



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

September 16, 2022

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The pastoral visit of Pope Francis to Canada to promote healing and reconciliation with our Indigenous brothers and sisters was a great blessing. In his apology to the Indigenous people of Canada at Maskwacis, Alberta, Pope Francis asked forgiveness for “the ways in which many members of the Church and religious communities co-operated, 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.” As a diocese, we have an opportunity to overcome this indifference and actively work toward healing and reconciliation. A significant aspect of this process is the Indigenous Reconciliation Fund.

The Bishops of Canada have pledged thirty million dollars to financially support Indigenous reconciliation efforts. The Diocese of St. Catharines has pledged two-hundred and fifty thousand dollars to this fund over a five-year period. I believe that it is important that we support this significant initiative.

A national charitable organization has been established to administer these funds with a Board of Directors that is comprised of Indigenous and Catholic representatives. Priority will be given to those projects that promote healing and reconciliation for communities and families; culture and language revitalization; education and community building; dialogues for promoting Indigenous spirituality and culture. These projects can take place where there is greatest need throughout the country.

In order to meet this commitment I have initiated a parish collection that will extend over the next five years. This will give individuals and families an opportunity to financially contribute to this fund if they so wish. The diocese will also draw on existing operational assets to ensure that the annual pledge is honoured. This collection will take place the Sunday after National Truth and Reconciliation Day (September 30, 2022). This year the date will be Sunday, October 2, 2022. You will be able to include your donation in the Sunday collection or online on our Diocesan Webpage.

The Diocese of St. Catharines is committed to efforts that promote healing and reconciliation with our Indigenous brothers and sisters. A significant step in that process is to support this initiative of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

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I sincerely thank you for your support and assure you of my prayers and best wishes.

With kind regards, I remain

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Gerard Bergie". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Most Reverend Gerard Bergie, D.D.
Bishop of St. Catharines