



**Press release**  
**For immediate release**

### **Bishops of Canada Gather for 2023 Annual Plenary Assembly**

**September 19, 2023, Ottawa** - Next week (25-28 September 2023), the Plenary Assembly of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCBC) will gather in King City, Ontario, for its annual meeting, bringing together 79 Bishops to deliberate, discern, and discuss the life of the Church in Canada, including:

- **Palliative Care and the Expansion of the Eligibility Criteria for MAiD** –The Standing Committee for Family and Life, chaired by Archbishop Christian Lépine, has organized a panel discussion to help CCCBC members engage with the urgency of promoting palliative care. Dr. Hazel Markwell (in person) and Father Thomas de Gabory, O.P. (online), will join Archbishop Lépine for this presentation.
- **Development and Peace – Caritas Canada (DPCC)** – The episcopal members serving on DPCC’s National Council will provide an update on the DPCC’s activities since the last meeting of the Plenary Assembly. They will be joined by the DPCC’s President, Mrs. Brenda Arakaza, and Executive Director, Mr. Carl Héту.
- **Standing Committee for Responsible Ministry and the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons – Presentation on “safeguarding persons in vulnerable situations”** – Over the past year, the Standing Committee for Responsible Ministry has been studying the issue of vulnerable persons: how to define the vulnerability, how to reduce risks, what behaviors to encourage on the part of persons in ministry? Father Stephan Kappler, Ph.D., and Dr. Karlijn Demasure, Ph.D., will lead a bilingual PPT presentation on vulnerable persons. Mr. Richard Frechette will deliver a presentation on the Code of Conduct of the Archdiocese of St. Boniface.
- **XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops** - The bishop delegates representing the episcopal conference in Canada, selected by the Plenary Assembly in 2022 and confirmed by Pope Francis are:
  - The Most Rev. William McGrattan (English Sector delegate)
  - The Most Rev. J. Michael Miller, C.S.B. (English Sector delegate)
  - The Most Rev. Marc Pelchat (French Sector delegate)
  - The Most Rev. Raymond Poisson (French Sector delegate).

The “non-bishop” members of the Synod from Canada, who were chosen by Pope Francis, are:

- M. Sami Aoun, nominee of the Maronite, Melkite and Syriac Catholic Churches in Canada
- Ms. Catherine Clifford, Archdiocese of Gatineau
- Sister Chantal Desmarais, s.c.s.m., Diocese of Joliette
- Ms. Linda Staudt, Diocese of London.

In order to help prepare the episcopal delegates, Bishops present at the Plenary Assembly meeting will reflect on one of the three dimensions of synodality (communion, participation, and mission), guided by the questions in the *Instrumentum Laboris* and the results of the “national” and “continental” stages of the Synod process.

- **Reports** from numerous sub-committees engaged in areas of pastoral care and responsibility including liturgy, catechesis and evangelization.

The Keynote address this year will be given (virtually) by Cardinal Luis Antonio Gokim Tagle, who will speak on the reform of the Roman Curia in the context of evangelization, according to Pope Francis' Apostolic Constitution *Predicate Evangelium*.

As is customary, the Apostolic Nuncio to Canada, Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, will address the Bishops in his capacity as the Pope's representative in Canada.

At this year's meeting, in addition to the customary **formal press conference**, which will be held at the close of the Plenary Assembly meeting on **Thursday, September 28 at 2 p.m. ET**, there will be **two additional informal press briefings** on **25 and 26 September at 5:30 p.m. ET**.

These two **informal press briefings** will focus on specially chosen topics from the day's agenda. Both the informal press briefings and the formal press conference will be held in a **hybrid format** to accommodate the accredited journalists who cannot be present in person.

### **What is the Meeting of the Plenary Assembly?**

A meeting of the Plenary Assembly is a solemn and momentous event in the life of the Church in Canada because it gathers together all the members of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB), who total 79 Bishops of the Latin and Eastern Churches across Canada. Decisions taken by the Plenary Assembly are the highest instance of authority within the CCCC and represent the unity of action of all the Bishops on a national level. Convoked at least once a year, the Plenary Assembly considers a broad range of topics related to the evangelizing mission of the episcopal conference, including reports and questions from the Episcopal Commissions and other advisory bodies of the Conference. In addition, the agenda, which is set by the Permanent Council, may include discussions on special topics. Every two years, elections are held for positions within the Conference.

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