

## 9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost: August 7, 2022

As Jesus moves from place to place, thousands seek him, wanting to listen to his teachings and to watch him bring healing to members of the crowds. However, some who seek him are offended by what they hear and see. These people in the crowds speak to each other and begin plotting to do Jesus harm.

### Read Luke 12:32-40. What catches my attention in this gospel reading?

Do you remember those advertisements challenging people to use our imagination? Imagine travelling anywhere on the planet and staying at an all inclusive resort? Imagine listening to a live concert in a room filled with the sounds of your favourite vocalist, choral ensemble, or musicians? Imagine driving an electric sports utility vehicle? Imagine owning a 9,000 square foot home with an indoor swimming pool, a fully equipped gym, a media room with an enormous screen and the best sound system available, a huge bathroom with an amazing marble shower and jacuzzi tub, an immense kitchen with all of the appliances which a Michelin chef would enjoy. Imagine being able to pay for enough people to keep such a home clean and everyone residing within these walls comfortably served? Imagine having a lottery ticket for a \$1.334 billion prize?

Jesus states that Creator continues to be involved in creation bringing new life into being, offering each and every Human Being more than we could ever imagine or hope to receive.

Jesus challenges the crowds to use their imagination, saying, **“Make yourselves wallets or purses that don’t wear out!” Luke 12:33.** Into this amazing wallet or purse, we can place the spiritual currency which we are given each day on our life’s journey. As an example to illustrate his teaching, Jesus speaks about a master in a wealthy household who arrives home after a wedding celebration and then gets all of the household to sit down at the table where he will serve an extravagant meal. Out of gratitude, the master of the household prepares a feast for them as a reward for welcoming him home in the middle of the night. For Jesus, Creator and Great Spirit are faithful and generous in providing all that we need.

### Reread Luke 12:32-40. What is God saying to us?

What if you and I did not have clean, safe water available from taps inside our homes? What if we lived in small houses with two or three generations sharing the same space? What if our grandparents and parents had been forced to attend a school where any use of our language elicited belittling and often severe physical discipline? What if our communities had been decimated by strange diseases? What if our cultural heritage and spiritual practices were forbidden and met with more physical, emotional, and even sexual harm? What if you could no longer be called by the name given to you by the elders and healers in your community? What if you could no longer eat the foods which came from the lands and waters which had fed and nourished your ancestors for thousands of years? What if when you were allowed to return to your families and communities, communication gaps increased your sense of loneliness and disconnection? What if your extended family members and parents sought comfort through eating unhealthy foods, drinking copious amounts of alcohol, and consuming other drugs to ease their experiences of various kinds of pain?

Each of the churches who operated residential schools under the government's policies and practices of assimilation have invested a great deal of time and energy into listening to Indigenous peoples speak of their experiences in attending these residential schools and learning about the ongoing impact of these efforts to assimilate Indigenous Peoples which promoted cultural genocide and spiritual harm.

In Vatican City at the end of March and the beginning of April 2022, Pope Francis listened to members of the Indigenous delegation speak about their experiences of residential schools and the ongoing impact of colonization on their communities. Pope Francis also listened as these delegates also communicated their hopes for the future. Pope Francis watched as members of the delegation engaged him through spiritual ceremonies which evolved over thousands of years.

In July 2022, Pope Francis honoured his commitment to come to Canada, to meet with members of some Indigenous communities on their traditional lands, to listen to what these Indigenous people had to say about their experiences of residential schools, and to make his apology. During his six day penitential pilgrimage, Pope Francis engaged gatherings of Indigenous Peoples and leaders among Roman Catholics in Alberta, Quebec, and Nunavut.

On his first full day, Pope Francis went to the site of a former residential school on the traditional territories of the Ermineskin Cree Nation, the Samson Cree Nation, the Louis Bull Tribe, and the Montana First Nation who belong to the Maskwacis Tribal Council in north-central Alberta. In nehiyawewin, the Cree language, Maskwacis means "Bear Hills". Here, Pope Francis made a more comprehensive apology on this penitential pilgrimage than what he did in Rome. Thousands came to hear his teachings and to see him make his apology as a Human Being and as the head of the Roman Catholic Church. Pope Francis spoke about the evil done to Indigenous Peoples by forcing children and youth to be removed from their families and their communities in following policies and practices of assimilation. Pope Francis also acknowledged the ongoing impact of the deaths of those children and youth who did not return home from these residential schools. Pope Francis communicated his profound shame and sorrow for what happened and for the ongoing intergenerational trauma still impacting survivors, their descendants, and their communities. Pope Francis said, **"I am sorry. I ask forgiveness, in particular, for the ways in which many members of the church and of religious communities co-operated, not least through their indifference, in projects of cultural destruction and forced assimilation promoted by governments of that time, which culminated in the system of residential schools. Although Christian charity was not absent, and there are many outstanding instances of devotion and care for children, the overall effects of the policies linked to the residential schools were catastrophic. What our Christian faith tells us is that this was a disastrous error, incompatible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is painful to think of how the firm soil of values, language, and culture that made up the authentic identity of your peoples was eroded, and that you have continued to pay the price of this. In the face of this deplorable evil, the church kneels before God and implores His forgiveness for the sins of her children. I myself wish to reaffirm this, with shame and unambiguously, I humbly beg forgiveness for the evil committed by so many Christians against Indigenous Peoples."** Pope Francis then went on to stress the importance of putting in place a culture to prevent further instances of this form of evil from occurring in the future. Pope Francis acknowledged that further action also needed to be taken by the Roman Catholic Church in moving

forward towards reconciliation and healing in relationships with Indigenous Peoples. Pope Francis called for Christians and civil authorities to promote Indigenous cultures, customs, languages, and educational experiences based on the principles of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

One of the three former Commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Willie Littlechild had also worked for years as a lawyer at the United Nations to develop the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Willie Littlechild was born in the town of what is now known as Maskwacis and served as the Grand Chief of the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations as well as a Member of Parliament for this constituency. Chief Willie Littlechild also met with Pope Francis at the Vatican, shared his experiences as a residential school survivor, and communicated his dreams for the future. Following the apology made by Pope Francis, Chief Willie Littlechild came forward and placed a headdress on the Pope's head to honour this step in the journey together towards healing and reconciliation.

After Chief Littlechild placed a headdress on Pope Francis, a woman dressed in her ceremonial regalia SiPihKo from the Asiniskawe Nethowak Cree Nation stood up in the crowd and sang in Cree to a tune which sounded like the Canadian national anthem. This song is actually known among her people as **OUR VILLAGE** from an older dialect of the Language of the Four Winds. Through her tears, SiPihKo communicated her pain. She was raised away from her family and community. As a child, she was also forced to become a Roman Catholic. Her song was a song of protest, in disagreement with the presentation of a headdress placed on the head of Pope Francis. SiPihKo believes that Pope Francis has not done enough to be honoured in this way. At the end of her song, SiPihKo addressed Pope Francis, saying **"You are hereby served the spoken law. We the daughters of the Great Spirit and our tribal sovereign members cannot be forced into law or treaty that is not the Great Law. We have appointed chiefs on our territories. Govern yourselves accordingly."** SiPihKo then turned her back to Pope Francis and said in Cree, **HIY! HIY!** which means **"That is all that I have to say!"** However, many others responded with appreciation for the apology which Pope Francis made. When Pope Francis was wheeled to the shores of Lac Ste. Anne where Indigenous Roman Catholics have come seeking healing, he asked for his footpads on his wheelchair to be lifted and then put his feet on sacred soil as he prayed. Many appreciated this action, communicating his respect for this land and these waters. It was amazing to witness Pope Francis listening to an elderly Indigenous woman who is a residential school survivor and then leaning forward to kiss her hand as a demonstration of his understanding of Christian leadership. When Pope Francis stopped at the graveyard and prayed, many were moved. When Pope Francis kissed the red banner listing the names or nicknames of over 4000 children who did not return to their families or Indigenous communities, he communicated his sorrow for them and for those who continued to grieve these losses. Whether present at this historic event in Maskwacis or watching on screens in a variety of locations, members of Indigenous Peoples from coast to coast to coast experienced profound emotions. Many relived episodes of trauma experienced at residential schools and felt again their pain arising from ongoing intergenerational trauma. At the same time, some Indigenous people were opening themselves to the possibilities for a very different future.

The former Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Senator Murray Sinclair appreciated this historic apology made by Pope Francis but pointed out that Indigenous Peoples needed to hear more than genuine remorse. Justice Sinclair noted that Pope Francis missed the opportunity to acknowledge the full role of the Roman Catholic Church played in the residential school system by placing the blame on individual members of the church. Justice Sinclair maintained in a statement on the following day, **“It is important to underscore that the church was not just an agent of the state, nor simply a participant in government policy, but a co-author of the darkest chapters in the history of this land.”** Murray Sinclair refers to documentation identifying the leadership in the Roman Catholic Church as instigators in the dispossession, subjugation, and destruction of the lives of Indigenous Peoples. Similar documents can be found in the archives of every church who operated residential schools. For Murray Sinclair, the Papal Bulls which put forward the Doctrine of Discovery need to be repudiated by Pope Francis as the head of the Roman Catholic Church. At St. Anne-de-Beaupre near Quebec City where Roman Catholics go on pilgrimages to seek healing, other young Indigenous adults raised a banner prior to worship pressing Pope Francis to rescind these Papal Bulls.

Three Papal Bulls proclaim the Doctrine of Discovery. In 1452, Pope Nicholas V issued a Papal Bull known as **Dum Diversas**. This theological framework identified **“the Saracens (Muslims) and pagans and any other unbelievers”** as enemies of Christ and condemned them to perpetual slavery. This Pope authorized King Alfonso V of Portugal to subjugate these enemies of Christ. As a result, the first slave market opened in Lagos in Portugal selling Indigenous Peoples from western Africa to Europeans. In 1455, Pope Nicholas V issued a second Papal Bull known as **Romanus Pontifex**. As a result, other Christian monarchs were also authorized to seize the lands and property of the enemies of Christ as well as to enslave non-Christian and Indigenous Peoples in the rest of Africa and southeast Asia. In 1493, Pope Alexander VI issued another Papal Bull known as **Inter Caetera** which provided the Christian monarchs of Europe authority to defend the Christian faith by claiming the lands and waters along with all of the natural resources found on newly **“discovered”** parts of the world, by enslaving the Indigenous Peoples found living on these lands, and by decimating them in any way necessary to accomplish this mission. However, each of the European monarchs were told by Pope Nicholas V to respect each other’s claims to various newly **“discovered”** lands. Following the Reformation, the monarchs in England continued this practice, sending out explorers to claim **“new founde lands”** for the Crown. Based on a legal principle known by the Latin term as **“terra nullius”**, these lands were identified as **“empty”** and those who had occupied these lands were considered to be **“uncivilized”** without rights to property and in need of education in the process of assimilation since these Indigenous Peoples were believed to be **“led by their own lusts and sensuality”**. In Canada, property ownership is based on this principle of **“terra nullius”**. The Indian Act of 1876 and subsequent revisions of this Act also are based on this legal construct.

For Indigenous Peoples, Creator/Great Spirit gave these lands and waters to each Indigenous People as gifts to sustain them and their descendants for thousands of years. In appreciation of these gifts of Mother Earth, Indigenous Peoples developed knowledge, cultural heritages, and spiritual practices in order to express gratitude to Creator/Great Spirit, to be in right relationship with each other, and to care for all of creation for generations to come.

## **Reread Luke 12:32-40. What is God asking us to be and do in this gospel reading?**

Jesus points out that Creator and Great Spirit are generous and loving, giving the gifts of Creation to sustain Human Beings with all that we need day by day. God is steadfast and faithful. Creator and Great Spirit continue to bring us together with others throughout the world so that we experience ourselves as members of well-loved communities of faith. We enter into the power and authority of Creator and Great Spirit not by seeking power over other Human Beings and subjugating them as slaves but by identifying the needs of the most vulnerable and by working together so that the most vulnerable among us can live and flourish. In his teaching in today's gospel reading, Jesus challenges each and all of us to keep a wallet or purse full of spiritual currency which Creator and Great Spirit provide for us each day on our respective journeys.

It is amazing that God has faith in Human Beings. We become the ones who learn how to listen to those in pain and to do what we can do to support them in their healing journey. We open ourselves to develop our abilities to identify the presence of Creator and Great Spirit in others as well as inside ourselves. We take responsibility for the harm which we cause other people and Mother Earth. We work to stop causing harm and to prevent further harm from taking place. We also take time to celebrate what is good and right and healthy in the ways other Peoples discover life and care for the most vulnerable among us too.

On Saturday, September 24, 2022, the Parish of Lloydtown invites people of all ages and abilities to participate in the Annual Schomberg Country Run beginning at St. Mary Magdalene Anglican Church at 116 Church Street in Schomberg in the morning. At the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Schomberg Country Run in memory of the Reverend Sheilagh Ashworth, participants and sponsors raised about \$25,000 so the NGO Water First could train young Indigenous adults selected by their respective communities to improve water quality and distribution to Indigenous homes. If you want to obtain a Sponsor Sheet in order to gather commitments to support you in walking or running or bicycling in the Schomberg Country Run, please contact the Trinity Office Administrator Kelly Clarke.

On Sunday, September 25, 2022, Trinity Anglican Church in Aurora will celebrate National Truth and Reconciliation Day with a special time of worship. On this day, the Chippewas of Georgina Island also invite people to join them for the ceremonial Grand Entry for their Annual Pow Wow at 12 noon at Sutton District High School at 20798 Dalton Road in Georgina. If you have an orange shirt, please wear it in solidarity with the Chippewas of Georgina Island. It would be good to make connections with Nanockashee Jake Charles, his family, and community at this Pow Wow.

During Lent 2022, members from a number of Anglican Churches in the Newmarket/Aurora area participated in Talking Circles based on the booklet LISTENING TO INDIGENOUS VOICES: A DIALOGUE GUIDE FOR JUSTICE AND RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS published by the Jesuit Forum in 2021. On Thursday, September 29, 2022, Talking Circles to complete the remaining five chapters using a ZOOM format.

**BE GENEROUS AS CREATOR, ETERNAL WORD, AND GREAT SPIRIT ARE GENEROUS WITH US.**