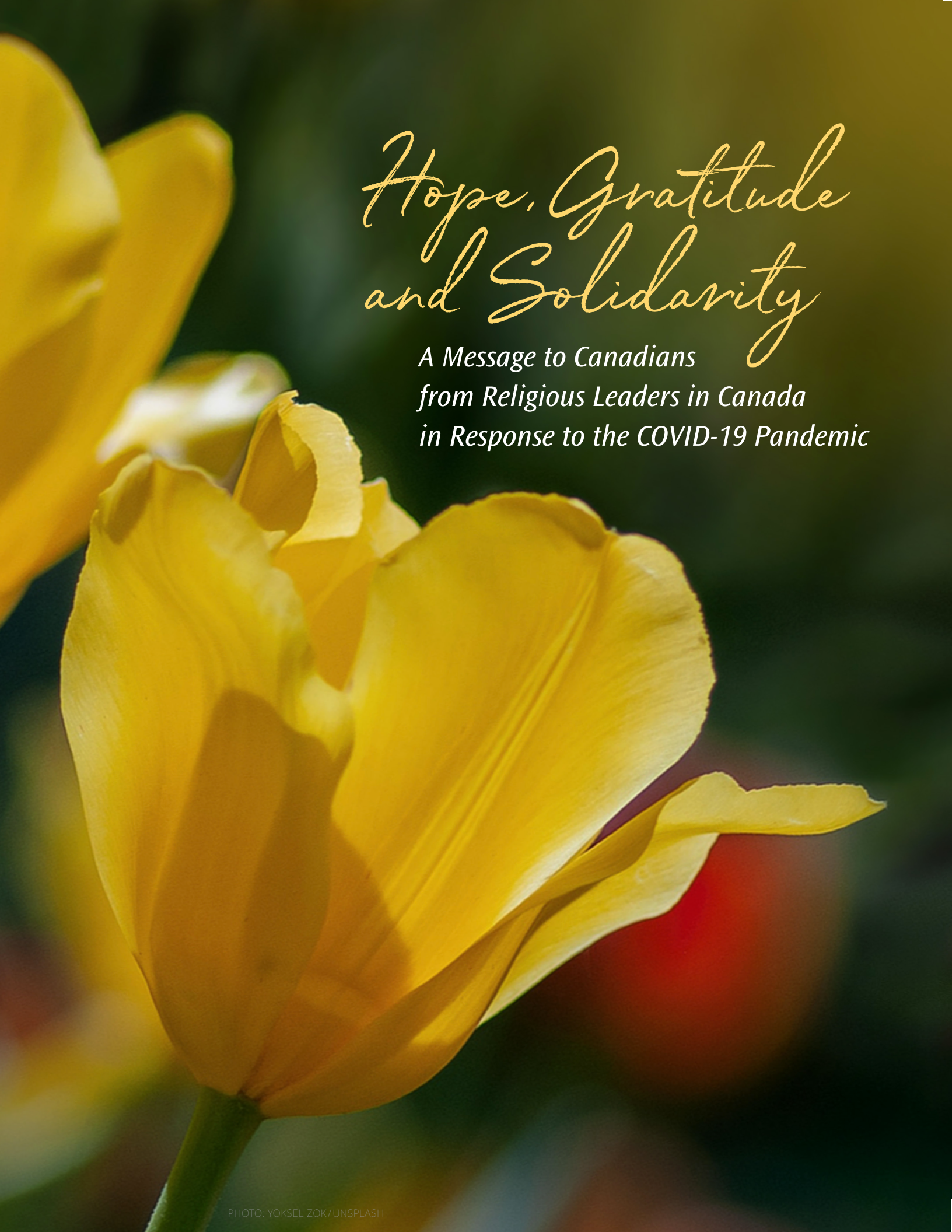
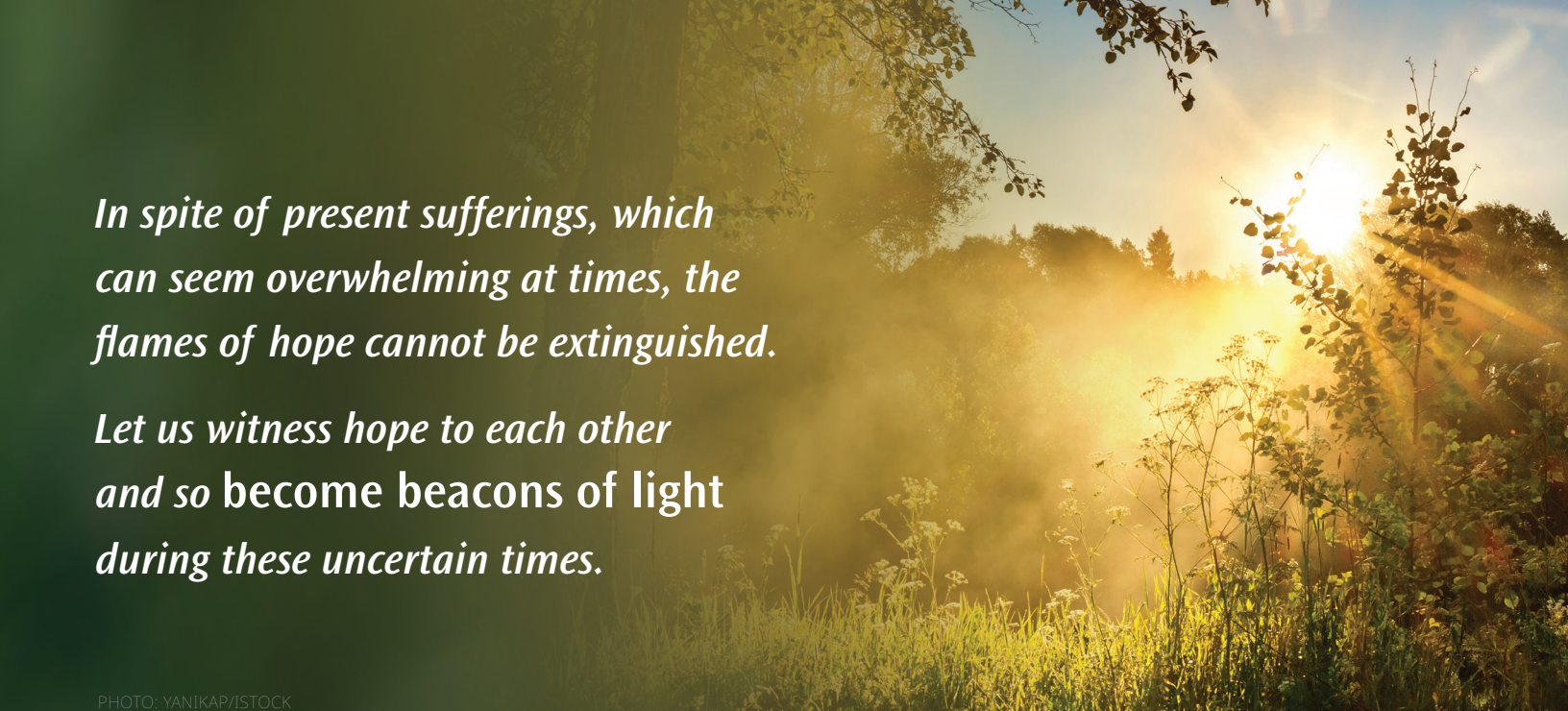




Hope, Gratitude and Solidarity

*A Message to Canadians
from Religious Leaders in Canada
in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic*



In spite of present sufferings, which can seem overwhelming at times, the flames of hope cannot be extinguished.

Let us witness hope to each other and so become beacons of light during these uncertain times.

PHOTO: YANIKAP/ISTOCK

Canadians are experiencing the devastating impact of COVID-19 in what has become a rapidly evolving crisis. Understandably, this crisis has brought about feelings of anxiety, apprehension and fear. Critical elements of our daily lives are being thrown into uncertainty: health, employment, financial security, recreational activities, as well as our ability to gather as worshipping communities. In view of these difficulties, we as religious leaders wish to bring forward a message of hope, gratitude and solidarity to all people who call Canada home.

A Message of Hope

We draw hope from a variety of sources: from our religious beliefs, the love of our families, the relationships with friends and the work we do. Each of these, and others as well, provides rays of hope to our daily lives. Likewise, hope provides courage to face the burdens we bear and the ability to look onwards toward the dawning of a new day. In spite of present sufferings, which can seem overwhelming at times, the flames of hope cannot be extinguished. Love, which gives life its fullest meaning, continues to seek out the common good in spite of individual difficulties. Acts of kindness

can bring us closer in spirit, despite the requirements of physical distancing. Let us witness hope to each other and so become beacons of light during these uncertain times.

Canada has gone through several difficult and painful experiences in its history. When current and former generations have responded to these challenges, many were empowered by unwavering hope as well as human and spiritual resilience. For religious believers, this hope takes on a special

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and unique dimension. It assures us of the caring embrace of the Creator, a sacred relationship sustained by prayer, and which flows into our human relationships whereby we care for one another and bear each other's burden. Yet, hope brings for everyone a promise of renewal, even in the midst of human suffering. Hope assures us that this affliction too shall pass.



PHOTO: LISEGAGNE/ISTOCK

As religious leaders, we raise our collective voices to highlight the necessity for greater attention to the needs of the homeless, the incarcerated, the elderly and those already suffering from social isolation.

A Message of Gratitude

During this time of crisis, we as religious leaders wish to offer words of appreciation and gratitude. Health care professionals are providing unfailing and dedicated service under stressful and difficult circumstances. They provide for us a powerful witness of care, expertise and service in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.



PHOTO: FOROUZANI/UPSTOCK

There is also the increased risk of exposure to infection along with other hardships being experienced by so many others. For instance, while the rest of society rightly heeds the precautions of physical distancing, many remain at work in grocery stores, pharmacies and factories. Students, the middle-aged, and those close to retirement are fulfilling a variety of essential front-line jobs in the supply chain, ensuring

that stores remain open, shelves remain stocked, and goods are delivered so that others can have food, medicines and other essentials for their families and communities. We express a deep appreciation and gratitude for these workers.

A Message of Solidarity

We urge all people in Canada to listen and follow attentively the directions of our public health officials and government leaders. We, as religious leaders, pledge to lead by example. We all must act together in confronting this virus. While everyone is vulnerable during this crisis, let us not forget those in our society who, prior to COVID-19, were already vulnerable to health and social ailments. As religious leaders, we raise our collective voices to highlight the necessity for greater attention to the needs of



PHOTO: ROCKETCLIPS/ADOBESTOCK



PHOTO: SDOMINICK/ISTOCK

This is a time for human solidarity. *We all need to pull together.*

neighbour. This includes care and solidarity for the global community who face this crisis with far fewer resources than those accessible to Canada. This is a time for us to draw closer to God.

Religion and spirituality can indeed contribute to building people up, to providing a sense of meaning, inner strength, new horizons and openness of hearts. As religious leaders, we wish to emphasize, especially in times like these, the power and importance of prayer. We earnestly pray for healing, for the continued efforts to relieve human suffering, and for perseverance throughout these challenging times. As history records these moments for our country's future,

the homeless, the incarcerated, the elderly and those already suffering from social isolation. We remember too those people, especially women and children who face abuse and violence, who are not safe at home and may suffer additional abuse and violence as stress increases. We must never overlook or exclude these groups from our planning, preparedness and response to this pandemic. We are particularly mindful of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, including isolated Northern communities, who were already facing pre-existing challenges and for whom the COVID-19 outbreak could prove singularly devastating. Likewise, we need to remember the needs and vulnerabilities of the many refugees and migrant workers who have come to Canada seeking safety and security.

Charitable organizations in Canada will face greater challenges during this time of crisis and will need greater assistance from governments so as to continue their vital work. This is a time for human solidarity. We all need to pull together. It is essential to carry out the practical requirements to limit the spread of this virus. It is also important to maintain a posture of attentive caring towards our

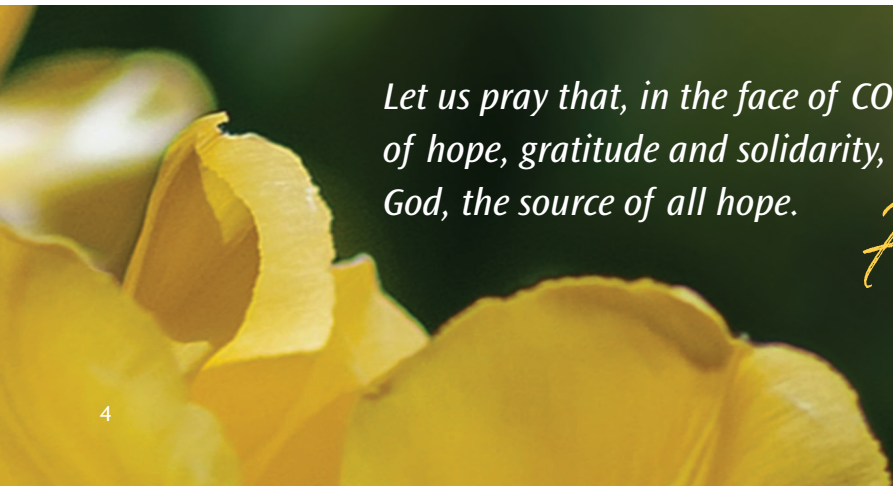


PHOTO: KIEERPIX/SHUTTERSTOCK

let us pray that, in the face of COVID-19, we respond with an abundance of hope, gratitude and solidarity, trusting in the loving and ever merciful God, the source of all hope. ☸

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*Hope, Gratitude
and Solidarity*



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