

*Denise Thomas, Minister for the Sixties Scoop with the Manitoba Métis Federation, grew up on a farm in the municipality of St. Laurent, and now resides in Grand Marais, Manitoba. Raised a Catholic, her relationship with the Catholic Church has continued throughout her life. Today, she's a trustee for St. Theresa of the Child Jesus in the Parish of Grand Marais. From her time traveling to different communities and regions in the early 2000s, delivering the Métis Survivor Wellness Program, she has heard many stories from residential and day school survivors. As a delegate travelling to Rome to meet with His Holiness, Denise prays for the right words to share her message and represent her friends and community members who were harmed by the residential and day school system.*

*Statement to His Holiness by Minister Denise Thomas:*

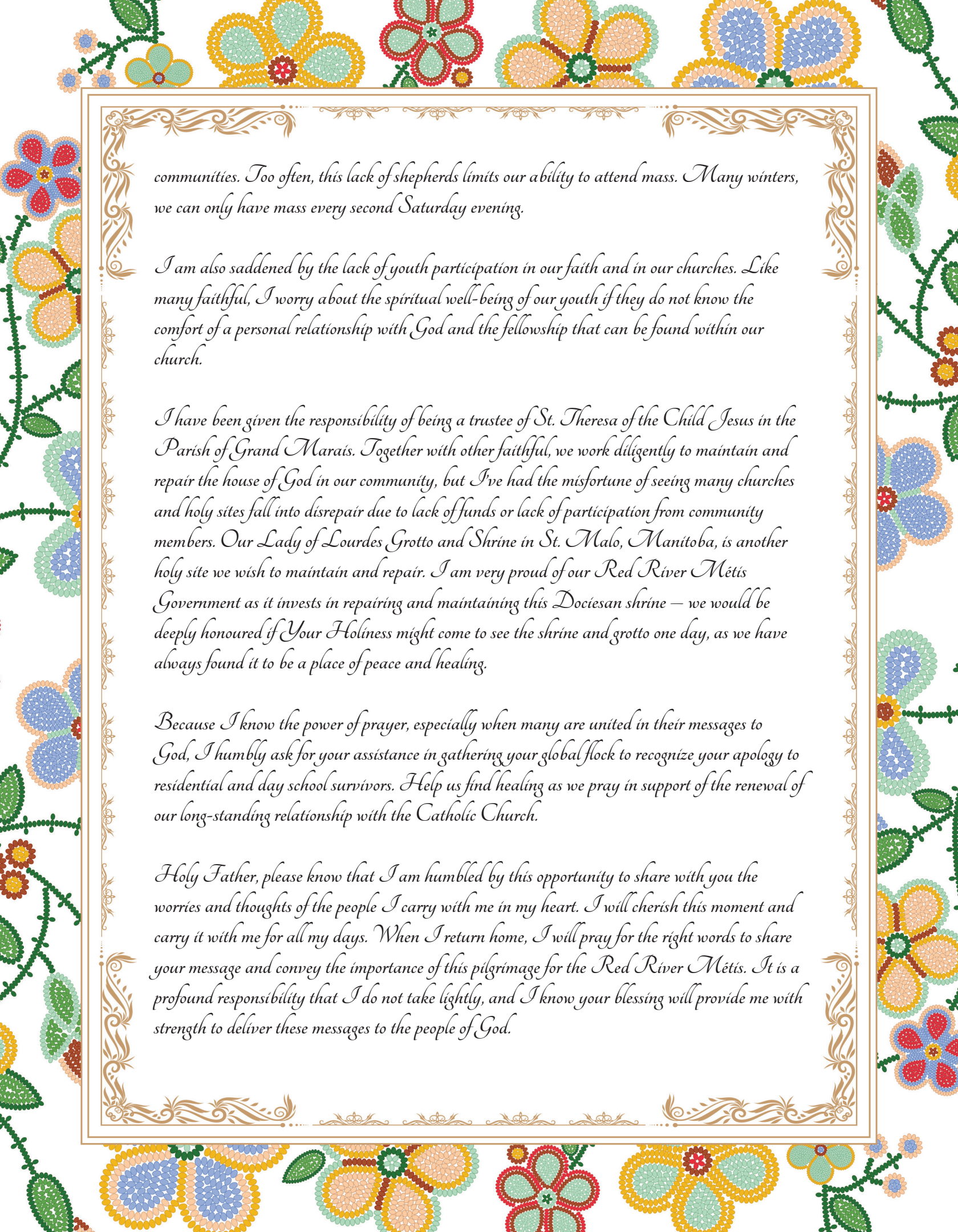
*It is with deep faith and gratitude that I am here today. I represent my parents, who raised me to be a devout Catholic and to say my rosary every night. I particularly wish to honour my mother, who I know was saved from a life-threatening childbirth experience through the power of prayer. I represent my siblings, who share my faith — this includes my sister, who is losing her memory but has never forgotten to say her rosary before bed.*

*I represent my prayer circle, who pray with me almost every night as we extend our spiritual support to members of our community who are suffering or challenged by health issues. I also represent the many people who faced their hurt and pain and shared their stories with me when I led consultations with residential and day school survivors.*

*I carry my family, my community, and my Nation in my heart and mind as I speak to you today, Holy Father.*

*I would like to share with you the desire of your flock in my community that we travel together down a road that renews and revitalizes the role of the Catholic Church in our communities. The lack of available priests means we must share the support of one shepherd amongst several*





*communities. Too often, this lack of shepherds limits our ability to attend mass. Many winters, we can only have mass every second Saturday evening.*

*I am also saddened by the lack of youth participation in our faith and in our churches. Like many faithful, I worry about the spiritual well-being of our youth if they do not know the comfort of a personal relationship with God and the fellowship that can be found within our church.*

*I have been given the responsibility of being a trustee of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus in the Parish of Grand Marais. Together with other faithful, we work diligently to maintain and repair the house of God in our community, but I've had the misfortune of seeing many churches and holy sites fall into disrepair due to lack of funds or lack of participation from community members. Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto and Shrine in St. Malo, Manitoba, is another holy site we wish to maintain and repair. I am very proud of our Red River Métis Government as it invests in repairing and maintaining this Dociesan shrine — we would be deeply honoured if Your Holiness might come to see the shrine and grotto one day, as we have always found it to be a place of peace and healing.*

*Because I know the power of prayer, especially when many are united in their messages to God, I humbly ask for your assistance in gathering your global flock to recognize your apology to residential and day school survivors. Help us find healing as we pray in support of the renewal of our long-standing relationship with the Catholic Church.*

*Holy Father, please know that I am humbled by this opportunity to share with you the worries and thoughts of the people I carry with me in my heart. I will cherish this moment and carry it with me for all my days. When I return home, I will pray for the right words to share your message and convey the importance of this pilgrimage for the Red River Métis. It is a profound responsibility that I do not take lightly, and I know your blessing will provide me with strength to deliver these messages to the people of God.*