



In 1999, following the recommendation of the Special Synod of America which had just taken place, Pope John Paul II decided that December 12 would henceforth be consecrated to Our Lady of Guadalupe under the title “Mother and Evangelizer of America”. In 2002, the Bishops of Canada also decided to make it a *National Day of Prayer in Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples*.

Each year, the Canadian Catholic Indigenous Council publishes a reflection and a prayer for this day. This year, this text takes on a very special aspect for, on December 20, a delegation of former students of Indian residential schools will meet Pope Francis in Rome share with him their experiences and their hopes.

The healing of former residents and their families concerns all Canadian society, since these residential schools were part of a government policy supported by the general public. It concerns in a particular way the Catholics of Canada, since men and women religious, in the name of our common faith, were involved in this system which, despite certain good intentions, proved to be a source of oppression and assimilation. It is therefore the responsibility of all Catholics to pray for and commit to healing and reconciliation with our Indigenous peoples.

I therefore invite all members of our diocese to learn about this visit. A page on the CCCB website is dedicated to this topic. You will find there many resources: backgrounders, a list of participants, reflection videos, educational material, etc. Here is the link to this page: <https://www.cccb.ca/indigenous-peoples/indigenous-delegation-17-20-december-2021-vatican-city/>

I also invite you to read the reflection of the Canadian Catholic Indigenous Council and to take up the prayer that they have composed for December 12. You can find this text here: <https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021-National-Day-of-Prayer.pdf>

Over the next few weeks, let us often take up the words that conclude this special prayer: *Creator God, may Your Spirit bless and guide the delegation of indigenous leaders and young people as they prepare to visit the Holy Father, Pope Francis, in the near future. May this be occasion of grace and healing, and make possible a renewed journey and future. Show us the way to healing, forgiveness and reconciliation, and a renewed fellowship. +Amen*