

Excerpts of Relevant Quotes from Pope Saint John Paul II and Pope Francis

1. Pope John Paul II in Huronia [1984]:

Thus the one faith is expressed in different ways. There can be no question of adulterating the word of God or of emptying the Cross of its power, but rather of Christ animating the very centre of all culture. Thus, not only is Christianity relevant to the Indian peoples, but Christ, in the members of his Body, is himself Indian.

2. Pope John Paul II in Yellowknife [1984]:

My presence in your midst today is intended to be another expression of the deep interest and solicitude which the Church wishes to show for the native peoples of the New World. In 1537, in a document entitled Pastorale Officium, my predecessor Paul III proclaimed the rights of the native peoples of those times. He affirmed their dignity, defended their freedom, asserted that they could not be enslaved or deprived of their goods or ownership.

3. Pope John Paul II in Fort Simpson [1987]:

Let me recall that, at the dawn of the Church's presence in the New World, my predecessor Pope Paul III proclaimed in 1537 the rights of the native peoples of those times. He affirmed their dignity, defended their freedom and asserted that they could not be enslaved or deprived of their goods or ownership. That has always been the Church's position (Cfr. Pauli III Pastorale Officium, die 29 maii 1537: DENZ.-SCHÖNM. 1495.

4. Pope John Paul II in Australia [1986]:

The Gospel now invites you to become, through and through, aboriginal Christians. It meets your deepest desires. You do not have to be people divided into two parts, as though an aboriginal had to borrow the faith and life of Christianity, like a hat or a pair of shoes, from someone else who owns them. Jesus calls you to accept his words and his values into your own culture. To develop in this way will make you more than ever truly aboriginal.

The old ways can draw new life and strength from the Gospel. The message of Jesus Christ can lift up your lives to new heights, reinforce all of your positive values and add many others which only the Gospel in its originality proposes. Take this Gospel into your own language and way of speaking; let its spirit penetrate your communities and determine your behavior toward each other, let it bring new strength to your stories and your ceremonies. Let the Gospel come into your hearts and renew your personal lives. The church invites you to express the living word of Jesus in ways that speak to your aboriginal minds and hearts. All over the world people worship God and read his word in their own language, and color the great signs and symbols of religion with touches of their own traditions. Why should you be different from them in this regard, why should you not be allowed the happiness of being with God and each other in aboriginal fashion?

[Excerpt from *Origins*, 16 (1986), pp. 474-477, as found on pp. 236-237, in *That The World May Believe*, by Michael Stogre, SJ, Editions Paulines, 1992].

5. Pope John Paul II's Homily of Saint Juan Diego in Mexico City [2002]

[3]... "The Guadalupe Event", as the Mexican Episcopate has pointed out, "meant the beginning of evangelization with a vitality that surpassed all expectations. Christ's message, through his Mother, took up the central elements of the indigenous culture, purified them and gave them the definitive sense of salvation" (14 May 2002, No. 8). Consequently Guadalupe and Juan Diego have a deep ecclesial and missionary meaning and are a model of perfectly inculturated evangelization.

6. Pope Francis apology in Bolivia [July 9, 2015]:

Here I wish to bring up an important issue. Some may rightly say, "When the Pope speaks of colonialism, he overlooks certain actions of the Church". I say this to you with regret: many grave sins were committed against the native peoples of America in the name of God. Like Saint John Paul II, I ask that the Church – I repeat what he said – "kneel before God and implore forgiveness for the past and present sins of her sons and daughters".[6] I would also say, and here I wish to be quite clear, as was Saint John Paul II: I humbly ask forgiveness, not only for the offenses of the Church herself, but also for crimes committed against the native peoples during the so-called conquest of America. Together with this request for forgiveness and in order to be just, I also would like us to remember the thousands of priests and bishops who strongly opposed the logic of the sword with the power of the Cross. There was sin, a great deal of it, for which we did not ask pardon. So for this, we ask forgiveness, I ask forgiveness.