



**Statement by Bishop Raymond Poisson,
Bishop of St-Jérôme-Mont-Laurier and
President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
on the Passing of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI**

Today, the Bishops of Canada join Pope Francis and all the People of God in mourning the loss of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and thank God for his life of humble and dedicated service. Benedict XVI leaves behind a great legacy of teaching that will continue to inspire us, both through the three encyclicals he wrote and through the many public speeches he delivered throughout the world as Supreme Pontiff. Pope Benedict XVI, “Cardinal Ratzinger”, served as a faithful and sure guide of Catholic doctrine in his various offices with the Holy See.

As Pope, he challenged us “to dare to love” – to make “your whole existence a joyful enterprise of giving yourselves to God and to your brothers and sisters, in imitation of the One who conquered hatred and death forever with love (cf. Rev 5:13)”, and to find peace, comfort and inspiration in the love that Christ has for each one of us.

As Canadians, we are especially grateful for his efforts to heal the wounds of our past. Benedict XVI was the first pope to meet victims of abuse by members of the clergy. He publicly acknowledged the scourge of abuse by these clergy, apologized for it, and strengthened Church processes to respond to allegations, including facilitating the prosecution or suspension from the clerical state those found responsible for abuse.

Pope Benedict XVI also invited a Canadian delegation, made up of representatives of Indigenous communities, as well as Catholic dioceses and religious communities across Canada, to a private meeting in April 2009 to discuss their experience of residential schools. During this meeting, the Pope listened to their stories and expressed his regret and sadness for the sorrow suffered by many Indigenous people in the residential school system.

A few years later, he canonized North America's first Indigenous saint, St. Kateri Tekakwitha, also known as the “Lily of the Mohawks.”

As we pray for the eternal rest of his soul, we pray that the love and hope that Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI found in the Risen Lord may continue to inspire and comfort us in the trials and tribulations of our own earthly lives. May peace be granted to him as he rests forever in communion with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

31 December 2022