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Dear Clergy, Religious and Faithful,

I want to offer some reflections in the wake of last week's discovery of the remains of 215 children at Kamloops Indian Residential School.

As a Church, we are deeply sorry the pain and hurt that we have caused to our Mi'kmaq people and to all Indigenous peoples and for the wounds that are torn open by the latest revelations. We wonder, what happened and how could this happen? We make assumptions but we may never have answers to those questions. Nevertheless, the answers to such questions are only a small part of a much bigger question. Why is it still happening in our world today? It seems that with this sad news, we are just awakening to a much bigger issue of justice that we struggle to address.

If we are sisters and brothers uniquely created in God's image, then how is it that anyone can ever disrespect another human being? How is it that we have less esteem for those of a different race, of a different gender, of a different nation, of a different language, or even of a different religion?

Our feast of Corpus Christi reminds us just how connected we are to Christ and to one another. Indeed we are 'One Body in this One Lord' as the hymn reminds us.

Quoting from the Vatican II Document, *Gaudium et spes* 1, the Church in the Modern World, Pope Francis reminds us "the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts". In the attempt to search for a ray of light in the midst of what we are experiencing, Pope Francis proposes in Chapter Two of his Encyclical Letter, [*Fratelli Tutti, On Fraternity and Social Friendship*](#) issued on the Vigil of St. Francis, October 3, 2020 that we reflect on the parable of the Good Samaritan.

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html

A lawyer stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' ... But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' In response to that question, Jesus told the parable story of the Good Samaritan. Jesus concluded the parable by saying, 'Go and do likewise.'" (Lk 10:25-37).

Pope Francis indicates, by his actions, the Good Samaritan showed that “the existence of each and every individual is deeply tied to that of others: life is not simply time that passes; life is a time for interactions” # 66.

The parable eloquently presents the basic decision we need to make in order to rebuild our wounded world. In the face of so much pain and suffering, our only course is to imitate the Good Samaritan # 67.

The reality is that we are all to blame when we pass by on the other side of the road and continue on our way without regard for one another. We cannot go back and change this dark history of our past, we can only move forward with greater determination not to walk on by, in our present day.

Pope Benedict XVI met with a delegation of Indigenous leaders on April 29, 2009 "and expressed sorrow and regret for the abuses suffered" in the Canadian residential schools. This apology was accepted by some and rejected by others. I could not find the link to the statement but only a quote issued by the Vatican at that time and the [link to the news report](#).

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/pope-apologizes-for-abuse-at-native-schools-1.393911>

“Given the sufferings that some indigenous children experienced in the Canadian residential school system, the Holy Father expressed his sorrow at the anguish caused by the deplorable conduct of some members of the church and he offered his sympathy and prayerful solidarity.”...“His Holiness emphasized that acts of abuse cannot be tolerated in society,” adding that the Pope was praying that the victims would heal and move forward “with renewed hope.”

In the wake of the scandals that came to light in the United States and Ireland, Pope Francis issued an apology to the world on August 20, 2018 in a powerful letter entitled

[*Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to the People of God*](#)

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2018/documents/papa-francesco_20180820_lettera-popolo-didio.html

We are all hoping to hear an apology from Pope Francis and perhaps we will hear from him. Pope Francis is not indifferent to such pain and suffering. I was moved by his words in 2018, and I am moved by these same words now and for this reason I want to share them with you.

“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it” (*1 Cor 12:26*). “Looking back to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient. Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated. The pain of the victims and their families is also our pain.

“With shame and repentance, we acknowledge as an ecclesial community that we were not where we should have been, that we did not act in a timely manner, realizing the magnitude and the gravity of the damage done to so many lives. We showed no care for the little ones; we abandoned them. ... It is essential that we, as a Church, be able to acknowledge and condemn,

with sorrow and shame, the atrocities perpetrated by consecrated persons, clerics, and all those entrusted with the mission of watching over and caring for those most vulnerable. Let us beg forgiveness for our own sins and the sins of others. An awareness of sin helps us to acknowledge the errors, the crimes and the wounds caused in the past and allows us, in the present, to be more open and committed along a journey of renewed conversion.”

Pope Francis concluded *Fratelli Tutti*, with the following prayer to the Creator.

Lord, Father of our human family,
you created all human beings equal in dignity:
pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit
and inspire in us a dream of renewed encounter,
dialogue, justice and peace.
Move us to create healthier societies
and a more dignified world,
a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war.

May our hearts be open
to all the peoples and nations of the earth.
May we recognize the goodness and beauty
that you have sown in each of us,
and thus forge bonds of unity, common projects,
and shared dreams. Amen.

Fraternally,

+ *Wayne Kirkpatrick*

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