



Archevêque de Montréal

June 11, 2021

## Statement

### **Residential schools: In solidarity with the families and their communities**

Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family,  
you did it to me.  
Matthew 25:40

The fate of residential school children in Kamloops has shed further light on a dark episode in Canadian history, one that can leave no man or woman, believer or non-believer unmoved. Our most fundamental values are under attack when the integrity of families and the respect that is due to every human being are so utterly violated.

In the course of hearings held in Montreal before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, I have listened to heart-wrenching testimonies revealing the wounds that remain open, and I have met with men and women who have been profoundly scarred.

Indian Residential Schools shattered lives: the lives of the families and communities whose children were snatched away from them, the lives of the children themselves, who were terribly lonely, uprooted and often mistreated.

I am deeply distressed to know that, as Catholics and as Canadians, we collaborated in view of God and the world with this policy of assimilating the First Nations people under the guise of education.

Words cannot express the great sorrow I feel in the face of so much suffering. How, in real terms, can we find our way forward in the quest for justice and peace and in solidarity with these families and communities, in order to ensure that situations stemming from that colonial mentality never happen again?

To begin with, we must acknowledge the damage that we have caused; we must commit to assisting each family still seeking the truth about their little loved one who disappeared without a trace, so that they may finally be able to grieve; and we must offer our apologies for the wrongdoing that has been committed. Many individuals and institutions have already moved to do this: the Right Honourable Stephen Harper and the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, the Anglican, United and Presbyterian churches of Canada, and numerous Catholic dioceses and religious communities that were in charge of residential schools across the land.

I unite my voice with theirs to express my most sincere apology for the injustices committed against Canada's First Nations families and communities.

Moreover, along with the 250 Catholic congregations who are members of the Canadian Religious Conference, I support the federal government's Bill C-15 in its objective -- also espoused by the Holy See -- to bring our federal laws into alignment with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

I will be dedicating my best efforts to pursuing this dialogue and working towards the rebuilding of trust in a society that is free of discrimination and respectful of the dignity of every human being.

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