



FROM THE VINEYARD

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ONTARIO ENTERED STEP 1 OF REOPENING today, and it is a blessing for our churches which will now operate at an increased capacity of 15%. It is a small beginning, but enough that churches in our Diocese will be open again for Sunday Mass. What a joy on this feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus! Step 2, which is foreseen in about three weeks, will allow for an even higher capacity. There is also an allowance for “drive-in” and other outdoor religious services, which may be utilized by some parishes. One step at a time! Pastors and parishioners are reminded to observe all the public health protocols to ensure the safest possible environment in our churches. For those not yet ready to make the return to in-person worship, a variety of broadcast options exist, including the Mass on our Diocesan You Tube channel.

A MEMORIAL OF SHOES, TEDDY BEARS AND CANDLES has been collecting on the steps of our Cathedral, part of a tribute to the 215 children whose remains were found in unmarked graves at the former Kamloops Residential School. The memorial began with a gathering organized by local Indigenous and community leaders last Friday evening. There will be a closing ceremony tonight at 7:00 p.m. Last Friday, about 200 people were in attendance, a striking sign of how deeply this revelation has impacted people and of the devastating legacy of the Residential School System – and the Church’s shameful participation in it.

JUST YESTERDAY, THE CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS announced a long-planned-for initiative to send a Delegation of Indigenous Leaders, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, residential school survivors and young people for a meeting with Pope Francis. The meeting was delayed because of COVID-19 and travel restrictions, and the events of recent weeks have made it urgent that this should happen before the end of this year. The event is foreseen to be a “meaningful encounter of dialogue and healing” between Pope Francis and a diverse group of Indigenous representatives. You may read the CCCB statement [here](#). Let us pray that this meeting may happen soon and that it may be a good step leading to further steps on the path to reconciliation.

THE KILLING OF THE AFZAAL FAMILY in London earlier this week was a tragic act of hatred apparently motivated by anti-Muslim sentiment. Today, I participated in an online memorial for the Afzaal family, put on locally by the organizers of *The Abraham Festival*. Earlier this week I reached out to the local Muslim community with expressions of grief and solidarity on behalf of Catholics in our diocese. Also this week, the Canadian Bishops released this message calling for an end to religious violence in Canada, noting the disturbing rise in attacks and slurs against both Muslims and Jews.

CATHOLICS ARE URGED TO PRAY FOR PRIESTS TODAY, which is the World Day of Prayer for Priests. The day, which coincides with the Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, was initiated by St. John Paul II in 2002, to encourage the faithful to pray for the sanctification of priests.

Fraternally, † Daniel