

**EMERGING STRONGER FROM THE PANDEMIC:
A MESSAGE FROM LEADERS OF CANADA'S RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES**

Montreal, October 14, 2020 – The second wave of COVID-19 is spreading and forcing us to make new efforts of solidarity. Like you, we have gone through the last months of the pandemic facing the same challenges as you have been facing. The outbreaks in our infirmaries and residences have caused us to lose sisters and brothers, without our being able to accompany and support them as we would have liked. Confinement has been painful for many of us, as it has been for so many elderly people who are isolated and deprived of family visits. How can we remain resilient in the weeks and months ahead? We hope, with these words, to offer some wisdom and faith so that solidarity might be within our reach.

Thanksgivings

The majority of the members in our religious communities are elderly. Confinement has forced us to restrict our activities. What still remains most valuable to us is the way we look at the world and our neighbourhoods. Global and local perspectives that embrace the greatness and poverty of our humanity. We have felt more than ever this call to protect our earth by recognizing that we are all interdependent.

With tired but valiant arms, sisters began to make masks and gowns for nurses. [Brothers went to help](#) their infected and dying elders. Sisters lobbied for front-line workers to be recognized so that they would be accepted as permanent residents of Canada. Others circulated petitions for a just ecological recovery and for renewed international solidarity. And everyone prayed to the God of Life so that the shadow of death would recede.

Strengthened by their heritage at the forefront of their educational, hospital and social missions, religious communities still have the future of our society at heart. In this time of thanksgiving, we want to say thank you and to bless (in the word's etymological sense: "to praise, worship") those who continue to devote themselves to the service of our collective and personal well-being, often at the risk of their own health:

- Thank you to the nurses who are working countless hours to alleviate the physical or psychological suffering of patients;

- Thank you to the teachers, who are navigating through uncertainty while trying to provide stability and a horizon of hope for pupils and students;
- Thank you to the community organizations that have maintained essential services for people living in situations of poverty, homelessness or violence;
- Thank you to the artists who have touched our hearts and souls with their creativity, often virtually, despite the upheaval in their projects;
- Thank you to the small and local business people that were able to quickly adjust their products to new needs while trying to keep their staff employed;
- Thank you to our leaders who are managing an unprecedented crisis situation in spite of criticism and misinformation, in order to stay the course to ensure our collective health;
- Thank you to the journalists and media that are working for transparency and to inform the community;
- Thank you, too, to the religious leaders and committed believers who are seeking to adapt the spaces and means of community celebration so that faith can give meaning to this difficult passage.

Emerging stronger from the pandemic

To the families exhausted by reconciling telework and the changing modalities of studies, to the young people who are courageously taking on jobs in essential businesses, we express our confidence in you. We pray for your perseverance in the sacrifices that you have to make.

Our collective patience is starting to wear thin in the face of this second wave. Many are losing hope and mental health is becoming a critical issue. We are concerned about movements that believe in conspiracies or incite civil disobedience of basic health measures. Yet we are at a crucial juncture for the future. Our resilience will be built up if we all raise our heads to look in the same direction with hope and wisdom.

We, women and men religious, wish to humbly affirm our solidarity and offer our prayers to our society. In the midst of the mourning that we are collectively experiencing, a seed of transformation is emerging. The values that we put at the heart of our choices will shape the society we want to become. Our hope is in God, and we wish everyone to anchor their resilience in a source of love and meaning.

We are precious to one another. Let's take care of ourselves and one another! As St. Francis of Assisi said, we are [all sisters and brothers](#) on this earth!

About CRC

The Canadian Religious Conference is a network that brings together the leaders of 250 Catholic congregations of women and men religious in Canada. The CRC's mission is to encourage its

members to live fully their vocation in following Christ and to support them in their prophetic witness to justice and peace in a Canadian context.

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Information:

Jean-Michel Bigou

Executive Assistant, Communications

Telephone: 514 259-0856 Ext. 105

E-mail: communications@crc-canada.org

Website: www.crc-canada.org