

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops Key Messages and Reactive Q&As

27 October 2021

Key messages

- The Bishops of Canada are grateful that Pope Francis has accepted their invitation to visit Canada on a historic pilgrimage of healing and reconciliation.
- We expect this visit to build on three years of constructive dialogue between the Canadian Bishops, the Holy See, and Indigenous Peoples who have generously shared their experiences and stories about the suffering and challenges that continue to this day.
- After collectively and unequivocally apologizing for the Catholic Church's role in the residential school system this past September, discussions between the Canadian Bishops and the Holy See have continued.
- The President and past-President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops recently met in Rome with the Secretary of State of the Holy See to discuss the next steps on the reconciliation journey.
- The Pope was moved by the profound desire of the Bishops of Canada and the Indigenous Peoples for him to come to Canada on a pilgrimage of healing and reconciliation.
- Following this meeting, the Pope has accepted the invitation from the Canadian Bishops to visit Canada.
- Details will be announced by the CCCB as they are confirmed
- More immediately, the Indigenous delegation to the Vatican in December will allow the Pope to hear directly from Indigenous people on the historic and ongoing legacy of residential schools, and discuss with them their hopes for the visit in service of ongoing reconciliation

Questions and Answers

1. Will the Pope apologize on Canadian soil for the Church's role in residential school?

The Bishops of Canada have been engaged in meaningful discussions with Indigenous Peoples, especially those affected by Residential Schools, who have shared stories of the suffering and challenges that they continue to experience. We pray that Pope Francis' visit to Canada will be a significant milestone in the journey toward reconciliation and healing.

In anticipation of this visit, a planned delegation of Indigenous survivors, Elders, knowledge keepers and youth will travel to the Holy See in December, where they will have the opportunity to speak to Pope Francis about the timing, focus, and themes in preparation for his future pilgrimage to Canada. This visit will afford Pope Francis with a unique opportunity to hear directly from Indigenous Peoples, to express his heartfelt closeness, and to address the impact of colonization and the participation of the Catholic Church in the operation of the residential schools on behalf of the government, to respond to the suffering of Indigenous Peoples and the historical and ongoing trauma. We are confident that he will respond to the suffering of Indigenous Peoples of Canada with a genuine response that expresses the Church's regrets and sorrow.

2. What is the purpose of the Rome delegation if the Pope has committed to coming to Canada?

A group of Canadian bishops have been in regular conversation with Indigenous leaders – both at the local and national levels, and bilaterally with the First Nations, Métis and Inuit national organizations – to learn and discern with them how best to accompany them on the path to healing, reconciliation and a brighter future. One of the concrete outcomes of these conversations was for the CCCB to ask Pope Francis to meet with a delegation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit survivors, knowledge keepers, and youth.

The visit to Rome will provide Pope Francis with a unique opportunity to hear directly from Indigenous Peoples, express his heartfelt closeness, address the impact of colonization and the implication of the Church in the residential schools, and to learn about their hopes and desires for his visit to Canada.

3. When exactly will the Pope be in Canada? Where will he go?

The precise date of Pope Francis' visit to Canada and the details of his itinerary, as well as additional information on the Rome delegation, will be announced by the CCCB as details are confirmed.

4. Will the Canadian Bishops be paying for this mission?

At this point, we're still confirming the timing, scope and themes of Pope Francis' future visit to Canada. Having said that, there is widespread enthusiasm around the pilgrimage from the Canadian Bishops and other members of the Catholic community. Working together, we are confident in our ability to ensure the trip has the necessary funding to be successful.

5. Will this be paid for by the \$30 million that the Canadian Bishops promised to raise?

No. The Canadian Bishops jointly committed this year to raising \$30 million to support healing and reconciliation initiatives around the country, determined in consultation with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples in each region. Additional updates on the strategy, timeline, and public communication of those collective initiatives will be available this November. Determinations on costs, funding and specific plans for the papal visit will be made separately.