



# The Holy See

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## APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

### to CANADA

(24 - 30 JULY 2022)

## PARTICIPATION IN THE "LAC STE. ANNE PILGRIMAGE" AND LITURGY OF THE WORD

### *HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER*

*"Lac Ste. Anne"*

*Tuesday, 26 July 2022*

**[Multimedia]**

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Dear brothers and sisters, âba-wash-did! Tansi! Oki! [Good day!]

I am very pleased to be here, a pilgrim with you and among you. In these days, and today in particular, I have been struck by the sound of drums that accompanied me wherever I went. This beating of drums seems to echo the beating of so many hearts: hearts that, over the centuries, have beat near these very waters; hearts of the many pilgrims who walked together to reach this "lake of God"! Here we can truly feel the choral heartbeat of a pilgrim people, of generations who set out on a journey towards the Lord in order to experience his work of healing. How many hearts have come here with anxious longing, weighed down by life's burdens, and found by these waters consolation and strength to carry on! Here, immersed in creation, we can also sense another beating: the maternal heartbeat of the earth. Just as the hearts of babies in the womb beat in harmony with those of their mothers, so in order to grow as people, we need to harmonize our own rhythms of life with those of creation, which gives us life. Today, then, let us return to the sources of life: to God, to our parents and, on this feast day and in the house of Saint Anne, to our grandparents, all of whom I greet with great affection.

Inspired by these vital heartbeats, we are here, silently contemplating the waters of this lake. This

too helps us to return to the *sources of faith*. Indeed, it allows us, in spirit, to visit the holy places: to imagine Jesus, who carried out much of his ministry on the shores of a lake: the Sea of Galilee. There he chose and called the Apostles, preached the Beatitudes, taught many of his parables, performed signs and healings. That lake, the heart of “Galilee of the Gentiles” (*Mt 4:15*), was nonetheless a peripheral area, a crossroads of commerce where various peoples converged, making the region one of different religions and customs. Geographically and culturally, it was the farthest place from the religious purity concentrated in Jerusalem, around the Temple. So we can think of that lake, the Sea of Galilee, as a place teeming with diversity: fishermen and tax collectors, centurions and slaves, Pharisees and the poor, men and women from a wide variety of origins and social backgrounds, all coming together on its shores. It was precisely there that Jesus preached the kingdom of God: not to a select religious congregation, but to various peoples who then, as today, flocked from different places; in a natural theatre such as this, he preached and welcomed everyone. God chose that richly diverse context to announce to the world something revolutionary: for example, “Turn the other cheek, love your enemies, live as brothers and sisters so as to be children of God, the Father who makes his sun shine on both good and bad and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous” (cf. *Mt 5:38-48*). This lake, with all its diversity, thus became the site of an unprecedented *proclamation of fraternity*; not a revolution bringing death and injury in its wake, but a revolution of love. Here, on the shores of this lake, the sound of drums, spanning the centuries and uniting different peoples, brings us back to that time. It reminds us that fraternity is genuine if it unites those who are far apart, that the message of unity that heaven sends down to earth does not fear differences, but invites us to fellowship, a communion of differences, in order to start afresh together, because we are all pilgrims on a journey.

Dear brothers and sisters, pilgrims to these waters, the word of God can help us realize what we can draw from them. The prophet Ezekiel tells us twice that the waters flowing the Temple both “give life” and “heal” God’s people (cf. *Ezek 47:8-9*).

*The waters give life.* I think of the many dear grandmothers who are here with us: your hearts are springs from which the living water of faith flowed, and with it you quenched the thirst of your children and grandchildren. I am struck by the vital role of women in indigenous communities: they occupy a prominent place as blessed sources not only of physical but also of spiritual life. In thinking of your *kokum*, I also remember my own grandmother. From her, I first received the message of faith and learned that the Gospel is communicated through loving care and the wisdom of life. Faith rarely comes from reading a book alone in a corner; instead, it spreads within families, transmitted in the language of mothers, in the sweetly lyrical accents of grandmothers. It warms my heart to see so many grandparents and great-grandparents here. Thank you! I thank you and would like to say to all those families with elderly people at home: you possess a treasure! Guard this source of life within your homes: please take care of it, as a precious legacy to be loved and cherished.

The prophet also said that, in addition to giving life, *the waters heal*. This too brings us back to the

shores of the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus “cured many who were sick with various diseases” (Mk 1:34). When sunset came, “they brought to him all who were sick” (v. 32). This evening, let us picture ourselves around the lake with Jesus, as he draws near, bends down and with patience, compassion and tenderness, heals many who are sick in body or spirit: the possessed, the paralyzed, the blind and lepers, but also the broken-hearted and discouraged, the lost and hurting. Jesus came then, and he still comes now, to care for us, and to console and heal our lonely and wearied human family. To everyone, and to us as well, he extends the same invitation: “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28). Or, as he says in the passage we heard this evening, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and drink” (Jn 7:37-38).

Brothers and sisters, all of us need the *healing* that comes from Jesus, the physician of souls and bodies. Lord, as the people on the shores of the Sea of Galilee were not afraid to cry out to you with their needs, so we come to you, Lord, this evening, with whatever pain we bear within us. We bring to you our weariness and our struggles, the wounds of the violence suffered by our indigenous brothers and sisters. In this blessed place, where harmony and peace reign, we present to you the disharmony of our experiences, the terrible effects of colonization, the indelible pain of so many families, grandparents and children. Lord, help us to be healed of our wounds. We know, Lord, that this requires effort, care and concrete actions on our part; but we also know that we cannot do this alone. We rely on you and on the intercession of your mother and your grandmother.

Yes, Lord, we entrust ourselves to the intercession of your mother and your grandmother, because mothers and grandmothers help to heal the wounds of our hearts. At the dramatic time of the conquest, Our Lady of Guadalupe transmitted the true faith to the indigenous people, speaking their own language and clothed in their own garments, without violence or imposition. Shortly afterwards, with the arrival of printing, the first grammar books and catechisms were produced in indigenous languages. How much good was done in this regard by those missionaries who, as authentic evangelizers, preserved indigenous languages and cultures in many parts of the world! In Canada, this “maternal inculturation” took place through Saint Anne, combining the beauty of indigenous traditions and faith, and fashioning them with the wisdom of a grandmother, who is a mother twice over. The Church too is a woman, a mother. In fact, there has never been a time in her history when the faith was not passed on in mother tongues, passed on by mothers and grandmothers. Yet, part of the painful legacy we are now confronting stems from the fact that indigenous grandmothers were prevented from passing on the faith in their own language and culture. That loss was certainly tragic, but your presence here is a testimony of resilience and a fresh start, of pilgrimage towards healing, of a heart open to God who heals the life of communities. All of us, as Church, now need healing: healing from the temptation of closing in on ourselves, of defending the institution rather than seeking the truth, of preferring worldly power to serving the Gospel. Dear brothers and sisters, with God’s help, let us help one another in offering our own contribution to the building up of a Mother Church pleasing to him: capable of embracing

each of her sons and daughters; a Church that is open to all and speaks to everyone; a Church that is against no one, and encounters everyone.

The crowds at the Sea of Galilee who thronged around Jesus were made up for the most part of ordinary, simple people, who brought to him their own needs and hurts. If we want to care for and heal the life of our communities, we need to start with the poor and most marginalized. Too often, we allow ourselves to be guided by the interests of a few who are comfortable. We need to look more to the peripheries and listen to the cry of the least of our brothers and sisters. We need to learn how to listen to the pain of those who, in our crowded and depersonalized cities, often silently cry out: “Don’t abandon us!” It is also the plea of the elderly who risk dying alone at home or in a nursing home. Of patients who, in place of affection, are administered death. It is the muffled plea of young people who are more interrogated than listened to, who delegate their freedom to a cell phone, while in the same streets other young people wander about, lost, aimless, prey to addictions that only make them depressed and frustrated, unable to believe in themselves or to love themselves for who they are, or to appreciate the beauty of their lives. *Don’t abandon us!* That is the cry of those who want a better world but do not know where to start.

In this evening’s Gospel, Jesus, who heals and consoles us with the living water of his Spirit, asks that from us too, from the hearts of those who believe in him, “streams of living water might flow” (cf. v. 38). Yet, are we able to quench the thirst of our brothers and sisters? While we continue to ask God for consolation, are we also able to bring consolation to others? It often happens that we free ourselves from many inner burdens, from not feeling loved or respected, for example, simply by starting to love others freely. When we are lonely and restless, Jesus urges us to go out, to give, to love. So, let us ask ourselves: what do I do for those who need me? When looking at the indigenous peoples and thinking of their history and the pain that they endured, what do I do for indigenous peoples? Do I merely listen with curiosity, horrified by what happened in the past, or do I do something concrete for them? Do I pray, meet, read, support them, and let myself be touched by their stories? Looking at my own life, if I find myself suffering, do I listen to Jesus who wants to take me beyond the confines of my impatience, who invites me to start over again, to go a step further, to love? Sometimes, a good way to help others is not immediately to give them what they ask for, but to accompany them, inviting them to love, and to give of themselves. In this way, through the good they can do for others, they will discover their own streams of living water, and the unique and precious treasure that they truly are.

Dear indigenous brothers and sisters, I have come here as a pilgrim also to say to you how precious you are to me and to the Church. I want the Church to be intertwined among us, as tightly woven as the threads of the colored bands that many of you wear. May the Lord help us to move forward in the healing process, towards an ever more healthy and renewed future. I believe that this is also the wish of your grandmothers and your grandfathers and of our grandfathers and our grandmothers. May the grandparents of Jesus, Saints Joachim and Anne, bless us on our journey.

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