



A Letter to the Archdiocese of Ottawa regarding Reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

As Pentecost approaches and we invite the Holy Spirit to renew the Church and the face of the earth, I invite you to reflect on the importance of Canada's First Peoples and to repent with me for how the Church has at times mistreated them. In particular, I ask that you act in solidarity with Aboriginal peoples over the offences of residential schools and join me in prayer for reconciliation.

From May 31 to June 3, Ottawa as the National Capital will host several events surrounding the release of the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). I encourage you to participate in these public events as a gesture advancing the cause of healing, principally by joining with me in the Solidarity Walk from École secondaire de l'Île (255 rue Saint Rédempteur, Gatineau), across the Portage Bridge to Ottawa City Hall. Walkers will assemble at 11am on Sunday, May 31 and the walk will begin at noon. Church bells will ring across Canada at the local equivalent of noon in Ottawa that day.

Other aspects of TRC closing events which you are invited to attend are listed on the archdiocesan website [<http://www.catholicottawa.ca/upcoming-events>].

As you may know, the Government of Canada mandated "Indian Residential Schools" from the 1840s until the last school closed in 1996. The schools were a part of a policy of cultural assimilation of Aboriginal peoples, and over the decades, much abuse took place at these schools. Most of these residential schools were operated by Catholic entities and we recognize a moral responsibility and obligation to repent of this wrongdoing. You can learn more about this dark period in the Church's history and the work of the Commission at www.trc.ca.

We face the past and sincerely ask for forgiveness. Your awareness of this history, your presence at events, and your prayers will help the Church express its genuine desire to work with Aboriginal communities to build a shared future of mutual respect.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



✠ Terrence Prendergast, S.J.
Archbishop of Ottawa