

## **Pastoral Letter by Archbishop Marcel Dampousse**

### **Path Towards Healing & Reconciliation**



**“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ,  
and has given us the ministry of reconciliation”  
2 Corinthians, 5:18**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I write to you today reflecting on the words shared by the Holy Father during the recent papal visit to the Lac Ste. Anne (Alberta) pilgrimage site. “In this blessed place, where harmony and peace reign, we present to you the disharmony of our experiences, the terrible effects of colonization, and the indelible pain of so many families, grandparents and children. Help us to be healed of our wounds.”<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis has suggested that “effort, care and concrete actions” are required of all of us to walk together, move forward and support the healing process.

I am following his advice on behalf of the people of the Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall by announcing a campaign to raise funds to support reconciliation efforts. We are calling this appeal “A Christ-Centred, Co-Journey Towards Healing: Ottawa-Cornwall’s Fundraising Campaign in Support of Reconciliation.”

This fundraising campaign, with a goal of \$1.2 million, is not a typical church appeal or collection. This campaign will serve as a concrete move from apology to action to show that we want to strengthen our existing connections, that we want to heal broken relationships, and develop new spaces to journey with local Indigenous groups and leaders. We also wish to discern reconciliation initiatives that will have a meaningful local impact.

We have designated the first weekend in November (5th and 6th) as a special weekend of prayer, contemplation, and giving. This weekend will offer us time to engage, reflect and look forward to opportunities to heal.

I recognize that these are challenging times, however, we anticipate that all parishes will participate in this healing and reconciliation journey. I call on each of the parishes to give generously to this campaign. In addition, I encourage each parish to engage in activities that allow the public to participate, that are appropriate to each of your communities, and that develop conversations about Indigenous reconciliation.

To walk the path of reconciliation, the Bishops of Canada have established the Indigenous Reconciliation Fund and have committed to raising \$30 million. The Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall has committed to raising \$1.2 million as its contribution to this Fund. In demonstrating his support for the Bishops' initiative, Pope Francis stated, "My presence here and the commitment of the Canadian Bishops are a testimony to our will to persevere on this path."<sup>2</sup>

"A Christ-Centred, Co-Journey Towards Healing" is a commitment to concrete action. The funds raised will provide opportunities for Indigenous brothers and sisters, youth, and community members within our Archdiocese. The goal of the Indigenous Reconciliation Fund is, in fact, for local dioceses to support meaningful reconciliation work as determined by local Indigenous groups and organizations.

The monies raised will be used in the Archdiocese to fund opportunities for healing broken relationships. The CCCB encourages initiatives that support:

- Healing and reconciliation for communities and families.
- Culture and language revitalization.
- Education and community building.
- Dialogues involving Indigenous elders, spiritual leaders, and youth with a focus on Indigenous spirituality and culture.

The Archdiocese is committing the first \$250,000 towards the total \$1.2 million goal.

Together, through effort and concrete actions, the parishes of the Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall will make a difference in the process of healing between the Church and the Indigenous brothers and sisters of this land. While financial generosity is part of it, the real work takes place when we open our hearts and show we want to walk together in this journey of healing. As Pope Francis has said: "We want to walk together, to pray together and to work together, so that the sufferings of the past can lead to a future of justice, healing and reconciliation."<sup>3</sup>

+Marcel Damphousse  
Archbishop of Ottawa-Cornwall

[1] From the Pope's blessing at the Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage site.

[2] From the text of the residential school apology from Pope Francis.

[3] From the text of the residential school apology from Pope Francis.