



Re: Collection for the Needs of the Church in Canada
25-26 September 2021

Dear Pastors and collaborators in pastoral ministry,

In my message to you last year, I noted how the Catholic Church in Canada reached the six-month mark of a period of isolation, anxiety and weariness owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now some twelve months later, we continue to live under a different kind of “normal” than the pre-pandemic days. Though it is difficult to comprehend the full extent of the pandemic on Canadian society, we easily recognize, nevertheless, the common experiences that have touched all regions: communities in lockdown; overwhelmed healthcare providers and institutions; struggling businesses; and the mental, emotional and physical toll on families, friends and neighbours.

This past spring, the Church entered into a period of deep sorrow when results from investigations into gravesites at former Indian Residential Schools were shared. The findings rekindled trauma across this land for residential school survivors, their families and their communities. And it touched all Canadians regardless of their faith. As Bishops, we saw ever more clearly the pain and suffering of the past, and renewed our pledge to continue walking side by side with Indigenous Peoples in the present, seeking greater healing and reconciliation for the future. The CCCB has been working with Catholic leadership, Indigenous Peoples, and members of our respective communities to reflect together on the residential schools’ legacy and the intergenerational trauma that it caused. Inspired by meaningful dialogue, the CCCB has made significant progress on the path to reconciliation, including confirmation of a meeting between Pope Francis and a delegation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit survivors, knowledge keepers, and youth this December.

In addition, the CCCB has undertaken the important work to obtain greater clarity on the history of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) and the Corporation for the Catholic Entities Party to the Indian Residential School Settlement (CCEPIRSS) which has been a significant challenge. Encouragingly, Bishops from many dioceses across the country have indicated their readiness to discern possible new local and/or regional fundraising initiatives to support healing and reconciliation. The details of the particular fundraising efforts will be made known locally following further consultations.

This has been a most difficult time for all who serve the Church and wider community in various ministries. Notwithstanding the challenges, we are encouraged by the outpouring of charity, creativity and innovation to bring the Good News of Christ into our communities. Our Episcopal Conference has continued to work on many initiatives throughout the past year in the areas of family and life, liturgy and sacraments, evangelization and catechesis, responsible ministry, social justice, as well as ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue.

As we remain steadfast in responding to the reality of the pandemic upon our communities of faith and the healing and reconciliation for Indigenous Peoples, on behalf of all Canada’s Bishops I would like to thank you for your ongoing support. May the Lord to extend his grace and love upon you and your loved ones.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Richard Gagnon
Archbishop of Winnipeg and
President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

For more information: www.cccb.ca