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Archdiocese of Vancouver



**WALKING
TOGETHER**



POPE FRANCIS VISITS CANADA

Apology paving the way to reconciliation

by: Rosette Correa

Pope Francis' visit to Canada is a highly anticipated pilgrimage that hopes to start the healing process for many Indigenous groups, some of whose elders went through the residential schools established by the Canadian government and some of which were run by Catholic religious orders and Protestant groups.

The First Nation, Métis and Inuit people will welcome Pope Francis from July 24-29 wearing their traditional dress, speaking their languages, performing their songs and dances and sharing

elements of their traditional styles of prayer.

Fr. Cristino Bouvette, who is Italian on his mother's side and Cree and Métis on his father's side, is a priest of the Archdiocese of Calgary, Alberta, and has been working with the pope's master of liturgical ceremonies, Msgr. Diego Giovanni Ravelli, to plan the Masses and prayer services for the trip. He has been named the national liturgical director for the first visit to Canada by Pope Francis. With the theme "Walking Together", the Pope is scheduled to

meet with Indigenous groups and residential school survivors at stops in and around Edmonton, Quebec City and Iqaluit. Fr. Bouvette's *kokum*, or grandmother, went to a residential school run by the United Church, when she was a little girl.

One of the events Fr. Bouvette has helped plan is Pope Francis' scheduled meeting July 25 with Indigenous people at Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples, which has been the official parish for First Nations and Métis people in Edmonton since 1993.

Speaking with Fr. Bouvette, he said that he at first did not want to take on the assignment. He recalled, "It's very overwhelming. I was sure it was going to be really complicated. I was just afraid of doing something wrong or getting it wrong." He says he is "hanging in there" and is grateful for all the prayers that are being said for him and the group who will be handling the visit.

Squamish Nation Elder and Catholic Church Deacon Rennie Nahanee of the Archdiocese of Vancouver wonders when he thinks about the possible papal visit to Canada. He says that he is very happy that the Pope is coming, but he also looks forward to what will happen after the apology. "Will there be reconciliation? And will there be healing? This is what we all hope for," he says.

"I hope that Catholics will realize that they have a lot to learn regarding their brothers and sisters of Indigenous descent, here in Canada. They need to learn. Many native people are of that faith, including myself," Deacon Nahanee shares.

He also says he doesn't blame Catholics themselves for not understanding the history of Indigenous people, however, and made note of the role the education system and federal governments have played in not teaching the colonial history of Canada.

While the Church hopes that this apology will pave the way for Catholics to understand the role religious institutions have in the management of residential schools, Catholics also hope that the federal

government also acknowledges that residential schools were established by the Canadian government and given to Catholic and Protestant churches to run with little direction and funding.

Understanding the ways in which the government of the day wanted to take the Indian out of the child, and forcibly removed culture, language, and spirituality, Deacon Nahanee wants the government and the church to invest in the revitalization of culture and language programs.

A smudging ceremony will take place during Pope Francis' visit, according to Fr. Bouvette, as part of the inculturation aspect of the faith with Indigenous peoples. "In a Catholic context, we could see the ritual of smudging as being akin to the use of certain of our sacramentals which are borne for personal, spiritual purposes, such as wearing the scapular or anointing with the oil of St. Joseph's Oratory," in Montreal, a practice initiated by St. André Bessette, Bouvette said. The cedar, sage, sweetgrass and tobacco are "gifts of the Creator and therefore, returned back to the Creator."

The visit hopes to enlighten Canadian Catholics to the beauty of the Christian faith through the eyes of the Indigenous peoples, apart from its reconciliatory purpose. With the visit of the Indigenous peoples to the Vatican in April and the pope's visit this month, the hope and prayer of Catholics in Canada and from all over the world is that this will pave the way to true healing and to a journey of faith together with our indigenous brothers and sisters as one people of God.

Save the date!

Aug 7 - Summer Music and Arts Festival,
Town Centre Park, Coquitlam, BC @ 11 am

Aug 13 - Diaconal Ordination - Dan Ramos
St. Patrick, Vancouver, BC @ 11 am

Aug 20 - Sto. Niño Shrine Enthronement
St. Anthony, of Padua, Agassiz, BC @ 4 pm