

2017 National Day of Prayer in Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples in Canada

Since 1980, over 1000 Indigenous women and girls have been murdered in Canada. While Indigenous women make up only 4% of Canada's female population, 16% of all women murdered in Canada between 1980 and 2012 were Indigenous. In June 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued 94 Calls to Action designed to redress the legacy left by the Indian Residential Schools. In Call to Action no. 41, the federal government is invited to launch a public inquiry into the causes of, and remedies for, the disproportionate victimization of Indigenous women and girls; "The inquiry's mandate would include: i) investigation into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls; ii) links to the intergenerational legacy of residential schools." In December 2015, the federal government of Canada announced the launch of the first phase of a public inquiry into murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls.

The overwhelming grief caused by these violent crimes can be felt throughout the community. Families of victims are looking for answers to understand what happened to their loved one, a demonstration that the public cares, and to be treated fairly. Justice and hope need to come together for each and every one of the victims and their families.

Many are coming together to share in ceremonies, uniting the families of victims, the community and the spirit of the departed to deal with their grief. One such ceremony encourages people to "leave it on the cross", offering tissues with their tears into a fire and in turn releasing their grief to the Creator. The Native Women's Association of Canada has developed a useful guide on how to hold a "**Sisters in Spirit**" walk in communities. These ceremonies can often provide a sense of closure for the victims and their families.

On this **day of prayer** (12 December 2017), we the members of the **Canadian Catholic Aboriginal Council**, wish to bring awareness to this important issue. We call on all Catholics to pray to the Creator for hope and justice for the victims and their families. We call on communities, parishes, and individuals to support the national inquiry in any way they can, by participating in ceremonies and truly experiencing them, participating in search and rescue operations, and providing spaces for people to meet. We call on individuals to pray for the victims and their families and to share any information they may have with the proper authorities.

Today we come together in prayer for the victims and their loved ones.

Let us pray.

Creator God, we acknowledge all of the gifts we have been given. We especially acknowledge the gifts of the women in our lives, our mothers, grandmothers, wives, aunts, sisters and nieces. We express our sorrow and hurt for those of our Indigenous sisters who have gone missing or have been murdered. At this time, we ask for blessings for all women, and especially for those who have experienced inexplicable violation and suffering. We ask for comfort, care, and consolation, for those family members left behind. We again acknowledge the gifts of the Spirit we have been given and we ask for these blessings in Christ.

Amen.