



WILLIAM T. MCGRATTAN

BISHOP *of* CALGARY

July 2, 2021

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I have asked the clergy to read this pastoral letter to you at all the Masses being celebrated this weekend.

On the night of Wednesday, June 30, more than 10 churches in Calgary were vandalized. These are churches of Catholic parishes including the Cathedral of St. Mary and of the Presbyterian and Evangelical faith communities defaced. The incidents have been reported to the Calgary Police Service and the investigation is being conducted by the Calgary Police Hate Crimes Unit. The Diocese will continue to cooperate with the police and the provincial government that have reached out to offer assistance.

These acts of vandalism and the recent burning of churches in various provinces and territories in Canada, including the attempt to burn down in our diocese Holy Trinity Church in Siksika, come in the aftermath of the discoveries of gravesites of former residential schools operated on behalf of the Canadian government by Catholic religious orders. This tragic and dark history of Canada's Indian Residential School system continues to be a deep wound that profoundly affects the Indigenous peoples and their communities.

As Canadians and members of the Catholic Church we feel this shame and guilt and are challenged to question if the Church has done enough to correct the wrong in its participation in an unjust system established by the government of Canada.

We must acknowledge this pain and suffering and at the same time find constructive ways to accept and deal with the truth of this historical reality that continues to impact our country and its peoples. Acts of vandalism are unacceptable, they are shocking and hurtful when directed at places of worship no matter what faith or religion. We as a Diocese must always affirm through faith and concrete acts of solidarity the path of truth and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

In my letter issued almost a month ago, I have personally recommitted the Diocese in expressing the apology and regret made by the Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories in 2014 to our indigenous brothers and sisters. While the call for apologies

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continue to be raised, we also hear people say that apologies are not enough in effecting truth, justice, and healing for the oppressed.

I ask the question, what is the Lord asking of us as a local church at this time? How are we to discern the work of the Spirit?

In these difficult times, I believe that we are being called to understand and acknowledge the cross that is in our midst. This cross has always been present and quietly borne by those who have suffered from the effects of a residential school system that tried to assimilate the original peoples of our land and not allow them to live and celebrate their true identity.

In this time of society's reawakening, the Spirit calls us to ease the burden of the cross which our indigenous sisters and brothers have continued to bear by finally learning to listen to the generations of stories they have to tell in order for us to learn to walk with them, and as in the words of Pope Francis, "*in dialogue, mutual respect and recognition of the rights and cultural values of all the daughters and sons of Canada*" and in this way open the path to truth, justice, and healing.

In these tumultuous times, we find ourselves humbly open to the guidance of the Spirit. In prayer we must petition the Spirit to enliven in us a consciousness and a conscience that does not forget or ignore the plight of the oppressed in our midst.

It is only through Christ crucified, the suffering victim, that we begin to see others and acknowledge the crosses they bear. In solidarity with them in their suffering, may we all grow to experience the gift of redemption and new life.

We unite ourselves in prayer with the world that the Spirit will guide us in our humble reconciliation in the wholeness of God's saving grace.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



+William T. McGrattan  
Bishop of Calgary