



Greeting Address given by  
His Eminence  
**Gérald Cyprien Cardinal Lacroix**  
*Archbishop of Québec*  
*Primate of Canada*

to

**HIS HOLINESS POPE TAWADROS II**  
**PRIMATE AND PATRIARCH OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH**

Québec City, September 22, 2014

Your Holiness Pope Tawadros II,  
Très Vénérable Frère en Notre Seigneur Jésus Christ,

It is a great honour, and with a feeling of overwhelming pride, that I greet you for the first time in our beautiful city of Québec. We are not accustomed to welcoming Popes in this land ! By the grace of God, you are the second, since your visit takes place precisely thirty years after the historic voyage of Saint Pope John-Paul II, an outstanding event we commemorated with prayers of thanksgiving only a few days ago.

Moreover, your visit takes place a few days away from the celebration of the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Notre-Dame de Québec Parish, the Cathedral Basilica we are so proud of and therefore, of the first catholic parish in America north of the Spanish colonies. This event took place on September 15, 1664, and we consider it as one of the most important legacies of the first, and now recently canonized bishop of Québec, Saint François de Laval.

This may seem to you as a very recent anniversary since your own Church reaches as far back as to the Apostle Saint Mark, almost two thousand years ago ! Yes, Your Holiness, our Church is quite young when compared to yours. But we agree on the fact that in both our communities, we are all young children of God, brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ, as we

are taught by Saint Paul « *For whoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God...For you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father)!* » (Rom 8, 14-15).

These commemorations are not mere reminders of faraway events. They operate as sources of knowledge and teaching which help us understand our present times. They stimulate the energy necessary to tackle the many obstacles that still deviate our paths from the establishment of peace, justice and progress. But mostly, they make us understand the importance of spreading the Word in a way that will be relevant for every person of this time so that their life will be radiant with the happiness of knowing they are the beloved children of God.

The Christian faith was originally spread on this huge North American continent by a handful of bold and enlightened men and women who dedicated their whole lives to building a new world where the rules of peace, justice, freedom and faith would be the cornerstones of a new kind of society for all generations to come. They dreamed of a new world, and worked passionately to make it come true !

From the very beginning of the process of colonisation, a tremendous project of evangelization was put into place with the arrival of the Récollet priests in 1615, and the Jesuits some ten years later. Very soon after, Bishop François de Laval set up a Seminary in order to form priests and train them to respond to the expectations of the settlers. I am proud to recall that the Séminaire de Québec was established 351 years ago in Québec City, on March 26, 1663. The anniversary was also greeted with wide celebrations and testimonies of the awesome work of all those who have been part of this institution for generations and for the progress they have made occur for our people today.

One of the prominent figures of our history who dedicated her life to establishing and expanding the Church in North America was the Ursuline nun Sainte Marie de l'Incarnation who answered the Lord's call to leave France to « *...go to Canada and build a house to Jesus and Mary* ». She set up a school, the first in this uncultured land, that educated both native and European children. Alongside this remarkable woman, another great figure was striving to establish a hospital for the sick and the needy. Blessed Mother Marie Catherine de Saint-Augustin, together with her Augustinian Hospital Sisters, set up the Hôtel-Dieu in this city which still pursues the noble mission of healing the sick and needy people in this twenty-first century. Their bodily remains, along with those of Saint Bishop François de Laval, rest in our city of Québec consequently nicknamed « The city of Saints ». They are the noble foundations of our Church and we owe them gratitude for the rewards we reap today. They act as a GPS, these Global Positioning Systems we can't hardly do without to make sure we are faring on the right path towards our destinations.

One of the most important challenges we must take up now, as in many countries of the Western world, is the indifference of people towards God, their apparent ignorance of the beauty of living in Christ. It is a pity since our forefathers worked passionately to express their faith. They were very proud to refer to themselves as Christians. Unfortunately, mostly due to a tremendous tidal wave of secularization that unfurled over many parts of our modern world, we must now undertake a mission of new evangelization. Happily, in our country at least, this proc-

ess, however arduous, occurs on a background of democratic rule, of social peace and religious tolerance. This is so different to the challenges you must face up to in your own land, and consequently in the holy ministry you were entrusted with, in November 2012, when you were chosen as the 118<sup>th</sup> Primate and Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church and Pope of the See of Saint Mark.

We have witnessed the bravery you have demonstrated in denouncing abject acts of violence committed, especially in Egypt, and in many countries of Africa and of the Middle East, against Christians. Our brethren are victims of intolerance and brutality, unfortunately accomplished in the name of God by zealots who have mistaken the true message of Islam. The consequences lead to violence, fear, bloodshed, destruction of Christian buildings and churches, social cleavages and, unfortunately for many, to the urge to flee their homes, tear themselves away from their families and their homeland.

I wish to assure you, Your Holiness, that you do not stand alone against such infamy. My prayers and those of many of my brothers and sisters who sincerely show compassion for your people, constantly rise up to the Lord to implore His mercy and for Him to grant peace and justice to these lands. As I have previously expressed to your people here in Quebec, our parish communities have prayed often for you and will continue to do so.

I also wish to stress the warm feelings and the conciliatory words spoken by our beloved Pope Francis. They flow from his heart in a beautiful letter which was sent to you on the first anniversary of your historic encounter with him in Rome, one year ago. They express the ecumenical communion that bonds together two important Christian leaders. They also sound loud with compassion and earnest concern.

*« Our encounter strengthened those spiritual bonds which unite the See of Peter and the See of Mark... With trust in the Lord's grace, we continue to strive through dialogue in charity and truth to overcome the remaining obstacles to full communion... I assure Your Holiness of my unceasing prayer for all Christians throughout the Middle East. May the Lord inspire those who are responsible for the destiny of peoples in these lands, a firm resolve to seek just and peaceful solutions respectful of the rights of all. »* (From the Vatican, 5 May 2014).

Your Holiness, Très Vénérable Frère Tawadros, merci, thank you from the bottom of my heart for having blessed us with your visit. You have called us to our duty of friendship, solidarity and prayer. May I assure you that, in return, we call upon the Lord to bless you and your brethren on their way to a life of peace and joy in the love of Christ and of his beloved Mother.

You may have noticed on your way from the airport that all motor vehicles in Québec bear the provincial motto « Je me souviens » meaning « I remember ». Be assured, Your Holiness, that your visit among us will be remembered as it will also be cherished for long.

Bon voyage au Québec et au Canada et meilleurs vœux de succès dans la suite de votre mission apostolique !