brings back together everything that seemed unthinkable and unforgivable; he embraces everyone and everything. Everyone and everything! The indigenous peoples attribute a powerful cosmic significance to the cardinal points, seen not only as geographical reference points but also as dimensions that embrace all reality and indicate the way to heal it, as embodied by the so-called "medicine wheel". This church appropriates that symbolism of the cardinal points and gives it a Christological meaning. Jesus, through the four extremities of his cross, has embraced the four cardinal points and has brought together the most distant peoples; Jesus has brought healing and peace to all things (cf. *Eph 2:14*). On the cross, he accomplished God's plan: "to reconcile all things" (cf. *Col 1:20*).

Dear brothers and sisters, what meaning does this have for people who bear within their hearts such painful wounds? I can only imagine the effort it must take, for those who have suffered so greatly because of men and women who should have set an example of Christian living, even to think about reconciliation. Nothing can ever take away the violation of dignity, the experience of evil, the betrayal of trust. Or take away our own shame, as believers. Yet we need to set out anew, and Jesus does not offer us nice words and good intentions, but the cross: the scandalous love that allows his hands and feet to be pierced by nails, and his head to be crowned with thorns. This is the way forward: to look together to Christ, to love betrayed and crucified for our sake; to look to Christ, crucified in the many students of the residential schools. If we truly want to be reconciled with one another and with ourselves, to be reconciled with the past, with wrongs endured and memories wounded, with traumatic experiences

that no human consolation can ever heal, our eyes must be lifted to the crucified Jesus; peace must be attained at the altar of his cross. For it is precisely on the tree of the cross that sorrow is transformed into love, death into life, disappointment into hope, abandonment into fellowship, distance into unity. Reconciliation is not merely the result of our own efforts; it is a gift that flows from the crucified Lord, a peace that radiates from the heart of Jesus, a grace that must be sought.

There is another aspect of reconciliation that I would like to mention. The Apostle Paul explains that Jesus, by means of the cross, has reconciled us *in one body* (cf. *Eph 2:14*). What body is he talking about? He is talking about the body of the Church. The Church is this *living body of reconciliation*. If we think of the lasting pain experienced in these places by so many people within ecclesial institutions, we feel nothing but anger, nothing but shame. That happened because believers became worldly, and rather than fostering reconciliation, they imposed their own cultural models. This attitude, brothers and sisters, dies hard, also from the religious standpoint. Indeed, it may seem easier to force God on people, rather than letting them draw near to God. This is contradictory and never works, because that is not how the Lord operates. He does not force us, he does not suppress or overwhelm; instead, he loves, he liberates, he leaves us free. He does not sustain with his Spirit those who dominate others, who confuse the Gospel of our reconciliation with proselytism. One cannot proclaim God in a way contrary to God himself. And yet, how many times has this happened in history! While God presents himself simply and quietly, we always have the temptation to impose him, and to impose ourselves in his name. It is the worldly temptation to make him come down from the cross and show himself with power. Yet Jesus reconciles us *on* the cross, not by coming down *from* the cross. At the foot of the cross, were those who thought only of themselves and kept tempting Christ, telling him to save himself (cf. *Lk 23:35.36*) and not think of others. Brothers and sisters, in the name of Jesus, may this never happen again in the Church. May Jesus be preached as he desires, in freedom and charity. In every crucified person whom we meet, may we see not a problem to be solved, but a brother or sister to be loved, the flesh of Christ to be loved. May the Church, the Body of Christ, be a living body of reconciliation!

The word “reconciliation” is in fact practically synonymous with the word “Church”. It comes from the word “council”, and it means “meet again in council”. The Church is the house where we “conciliate” anew, where we meet to start over and to grow together. It is the place where we stop thinking as individuals and acknowledge that we are brothers and sisters of one another. Where we look one another in the eye, accept the other’s history and culture, and allow the mystique of togetherness, so pleasing to the Holy Spirit, to foster the healing of wounded memories. This is the way: not to decide for others, not to pigeonhole everyone within our preconceived categories, but to place ourselves before the crucified Lord and before our brothers and sisters, in order to learn how to walk together. That is what the Church is, and should always

be – the place where reality is always superior to ideas. That is what the Church is, and always should be – not a set of ideas and precepts to drill into people; the Church is a welcoming home for everyone! That is what the Church is, and ever should be: a building with doors always open. We heard from our brother and sister that this parish is just that: a building with doors always open, where all of us, as living temples of the Spirit, encounter one another, serve one another and are reconciled with one another. Dear brothers and sisters: gestures and visits can be important, but most words and deeds of reconciliation take place at the local level, in communities like this, where individuals and families travel side-by-side, day by day. To pray together, to help one another, to share life stories, common joys and common struggles: this is what opens the door to the reconciling work of God.

One final image can help us in this. Here, in this church, above the altar and tabernacle, we see the four poles of a typical indigenous tent, a teepee. This teepee has deep biblical symbolism. When Israel journeyed in the desert, God dwelt in a tent that was set up every time that the people stopped and camped: it was *the Tent of Meeting*. The teepee reminds us that God accompanies us on our journey and loves to meet us together, in assembly, in council. And when he became man, the Gospel tells us, he literally “pitched his tent among us” (cf. *Jn* 1:14). God is a God of closeness, and in Jesus he teaches us the language of compassion and tender love. That is what we should call to mind every time that we enter a church, where Jesus is present in the tabernacle, a word that itself originally meant “tent”. Therefore, God has placed his tent in our midst; he accompanies us through our deserts. He does not dwell in heavenly mansions, but in our Church, which he wants to be *a house of reconciliation*.

Lord Jesus, crucified and risen, you dwell here, in the midst of your people, and you want your glory to shine forth through our communities and in our cultures. Jesus, take us by the hand, and even through the deserts of history, continue to guide our steps on the way of reconciliation. Amen.

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS AT COMMONWEALTH STADIUM

Today we celebrate the feast of the grandparents of Jesus. The Lord has gathered all of us together precisely on this occasion, so dear to you and to me. It was in the home of Joachim and Anne that the child Jesus came to know his older relatives and experienced the closeness, tender love and wisdom of his grandparents. Let us think about our own grandparents, and reflect on two important things.

First: *we are children of a history that needs to be preserved*. We are not isolated individuals, islands. No one comes into this world detached from others. Our roots, the love that awaited us and welcomed us into the world, the families in which we grew up, are part of a unique history that preceded us and gave us life. We did not choose that history; we received it as a gift, one that we are called to cherish, for, as the Book

of Sirach reminds us, we are “descendants” of those who went before us; we are their “inheritance” (*Sir* 44:11). An inheritance that, quite apart from any claim to prestige or authority, intelligence or creativity in song or poetry, is centred on righteousness, on fidelity to God and his will. This is what they passed on to us. In order to accept who we really are, and how precious we are, we need to accept as part of ourselves the men and women from whom we are descended. They did not simply think about themselves, but passed on to us the treasure of life. We are here thanks to our parents, but also thanks to our grandparents, who helped us feel welcome in the world. Often they were the ones who loved us unconditionally, without expecting anything back. They took us by the hand when we were afraid, reassured us in the dark of night, encouraged us when in the full light of day we faced important life decisions. Thanks to our grandparents, we received a caress from the history that preceded us: we learned that goodness, tender love and wisdom are the solid roots of humanity. It was in our grandparents’ homes that many of us breathed in the fragrance of the Gospel, the strength of a faith which makes us feel at home. Thanks to them, we discovered that kind of “familiar” faith, a domestic faith. Because that is how faith is fundamentally passed on, at home, through a mother tongue, with affection and encouragement, care and closeness.

This is our history, to which we are heirs and which we are called to preserve. We are children because we are grandchildren. Our grandparents left a unique mark on us by their way of living; they gave us dignity and confidence in ourselves and others. They bestowed on us something that can never be taken from us and that, at the same time, allows us to be unique, original and free. From our grandparents we learned that love is never forced; it never deprives others of their interior freedom. That is the way Joachim and Anne loved Mary and Jesus; and that is how Mary loved Jesus, with a love that never smothered him or held him back, but accompanied him in embracing the mission for which he had come into the world. Let us try to learn this, as individuals and as a Church. May we learn never to pressure the consciences of others, never to restrict the freedom of those around us, and above all, never to fail in loving and respecting those who preceded us and are entrusted to our care. For they are a precious treasure that preserves a history greater than themselves.

The Book of Sirach also tells us that preserving the history that gave us life does not mean obscuring the “glory” of our ancestors. We should not lose their memory, nor forget the history that gave birth to our own lives. We should always remember those whose hands caressed us and who held us in their arms; for in this history we can find consolation in moments of discouragement, a light to guide us, and courage to face the challenges of life. Yet preserving the history that gave us life also means constantly returning to that school where we first learned how to love. It means asking ourselves, when faced with daily choices, what the wisest of the elders we have known would do in our place, what advice our grandparents and great-grandparents would have given us.

So, dear brothers and sisters, let us ask ourselves: are we children and grandchildren capable of safeguarding this treasure that we have inherited? Do we remember the good teachings we have received? Do we talk to our elders, and take time to listen to them? And, in our increasingly well-equipped, modern and functional homes, do we know how to set aside a worthy space for preserving their memory, a special place, a small family memorial which, through precious pictures and objects, allows us to remember in prayer those who went before us? Have we kept their Bible, their rosary beads? In the fog of forgetfulness that overshadows our turbulent times, it is essential, brothers and sisters, to take care of our roots, to pray for and with our forebears, to dedicate time to remember and guard their legacy. This is how a family tree grows; this is how the future is built.

Let us now think of the second important thing. In addition to being *children of a history that needs to be preserved*, we are *authors of a history yet to be written*. Each of us can recognize ourselves for who and what we are, marked by both light and shadows, and by the love that we did or did not receive. This is the mystery of human life: we are all someone's children, begotten and shaped by another, but as we become adults, we too are called to give life, to be a father, mother or grandparent to someone else. Thinking about the people we are today, what do we want to do with ourselves? The grandparents who went before, the elderly who had dreams and hopes for us, and made great sacrifices for us, ask us an essential question: what kind of a society do we want to build? We received so much from the hands of those who preceded us. What do we, in turn, want to bequeath to those who come after us? "Rose water", that is a diluted faith, or a living faith? A society founded on personal profit or on fraternity? A world at war or a world at peace? A devastated creation or a home that continues to be welcoming?

Let us not forget that the life-giving sap travels from the roots to the branches, to the leaves, to the flowers, and then to the fruit of the tree. Authentic tradition is expressed in this vertical dimension: from the bottom up. We need to be careful lest we fall into a caricature of tradition, which is not vertical – from roots to fruits – but horizontal – forwards and backwards. Tradition conceived in this way only leads us to a kind of "backwards culture", a refuge of self-centredness, which simply pigeonholes the present, trapping it within the mentality that says, "We've always done it this way".

In the Gospel we just heard, Jesus tells the disciples that they are blessed because they can see and hear what so many prophets and righteous people could only hope for (cf. *Mt 13:16-17*). Many people had believed in God's promise of the coming Messiah, had prepared the way for him and had announced his arrival. But now that the Messiah has arrived, those who can see and hear him are called to welcome him and proclaim his presence in our midst.

Brothers and sisters, this also applies to us. Those who preceded us have passed on to us a passion, a strength and a yearning, a flame that it is up to us to reignite. It is not a matter of preserving ashes, but of rekindling the fire that they lit. Our grandpar-

ents and our elders wanted to see a more just, fraternal and solidary world, and they fought to give us a future. Now, it is up to us not to let them down. It is up to us to take on the tradition received, because that tradition is the living faith of our dead. Let us not transform it into “traditionalism”, which is the dead faith of the living, as an author once said. Sustained by those who are our roots, now it is our turn to bear fruit. We are the branches that must blossom and spread new seeds of history. Let us ask ourselves, then, a few concrete questions. As part of the history of salvation, in the light of those who went before me and loved me, what is it that I must now do? I have a unique and irreplaceable role in history, but what mark will I leave behind me? What am I passing on to those who will come after me? What am I giving of myself? Often we measure our lives on the basis of our income, our type of career, our degree of success and how others perceive us. Yet these are not life-giving criteria. The real question is: am I giving life? Am I ushering into history a new and renewed love that was not there before? Am I proclaiming the Gospel in my neighbourhood? Am I freely serving others, the way those who preceded me did for me? What am I doing for our Church, our city, our society? Brothers and sisters, it is easy to criticize, but the Lord does not want us to be mere critics of the system, or to be closed and “backwards-looking”, as says the author of the Letter to the Hebrews (cf. 10:39). Rather, he wants us to be artisans of a new history, weavers of hope, builders of the future, peacemakers.

May Joachim and Anne intercede for us. May they help us to cherish the history that gave us life, and, for our part, to build a life-giving history. May they remind us of our spiritual duty to honour our grandparents and our elders, to treasure their presence among us in order to create a better future. A future in which the elderly are not cast aside because, from a “practical” standpoint, they are “no longer useful”. A future that does not judge the value of people simply by what they can produce. A future that is not indifferent to the need of the aged to be cared for and listened to. A future in which the history of violence and marginalization suffered by our indigenous brothers and sisters is never repeated. That future is possible if, with God’s help, we do not sever the bond that joins us with those who have gone before us, and if we foster dialogue with those who will come after us. Young and old, grandparents and grandchildren, all together. Let us move forward together, and together, let us dream. Also, let us not forget Paul’s advice to his disciple Timothy: Remember your mother and your grandmother (cf. 2 *Tim* 1:5).

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS AT LAC STE. ANNE

Dear brothers and sisters, âba-wash-did! Tansi! Oki! [Good day!]

I am very pleased to be here, a pilgrim with you and among you. In these days, and today in particular, I have been struck by the sound of drums that accompanied me wherever I went. This beating of drums seems to echo the beating of so many hearts: hearts that, over the centuries, have beat near these very waters; hearts of the many pilgrims who walked together to reach this “lake of God”! Here we can truly feel the choral heartbeat of a pilgrim people, of generations who set out on a journey towards the Lord in order to experience his work of healing. How many hearts have come here with anxious longing, weighed down by life’s burdens, and found by these waters consolation and strength to carry on! Here, immersed in creation, we can also sense another beating: the maternal heartbeat of the earth. Just as the hearts of babies in the womb beat in harmony with those of their mothers, so in order to grow as people, we need to harmonize our own rhythms of life with those of creation, which gives us life. Today, then, let us return to the sources of life: to God, to our parents and, on this feast day and in the house of Saint Anne, to our grandparents, all of whom I greet with great affection.

Inspired by these vital heartbeats, we are here, silently contemplating the waters of this lake. This too helps us to return to the *sources of faith*. Indeed, it allows us, in spirit, to visit the holy places: to imagine Jesus, who carried out much of his ministry on the shores of a lake: the Sea of Galilee. There he chose and called the Apostles, preached the Beatitudes, taught many of his parables, performed signs and healings. That lake, the heart of “Galilee of the Gentiles” (*Mt 4:15*), was nonetheless a peripheral area, a crossroads of commerce where various peoples converged, making the region one of different religions and customs. Geographically and culturally, it was the farthest place from the religious purity concentrated in Jerusalem, around the Temple. So we can think of that lake, the Sea of Galilee, as a place teeming with diversity: fishermen and tax collectors, centurions and slaves, Pharisees and the poor, men and women from a wide variety of origins and social backgrounds, all coming together on its shores. It was precisely there that Jesus preached the kingdom of God: not to a select religious congregation, but to various peoples who then, as today, flocked from different places; in a natural theatre such as this, he preached and welcomed everyone. God chose that richly diverse context to announce to the world something revolutionary: for example, “Turn the other cheek, love your enemies, live as brothers and sisters so as to be children of God, the Father who makes his sun shine on both good and bad and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous” (cf. *Mt 5:38-48*). This lake, with all its diversity, thus became the site of an unprecedented *proclamation of fraternity*; not a revolution bringing death and injury in its wake, but a revolution of love. Here, on the shores of this lake, the sound of drums, spanning the centuries and uniting different peoples, brings us back to that time. It reminds us

that fraternity is genuine if it unites those who are far apart, that the message of unity that heaven sends down to earth does not fear differences, but invites us to fellowship, a communion of differences, in order to start afresh together, because we are all pilgrims on a journey.

Dear brothers and sisters, pilgrims to these waters, the word of God can help us realize what we can draw from them. The prophet Ezekiel tells us twice that the waters flowing the Temple both “give life” and “heal” God’s people (cf. *Ezek 47:8-9*).

The waters give life. I think of the many dear grandmothers who are here with us: your hearts are springs from which the living water of faith flowed, and with it you quenched the thirst of your children and grandchildren. I am struck by the vital role of women in indigenous communities: they occupy a prominent place as blessed sources not only of physical but also of spiritual life. In thinking of your *kokum*, I also remember my own grandmother. From her, I first received the message of faith and learned that the Gospel is communicated through loving care and the wisdom of life. Faith rarely comes from reading a book alone in a corner; instead, it spreads within families, transmitted in the language of mothers, in the sweetly lyrical accents of grandmothers. It warms my heart to see so many grandparents and great-grandparents here. Thank you! I thank you and would like to say to all those families with elderly people at home: you possess a treasure! Guard this source of life within your homes: please take care of it, as a precious legacy to be loved and cherished.

The prophet also said that, in addition to giving life, *the waters heal*. This too brings us back to the shores of the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus “cured many who were sick with various diseases” (*Mk 1:34*). When sunset came, “they brought to him all who were sick” (v. 32). This evening, let us picture ourselves around the lake with Jesus, as he draws near, bends down and with patience, compassion and tenderness, heals many who are sick in body or spirit: the possessed, the paralyzed, the blind and lepers, but also the broken-hearted and discouraged, the lost and hurting. Jesus came then, and he still comes now, to care for us, and to console and heal our lonely and wearied human family. To everyone, and to us as well, he extends the same invitation: “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (*Mt 11:28*). Or, as he says in the passage we heard this evening, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and drink” (*Jn 7:37-38*).

Brothers and sisters, all of us need the *healing* that comes from Jesus, the physician of souls and bodies. Lord, as the people on the shores of the Sea of Galilee were not afraid to cry out to you with their needs, so we come to you, Lord, this evening, with whatever pain we bear within us. We bring to you our weariness and our struggles, the wounds of the violence suffered by our indigenous brothers and sisters. In this blessed place, where harmony and peace reign, we present to you the disharmony of our experiences, the terrible effects of colonization, the indelible pain of so many families, grandparents and children. Lord, help us to be healed of our wounds. We know, Lord, that this requires effort, care and concrete actions on our part; but we also

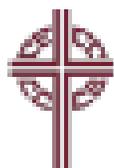
know that we cannot do this alone. We rely on you and on the intercession of your mother and your grandmother.

Yes, Lord, we entrust ourselves to the intercession of your mother and your grandmother, because mothers and grandmothers help to heal the wounds of our hearts. At the dramatic time of the conquest, Our Lady of Guadalupe transmitted the true faith to the indigenous people, speaking their own language and clothed in their own garments, without violence or imposition. Shortly afterwards, with the arrival of printing, the first grammar books and catechisms were produced in indigenous languages. How much good was done in this regard by those missionaries who, as authentic evangelizers, preserved indigenous languages and cultures in many parts of the world! In Canada, this “maternal inculturation” took place through Saint Anne, combining the beauty of indigenous traditions and faith, and fashioning them with the wisdom of a grandmother, who is a mother twice over. The Church too is a woman, a mother. In fact, there has never been a time in her history when the faith was not passed on in mother tongues, passed on by mothers and grandmothers. Yet, part of the painful legacy we are now confronting stems from the fact that indigenous grandmothers were prevented from passing on the faith in their own language and culture. That loss was certainly tragic, but your presence here is a testimony of resilience and a fresh start, of pilgrimage towards healing, of a heart open to God who heals the life of communities. All of us, as Church, now need healing: healing from the temptation of closing in on ourselves, of defending the institution rather than seeking the truth, of preferring worldly power to serving the Gospel. Dear brothers and sisters, with God’s help, let us help one another in offering our own contribution to the building up of a Mother Church pleasing to him: capable of embracing each of her sons and daughters; a Church that is open to all and speaks to everyone; a Church that is against no one, and encounters everyone.

The crowds at the Sea of Galilee who thronged around Jesus were made up for the most part of ordinary, simple people, who brought to him their own needs and hurts. If we want to care for and heal the life of our communities, we need to start with the poor and most marginalized. Too often, we allow ourselves to be guided by the interests of a few who are comfortable. We need to look more to the peripheries and listen to the cry of the least of our brothers and sisters. We need to learn how to listen to the pain of those who, in our crowded and depersonalized cities, often silently cry out: “Don’t abandon us!” It is also the plea of the elderly who risk dying alone at home or in a nursing home. Of patients who, in place of affection, are administered death. It is the muffled plea of young people who are more interrogated than listened to, who delegate their freedom to a cell phone, while in the same streets other young people wander about, lost, aimless, prey to addictions that only make them depressed and frustrated, unable to believe in themselves or to love themselves for who they are, or to appreciate the beauty of their lives. *Don’t abandon us!* That is the cry of those who want a better world but do not know where to start.

In this evening's Gospel, Jesus, who heals and consoles us with the living water of his Spirit, asks that from us too, from the hearts of those who believe in him, "streams of living water might flow" (cf. v. 38). Yet, are we able to quench the thirst of our brothers and sisters? While we continue to ask God for consolation, are we also able to bring consolation to others? It often happens that we free ourselves from many inner burdens, from not feeling loved or respected, for example, simply by starting to love others freely. When we are lonely and restless, Jesus urges us to go out, to give, to love. So, let us ask ourselves: what do I do for those who need me? When looking at the indigenous peoples and thinking of their history and the pain that they endured, what do I do for indigenous peoples? Do I merely listen with curiosity, horrified by what happened in the past, or do I do something concrete for them? Do I pray, meet, read, support them, and let myself be touched by their stories? Looking at my own life, if I find myself suffering, do I listen to Jesus who wants to take me beyond the confines of my impatience, who invites me to start over again, to go a step further, to love? Sometimes, a good way to help others is not immediately to give them what they ask for, but to accompany them, inviting them to love, and to give of themselves. In this way, through the good they can do for others, they will discover their own streams of living water, and the unique and precious treasure that they truly are.

Dear indigenous brothers and sisters, I have come here as a pilgrim also to say to you how precious you are to me and to the Church. I want the Church to be intertwined among us, as tightly woven as the threads of the colored bands that many of you wear. May the Lord help us to move forward in the healing process, towards an ever more healthy and renewed future. I believe that this is also the wish of your grandmothers and your grandfathers and of our grandfathers and our grandmothers. May the grandparents of Jesus, Saints Joachim and Anne, bless us on our journey.



Canada's Catholic Bishops Welcome Historic Visit from Pope Francis

July 29, 2022 The Bishops of Canada are thankful for Pope Francis' historic visit to our country. He came in fulfilment of his promise to manifest by his very presence his closeness to the Indigenous Peoples of this land. This visit represents a significant milestone on the path of healing and reconciliation.

In his various public and private addresses, he gave a heartfelt and solemn apology to Indigenous Peoples on behalf of the Catholic Church, spoke of his admiration for Indigenous culture and spirituality, expressed profound sadness at the lasting impact of colonization, acknowledged the catastrophic impact of the residential school system, and sought forgiveness for abuses, including sexual abuses, that were committed by members of the Church.

The Holy Father called on us to continue to assist survivors and families in healing from the traumas they have suffered. We have heard this call and will be reviewing an updated action plan during our National Plenary Assembly this fall. It is our hope that the relationships forged in this planning process, particularly with Indigenous partners at both the national and local levels, will grow well beyond this visit and serve as the foundation for the work that lies ahead. In conversations with our Indigenous sisters and brothers, we have heard:

- Calls for greater transparency with the preservation and disclosure of residential school records;
- Asks for support to address the issue of Indigenous artifacts housed at the Vatican Museum;
- A desire to affirm the inherent rights of Indigenous people and to clarify the historical policies and principles often referred to as the "Doctrine of Discovery";
- An invitation to walk with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities in addressing systemic injustices which continue today; and
- To financially support initiatives that advance healing and reconciliation.

This guidance will be instrumental to our next steps as we seek to walk together in a new way.

During our [2021 Plenary Assembly](#), the Canadian Bishops pledged to promote access to records, educate clergy on Indigenous cultures and spirituality, continue dialogue with Indigenous communities and engagement with the Vatican regarding artifacts, and commit \$30 million for what would eventually become an Indigenous Reconciliation Fund. We are grateful to the Indigenous partners, governments and faithful Catholics who have helped us make meaningful progress on these commitments, while recognizing that significant work lies ahead.

Reconciliation is a journey that involves all of us, and the Holy Father's presence has been a source of hope and inspiration for Canadians across the country. We would like to sincerely thank the Survivors for their bravery and openness to be a part of these encounters with the Holy Father and to the Indigenous partners for their assistance in the planning process. We are blessed to have been part of this penitential pilgrimage and conclude this week with renewed hope for walking together towards a better future.

For further information, email communications@ccc.ca