



8 February 2023

Dear First Nation Chief and Council, Elders and all Persons of good will,

I am forwarding to you the letter that is being published and distributed today by the Catholic Bishops of Canada, to the First Nations of our common home Canada. As you can see, this letter expresses the desire of the Canadian Catholic Church through its leaders, the Bishops, to continue the spirit of Pope Francis' visit to Canada last July. The theme of the Holy Father's pilgrimage of penance was "Walking Together".

The Indigenous delegation that met Pope Francis in the Vatican last April/May, as well as the Pope's visit to Canada, were expressions of a desire for reconciliation and healing. We all admit that these two events, as powerful as they were, are only the beginning of a hoped-for new relationship between the Catholic Church and Indigenous Peoples. This calls for continuing efforts at relationship building.

It is my desire that we can strengthen these relationships in our local area. I am sending you this letter because your Nation is in the same territory as the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan. These relationships have to be built and strengthened here, locally.

In the coming months I will attempt to connect with you, so that we can better know and understand one another. I have yet to meet most of you. There have been and continue to be Catholics among your people, despite past hurts and challenges. I look forward to establishing a respectful relationship with you and your people. It may take time to do this, as there are 18 First Nations in this archdiocese, and 4 Metis Settlements. If I am slow to reach you, please feel free to call on me if you feel my presence in your community for an event will help to build this mutual relationship.

Most Rev. Gerard Pettipas, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan