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## Priest returns to Maskwacis for historic papal apology

BY Johnnie Bachusky, MVP Staff

**OLDS** – Father Nilo Macapinlac is on a sacred homecoming to Maskwacis this week to witness Pope Francis' historic communion with thousands of Indigenous citizens – a 'penitential' pilgrimage to offer God's embrace of his people who endured longstanding abuse throughout the Catholic church's residential school system.

"He has the conviction and sincerity to walk together on the path of truth, healing and reconciliation with our Indigenous people of Canada, especially here in Alberta," said Macapinlac of the papal visit on July 25.

He was the parish priest at Maskwacis' Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Catholic Church from 2013 to 2019. Since July 19, 2019, the 49-year-old Macapinlac has been the parish priest at Olds' St. Stephen's Catholic Church.

"For me it's a reunion, a homecoming, a hallmark of history of healing," said Macapinlac, who is originally from the Philippines. "It means so much for me as a shepherd because I was able to touch the wounds of these people. I was able to hear their groanings and their sufferings and their crying.

"This is God's comfort," he added. "This is God's loving embrace, and (I'm) praying this will continue and will make a change, and make a troubled world a better place to live in, like in Maskwacis where the people are in dire need of this."

Macapinlac's attachment to Maskwacis remains deep. In June, he welcomed a visit from Randy Ermineskin, the chief of the Ermineskin First Nation, one of four First Nations in and around Maskwacis, and the site of Pope Francis' July 25 visit.

"For six years I was enriched by a lot of experiences, a lot of depression and a lot of needs for healing," said Macapinlac. "I was totally immersed with them... and they are coming back to see me there."

*Continued on page 7*



Father Nilo Macapinlac, parish priest at Olds' St. Stephen's Catholic Church, looks over the many stuffed animals inside an Every Life Matters display case that were donated by Olds residents last year following the discovery of forgotten Indigenous graves at Kamloops, B.C.

Johnnie Bachusky/MVP Staff