CONFÉRENCE DES ÉVÊQUES CATHOLIQUES DU CANADA
CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

21 September 2026

His Holiness Pope Leo XIV
Vatican City

Most Holy Father,

As the Bishops of Canada gather in Plenary Assembly, we ask you to remember us in your prayers that through attentive listening, fraternal exchange, and common discernment, we may be docile to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We entrust these days to the Lord, asking for the wisdom and courage needed to serve faithfully the people and particular Churches committed to our pastoral care.

Our Plenary Assembly is, above all, an occasion to consider how we may more faithfully fulfil the pastoral mission entrusted to us and how our Episcopal Conference can better assist us in responding to the needs of the Church in Canada. This year has particular significance: in the triennial cycle of this Conference, we will appoint the chairs and members of our Episcopal Commissions and Standing Committees and discern the pastoral priorities that will guide their work. Your recent catechesis on *Gaudium et Spes* is especially timely for this task, reminding us that the Church cannot remain a passive spectator before the rapid changes of our time, but must listen attentively, discern the signs of the times, and interpret them in the light of the Gospel (Leo XIV, General Audience, 2 September 2026; Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 4).

Our reflections on synodality will be enriched by the Most Reverend Lizardo Estrada Herrera, O.S.A., Secretary General of CELAM, who will share with us the experience of its implementation in Latin America. In his keynote address, he will offer a concrete point of reference, as we consider how synodality could be further strengthened in the Church in Canada. We will also undertake, in a form new to our recent Plenary practice, a facilitated synodal-style reflection on the Conference itself. Beginning with the strengths we have received and wish to preserve, we will consider where its structures and services might be strengthened or adjusted so as to support more effectively our ministry as Bishops and our common responsibilities, with due attention to mission, subsidiarity, and the proper role of an Episcopal Conference (cf. John Paul II, *Apostolos Suos*, nos. 18–19).

This work of discernment takes place amid grave uncertainty in the world. War and violence in Iran, the continuing suffering in Gaza, instability throughout the Middle East, and other tensions and conflicts throughout the world exact a terrible human cost and have repercussions felt by families and peoples far beyond the region. In Canada, too, economic uncertainty and new strains in international relations are affecting workers, families, and communities. We are grateful for your persistent appeal that dialogue and diplomacy regain their proper place, that political life

2500 promenade Don Reid Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K1H 2J2 • Tél./Tel. : (613) 241-9461 • Télécopier / Fax : (613) 241-9048
Site internet / Internet : https://www.cccb.ca • Courrier électonique / E-mail : cecc@cccb.ca

be directed toward the common good, and that peace be sought through justice rather than the logic of force (Leo XIV, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps*, 9 January 2026).

A concern for the common good also directs our attention to urgent questions within Canada where the dignity of the human person is not respected. The prospect that eligibility for euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide ("MAID") could soon be extended to persons whose sole underlying medical condition is mental illness gives renewed urgency to our witness to the inviolable dignity of every human life. We continue to call for greater access to mental-health treatment, accompaniment, and community support, and we pray that the loneliness, marginalization, and stigmatization that deepen suffering might be overcome by a genuine solidarity capable of offering hope (Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 55; *Address to the Diplomatic Corps*, 9 January 2026).

Questions centred on human dignity are also being recast by rapid technological change. The development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents an urgent pastoral and social responsibility, one with particular resonance in Canada, which has played a significant role in the development of modern AI. It is noteworthy that some of those closest to this technological transformation have themselves warned of the risks posed by increasingly autonomous systems and of the need to ensure that they remain subject to meaningful human responsibility and control. As our Conference continues to engage these questions in Canadian society and with public authorities, we will look to the orientation you have offered in *Magnifica Humanitas*: that human intelligence, conscience, and freedom must guide technological innovation and responsibly determine its use and limits, so that technology remains at the service of the human person, the dignity of work, and the common good (see Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, nos. 97, 102–3, 111, 150–52).

Our concern for human dignity must also find concrete expression in pastoral accompaniment. Our newly established national Service for Migrant and Refugee Ministry (Human Mobility) seeks to strengthen connections among dioceses, eparchies, parishes, and Catholic organizations in order to support the Church's welcome and accompaniment of migrants, refugees, and families on the move, encouraged by your call to make welcome a stable pastoral practice in Christian communities (Leo XIV, *Message for the 112th World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, 2026).

Our response to these signs of the times, however, cannot be merely programmatic: it must be rooted in the life of grace and in the prayer of the Church. The sacred liturgy will therefore have a privileged place in our Assembly. A reflection offered by Monsignor Enda Murphy of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments will help us consider anew the liturgy as the source and summit of the Church's life and ministry. In English-speaking Canada, we also anticipate the forthcoming reprint of the English translation of the third typical edition of the *Roman Missal*, incorporating more recently approved celebrations. These moments remind us that the Church's prayer both expresses and forms her faith—*lex orandi, lex credendi*—and that from the sacred liturgy the Church continually receives the life she is called to bear into the world (Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 10; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1124; Leo XIV, *General Audience*, 26 August 2026).

Liturgical prayer will take a particularly solemn form during a Holy Hour with Vespers for victims and survivors of sexual abuse. Responding to the universal initiative first proposed by a survivor to the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors and subsequently taken up by Pope Francis, we will listen to the testimony of those wounded within the Church and remain before the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. We will pray for truth and justice, healing and hope, and repentance and conversion, renewing our resolve to accompany those who have been harmed and faithfully to safeguard those entrusted to our care (Francis, *Address to the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors*, 21 September 2017; Leo XIV, *Address to the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors*, 16 March 2026).

Most Holy Father, in all of this, we do not wish merely to catalogue the anxieties of our time, but to discern within them the call of the Lord and to respond with the hope of the Gospel. We ask again for your prayers, that the Holy Spirit may grant us wisdom and courage, deepen our communion, and make our Conference ever more effective in supporting its members and the particular Churches entrusted to their pastoral care.

With sentiments of profound filial devotion, we respectfully ask your Apostolic Blessing upon the Bishops gathered in Plenary Assembly and upon all the faithful of Canada, assuring you in turn of our prayers.

Yours sincerely in Christ,



The Most Rev. Pierre Goudreault
Bishop of Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pocatière
President
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops