



25 September 2023

His Holiness Pope Francis
Vatican City

Most Holy Father,

Fraternal greetings in Jesus Christ from the members of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

With these few lines, we wish to share with you, the successor of Saint Peter, that we will be meeting this week in King City, Ontario, in the context of this Episcopal Conference's annual plenary meeting, to discuss a number of topics which are important to the life of the Church in Canada.

We desire, above all, that the yearning for fraternal unity deeply rooted in the human heart be manifest this week as a gift of Christ and his Spirit specifically to support, sustain, and strengthen our ministry as Bishops in the service of the local Church and in communion with the universal Church. In turn, we hope that our deliberations and decisions in plenary, the *communio episcoporum* (communion of Bishops), will serve to strengthen our relationship with, and accompaniment of the *communio fidelium* (communion of the faithful), thus strengthening the unity of the Church as *one* in Christ.

The unity of the People of God called to proclaim the Gospel in general, and the Synod on Synodality in particular, will be on our agenda this week. Guided by the Synod themes and the questions contained in the *Instrumentum Laboris*, we hope to help prepare the four episcopal delegates to represent the CCCB in Rome next month, as they are accompanied by the "non-episcopal" delegates whom you also appointed from Canada. Since synodality is closely related to evangelisation, insofar as the former is exercised in the service of the latter, we have invited Cardinal Luis Antonio Gokim Tagle to deliver this year's keynote address, specifically to enlighten us on the reform of the Roman Curia as set out in your Apostolic Constitution *Predicate Evangelium*.

In so many dimensions of ministry and pastoral care, the Church's life is enriched and enhanced when we approach questions synodally, that is, with the involvement and co-responsibility of all the baptised. Thus will it be this week when we hear from invited experts on the topic of palliative care, as well as when we consider the issue of preventing sexual abuse as it relates to persons in vulnerable situations. It is also true in our reconciliation efforts with Indigenous Peoples, that by walking together with them, and inviting the participation of all the People of God on the same journey, results are possible, even greater than we ever imagined.

With all that we have to consider and accomplish this week, conscious of the weight of our responsibility as successors of the Apostles (and all that this entails), and knowing that even with the best of intentions much remains out of our control, we return to your example of trust in the Lord from your Angelus message August last: “The Lord knows that the boat of our life, as well as the boat of the church, is threatened by headwinds, and that the sea on which we sail is often turbulent,” but then Peter cried out, “Lord, save me!,” expressing the certainty that the Lord can save us, and reminding us that we must call on Him and trust that He will answer.

With enormous gratitude for your witness and loving service as Saint Peter’s successor, and united with you as part of the household of faith, we ask you, Holy Father, to remember us, your loving brothers in Christ, and to grant us and all the faithful of our dioceses and eparchies your Apostolic Blessing.

Yours respectfully in Jesus Christ Our Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Raymond Poisson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

+Raymond Poisson
Bishop of Saint-Jérôme-Mont-Laurier
President of the Canadian Conference
of Catholic Bishops