



Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

123 Nelson Rd
Saskatoon SK S7S 1H1
www.rcdos.ca

Phone: 306-242-1500
Fax: 306-244-6010
Toll free: 877-661-5005



June 16, 2021
11th Week in Ordinary Time

On the occasion of Indigenous Peoples Day - June 21, 2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:


As we prepare to celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day on Monday, June 21, I join you and all Canadians in continuing to grapple with grief, dismay and anger at the recent discovery by the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation of 215 unmarked graves at the site of the former Kamloops residential school.

Since that discovery was announced, I have listened and heard how the shock and dismay of this news is impacting and hurting so many in our community, affecting us all – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous – across our diocese and our nation. In particular, I have heard and shared the sorrow and the anguish of knowing that Catholics were among those who ran the schools established by the federal government that operated in this country from the 1870s until the late 1990s. I have again added my apology to those of other church leaders in our country:

I deeply regret and apologize that Catholics were part of this system which was designed to separate children from their families and communities and to assimilate them into a culture that featured a colonial attitude and approach. I deeply regret and apologize for the damage done to children at these schools, which for many included neglect and abuse, and I apologize for the deaths that happened at these schools, with children dying far away from mothers, fathers, grandparents and families, and I apologize to the families and the communities who have not been able to honour children's burial sites.

It is certainly true that the discovery in Kamloops is again exposing the wounds and scars from the Indian Residential School legacy which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission revealed in its multi-year process of listening to survivors – but it is also raising greater awareness of the work, findings and the recommendations of the TRC. The TRC final report of 2015 includes Calls to Action #71 to #76 dealing with “Missing Children and Burial Information,” and Calls to Action # 58 to #61 dealing with “Church Apologies and Reconciliation.”

Call to Action #58 specifically calls for Pope Francis to visit Canada to apologize to residential school survivors, their families and communities for the Roman Catholic Church's role in the spiritual, cultural, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of First

 In all things we are *rooted in Christ*,
in His desire to bring God's love to all peoples.

Nations, Inuit, and Métis children in Catholic-run residential schools. Former Saskatoon Bishop Donald Bolen (now the Archbishop of Regina) and myself are among those who were encouraging the Holy Father to come to Canada in the months and years after the TRC Report. We were also among those who were disappointed by a March 2018 announcement that Pope Francis would not be coming to Canada to apologize. As calls are renewed for a papal apology – with plans for a delegation of residential school survivors and Indigenous leaders to travel to Rome only recently announced -- I want to again state my support for a visit by the Holy Father to Canada, and I believe that an apology from Pope Francis would bring healing to many, and would help to further the journey of reconciliation in our Church and in our country.

In the midst of all the grief and anger and the increased national awareness of the TRC Calls to Action, I am extremely grateful for all those among you and across our diocese and our communities who have been walking that path of reconciliation over the past many years. This includes the Elders and leaders at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, and members of the Diocesan Council for Truth and Reconciliation (formed as a direct result of our diocese's participation in the TRC national event in Saskatoon in June 2012), as well as partners in Catholic education, Catholic colleges, and Catholic health – and many individual Catholics - Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

As a bishop and as a citizen, I have learned many things from Indigenous, Inuit and Métis peoples – in fact, they have taught me to be a better bishop and pastor. I pledge that I and our diocese will continue to walk a path of reconciliation and healing. As I wrote in 2018, this is part of our gospel call to reconciliation and solidarity. We must walk in love and friendship as sisters and brothers. I again ask us all to renew our ongoing commitment to building relationships of honour and respect, and to continue to take concrete steps on this journey of healing that must involve all of us.

To conclude, in honour of Indigenous Peoples Day, I share the following prayer:

*O God, Creator and Father of all,
with humility we your children acknowledge the relationship of all living things.*


For this we thank You, we praise You and we worship You.

We call on you, Great Mystery, the Word made Flesh – our Teacher, Prophet and Brother – to open our hearts to all our brothers and sisters, and with them to grow in the wisdom, honesty, courage and respectfulness shown in the Sacred Teachings.

Give us the vision and honesty to recognize that the we are all brothers and sisters of one human family, created and sustained by the One Creator.

As we deal with many challenges, may we never give way to fear and anger, which can be the source of division and threat amongst peoples.

*We look to how God always gives to us a remedy
for sins of prejudice and intolerance.*

 In all things we are *rooted in Christ*,
in His desire to bring God's love to all peoples.

We see in God the Creator of all things, One who always provides and is generous – even given the abuses we have heaped on one another and on the earth.

We see in the Son, Jesus Christ – the innocent Victim who pours His life blood out from the Cross for all peoples.

We see how the Holy Spirit is God's gift, alive in our world today – inspiring vision and hope that we can have the same mind and heart of God!

O Creator, show us the way to healing, forgiveness and reconciliation, and a renewed fellowship. +Amen

Yours in Christ,

+ M A Hagemoen

✠ Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen