**National Day of Prayer in Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples**

**We are called to Healing, Forgiveness, Reconciliation**

We, the Body of Christ, are called to live in friendship and harmony with all peoples. We are brothers and sisters of our One Creator God. God gives

everything to all of us. God creates and sustains the wonderful diversity of

peoples, cultures, races and creeds. It is a source of great sadness when our blessed diversity becomes a source of division, threat, and intolerance. Further-more, as we deal with life’s challenges and hurts, our pain can feed our fear and anger, destroying opportunities for forgiveness and healing, and preventing the journey to achieving them. Unless we take responsibility for our healing, it is difficult to move forward. Indigenous peoples have responded to this common human situation through various traditions, seeking spiritual healing. For

example, a common teaching is to seek healing by going ‘on the land.’ The land – whether a desert or wilderness – is the place where we encounter the Love of our Creator, inviting us to leave our baggage behind, and to encounter the God and Creator of Peace, Light and Hope. The “Sharing Circle” is another way in which a person who has been harmed can be welcomed and heard by the other member of the circle, in order to move from a place of brokenness and retribu-tion, to a pathway of restoration and peace. Saint John Paul II reminds us that there can be, “No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness.” And he insists: “I shall not tire of repeating this warning to those who, for one reason or another, nourish feelings of hatred, a desire for revenge or the will to destroy.”

Pope Francis reminds us that ‘forgiveness’ is not temporary or shallow. As he states in Fratelli Tutti: Forgiving does not mean forgetting… Free and heartfelt forgiveness is something noble, a reflection of God’s own infinite ability to for-give…Those who truly forgive do not forget. Instead, they…choose not to yield to the same destructive force that caused them so much suffering. They break the vicious circle; they halt the advance of the forces of destruction. They choose not to spread…the spirit of revenge that will sooner or later return to take its toll.

We often have such a hard time finding and seeing God. In response to the

question, why do you ask where God is, a Tlicho Dene woman once commented that we should look around, despite all the violence on the earth, it continues to provide for us. Our mother continues to provide for us, and gives us everything.

There is a proverbial Inuit saying: “ ‘A long time ago, in the future.’ Let the children see our history, and maybe it will help to shape the future.” Let us pray and work in such a way that our children will know that the people who

preceded them took seriously the problem of intolerance and prejudice –

especially during times of uncertainty and fear – and responded by working for a culture of caring and respect. What a gift we can give our young people – an example and memory that they can take forward to an unknown, but,

hopeful future.

Let us pray:

*O God, Creator and Father of all, with humility we your children acknowledge the relationship of all living things. For this we thank you, we praise you and we worship you. We call on you, Great Mystery, the Word made Flesh – our*

*teacher, prophet and brother – to open our hearts to all our brothers and*

*sisters, and with them to grow in the wisdom, honesty, courage and respectful-ness shown in The Sacred Teachings. Give us the vision and honesty to*

*recognize that the we are all brothers and sisters of one human family, created and sustained by the One Creator. As we deal with many challenges, may we never give way to fear and anger, which can be the source of division and threat amongst peoples. We look to how God always gives to us, as a remedy for sins of prejudice and intolerance. We see in God the Creator of all things, One who always provides and is generous – even given the abuses we have heaped on one another and on the earth. We see in the Son, Jesus Christ - the innocent Victim who pours His life blood out from the Cross for all peoples. We see how the Holy Spirit is God’s gift, alive in our world today – inspiring vision and hope that we can have the same mind and heart of God! May Your Spirit also bless and guide the delegation of indigenous leaders and young people as they prepare to visit the Holy Father, Pope Francis, in the near future. May this be occasion of grace and healing, and make possible a renewed journey and*

*future. O Creator, show us the way to healing, forgiveness and reconciliation, and a renewed fellowship. +Amen*

**Please note the postponement of the Rome delegation (due to COVID/Omicron concerns) this week.**