



Message from Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle

Pentecost 2021

Send forth your spirit and renew the face of the Earth (Ps. 104)

Greetings and blessings on the Feast of Pentecost,

As Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle, focused on the work of reconciliation between Indigenous and all Canadians, we want to renew and celebrate the Spirit of Pentecost. Still relatively new as a coalition we are convinced of the importance of language, the challenges of unity in diversity, and the impossibility of progress in reconciliation in our Church and communities apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. It is urgent that we pray for each other in these times when, even as we see signs that the Covid 19 pandemic is lifting, the effects of isolation, of our immense vulnerability and of our profound loss and grief still weigh on our spirits individually and as communities. Surrounded by this shared suffering, but also grateful for the many acts of love and compassion that we have all witnessed, may we find the strength as the disciples did on the first Pentecost, to step out in faith to build a new way forward together.

Holy Scriptures tell us that the Church was born at such a time as this. The first disciples found themselves still huddled together, with the windows of their souls guarded and the doors to their hearts locked. Into this reluctance and uncertainty, the Holy Spirit poured as a mighty wind and as fire. The Church at Pentecost was born with a oneness that welcomes and celebrates a wide diversity of languages and cultures. As a part of the Community of Faith born in this outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle strives to be a sign of that "one faith expressed in many different ways."ⁱ

In the Acts of the Apostles, we are told of people from many nations proclaiming with amazement, "we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God." (Acts 2:11). This action of the Holy Spirit highlights the importance of speaking and hearing one's own language. Convinced of the prophetic significance of this message, the Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle continues to emphasize the importance of Indigenous languages. We strongly support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) which states "Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons".ⁱⁱ Members of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle are committed to encouraging and celebrating the revitalization of these teachings and languages.ⁱⁱⁱ

More than four centuries ago the Church was again birthed in this land among Indigenous Peoples amid crisis, conflict, and cultural diversity. Indigenous members of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle express one faith in Christ through their own cultural and spiritual diversity. The Holy Spirit through them and other Indigenous people, witnesses to the truth of the words spoken by Saint Pope John Paul II at Huronia: "There can be no question of adulterating the word of God or of emptying the Cross of its power, but rather of Christ animating the very centre of all culture. Thus, not only is Christianity relevant to the Indian people, but Christ, in the members of his Body, is himself Indian."^{iv} The Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle is committed to working to reconcile the participation of Indigenous members in the Church.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is not for the Church alone but is the Spirit renewing the whole world—the land, the people, and all living things. Moved by this Spirit and prompted by his Holiness Pope Francis we are sent to go boldly into our families and communities, into our educational, health, and social institutions, and even into the world of politics to bring the power of unity and love that are the true fruits of the presence of the Spirit of God. We are called to do the difficult work of justice and reconciliation, “to build a better kind of politics, one aimed at the service of the Common Good”.^v The Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle sees in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples a framework to guide our work toward this goal. In language that is embraced by the international community this declaration helps us to concretize the goal set before us by Pope Francis when he stated, “it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their lands are proposed.”^{vi} With the boldness that is asked of us, we members of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle pledge to do what we can to help our Catholic community to increase awareness of the significance of UNDRIP as a framework for reconciliation and just relations in Canada.^{vii}

On this great feast of Pentecost, the coming of the Spirit of God, we invite you to pray with us the ancient song of the People of Israel: “send forth your spirit and renew the face of the Earth.” (Ps. 104)

ⁱ Homily of Pope John Paul II at Martyr’s Shrine (Huronia) September 15, 1984.

ⁱⁱ United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 13.

ⁱⁱⁱ Message of Support from Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle on the occasion of the United Nations 2019 Year of Indigenous Languages.

^{iv} Homily of Pope John Paul II at Martyr’s Shrine (Huronia) September 15, 1984.

^v Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship, October 3, 2020 (#154)

^{vi} Pope Francis. Encyclical Letter Laudato si: On Care for Our Common Home, May 24, 2015 (#146)

^{vii} Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle Statement on Including UNDRIP in Canadian Law