

(Text for the Thurible Bulletin for 26 January)

## PRESENTATION OF CEREMONIAL BLANKET TO ST. JAMES' CHURCH

Presenting blankets to individuals or organisations is an important First Nations' ceremonial tradition. At High Mass today, in place of the sermon, Kelvin Bee, who is an Elder of the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nation and a Trustee of St. James' Parish, will present to the church a ceremonial blanket that he has made with the help of family and parishioners. First Nations Elders from Vancouver Island will also be present. By presenting this blanket Kelvin and his colleagues wish to recognize the role that St. James' Church has played in the process of reconciliation and the help that it has given to survivors of the residential schools – of which Kelvin is one. The recommendations of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission set a framework for the process of reconciliation, in which the feast that St. James' hosted in 2017 was a major milestone.

The blanket is made of Melton cloth, which is traditionally made of wool and woven in a twill form. It is thick, with a felt-like smooth surface. Green is a favourite colour of the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nation and the red edging represents the cedar door posts of the houses. Some 500 buttons, sewn on by Kelvin with the help of the clergy and parishioners, are a 'new' aspect of the blanket tradition (only 250 years old). The abalone shells are from Bella Bella and the panel of patterned fabric recalls the dresses worn by the older generation. Symbols sewn onto the blanket include First Nations imagery from Saskatchewan to northern Vancouver Island. The corners of the blanket include patterns of trees (or arrows) pointing outwards to symbolise the progress of reconciliation. In the centre of the blanket is the scallop shell of St. James.