

## **Day of Prayer for Aboriginal Peoples** **12 December 2005**

### **Letter from the Council for Reconciliation, Solidarity and Communion with Aboriginal Peoples Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops**

To the faithful in parishes and dioceses across Canada:

May the peace and grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

Today, 12 December, is the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas. In the Catholic Church of Canada, this is also the Day of Prayer for Aboriginal Peoples; we ask that your reflections and prayers be offered today for their special intentions.

Our Lady of Guadalupe has always been an important symbol of pride for Aboriginal Peoples. The persistent resolve of Saint Juan Diego, the Aboriginal who strove to fulfill the will of the Lord as it was communicated through Our Lady, is also an example of the faithfulness with which we are asked to respond to God's love today. Pope John Paul II told us that "In America, the *mestiza* face of the Virgin of Guadalupe was from the start a symbol of the inculturation of the Gospel, of which she has been the lodestar and the guide. Through her powerful intercession, the Gospel will penetrate the hearts of the men and women of America and permeate their cultures, transforming them from within" (*Ecclesia in America*, no. 70, January, 1999).

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples are in need of our prayers and solidarity. The levels of poverty among Aboriginal Peoples in our country are far higher than in the rest of the population. Other social indicators, such as those related to academic achievement, availability of adequate housing, public health and substance abuse, indicate a need for systemic change so that the Aboriginal Peoples of this land might play their rightful role. While admitting the historic role that the Church played in Aboriginal communities was not always positive, we rejoice in the presence of strong and vibrant communities where the Christian faith of the people is an inspiration. We invite the entire Catholic community to learn more about Aboriginal Peoples in their region, the work of our Council, and the Fund for Reconciliation, Solidarity and Communion with Aboriginal Peoples (<http://www.cccb.ca/Commissions.htm?CD=356>). As the Commission for the Evangelization of Peoples of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops wrote in its May 1999 pastoral letter to the Native Peoples of Canada, "We rejoice, not only because you have received Christ but also because many Catholics experience Christ anew through you."

Through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, may we be guided to do the will of God by working for social justice, healing and reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America,  
pray for us!

## **Members of the Council**

Rev. Mr. Ronald Boyer  
Kahnawake, QC  
Chairman

Most Reverend Bertrand Blanchet  
Archbishop of Rimouski

Most Reverend Albert LeGatt  
Bishop of Saskatoon

Mr. Harry Lafond  
Marcelin, SK

Ms. Shirley D. Leon  
Sardis, BC

Ms. Melody McLeod  
Yellowknife, NT

Sister Dorothy Moore, C.S.M.  
Sydney, NS

Mr. Justice Graydon Nicholas  
Fredericton, NB

Ms. Nicole O'Bomsawin  
Odanak, QC

Ms. Rosella Kinoshameg  
Wikwemikong, ON