

President's Report

October 3, 2022

It's been a quick 3 weeks since we last met. My time has been spent with meetings, and some more meetings, helping out with funerals and organizing our Red Sand Project. As you have heard, we have had 4 funerals in 2 weeks and hopefully won't be having to do another one for another week or so. Though there were not a lot of people during the Red Sand Prayer service, I do believe we still got the message across by the 350 information sheets that were passed out. Thank you to all who helped out with this project.

On the 17th of September I attended the Annual Diocesan Fall Executive meeting. The event was well attended with 117 in attendance. The new Diocesan Spiritual Advisor is Fr. Simmy Joseph and was installed at the morning mass. Fr. Simmy gave a brief history of the steps of him becoming a priest. His last posting before coming to Canada from India, was in a remote area of India where there was no power or water. So yes, he has enjoyed his time so far in Canada. He is currently posted with the Lacombe and Ponoka churches.

Fr. Simmy is very excited about being our Diocesan Spiritual Leader. He feels that the CWL should be visible at every stage of a person's life. From receiving a gift when born, being there to support them in their school years, and as we witnessed tonight, when they get married, visiting the sick or those in palliative care. He has noticed that the CWL does not have a lot of younger members and has encouraged all of us to try in recruiting our younger ladies of our parishes to join this wonderful organization.

Marion Haggarty-France spoke on her journey of Walking Together – the Papal Visit. Marion was one of many who helped in making the visit happen. They received confirmation on May 13th that the Pope was coming on July 24th. Normally a papal visit takes from 18 months to 2 years to prepare for, they had just over 2 months. It took many hours and many volunteers but it was done. Of course, security was a big issue and as normal Pope Francis sometimes had his own agenda, like greeting those outside of Sacred Heart church by the barrier fence. She shared some of her pictures from the trip as she was able to go down east as well and follow the complete tour during the Pope's visit.

The second speaker was Candida Shepherd from Sacred Heart of the First People's church. She spoke about Truth and Reconciliation. I had not realized that the commission for the TRC started in 2007 and created the 94 Calls to Action. She talked about the Pope's visit and how it meant so much for the elders as they felt their voices were being heard. We now have to build relationships with the Indigenous, honor their history and not hide what has happened in the past.

This past Friday I also attended the Walk with the Elders in Stony Plain. It was a very successful turn out as they were expecting about 50 people to show up and there must have been at least over 150. Unfortunately, did not hear what "Phillip" said prior to the walk, but at the end, when we came to the community centre, he spoke of being respectful of our neighbours, of taking care of each other and respecting Mother earth. Overall, I do believe that the organizing committee was very please with the turn out they had.

I too was surprised by the amount of people that came to support the National day for Truth and Reconciliation. It showed that people are now starting to be more open to learning about the Indigenous people and support them on their healing journey.

With that said, it also reinforced, how little I know of their culture, their way of life. So I asked myself: What are my prejudices? Am I painting every Indigenous person with the same paint brush? How can I change my ideas of what I think I know to be true? If I think this way, how many more are like me? How do I start to learn about their culture, their history? Most important how can I help with their healing process?

I do not have answers to all of these questions, but I am willing to do the work required to be a more informed person. The question I have for you is, are you ready to learn as well? Let us all discern on how can we make a difference or perhaps change our way of thinking.

"I really feel for the tress this time of year. At least when I went through the "the change" nothing fell off."