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3 September 2025
Feast of St. Gregory the Great

To: The Clergy and Lay Faithful in the Diocese of London

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Land Acknowledgements in the Diocese of London

The Diocese received a formal request from our own Truth and Reconciliation Committee (T&RC) to consider the use of a “Land Acknowledgement” across the Diocese. The request included, among other things, that all Families of Parishes would use the same wording and on the same dates, whether at the celebration of the Eucharist or at meetings. Discussions ensued with various groups to reach a protocol based on what was brought forward by our T&RC.

From the T&RC, we learned that a Land Acknowledgement is not recognizing the legitimacy of land claims nor territorial claims; not meant to create division among parishioners; nor take precedence over the prayers of the Mass. On the positive side, we see that a Land Acknowledgement can be a recognition of the unique, enduring, historical and ancestral relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories; a relationship involving the land, the climate and the creatures upon it. It can be an expression of appreciation to those on whose ancestral territory we reside; and a way of honouring those who have cared for the land from ancient times, not as owners but as good stewards. It reminds us that all are connected to one another, to nature and to the Creator who fashioned us all.

A Land Acknowledgement can also be a means for expressing our desire for peace among all peoples, and a starting point in our efforts to gain a richer and deeper understanding of Indigenous history and culture. It can be an expression of our willingness to overcome the systemic injustices that have occurred in our country, and a clear statement that we wish to know the truth that will ultimately lead to reconciliation.

In light of the above, it is my expectation that Families of Parishes, our diocesan offices, and all groups under the umbrella of the Diocese will observe the following protocol:

1. On the Sundays of or preceding the following dates, a Land Acknowledgement will be read with the words of welcome before all weekend Masses begin; that is, before the opening hymn is announced:
 - i. May 5 – National Day for Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls;
 - ii. June 21 – Indigenous Peoples Day;
 - iii. September 30 – National Day of Truth and Reconciliation (Orange Shirt Day); and
 - iv. December 12 – Solemnity of Our Lady of Guadalupe.
2. At the first meeting of every commission, committee, council or group of the Diocese, coinciding with the beginning of the “pastoral year” (September to June), a land acknowledgement will be read. This will be done on an annual basis at the same time of the year, after a suitable welcome, but before the opening prayer.

3. The land acknowledgement to be used in all of the above situations will be the same across the Diocese. There are to be no alterations. The following words will be used:

Out of deep respect for those who have cared for these lands since ancient times, and those who guard and care for them still, we are committed to tread lightly on the land, respect water and all living things as gifts of the Creator, and affirm our desire for right relations with all peoples, especially the Indigenous peoples, who share our common home.

It is my intention that this policy come into effect on this day, 3 September 2025, and will remain in effect unless otherwise abrogated by me or one of my successors. Further, it is my intention that this policy will be honoured in all Families of Parishes, our diocesan offices, and all groups under the umbrella of the Diocese of London.

I am grateful for the work of our diocesan Truth and Reconciliation Committee, under the leadership of Mrs. Kathy Furlong, for bringing forward the original proposal for a Land Acknowledgement. I want to recognize particularly the work of this Committee in reaching out to the local Indigenous groups as we seek to be educated about these issues and to make our diocesan contribution, on behalf of the Catholic Church in Canada, through the Annual Truth and Reconciliation Fund collection. The Diocese is committed to contributing \$1.8-million to this fund, which we are collecting over the course of five years.

This important collection, as an expression of our diocesan family's desire to make reconciliation a reality, is helping to fund local initiatives designed by and overseen by Indigenous groups. All of the various initiatives across the country are proposed at the level of each diocese but approved by a national board of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to assure they are in keeping with the standards set out in the agreement between the bishops in Canada and national Indigenous leaders. Each diocese, therefore, supports only local initiatives in union with local Indigenous leaders. Your support of this annual collection is an important step in the whole process of reconciliation. I ask for your generosity in making your donation this year. Together, we can make "truth and reconciliation" a reality in our communities.

I hope that you have found time for some relaxation and vacation over the course of the summer. It is a wonderful time to meet family and friends, to appreciate the gift of our country's natural beauty and to reflect on the goodness of God. May God bless you!

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Rev. Ronald P. Fabbro, CSB
Bishop of London