



## St. Ignatius Parish, Winnipeg

August 6, 2021

Happy Summer– and after our long though not very cold winter, we can't really complain about the heat. But we can pray for more rain! The farmers and ranchers are in desperate need and so is much of western continent– even for drinking water!

Despite the COVID restrictions June finished off in our school with a virtual closing Mass, with staff and students attending in their classrooms. Organized by Mrs. Jeannine Pistawka, a splendid Graduation took place on the 'green' with individual families and graduates. All was compiled into a video for all to see an entire ceremony!

Although First Communion and Reconciliation for our school was postponed until the fall, with protocol restrictions lifted somewhat, joyfully 27 young people were confirmed Monday and Tuesday evenings, July 26th and 27th.

The new protocols also mean that our church can welcome many more to public Masses. It is a pleasure to see parishioners I haven't seen over this past year! Thanks to our Knights for again taking up the responsibility of keeping our protocols of screening, sanitizing at the Church door!

For this entire year we honour St. Joseph, patron of Canada and the Church. To keep this in mind we have been often using a prayer addressed to St Joseph at the conclusion of our Prayers of the Faithful. The Archdiocese has dedicated a beautiful summer publication, ["On our Way", to St Joseph](#).

Our church grounds are looking spiffy this summer thanks to the efforts of Connor Magee. Work continues at the back of the church interior converting the old confessionals into Reconciliation rooms, convenient especially for those of us with mobility challenges and in the Tech area in the church. These projects have been a little delayed because of concerns about vandalism. Following the media reports about unmarked graves, the small shoes display at the front steps was tampered with, chalk messages appeared on the front sidewalk, plasticized signs on the front doors of the church were burned, and garbage was strewn on the side church steps. Chris Janes, Connor Magee, and Abusi (David) Folayan kept an overnight watch over our church for a few nights until a company was hired to keep watch from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. for two weeks. Within the next three weeks or so out- door surveillance cameras will be in place to monitor our church. Many thanks to our Knights for their generous donations and support that helped offset these expenses.

So many have been telling me of their frustration and anxiety in responding to the media coverage concerning the unmarked graves of those buried on the grounds of residential schools. I too experience profound sadness, confusion, and shame and am distraught about how to respond.

I have come to realize that the most important thing to do is to listen and learn with an openness to seek the truth. At the moment only part of the story is being carried in the main stream, and it is negative, especially towards the Church. I accept and acknowledge that the Church was complicit in carrying out the racist policies of the government concerning Indigenous peoples. It was simply wrong to remove children from their families and disallow them the use of their language and cultural and spiritual practices at residential schools. Horrendous acts were revealed in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, and the reporting about the unmarked graves emphasizes the horror of government policies.

What is not reported, are the efforts of the many to try and address the [The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#). For example, there is a joint committee of St Ignatius Parish and St Kateri Parish which has worked diligently over the past three years to address the TRC Report and build relationships. As well, St Ignatius Church has been active for many years in ministries which support the Indigenous community such as Rossbrook House and the Immaculate Conception Drop-In Centre. Gonzaga Middle School and Future Hope Inc. are local projects supported by the Jesuits of Canada and the Jesuits of Winnipeg.

We are called to be compassionate. We are called "to suffer with" those who suffer and to work for reconciliation. One thing is clear, it is important for us to LISTEN and LEARN about the injustices imposed on our Indigenous sisters and brothers. A good first step is to read the [Truth and Reconciliation Report](#) and its recommendations. [Reconciliation Canada](#) is a good source of information and resources to help us learn about reconciliation and what we can do as individuals.

Archbishop Don Bolen from the Archdiocese of Regina offers hopeful words and suggestions in our work as the church and individually in the spirit of reconciliation. [Click Here](#)  
You may also want to read the Canadian Jesuit FAQ on the Reconciliation between the Jesuits of Canada and Indigenous Peoples by [clicking here](#)

I believe we share a great grief with our Indigenous sisters and brothers at this time but we also experience much frustration because of a lack of information and understanding. I believe Niigaan Sinclair presents a clear path in [this quick video presentation](#). We certainly have our work cut out for us at St Ignatius Parish in trying to remedy that and to do what we can in promoting Reconciliation. Jan Hasiuk is currently working with others from St. Kateri to develop an ongoing means of building relationship and understanding as we move forward to implement some of the recommendations of the TRC Calls to Action. I do know that the most effective reconciliation is to look deep inside ourselves; that will take courage and the willingness to learn. There is no quick fix, but I also know we will be guided by the Holy Spirit.

I will be away from the parish August 8 - 29 for my annual 8 day retreat and some holiday time. Please keep me in your prayers. Fr. Con and Fr. John will be home to care for the parish.

A heartfelt thanks to all of you for your continued support of our community. We are strong in Faith and prayer. Blessings on all of you.

R. Frank Obrigewitsch, S.J.



P.S. Do not expect the kind of spirituality and expertise of the monks found in the following video in your monks at St. Ignatius! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7s8GiLrJvc>