



September 28, 2022

On the Occasion of the Second National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

This Friday, September 30, Canadians are observing the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Last July 25, I was honoured to be at Maskwacis, Alberta, with surviving residential school students from the Diocese of Prince Albert. That encounter with Pope Francis as he began his penitential pilgrimage to these lands was an unforgettable experience and one for which many Indigenous peoples had long been hoping.

An estimated 70,000 people met with the Pope at the different stops along his journey across 5,700 kilometres: Maskwacis, Edmonton, Lac St. Anne, Québec City, St. Anne de Beaupré, and Iqaluit. Countless others followed events virtually by livestreaming and by their prayerful support.

At that powerful meeting with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples at Maskwacis, we all heard Pope Francis' strong words of apology and sorrow about the past. He also acknowledged that this encounter was also just one very important step in an ongoing path of reconciliation. At Maskwacis, Pope Francis encouraged all of us "to conduct a serious investigation into the facts of what took place in the past and to assist the survivors of the residential schools to experience healing from the traumas they suffered." This history still has lasting effects on many families and communities today in our own area.

This second National Day for Truth and Reconciliation again expresses Canada's commitment to remembering the painful legacy of the colonial past but also a determination to learn the 'lessons' of that history. We too in the Catholic Church take this day to remember and to dedicate ourselves to concrete actions for healing and reconciliation. May the ongoing reflection and study of this history be firm ground for us to build better, more respectful relationships with all.

Sincerely in Christ,

† Stephen A. Hero

✠ Most. Rev. Stephen A. Hero
Bishop of Prince Albert