



Reclaiming Our Roots

Reflection and Prayer On the Story of Catholic Education In Ontario

**An Adult Faith Process
for use with School Staffs, Administrators,
School Councils and Students**

"In an age which seems more fearful
of the future, we're directed to
give an account of the hope
that is within us."

This Moment of Promise, pg. 15

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DEDICATION

**To the people and communities of faith
who have kept the spirit and story
of Catholic education alive,
we offer our thanks.**

You have inspired us.

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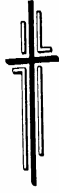
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Eastern Ontario Catholic Curriculum Cooperative

Working Together for Catholic Education

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Preface:

Greetings and salutations;

Margaret J. Weatley, in her book **A Simpler Way**, has one of the most alluring comments about community that I have read in a long time. She writes:

As we act together in the world, our organization's identity grows and evolves. It helps periodically to question what we have become. Do we still love this organization? Do we each organize our work from the same-shared sense of what is significant? Such an inquiry helps return us to the energy and passion of that space of early vision. We return to that place where our community took form, where we first became inspired by what we could be in the world. From remembering that place, together we can decide what we want to be now.

It is my pleasure to introduce you to this adult faith formation resource. It has been designed with two purposes in mind. First, it is an instrument to be used by your school community which will introduce them to the history of Catholic education in the province of Ontario. Secondly, it seeks to reinforce this experience through participation in a series of prayer services. These focus around several themes which are indicative of the major elements of our Catholic educational history and, indeed, all of our "life stories". This resource also can be used in conjunction with **The Enduring Gift** video and pamphlet, both of which are available at your school board office.

Today, Catholic school boards are faced with the reality that many of our new employees and younger parents have had little opportunity to come to know and celebrate our rich history. Moreover, this new generation has had a much different experience of Church than many of us have experienced. Each theme in this resource will introduce your staff or other school group to some small aspect of our Catholic educational history. It also offers opportunities for deeper reflection and exploration.

This resource is, I hope, practical. By design, each theme begins with a short introduction. This is followed by a prayer service after which is to be found extension or follow-up activities and/or readings. You are encouraged to use this material as it fits your needs and the needs of your school community. If you make extensive changes, we would appreciate your acknowledgement of the EOCCC and this document as your source.

The history of Catholic education in this province is a dramatic and compelling story of faith and courage, struggle and sacrifice. It is with this in mind that the EOCCC offers this resource to you so that you may continue to contribute meaningfully to this story for future generations.

God bless,
John Leitch, Principal
John Bosco Elementary School, Barry's Bay

Suggestions for Use:

Each of the following units may be used alone or as part of a series. While all deal directly or indirectly with the history of Catholic education in Ontario, they may be used in relationship to the broader themes indicated for each.

Environment:

Consider how adults learn best. It easily can be determine that comfort is essential. In order for participants to enter into any activity with authenticity, they must feel supported. Be sure the chairs are comfortable, the space is warm, and the room is inviting. Consider placing a symbol related to the theme of the session in a central place. It also may be appropriate, especially after a busy day, to have quiet music playing in the background to greet the participants. If the space you are using is a familiar one to the participants (e.g. a staff room), make an effort to transform the environment in such a way so as to indicate that the experience they are about to enter into is a departure from that which the room is usually used.

Gathering:

Hospitality is a hallmark of our Christian tradition. Organizers should consider how to best welcome the participants. This might include extending personal greetings or placing candies on chairs. The leader should call the participants to attentiveness with a greeting and an invitation to join in the moment. "Welcome. Today, as we begin this meeting, you are invited to spend a few quiet moments placing yourselves more consciously in the presence of the Living God. Our theme today is compassion, a quality to which we are all called."

Music:

Make every effort to involve musicians in your school community; use songs that are accessible and familiar. Everyone likes to sing, really! Regardless of the theme, music can set the tone and will contribute to an inviting and reflective environment.

Involvement:

Make every effort to involve each participant, respecting everyone's right to "pass" or participate simply through their attentive presence. While some will choose to become more actively engaged in the process itself, others may feel more comfortable assisting with set-up or refreshments. Be invitational in your efforts to involve the participants.

Symbols:

Be creative with your use of symbols. The symbol of open hands, for example, evokes the image of compassion; the symbol of wire around a Christ candle symbolizes very strongly the theme of struggle. These and other symbols may remain in and touch a person's heart in a more enduring manner than any words. Consider enthroning a bible and lighting a Christ candle during the prayer services.

Bible: All biblical quotations used are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

Introduction

"In an age which seems more fearful of the future, we're directed to give an account of the hope that is within us." This Moment of Promise, pg.15

The history of Catholic education in Ontario has a wondrous richness and a poignant legacy that deserves to be known, remembered, articulated, and celebrated by everyone connected to it. As educators and People of God, we need to know our roots, reflect on our history and remember our mission if the cherished treasure of Catholic education is to be preserved. As we "move out into the deep" in this third millennium with the hope and promise of our Catholic school system of education, we do so protective of and grateful for the "enduring gift" that Catholic education is. (*The Enduring Gift, O.C.S.T.A.*). These turbulent political times of massive reform and restructuring in education indeed are challenging. Of even greater concern for Catholic schools, however, is an apparent weakness from within that is clearly recognized as a "spiritual lethargy" and "religious illiteracy". (*Catholic Register: The Challenge Within, August 25, 2002*). A unique sense of mission and commitment to the faith dimension of our schools has become somewhat soft in the political agenda in education. This challenging unrest, indeed crisis in education in general, is an opportune time of inspiration to revisit, remember, and reaffirm our identity and mission in Catholic education with intentional vitality. This struggle and recommitment to our Catholic identity and Christian values might very well be our "moment of promise". (*This Moment of Promise, O.C.C.B.*).

Catholic schools in Ontario have long espoused a lived commitment to learning excellence anchored within a foundational faith dimension of authentic Catholic, Christian spirituality. Believing in the intrinsic value and dignity of all persons, Catholic education has promoted a broader dimension of educating the whole person, of indeed "educating the soul". (*Educating the Soul, I.C.E.*). Students in our Catholic schools are strengthened to be fully alive to their gifts, rights, freedom, and responsibilities in the world. According to the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations (CGEs), Catholic education challenges its students to be: "discerning believers, effective communicators, reflective and creative thinkers, self-directed, responsible, life-long learners, collaborative contributors, caring family members, and responsible citizens." (*Catholic Graduate Expectations, I.C.E.*) Catholic education connects its mission to building a more compassionate society, infused with the values of the gospel. "The Catholic school is one of the cultural

expressions of the vision of life for which the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is normative...Catholic schools intentionally inform and form the very being of their students". (*Curriculum Matters*, p.25, I.C.E.). Catholic education today challenges all who are connected with it to take seriously " its mission to be a ferment in society". (*Curriculum Matters* , p.18, I.C.E.)

The purpose of this resource is to promote and celebrate the story and mission of Catholic education in Ontario by focusing on some of its historical themes:

- **Perseverance / Resiliency**
- **Courage**
- **Commitment**
- **Struggle and Sacrifice**
- **Stewardship**
- **Sacramentality**
- **Faith community**
- **Discipleship**

A brief exploration of each theme is presented along with personal and community reflections, prayer responses, and further resources to develop and deepen each. This resource invites and supports remembering and reclaiming special pieces of the dynamic history of Catholic education in the province of Ontario. Like eager pilgrims on a journey of discovery, each theme offers us a unique and life-giving invitation to learn, reflect and respond to the challenging call of 'our story'.

Let us: "remember our past with gratitude"; "live the present with enthusiasm" and "look forward to the future of Catholic education with confidence". (*Pope John Paul II's At the Beginning of the New Millennium: An Agenda for Catholic Education*, James T. Mulligan, October 2001). May we reclaim our roots proudly, remember our history with deep gratitude, and celebrate our rich legacy with conviction.

PERSEVERANCE/RESILIENCY

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord,... plans to give you hope and a future Jeremiah 29:11,13

Introduction:

In achieving anything of enduring value, whether temporal or spiritual in nature, it may be reasonably argued that perseverance and resiliency are two of the requisite core values. Even a cursory glance at the history of Catholic education in Ontario makes it apparent that these values were deeply embraced by those who led the struggle to create " a state supported, universally accessible and comprehensive Catholic education system in Ontario." (**The Enduring Gift**, O.C.S.T.A)

The story began in 1804 with the arrival of Bishop Alexander Macdonell in Glengarry County. At a time when Catholics in Ontario were barely tolerated by the British government, the "Big Bishop" persisted against formidable odds in securing funding from the Crown for Ontario's first Catholic schools. It was an immense triumph considering the politics of the time. Then, in 1841, with the establishment of the New School Act, the Bishop's vision of permanent financial assistance by the state was partially realized. Following the Act, Catholic schools began to grow in what seemed like fertile soil. However, the struggle had barely begun. The 25-year period that followed was characterized by "sectarian violence, linguistic conflict and political manoeuvring..." (*The Enduring Gift*, O.C.S.T.A.) Throughout this time, those at the helm persevered. In spite of the bigotry and even bloodshed, the Catholic leaders refused to give up.

Many others followed in the footsteps of Bishop Macdonell. Without the countless nuns, priests, brothers and lay teachers, it is unlikely that Catholic schools would have survived. Catholics are indebted to them for their generosity and unwavering dedication.

Other outstanding figures include Sir Richard Scott, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, Archbishop John Joseph Lynch, Martin Quinn, and Bishop Joseph Ryan. In 1867, due to the efforts of McGee and Lynch, Catholics in Ontario were given "the right to establish, manage and control their own schools and to share proportionally in the government funds allotted to education..." (*The Enduring Gift*, O.C.S.T.A.) Once again, however, what seemed like a triumph was laden with difficulties as many Catholic schools fought to stay afloat.

Between 1900 and 1925 the number of students in Catholic schools more than doubled. As a result of the inequitable system of funding, Catholic schools were faced with tremendous financial hardships. When the Great Depression hit it looked as though Catholic schools might disappear altogether. Against tremendous obstacles they managed to endure. Finally, in 1936, justice seemed imminent. However, for various political reasons the bill which would have allowed Catholics to realize their vision, was withdrawn. Since the beginning, the struggle had been characterized by small victories and great setbacks. The character of the Catholic leaders had been mercilessly tested.

Following the Second World War, Catholic schools continued to labour with large student populations and the need for additional rural schools. More lay teachers were entering the system which "... placed additional financial burdens on school boards that were already desperately trying to keep their school facilities and programs up to Provincial standards." (*The Enduring Gift*, O.C.S.T.A.)

For nearly 140 years, the existence of Catholic education in Ontario had been fragile, at best. On many occasions it looked as though the death knell would finally ring for these schools. Yet, even with Ontario's first Royal Commission in 1950, which allowed separate schools to survive, it was a continual battle to keep their heads above water.

In the late 50s and early 60s, with the establishment of several Catholic organizations, considerable progress was made in improving

the condition of Ontario's separate schools. However, Catholic high schools continued to face major obstacles.

By the late 1980s, the struggles that had begun in the early 1800s started to bear significant fruit. As a result of decisions made William Davis' Progressive Conservative government, "(f)unds poured into the Catholic system and the landscape of Ontario bore the imprint of new schools, complete with facilities, equipment, and comforts scarcely imagined in previous generations." (*The Enduring Gift*, O.C.S.T.A.)

The 1990s witnessed more unprecedented changes in favour of Catholic schools. For the first time in the history of Ontario, Catholic as well as "public", non-sectarian schools were given access to equal funding.

Yet, reflecting upon the events of the past 200 years, have the latest changes really been a victory? From the early 1830s onwards, what often appeared to be triumph had been accompanied by many obstacles and complexities. Today, with school funding completely controlled by the provincial government, more challenging times appear to be ahead for Ontario's Catholics as they try to preserve the distinct character of their schools. With enormous government deficits looming over the heads of citizens, will the day come when taxpayers begrudge supporting two school systems? Will publicly funded Catholic school boards in Ontario eventually be dismantled as they have been in both Newfoundland and Quebec?

Although much has been won, separate schools still are sitting on somewhat shifting sands. As secular values continue to challenge Gospel principles, the perseverance of all who have worked toward safeguarding Catholic education in Ontario is more crucial than ever. Catholic schools need devoted, Christ-centred individuals to nourish and protect them so that future generations may know the joy and privilege of a Catholic education. Long may these schools continue to send young people out into the world, fortified with the determination and love that have characterized the history of Catholic education in Ontario, as they endeavour to further the Reign of God.

Personal Reflection:

"God is after something precious in your soul. Just like a farmer who is after a harvest... the golden grain of patience, perseverance and strong character. And how is the grain harvested? Only through threshing...through tribulation*. The farmer doesn't want weeds, does he? He wouldn't waste his time. He threshes the wheat which yields grain from the chaff. That priceless, blessed grain."
(Joni Eareckson Tada, *Secret Strength for those who Reach*)

*The Biblical word tribulation has its root meaning in the word to thresh.

I reflect...

1. What are some of the challenges that I have encountered in the past year?
2. Who and/or what have been most helpful to me during these testing times?
3. How have these experiences brought me closer to God?

Community Prayer:

Call to Worship

Leader: Let us begin ...

All: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Leader: As Christians we are called to embrace the times of testing in our lives, those periods when all seems dark, cold, empty and hopeless. As followers of Christ, we are called to welcome suffering even though it is ingrained in our human nature to recoil from it. As St Paul said: "... but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." (Romans 5:3-5)

(Brief pause.)

Let us pray ...

Lord God, the history of our faith and Catholic education in this province has been filled with difficulties,
the road heavy with obstacles.

Through the power and wisdom of your Holy Spirit,
help us to recognize that these trials have borne
and continue to bear great spiritual gifts
if we would but lift up our hearts and open our eyes to you.
Help us to remember that every test that comes our way
offers endless opportunities to grow stronger
and closer to you.

We make this prayer in the name of Jesus, our Lord and companion on
the journey.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us listen to God's Word proclaimed to us.

Reading: James (1: 2-12)

Reader: A reading from the first letter of James.

My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Let the believer who is lowly boast in being raised up, and the rich in being brought low, because the rich will disappear like a flower in the field. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the field; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. It is the same way with the rich; in the midst of a busy life, they will wither away. Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

(Brief pause to consider God's Word.)

Leader: Let us offer to God our prayers of intercession.
The response to each petition is ... **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Reader 1: Testing can be so painful when we are in the midst of it. Lord, grant us the wisdom to believe and trust that it does have value, that it does have meaning, we pray to the Lord ...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader 2: May we reach the point in our lives that, when the threshing machine appears, instead of trembling with fear, we are able to accept our "cup" with courage, strength and dignity, we pray to the Lord ...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader 3: Help us always to remember that to follow Christ means leaving our comfort zones and experiencing those things that will build our character and better enable us to serve God, we pray to the Lord ...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader 4: For all partners in Catholic education who are facing personal or professional struggles, may their perseverance sustain them, we pray to the Lord ...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader 5: Sustain us in our efforts always to protect the precious legacy of Catholic education in Ontario by cultivating perseverance and resiliency during testing times, we pray to the Lord ...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader 6: For all our leaders, religious and lay, and countless others who have worked relentlessly to preserve Catholic education in Ontario, may their great love for you inspire us to follow their example, we pray to the Lord ...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: We offer all these prayers, Lord, spoken and those that remain in the silence of our hearts, in faith and in the certainty that your plans for us are of hope for the future, in Jesus name.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us ...

All: Our Father, who art in heaven ...

Leader: Heavenly Father, thank you for this time together, for your Spirit who has challenged us in your Word, in our conversations and through new insights gained. May we go forth from this gathering ever committed to the values and goals of Catholic education. We make this prayer in Jesus' name.

All: Amen.

SONG: *(A suitable song may be sung.)*

Questions for Further Discussion:

1. How can we best serve others in our school community, especially those who are faced with major life challenges?
2. Discuss the words of St. James: with patience we will become fully developed and complete.
3. Is it possible to teach perseverance or is it only developed through experience? Explain.
4. What steps can be taken by the members of our school community to protect the legacy of Catholic education in Ontario?
5. What part can schools play in making the history of Catholic education in Ontario come alive for our young people?

Courage

Introduction:

Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for labourers deserve their food. ... You will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. (*Matt. 10: 8-10, 19-20*)

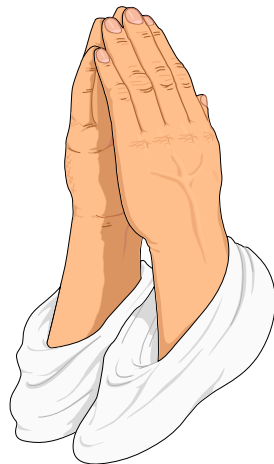
The history of Catholic schools in the province of Ontario is permeated with signs of courage. Since its humble beginnings in the early 1800's, one is struck by the courage, dedication and commitment of its Catholic laity and clergy. Courageous leaders, committed to serve, teach, and bear witness to the Gospel, made their invaluable contributions to the existence and growth of Catholic education in the province of Ontario.

"Profiles in Courage" (*Catholic Register, March 3, 2002*) identifies and celebrates the unique courage of some of the leaders in Catholic education. The outstanding legacy of contributors to its rich history includes: Bishop Alexander Macdonnell, Sir Richard Scott, the Sisters of Notre Dame, the Christian Brothers, the Sisters of Providence, the Grey Nuns, the Oblate Fathers, the Sisters of Loretto, the Sisters of St. Joseph, Martin Quinn, and Bishop Ryan of Hamilton. The unique courage, dedication, commitment, generosity, and lived witness of religious denominations to the evolution of Catholic education in Ontario are particularly significant and worthy of our recognition and gratitude.

That same ethic of courage, which has shown itself throughout the history of Catholic schools within Ontario, is as essential today as it was then. The teaching and learning environment of every Catholic school is challenged to reflect the face of Christ as well as being able to see it reflected in each other. The decision to teach, work or be part of a Catholic school community brings with it a deep responsibility to live and support the faith tradition of the Catholic Church. The Catholic educator enters not only a career but clearly

embraces a unique vocation in entering the Catholic school system. Teaching is to be a ministry wherein students, who are made in God's image, are encouraged and guided to become all that they can be. The acquisition of knowledge and skills and the unique high standards of learning excellence equip students for improving society and advancing the Reign of God in the world. Faith sharing and visioning and the authentic lived witness of teachers and all educators within that learning environment must permeate the school environment. It takes genuine courage to teach in Catholic schools. The integrity and future of Catholic schools in the third millennium must embrace this unique and life-giving courage.

May courage enfold you as you dare to teach and witness in Catholic schools. May you be open, vulnerable, hope-filled and enlivened by the grace and goodness of our God, as you lead, teach, minister and contribute in your Catholic Christian communities. May Jesus Christ continue to incarnate our Catholic schools as they "seek to transform the world according to (His) way of love" (*Curriculum Matters, p.21, I.C.E.*).



Courage

Reflection and Prayer

Personal Reflection:

1. Catholic education must continuously and intentionally be "transformative". It is called to be "critical, upsetting "through the power of the Gospel" education!" (*The Philosophy of Catholic Education, p. 124, Novalis*)
2. "Ontario's Catholics have a responsibility to nourish, improve, and defend their schools as a distinctive and valuable contribution to the vitality of their faith community and to Ontario society as a whole ... There is a need for schools that place Gospel values at the centre of a holistic education ... These schools are a "gift that should not be squandered." (*The Enduring Gift, p.12*).

I reflect:

1. What are some genuine fears, challenges, and anxieties that I feel as a partner in Catholic education in this school?
2. How can my work in this school community be "transformative"?
3. How am I a person of courage on staff?

Community Prayer

Call to Worship

Leader: Let us begin ...

All: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Leader: Consider these words from **The Enduring Gift** ...

“Ontario’s Catholics have a responsibility to nourish, improve, and defend their schools as a distinctive and valuable contribution to the vitality of their faith community and to Ontario society as a whole.”
(The Enduring Gift, p. 12)

(Brief pause.)

Let us pray...

Loving God, we gather as members of this Catholic school community to serve and minister to one another. We look to you for courage, strength, and purity of heart to be genuine people of the Gospel, People of God. Fill us with your compassion, integrity and zeal. Ignite your love and truth within us so that we may see you in one another. This we ask through Jesus, your Son, who lives and reigns forever and ever.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us stand and listen to the Gospel proclaimed to us.

Reading: **Jesus Calls the First Disciples: (Mark 1: 16 - 20)**

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

All: Glory to you, Lord.

Reader: As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea - for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them: “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he

went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

(Brief pause to consider God's Word.)

Leader: God of Compassion, source of our strength and our hope, we turn to you in prayer, as we place before you these petitions.
The response is: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: For the courage to follow where Jesus calls us, we pray...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For the courage to be people of faith and instruments of God's peace, we pray...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For the courage to stand up for the truth and to speak it with conviction and humility, even when it is difficult, we pray...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For the courage to defend and respect the dignity of all people, we pray...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For the courage to say: "I'm sorry" when I have hurt another, we pray...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Hear and answer our petitions and those deep within our hearts, O Heavenly Father. This we ask through Jesus, your Son, who lives and reigns forever and ever.

All: Amen.

Concluding Prayer: St Teresa's Prayer

Leader: Let us pray together our concluding prayer.

All: Christ has no body now but yours
No hands, no feet on earth but yours
Yours are the eyes through which He looks at
Compassion on this world
Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good
Yours are the hands with which He blesses
All the world
Yours are the hands; yours are the feet
Yours are the eyes; you are his body
Christ has no body but yours
No hands, no feet, no eyes on earth but yours.
Amen.

Concluding Song: *You Have Called Us (Rise Up and Sing #92)* or another suitable song may be sung.

Questions for Further Discussion

1. What **courage** is needed for Catholic schools to survive the challenges of today?
2. What special qualities of **courage** do we seek in this school community?
3. What kind of **courage** do we want our students to learn in this school community?
4. How does this school community defend **courageously** the spirit of the Gospel?
5. Who is a role model of **courage** in Catholic education?
6. What **courage** do I seek as a member of this staff?
7. Does this school community encourage and support an active and engaging faith formation for its staff?

Commitment

Introduction:

Those who have shared the bond of Catholic belief and tradition and who have selflessly worked to pass these on to our youth have shaped the unique character of Catholic schools. Communities all across Ontario share the common contributions made by our predecessors who were committed to Catholic education and who willingly sacrificed to contribute to the Catholic school in their community.

During the earliest period of our history families shared space in each other's homes or rectories were used to establish schools. Soon schools began to be built. Often they were constructed on land that had been donated by a parishioner. Religious communities answered the call, providing staff, and school and parish life were intertwined. School boards were formed and community leaders were elected as trustees. Ordinary Catholic families bore much of the financial burden, as there was very little government help.

Our schools have survived and flourished thanks to the countless members of the faithful who built strong, distinctive foundations by their daily striving to maintain a clear spiritual focus while pursuing academic excellence.

Personal Reflection:

... the lessening of the financial burden of Catholic education must be seen as freeing us to make the collective and personal choices and sacrifices necessary to enhance our educational communities of faith. As Pope John Paul II said "...even though the financial viability of Catholic schools has been guaranteed, the task remains of enduring their Catholic character." The great privilege of this new freedom cannot help but remind us that much is expected of those to whom much has been given (Luke 12:48).

This Moment of Promise, OCCB

I reflect:

1. What commitments am I willing to make to ensure that our school is a place that encourages and promotes the values taught by Jesus Christ?
2. How do I demonstrate these commitments in the communities of home, school, and parish?
3. What obstacles or challenges exist that make it difficult to fully live out these commitments?

Community Prayer:

Call to Worship

Leader: Let us begin ...

All: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Leader: In November of 2002, the Institute for Catholic Education convened a provincial symposium on the future of Catholic education in Ontario. At that time, Tom Reilly, General Secretary for the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops shared the following with the assembly:

I am convinced that the light of Catholic education will continue to shine but, by our attitudes, by our faithfulness, hopefulness and love, we will dictate whether it flickers and shines dimly or shines brightly and strong.

"The Image of Catholic Education in Ontario", Catholic Education Symposium 2002, Tom Reilly, General Secretary, O.C.C.B.

(Brief pause.)

Let us pray ...

Good and loving Father, help us to live as witnesses
of your unending love.

Guide our way as we strive to pass on our tradition of faith.

Help us to live the promise of our faith
through the communities that are our homes,
our schools, and our parishes.

We ask this through Jesus, our Lord and Saviour.

All: Amen

Leader: Let us stand as the Gospel is proclaimed to us.

Reading: **Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples:** (John 21: 9-17)

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

All: Glory to you, Lord.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep'.

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

(Brief pause for silent reflection.)

Gospel Commentary:

Reader 1: Three times Jesus asks Peter if he loves him and three times he invokes Peter to care for his flock. Jesus is seeking a real commitment from Peter. Commitment is not easy. Commitment requires dedication. It involves both obligation and promise. For over many years Catholics with tenacity and vision have strained to ensure

that our schools have survived and grown in Ontario. Since 1841 when the school Act for the United Provinces of Canada included a clause that permitted Catholics to establish schools, the partnership of parents, parishes, and community has step by step, year by year, worked to establish distinctive and respected centres for Catholic education.

Reader 2: For over 170 years Catholic schools were chronically under funded and inherently disadvantaged because they were "assessment-poor". The fact that our schools survived until the 1997 passing of the Education Quality Improvement Act, that required a "fair and non-discriminatory manner" of funding, is thanks to the generations of Catholics who were seriously committed to their responsibility of passing on the tradition of Catholic education. *[Local examples may be presented here.]*

Leader: Let us pray...

Holy Spirit, guide our efforts to provide opportunities to live, learn, love and grow in our faith in Jesus.

The response to each petition is: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Reader 1: Grant us the spirit of perseverance as we continue to work toward the goals of Catholic education.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader 2: Fill our hearts with generosity as we cooperate with all of the members of our faith community.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader 3: Strengthen our resolve to establish a school culture that embodies the values of Jesus Christ.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader 4: Give us joy as we accept Jesus' invitation to " Feed my lambs."

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Heavenly Father, as you challenged and empowered Peter to feed your lambs, so too do we hear your call to use our gifts to minister to our brothers and sisters. Enliven within us your Spirit and inspire us through the example of your Son and our brother, Jesus Christ, in whose name we make this prayer.

All: Amen.

Song: *Do You Really Love Me (Glory and Praise II)*
Here I Am Lord (Glory and Praise III)
or another suitable song.

Questions for Further Discussion

1. How does a Catholic philosophy of education impact on both the process and context of education in our school?
2. Are the Catholic Graduate Expectations a measure of how we are following Jesus' invitation to feed his flock?
3. Does equitable funding provide a false sense of security for Catholic schools? What are the current challenges to our existence?
4. Catholic schools are places that teach about Jesus Christ and where we try to live as his followers. What are some of the ways in which our school witnesses to this commitment to Jesus in the broader community, beyond our own homes and parishes?

Struggle and Sacrifice

The word sacrifice is taken from the Latin word *sacrum*, holy and *facere*, meaning to make. It is in the best tradition of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures that story after story tells of the struggles and the sacrifices a person, a tribe, or a community makes for its faith. It is in the struggles and sacrifices that one becomes defined, tested, honed and purified.

The epic Hebrew tale of enslavement in Egypt reaches a climax with the interventions of God (YHWH) who delivers the Hebrews from slavery. This story of liberation is book-ended in the Christian Scriptures, indeed in the course of human history, by the ultimate intervention of God (YHWH) sending not just his Word, but "His Word made flesh" in Jesus to deliver the world once and for all from the slavery of sin. These religious stories are the staple of the Christian religious diet. To be a people of faith is to be a people who sacrifice and struggle to be formed, informed and transformed by the word of God, incarnate in Jesus, the Christ.

In the early years of Canada, when the country was divided into Upper and Lower Canada, the population was marginalized along lines of religious affiliation. In Upper Canada, Catholics were the religious minority and all too often were treated as second-class citizens by the majority. When the Catholic community asked for the right to establish and govern their own schools in the 1830's, there was outright rejection of the request and sectarian violence broke out in many places in Canada West.

In the face of such violence and hatred, the notion of sacrifice takes on a deeper and more profound meaning. All of a sudden, one can be put to the test - one either faces up to it or walks away. Then, being a Catholic in Ontario meant that you could be held up for ridicule, harassment or worse. To be a visible, practising Catholic often would mean sacrifice and struggle in these very real terms.

In Upper Canada, the Catholic community, led by Bishop Alexander MacDonnell (1830's) began to fight for the right to educate their children in schools of their faith.

Today, we have Catholic schools across the breadth of Ontario. They exist because of the persistence, sacrifice, and struggle of men and women who felt that it was

their right and responsibility to educate their children in schools that reflected their worldview. This struggle continues today as the Church and the Catholic school system is buffeted by immensely strong (secular) values that are all too frequently at odds with Christian values.

In 2 Maccabees, a mother and her seven sons sacrifice their lives for their faith against a tyrant-king. It is one of the most gruesome and yet heroic stories in the Hebrew Testament. A family chose to accept their deaths rather than violate the Hebrew Law. In our Christian Scriptures, Jesus goes to His death in order to bring something new into existence. The passive sacrifice of the mother and her sons moves to the active sacrifice of Christ whose triumph over death brings forth a new creation.

Personal Reflection

"It is self-sacrifice that makes the universe possible. Every living being is sacrificed for other living beings."

"The universe is caught up in reciprocity. It has sacrificial dimension."

"The sacrifice of the first generation stars was of the order of magnitude that would make the planet earth possible. We are born out of the sacrifice of a first generation star."

"The re-shaping of...(Catholic Education) is not going to be without its negative, sacrificial, entropic aspects. But these are what we must willingly undertake. We have been trying to bargain for the new thing to be born. The first generation stars did not bargain over what they were doing. The first generation stars performed their historical role in bringing about the order of things..."

"We need to have a strong personal self and that is why the "courage to be" is so important, as Paul Tillich (1886-1965) said. It takes courage to be the person that each of us is, the courage to be unique, different, and assertive in fulfilling our personal destiny, our personal role."

Befriending the Earth, Thomas Berry

I reflect:

1. As a member of this Catholic school community am I willing to sacrifice (first generation stars) so that the next generation will be born?
2. What sacrifices must I make to be a person of "courage"?
3. What sacrifices, made by others, have inspired me in my own professional growth and in my own ongoing faith formation?

Community Prayer

Call to Worship:

Leader: Let us begin ...

All: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Leader: Now to him
Who by the power at work within us
Is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine,
To him be the glory in the Church
And in Christ Jesus to all generations,
Forever and ever.
Amen.

(Eph 3:20-21)

(Brief pause.)

Leader: Let us pray ...

You call us to be your people.
You have blessed us with abundance.
You have given us the mission
of assisting future generations grow and know you.
Let us be true to the past
And live truth in our present.
You have blessed us Lord,
Bless us in our task,
Enable us to be courageous in our communities and in our staff rooms,
Make your word sing in our hearts
So much so that we cannot be quiet.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us listen to God's Word proclaimed to us.

In this reading, Paul expresses his gratitude to the people of Thessalonica for their example of fidelity. As the scripture is read imagine that these words are for you, here and now.

Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1: 2-10

Reader: A reading from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of everyone of you for one another is increasing. Therefore we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith during all your persecutions and the afflictions that you are enduring.

This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, and is intended to make you worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering. For it is indeed just of God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to the afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes to be glorified by his saints and to be marvelled at on that day among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

(Brief pause for silent reflection.)

Leader: Let us pray ...

God our Father, creator of the first stars, you who brought the world into existence, bless us in our efforts to be better followers of your Word. Hear the prayers of your people.

The response to each petition is: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Reader: Father, give us courage in our work, let us be gentle and loving, strong and compassionate, we pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: Loving Father, allow us to be able to see the truth of ourselves. Give us the courage to be people of value in what sometimes seems a valueless world, we pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Creator God, as Saint Paul was able to recognize in the Church of Thessalonica their deep commitment to Christ, so may we be inspired to transform our Catholic schools into model faith communities. We make all of these prayers in Jesus' name.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us pray together in the words that Jesus has taught us ...

All: Our Father who art in heaven ...

Leader: Let us offer each other a sign of God's peace.

(A sign of peace is exchanged among participants.)

Leader: Let us pray ...

God of all creation, we thank you for this time that we have spent together reflecting on your Word and your call to be faithful servants. As we go forth from this gathering, may our school community continue to be enriched through our openness to sacrifice

and our willingness to struggle. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

All: Amen.

Questions for Further Discussion

1. What are the struggles facing our school system today? Your school?
2. How is your school counter-cultural?
3. Is there religious bias in Ontario today? If so, what form does it take or how is it manifested?
4. What personal struggles do we have in maintaining our Catholic school?
5. Who do you know that exemplifies a willingness to stand up for their faith?
6. What sacrifices have parents made in your community for your Catholic school system?
7. Is the religious concept of sacrifice still present in the Church today?
8. Have we lost something by being fully funded by the government of Ontario?
9. How does your role as a member of this school community fit into the broader mission of the Church?
10. How do we define ourselves today? What are the significant characteristics a stranger would see if they walked inside the doors of "your" school?
11. Tell a story of when you were a student in a Catholic school about an exemplary Christian educator.

Stewardship

Introduction

We respect the system of Catholic schools that has been entrusted to us. It has met challenges of growth and change as our society and Church have evolved since before Confederation. Catholic schools were accorded rights under the terms of the BNA Act but it took until the passing of Bill 160 in 1997 to achieve a funding model that provides equity between public and Catholic schools everywhere in the province.

The story of our political struggle to exist is long. Our founders lived with disappointment time and again. In the early 1970's many Catholic secondary schools closed under the pressure to offer diverse programming, pay just wages to their employees, and to maintain school facilities. The situation remained precarious for many more until the 1984 surprise announcement by Premier Bill Davis that funding would be extended to the end of secondary schools. Our schools then began to enjoy a period of previously unknown prosperity.

We are the people of faith who must ensure that these gains are not lost. We live within a society that pays little heed to spiritual matters and we have witnessed the failure of Catholic school systems to survive in Quebec and Newfoundland. The present generation has the responsibility to work to protect, promote, and to enrich the distinctive nature of a publicly funded, Catholic school system.

Personal Reflection:

Now that we have a system of education that is at once both Catholic and public, how can we be faithful to our religious origins and yet be authentic to our public mandate?

Curriculum Matters - A Resource for Catholic Educators

I reflect:

1. How do my actions promote responsible, accountable, and equitable education for all students?
2. What will I do to enhance one of the gifts God has given me?

Community Prayer:

Call to Worship:

Leader: Let us begin ...

All: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Leader: We recognize that we are the caretakers of the many gifts almighty God has given us. At the conclusion of every mass we are asked to "*Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.*" We recall this invitation to stewardship and pray that we will use our talents wisely in the service of others.

Let us pray ...

Gracious God, we recognize you as the source of all life from whom comes all our gifts. Inspire us in careful guardianship of Catholic education as we strive to live the Gospel values. We make this prayer in Jesus' name.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us stand as the Gospel is proclaimed to us.

Gospel: Matthew 25: 14-30

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All: Glory to you, Lord.

For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the

ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, "Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours." But his master replied, "You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

(Brief pause for silent reflection.)

Gospel Commentary:

Reader 1: The history of English Catholic schools is filled with examples of stewardship. A prime illustration is O.E.C.T.A. and the dedication to its establishment by Dr. F.J. McDonald.

The Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association's mission is to recognize the uniqueness of teachers in Catholic schools and it is committed to the advancement of Catholic education. The association provides professional services, support, protection and leadership for Catholic teachers. Before this provincial organization was formed "the salaries paid to teachers, and the conditions in which they worked testified to the public's lack of appreciation for the work of the Catholic teacher, especially the Catholic lay teacher, of that time." (History of OECTA)

Reader 2: Dr. F.J. McDonald, an inspector of separate schools in Ottawa, took an instigating role in organizing the teachers of Ottawa to form a local organization in 1930. Under his stewardship teachers made professional and economic gains. Dr. McDonald insisted that a provincial organization was necessary. Discussion among teachers began and continued for several years. Dr. McDonald consulted separate school inspectors across the province and obtained their support for the teachers' plan. The Ottawa English Catholic Teachers Association wrote to the superiors of all of the religious congregations teaching in Ontario and all offered their support for such an organization. Members of the clergy were consulted. Discussion with the bishops of the province began with the idea organizing along diocesan lines. In 1943 the Ministry of Education informed the various teaching groups in the province of draft legislation for a teaching profession act. The act proposed automatic membership for all teachers in tax- supported schools.

Reader 3: The Ottawa Catholic teachers' executive found that the draft gave them a choice of becoming members of one of the three existing teacher groups in the province or of forming a new group. The Ottawa organization feared that many English Catholic teachers might not know of the plan to form an English Catholic teachers' association and sent letters to teachers and principals across the province urging them to vote for a distinctly Catholic group. The result of the vote convinced the Department of Education to make provisions for all teachers in separate schools. Dr. McDonald continued to lend his support to the creation of such a group. Delegates met in Ottawa in Feb. 1944 and chose an interim provincial executive. OECTA was

officially incorporated on September 8, 1944. Today the group includes over 36,000 men and women and continues to work on behalf of the professional and personal interests of its members.

(Brief pause for silent reflection.)

A Litany Based on The OECTA Prayer

Reader 1: Creator God, we praise you, the source of all life.

All: Sustain and inspire us.

Reader 2: Renew our faith and guide us in our ministry as Catholic teachers.

All: Strengthen and challenge us.

Reader 3: Let us touch the hearts and minds of those with whom we work.

All: Nurture and empower us.

Reader 4: Lord Jesus, share with us your counsel, so we may choose knowledge over ignorance, wisdom over waste, peace over injustice, community over isolation and service over domination.

All: Lord, hear us.

Reader 5: Holy Spirit, nurture our growth. Inspire us to give birth to the creative powers within us. Let us come to the fullness of life promised in the Gospel.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us pray together this Stewardship Prayer ...

All: God my Creator,
You made me all that I am and gave me all that I have.
Help me show my gratitude
By using these gifts to serve others in your name.

Jesus my Redeemer,

You taught me the way to eternal life
By your example of loving service to others.
Grant me the courage to respond to your call to Discipleship
By following in your footsteps.

Holy Spirit of God,
Be with me as I choose each day to put you first in my life.
Let me be a model of Christian Stewardship
So others will come to know you through my actions.
Amen.

www.rcan.org

Song: *City of God (Glory and Praise III)* or other suitable song.

Questions for Further Discussion

1. How does our school uphold and celebrate the dignity of every person?
2. What are the visible signs and symbols of our Catholic faith and how are they part of the culture of our school?
3. The demographics of many school communities are in flux. How do we maintain a distinctive vision in a diverse, changing culture?
4. Stakeholders often ask what the school can offer them. What can we offer the school?

Sacramentality

Publicly funded education in the Province of Ontario began in the 1830's as a result of the dreams of common people to provide for their children what was previously available to only a select few. Catholic schools had their genesis in the desire of Catholic families to have available to their children an education framed by a curriculum that was informed by their faith.

The founding father of Catholic education was Bishop Alexander Macdonnell of Kingston. In 1841 his efforts were rewarded when denominational schools were included in the School Act. Parents could expect that their Catholic faith and their relationship to the institutional Church would be the foundation of the education of their children.

"Our life-affirming anthropology that permeates all aspects of the Christian life is what inspires a sacramentality that is able to see God in all things. Sacramentality is a major theological focus of Catholicism, and there is no other specific characteristic that is more central to its identity and function.

The seven sacraments are our most characteristic instances of this principle of sacramentality, in which we believe that the Risen Jesus is present to us through the Holy Spirit. But even these mediations between God and ourselves are of the ordinary structure of our lives: bread, wine, oil all brought together in the celebration of love in our church community." (Curriculum Matters p. 23)

While preparation for some of the seven sacraments continues to play an important part in our schools, the principle of sacramentality challenges Catholic schools at another, broader level. If, indeed, the seven ritual sacraments are not to be understood simply as singular moments in time, but rather as on-going invitations to a deeper relationship with God, then there is no aspect of any curriculum in a Catholic school that cannot be informed by this dynamic of grace. Catholic schools are not "Catholic" because one subject out of many is Religious and Family Life Education; rather, they can only be authentically Catholic if all subjects intentionally and appropriately integrate faith in the living Jesus.

Such an understanding amounts to a gracious outlook on the world that experiences life, all creation, as gift. It is not only constantly open to the possibility, but expects to see, the "more", the sacred, in the midst of the ordinary. Our world is

fundamentally good; all experience holds within it the possibility of an encounter with God. "A world so good as to be sacramental, pointing to it as gracious, meaningful, and worthwhile, is the core of a Catholic Christian attitude toward the world." (Groome, p. 125)

Jesus is the ultimate sacrament of God. To encounter Jesus is to encounter God. We, too, are called to be signs of God's graciousness in the world. Within our Catholic school system, all staff, but teachers and administrators in particular, are called to be more than efficient employees. All must see themselves as educators in the sense that all are potentially "sacrament" to the students, parents and, indeed, to each other. Just as we are called to see Jesus in our students, so too must we be conscious of how we reflect Jesus to them. This is no mean feat during a period when politics, government policies and some media have severely damaged the morale and self-esteem of many teachers. How do we continue to be signs of hope when we so often are feeling overwhelmed and under-appreciated? How do we insure that the prescribed and explicitly secular curricula of Ontario's Ministry of Education is distinctively "Catholic"? Long gone are the days when members of religious communities or members of the clergy populated the classrooms of Catholic schools. Indeed, the Bishops of Ontario have noted on many occasions that at this moment of our history as a believing community, the leadership of Catholic schools is clearly in the hands of the laity.

The challenge of this new century is to continue to bring the person and the message of Christ to our children, co-workers and parents. It is a task that can only be accomplished if we first take seriously the need to deepen our own faith in Jesus such that our view of the world is authentically a sacramental one.

Personal Reflection:

The principle of sacramentality "... invites Catholic educators to develop and constantly nurture their own sacramental consciousness. The old Scholastic philosophers had a dictum that is apt here: "*Nemo dat quod non habet*" - the colloquial translation being, "You can't give what you haven't got." When educators live their own lives as gift and gracious, as meaningful and worthwhile, with imagination and generativity, such cosmology [worldview] inevitably permeates their teaching and encourages a similar outlook in learners." (Groome, p. 151)

I reflect...

1. If we are called to be "sacrament" as educators, who is affected by our actions?
2. How has the development of the Catholic school system been tied to Sacraments?
3. What will I resolve to do to strengthen "Sacrament" in my school and school community?

Community Prayer:

Call to Worship:

Leader: Let us begin ...

All: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Leader: Let us consider these words from Thomas Groome's **Educating for Life:**

Are there spiritual practices that can nurture a sacramental consciousness in educators' souls? For nurturing sacramental consciousness, it seems wise to highlight the practice of contemplation. ... The contemplation I have in mind is the practice of *taking deliberate moments when we pay attention to the gift that is there, allowing ourselves to receive it and to be absorbed by it to the depths of our soul.* Thus, its core aspects are attention, gift, receiving, and being absorbed to our very souls. (Groome, p. 152)

(Brief pause.)

Leader: Let us pray ...

Providential God, you are the source of all life and goodness. Open our eyes, minds, and hearts to recognize your presence in all of creation and to reflect your divinity to all we meet. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus who is the primary sacrament of your Godhead.

Let us listen to God's Word proclaimed to us.

Reading: 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17, 3:1-5

Reader: A reading from the Second Letter of Paul To The Thessalonians.

But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of

the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.

Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us, so that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere, just as it is among you, and that we may be rescued from wicked and evil people; for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will go on doing the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

(Brief pause for silent reflection.)

Leader: Let us pray ...

Gracious God, your apostle Paul prayed for comfort and strength for the faithful as they strived to live out and be authentic signs of the gospel in their own lives. Help all involved in Catholic education to recognize and proclaim the glory of God and to live "Gospel" lives.

Reader 1: Lord, your grace is available to us through all of creation. Transform our schools into sacramental communities recognizable by their openness to your graciousness.

All: Lord, make us living sacraments.

Reader 2: Lord, many came before us with a dream of a Catholic education system. Let us remember their courage, commitment and vision that

kept our schools operating in darker days. We remember Bishop Alexander Macdonnell, who opened the first Catholic school house in Ontario ...

All: Lord, we give you thanks.

Reader 3: We remember Sir Richard Scott, who in 1863 fought for the Scott Act and brought Catholic schools a significant step closer to equality in the province.

All: Lord, we give you thanks.

Reader 3: We remember the many others whose lives of sacrifice gave to us the treasure of Catholic schools that we have today, including ... (participants are invited to name people in their own community whose contribution to Catholic education has been significant).

All: Lord, fill us with their courage and conviction.

Reader 3: Lord, the ritual sacraments hold together the members of your Church wherever we may be. Their power and meaning surpass language, culture, politics, economics, and geography. May our love of the sacraments continue to bind the many partners in our schools, staff, students, parents, trustees and all the friends of Catholic education.

All: Lord, make us living stones in your Church.

Reader 4: Lord, grant us a sacramental consciousness, that we become more aware of the presence of the sacred in all things and freeing us to imagine what we ought to and can be.

All: Lord, make us a gracious people.

Leader: Father, we are called to be a people of faith, witnesses to your love for all of creation. Strengthen us to use our "gifts" to build up the Body of Christ; empower us to serve you well

by reaching out to everyone in our school communities.
May we see Christ in everyone we meet
and may everyone we meet see Christ in us.
We ask this through Jesus, your Son, who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

All: Amen

Leader: Let us pray together in the words Jesus taught us when he said ...

All: Our Father who art in heaven ...

Leader: Let us go forth in the peace of Christ, confident of God's presence in our lives.

All: Thanks be to God!

Song: Holy Ground (**J. M. Talbot: Holy Ground**) or some other suitable song.

Questions for Further Discussion

1. How are we a distinctive Catholic community?
2. What is the connection between the invitation to follow Jesus and the pursuit of academic excellence in Catholic schools?
3. How can our attentiveness to the seven sacraments enrich our home, school and parish?
4. Who are the "sacramental" people who have influenced your faith formation?
5. What does it mean to you to have a "sacramental consciousness"?
6. How important is it that our faith is somehow reflected in all subject areas? What are some of the challenges to making this happen more authentically and consistently in your classroom?

FAITH COMMUNITY

He gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless.

Isaiah 40:29

A fundamental call to Christians is to be in community, to come together as one body as exemplified in our gathering to celebrate the sacrament of the Eucharist. It is here, as we partake of the mystical body and blood of Christ, that we are sanctified and strengthened in our faith. It is here where we are strengthened to go out and witness to the Good News. It is here where our love is deepened so that we may grow into kinder, gentler and more patient human beings.

From the early days of the 19th century, it was these faith communities that sustained Ontario Catholics as they endeavoured to keep separate schools alive. It was these Christ led families of believers that encouraged their leaders in times of despair, held them up in times of weakness, listened to their dreams and visions in times of disappointment, and imbued them with hope when the way ahead seemed bleakest.

In one of the many biblical stories about the life of St. Paul, after a particularly brutal beating, he was dragged outside the walls of Lystra (Acts 14: 8-20) and left for dead. After regaining consciousness some time later, he brushed himself off and returned to the city to continue preaching the Good News!

Such has been the character of many of the members of the Catholic community in Ontario during the past 200 years. History is rich with stories of countless religious and lay teachers who dedicated their lives to the education of young people. From 1850-1950, over 80% of the teachers in Catholic schools were nuns, priests and brothers. Often living on starvation wages, it was these Christ-filled people who assured the survival and growth of our Catholic schools.

The first religious Sisters who began teaching in Ontario came from the Congregation of Notre Dame in Montreal. In 1841, they traveled by stagecoach to Kingston. The journey took two days through a wilderness

that can barely be imagined today. Their discomfort over such rugged terrain at times must have seemed unbearable, not to mention set backs that included the bolting of the horses that had been drawing their stagecoach. The Sisters were more than a little ruffled by the time they arrived in Kingston. Here, in their first school, they attended to only 12 students. But by 1848, their students had come to number 200.

The importance of unity and shared vision of any community cannot be underestimated. In the middle of the 20th century, several Catholic groups were formed which worked successfully both on their own and together to improve schools. These included The Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association (now the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association or OCSTA), the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) and the English Catholic Education Association of Ontario (ECEA). Through their cooperative efforts and hard work, many positive changes were successfully implemented in the late 1950s and 60s.

Since the 1990s, when Catholic schools in Ontario were given equal funding, the struggle may have appeared to be over. Yet, a number of challenges still lay ahead.

Catholic schools have always been called to be distinctive communities of faith. It is this strength of commitment that distinguishes the Catholic school system. It also is this same commitment to the faith that today challenges our Catholic school communities to be all that they can be. Do the partners in Catholic education share a "passionate commitment to community building?" (Ontario Catholic Education: Enduring Truths, Changing Realities, Re-Igniting the Spirit) Are our schools faith communities noted for their spirit of love? Is there a strong relationship between home, parish and school? Are children being brought into the local church communities? Are Catholic schools providing "faith-filled communities in which Eucharist and prayer are central?" (Ontario Catholic Education; Enduring Truths, Changing Realities, Re-Igniting the Spirit) These and many more questions await our attention as we work toward the future of Catholic education in Ontario. May we always be guided by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit on our journey as we build stronger, Christ-centred communities of faith not just for the benefit of Catholics but for society as a whole.

Personal Reflection:

Excerpts from **By Hook or by Crook, How God Shaped a Fisherman Into a Shepherd**, by Jill Briscoe.

Pentecost resulted in a common binding together of God's forever family. Before his death and resurrection, Jesus himself had been the unifying factor, but this had been limiting because the Lord had been confined to his earthly body. Now the indwelling Spirit, given without measure was to bring together all those who believed in him.

Once, while I was waiting for a flight at a Washington airport, my attention was drawn to a group of excited couples. All of them had strollers with them, and baby paraphernalia was all over the place, but there were no babies in sight. I discovered these eight couples had never met before that particular moment, and I watched them curiously as they made polite but restrained conversation.

Suddenly the plane they were waiting for arrived, and into the eager waiting arms of these couples were placed eight beautiful Korean orphans, all about three months old. What a transformation took place among those excited people - they suddenly became almost like one big family. Those of us watching from outside their experience laughed and cried with them at this marvellous gift of new life, but none of us could identify with them the way they suddenly seemed to identify with each other.

After all, these new parents had something very unique in common. They laughed - and cried a little, too-as they began to show off their babies to each other.

That same sort of "binding" quality comes about among human beings who stretch out their spiritual arms and accept God's gift of new life into their hearts. After I became Christian, I couldn't get over this "family" feeling. I felt it whenever I met a bunch of believers. Even though we often had very little in common apart from our faith in Christ, I somehow felt we had known each other a very long time.

This sense of family crossed all barriers, so that the "oneness" operated even when I was introduced to a total stranger. This was really wonderful because I felt a true sense of belonging. I'd come home to the family of God, And today, years later, I still rejoice in being one of the family!

I reflect:

1. List some of the ways I love and hold others up in my faith community?
2. Do I feel a strong sense of family in my faith community? In what ways?
3. Reflect on my career as a student and a partner in Catholic education and name one person who has inspired me with his/her example and helped to deepen my faith and commitment to Christ.
4. How do I empower the powerless as a Catholic educator? Am I familiar enough with the Church's social teachings to meaningfully integrate them into my curricula?

Community Prayer:

Call to Worship:

Leader: Let us begin ...

All: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Leader: As members of the Body of Christ, each one of us is responsible for keeping our faith community strong. This is crucial if we are to weather the inevitable storms that await us as followers of Jesus Christ and partners in Catholic education. It is also important to remember that we all possess unique gifts, and that these gifts have been bestowed upon us in order to better serve our Lord and one another.

Let us pray ...

Lord, God of all creation, although the history of Catholic education in Ontario has been filled with hardship, these trials have produced many great men and woman of courage and character. Yet, they could not have succeeded without you, Lord, and the presence of strong faith filled communities. Help us to be fervent members of your mystical body and to always remember the great responsibility that you have placed in our hands as your disciples. Grant us the wisdom to recognize the gifts that you have so freely given us and to use them according to your will. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Reading: Romans 12: 3-13

Reader: A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in

Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

(Brief pause for silent reflection.)

Leader: Let us place our petitions before our gracious God.
The response to each petition is: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader 1: Lord, help us to recognize our gifts; guide us in their use to build stronger, faith filled communities. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader 2: As partners in Catholic education, may we be filled with zeal and spiritual fervour as we seek to inspire our young people as they continue on their faith journeys. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader 3: May we be inspired by the power of the Holy Spirit as we guide our students in the exploration of their gifts. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord hear our prayer

Reader 4: May we always be filled with gratitude for the many religious orders in Ontario whose "faith filled vision of education" has strengthened

the faith of innumerable Catholics over the past 200 years. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader 5: Lord, we ask that our faith communities be illuminated with the light of your love so that, in growing in purity and strength, they are better able to protect the sacred gift of Catholic education for future generations. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Loving God, we place all our hopes in you and look forward to the day when your Reign will be revealed in its fullness. We make all of these prayers in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Saviour.

All: Amen.

SONG: *They'll Know We are Christians* (Catholic Book of Worship II, #694) or some other suitable song.

Questions for Further Discussion

1. Discuss the importance of a strong faith community in sustaining your faith.
2. What are the visible signs of our Catholic faith in our school?
3. How can we work toward building a stronger relationship between home, parish and school?
4. Are the Eucharist and prayer central to our school faith community?
5. As partners in Catholic education, do we have the spiritual fervour necessary to inspire young people on their faith journeys? If not, what can we do to engender it in ourselves?
6. What does the Gospel's "preferential option for the poor" mean to you as a Catholic educator?

Discipleship

Introduction:

As a young man I remember one particular day in my grade nine English class when my eyes wandered out the window across to the parking lot of the Holy Redeemer Cathedral. This was the 1960's and the priests, some ten or twelve in number, were walking around the parking lot with their breviaries open saying their "daily office". This picture of faith, duty, prayer, ritual and something much deeper, struck me. I can't remember the lesson that period; but I can remember those black robed men saying their daily prayer. To me they were disciples.

The early visionaries of the Catholic school system for all of Ontario were disciples, too. They, as part of their faith commitment, chose to make the command "Go, make disciples of all people, baptize...teach them to observe all the commandments I gave you," their own mission (Matthew 28:19-20). Despite concerted and, at times, violent opposition, these early Catholic men and women persisted. Buoyed by their faith and belief in the mission entrusted to them by the Church, they fought, sacrificed, and laid the foundation for what we have today. The names MacDonnell, Scott, Lynch, Quinn, and thousands of others answered the call to discipleship. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you; as the Father has loved me, so I love you." (John 20:21)

As Catholic educators, we are disciples of the Word, called to teach by word and example about Jesus Christ. As Catholic Christians we believe that when we encounter students, we walk on holy ground. We have a responsibility to live out our baptism, to be Christ for others and to teach as Jesus taught. Our discipleship is exemplified more in the "washing of the feet" than in any other way. Remember when Jesus washed and kissed the weary feet of His disciples? (see John 13) How blessed were those feet. "Now it is the touch of our feet which makes the ground holy." (Farrell 140) Follow Christ and our footprints become holy.

Each generation of Catholics in Ontario has answered the call to discipleship regarding Catholic education. Each era brings its own struggles and challenges. In the 1800's it was overt sectarian violence and bigotry (McGowan). Today the challenges are no less dangerous but perhaps more subtle. During the struggle

against strong opponents everyone knew for what they stood and fought. During any struggle we have a special opportunity to define or redefine ourselves. To see ourselves as disciples and to answer the call to discipleship with a renewed vision is vital for the survival of Catholic education. Pundits predict that if the system fails it will not be because of outside influences but because of our own failure to be disciples.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta said. "One drop changes the whole ocean, a person changes all mankind (sic)." As teachers we have a holy task. We have a unique opportunity to touch the lives of students in very significant ways. As disciples of Christ, we can add a dimension to teaching that reaches into that "soul-space" of another and blesses them with the grace of the living God.

Community Prayer:

Call to Worship:

Leader: Let us begin ...

All: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Leader: God is with us. He walks before us and is ever present to us. He is with us in the faces and actions of each other.
Let us pray together the following prayer:

All: We rise today through a mighty strength,
The invocation of the Trinity,
Though belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness
Toward the Creator.

Christ with us, Christ before us,
Christ behind us,
Christ in us, Christ beneath us,
Christ above us
Christ on our right, Christ on our left
Christ where we lie, Christ where we sit,
Christ where we arise,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of us
Christ in the mouth of everyone who
Speaks of us
Christ in every eye that sees us
Christ in every ear that hears us.

(Prayer of St. Patrick-adapted)

Leader: Christ wants us to love each other. What does this mean?

(Participants may read the following lines slowly and quietly to themselves, or they may be read by the leader, in either case, pausing briefly to reflect after each line.)

- Loving people means summoning them forth
with the loudest and most insistent calls;
- It means stirring up in them
a mute and hidden being.
- Who can't help leaping at the sound of
our voices-
- A being so new
- That even those who carried him
didn't know him,
- And yet so authentic
that they can't fail to recognize him
once they discover him.
- All love includes fatherhood and motherhood.
- To love someone is to bid them to live,
invite them to grow.
- They have to feel they're loved very deeply
and very boldly
- Before they dare appear humble and kind,
- Affectionate, sincere
- And vulnerable.

-from Louis Evely's *That Man is You*

Leader: Let us pray ...

Father, you have given us your Spirit. Let that same Spirit strengthen us to be authentic disciples. Let us remember that we are to wash the feet of our students, to be humble before the tasks you have given to

us. Let us remember the struggles of your disciples who have in faith and hard work built a creative and dynamic school system. Let us be true to their work and vision. Give us the courage to follow the vision of your Kingdom, building on the richness of the past as we journey toward tomorrow.

All this we ask in the name of Jesus.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us pray together the prayer that Jesus taught to his first disciples when he said ...

All: Our Father, who art in heaven ...

Leader: Grant us your peace, Lord, and protect us from every anxiety as we await in joyful hope for the coming of your Kingdom.

All: For the Kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Leader: May the peace of the Lord be always with you.

All: And also with you.

Leader: Let us offer each other a sign of peace.

(A sign of peace is exchanged.)

Leader: Let us take our leave in the peace of Christ.

All: Thanks be to God!

Song: A suitable song may be sung.

Questions for Further Discussion

Activity One

Nowhere in the *Gospels* does Jesus give an explicit job description for a disciple. Indeed we might wonder about Jesus' skills at hiring disciples. They appeared to be pretty fickle, unable to stay awake on the job when asked, deserted their posts, misunderstood repeatedly the master's messages, and often were cowardly.

1. Break the group in smaller manageable groups.
2. Have each group select a recorder.
3. Provide a Bible to each participant and a marker and paper to each group.
4. A different chapter from one *Gospel* is assigned to each group (or participant) as appropriate.
5. The recorder in each group will make note of the *Gospel* and chapter assigned and list the characteristics of discipleship that the participants discover therein.
 - Participants read the assigned passage silently.
 - Where each participant has been assigned a different chapter, if time permits they may summarize the passage for the others.
 - In their small groups, participants then identify the characteristics of discipleship that are evident to them in their passage.

Large group Processing:

Leader has all groups report the characteristics found. Reporters should not repeat any mentioned by previous groups.

- Have participants write down the characteristics listed.
 - Have participants discuss how these characteristics of discipleship may challenge them.
 - Have small groups discuss how their school community supports them as disciples.
 - Have each participant write down one thing they are going to work on over the next week.
 - As a staff, identify strategies that you could adopt to more authentically support the call to discipleship.
-

Activity Two

Large group stands around a line of tables joined together and covered with rolled paper or several large sheets of chart paper (enough for one for each participant). Markers and/or coloured pencils are available for everyone.

Instructions:

In silence each person draws a symbolic representation of what they think it means to be a disciple.

After a time, a signal will be given indicating that you are to move to your left.

There should be no talking. Each person is to continue where the previous artist has left off - add to, improve, extend; be creative. You will continue to move you around for some time. After a short while you will be given further instructions:

Further instructions:

Each group is given a piece of the creation. They go back to their tables and try to determine from the renderings what characteristics of discipleship that they feel the drawing is depicting. Discuss.

This is often fun and informative. Report to the whole group your findings about discipleship.

Leader: What is one thing that stands out now about discipleship for you that may not have seemed to have been as important to you before?

(Have someone write down the most important characteristics.)

Activity Three

Revisiting the Prayer Service

- Re-introduce the reading from *That Man is You*. Tell the participants that you are going to read it over three times. The first time, after reading it, you will ask for any visual or emotional impression you may get. There is no discussion.

- After the second reading ask the participants for a word or phrase that resonates in their person. No explanation is to be given, just a listing. No discussion.
- After the third reading you ask the participants to tell which phrase or image spoke loudest to them and let them explain why.

Enrichment Resources

A Chronology of Catholic Education In the Province of Ontario

(excerpted from The Enduring Gift)

1830 Bishop Alexander Macdonell secured some financial funding from the crown for schoolmasters.

1841 Partial funding given by new school Act which included a clause that permitted Catholics and other to establish denominational schools.

1840's Sectarian violence and linguistic conflict emerges.

1840's-50's Egerton Ryerson, School Superintendent for Canada West pushes for universal, free and academically progressive public school system. Promoted a generic Christianity in schools.

1850-60 Bishop Armand de Charbonnel calls "public schools" an insult to the Catholic Population. Urges distinctive Catholic schools.

Expression of sectarian bitterness becomes public and divisive.

1850's A confluence of French Catholic political power in the Canadian Assembly, the arrival of Irish Catholic refugees, and their minority status among a protestant majority caused bitterness and bloodshed.

1855-63

1855 The weight of the French Catholic Votes in the Assembly passes the Tache Act which extended the rights of Upper Canada Catholics to create and manage their own schools.

1863

- 1863 Scott Act was passed which confirmed Catholic School Trustees all rights and privileges of their counterparts in public systems, and allowed Catholic Schools a share of the Common School Fund provided by the Canadian Government.
- 1867 The British North American Act, which created Canada, placed the responsibility of education in the hands of the provinces. Catholics in Ontario now faced a hostile Protestant majority.
- 1867 Prior to Confederation Archbishop John Joseph Lynch of Toronto, and Thomas D'Arcy McGhee initiated a process to secure the rights of Catholic schools under Section 93 of the BNA Act.
- 1867 Regulation 93 has become the corner stone of constitutional and legal debates regarding Ontario's Catholic Schools.
-

1925-present

- 1925 Population of Ontario Catholic Schools 95,300 and growing causing strain on resources.
- 1928 Tiny Township vs. the King-Catholics have "just" claim for grade 9 and 10 funding.
- 1930's Increased numbers of students, the depression and the inaccessibility to broader tax base, threatened Catholic School survival.
- 1930 Martin J. Quinn organized the Catholic Taxpayers Association. This lobby group attempts to secure equitable funding for Catholic school boards.

- 1936 The CTA helped elect the Liberals in 1934 and in 1936 legislation was passed. Corporate taxes were now accessible.
- 1936 Due to sectarian violence the bill was withdrawn.
- 1950 Hope Commission-1st Royal Commission on Education Hope offered full funding for primary and elementary students. Ontario Bishops declined the offer.
- 1963 Ontario Foundation Tax. Additional funds for poorer boards.
- 1969 Smaller rural Catholic Boards were amalgamated to seek better funding. Suffering continued.
- 1976 The Blair Commission, sought to tax Catholic School Boards. Strong presence by all partners caused the plan to be scrapped.
- 1984 The Government of Bill Davis announces full funding to Catholic Schools in the name of Justice.
- 1985 School Councils Established
Reduction in number of school boards
Placed cap on salaries of Trustees.
- 1986 Suspension of rights of trustees to raise taxes for schools. Funding for education is no longer a shared responsibility between the community and central government.
- 1998 Catholic Graduate Expectations

A Litany of Courage Proclaiming Our Vision Inspired by the Catholic Graduate Expectations

Reader 1: Our students and staff are called to be discerning believers formed in the Catholic faith community.

All: We are all called to be open to discerning and responding to the ongoing ways God speaks to us in order to witness with integrity to our students and one another.
Heavenly Father, fill us with courage.

Reader 2: Our students and staff are called to be effective communicators.

All: We are called to communicate through our words and actions that we recognize and honour the dignity of all persons.
Heavenly Father, fill us with courage.

Reader 3: Our students and staff are called to be reflective and creative thinkers.

All: We are all called to be reflective and creative people who vision information, learning, and our response to it, in light of the common good.
Heavenly Father, fill us with courage.

Reader 4: Our students and staff are called to be self-directed, responsible, life-long learners.

All: We are all called to be people who continuously pursue personal growth and religious literacy in order to help build up the Reign of God on earth.
Heavenly Father, fill us with courage.

Reader 5: Our students and staff are called to be collaborative contributors.

All: We are all called to promote a life-giving and supportive learning environment that invites respectful discussion and inclusive dialogue for everyone in our school community.
Heavenly Father, fill us with courage.

Reader 6: Our students and staff are called to be caring family members.

All: We are all called to value, affirm and respond to the needs of family, school, parish, and the larger community.
Heavenly Father, fill us with courage.

Reader 7: Our students and staff are called to be responsible citizens.

All: We are called to be responsible staff members and people of faith who are intent on building up the Reign of God on earth.
Heavenly Father, fill us with courage.

Presider: Loving Father, be with us and sustain us all as we endeavour to serve and bear witness to you in this school community. Strengthen and bless us in our work. Imbue within us a deep desire and courageous determination to be instruments of your hope and peace. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus, our Lord and friend.

All: Amen.

Bless the Earth with Beatitude-living!

Leader: Blessed are they who are convinced of their dependency on God, who try to empty themselves of all that doesn't matter, for whom the riches of this world just aren't that important.

All: The Reign of Heaven is theirs.

Leader: Blessed are they who know that they are a gift of God, and are content with their strengths and weaknesses. They can accept themselves and try to be true to themselves.

All: The earth shall be their heritage.

Leader: Blessed are they who wear compassion like a garment, who have learned how to find themselves by losing themselves in another's sorrow.

All: They shall receive comfort.

Leader: Blessed are they who are hungry for goodness, who never get enough of God and truth and righteousness.

All: They shall be satisfied.

Leader: Blessed are they who are merciful, who remember how much has been forgiven them and are able to extend this forgiveness into the lives of others.

All: They shall receive God's mercy.

Leader: Blessed are they whose hearts are free and simple, who ignore false images and are seeking honestly for truth.

All: They shall see God.

Leader: Blessed are they who work at creating peace, they who bless the world with the healing power of their presence.

All: They shall be called children of God.

Leader: Blessed are they whose love has been tried like gold in the furnace and found to be precious, genuine, and lasting... they who have lived their beliefs out loud, no matter what the cost or pain.

All: The kingdom of God is theirs.

Leader: Let us be sight for the blind, ears for those who are deaf to hear Your Word, and hands for those who refuse to work at building the Reign of God on earth. We pray all this in Your name, and for Your honour and glory.

All: Amen

*Adapted from: Commissioning Prayer: **More Than Words**: by Janet Schaffran and Pat Kozak.*

New Beginnings: A Prayer Celebration to Begin a New School Year

Introduction

Gathering Prayer: *(Please stand.)*

Presider: Heavenly Father, we gather today as educators, staff members and people of faith to know and understand better our mission and ministry in this Catholic school community.
Open our minds and hearts to the power and strength of your Spirit.

Mold us to be instruments of your hope, healing and peace in this school.

Strengthen us to be people of faith, hope and conviction so that the power of God working through us will bring compassion, healing, understanding, and love to others.

This we ask through Jesus, your Son who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

(Please be seated.)

Reading: 1 Cor.12: 4 - 12

A brief period of reflection

Or

Reflective Song: Speak, Lord: *(From: "May We Be One", Year 5: Born of the Spirit)*

Refrain: Speak, Lord, I'm list'ning
Plant your word down deep in me.
Speak, Lord, I'm list'ning
Please show me the way.

Commissioning Prayer: Heavenly Father, all of us are called to be instruments of your peace and builders of the Kingdom. Strengthen us to use our gifts and serve you well in our school communities, as we pray together...

Side 1 Lord, make me an instrument of your kindness.

Side 2 Let me be kind in word and action.

Side 1 Lord, make me an instrument of your gentleness.

Side 2 Let me consider people's feelings.

Side 1 Lord, make me an instrument of your justice.

Side 2 Let me work for those deprived of their rights for food, clothing, jobs, or even a voice in their life.

Side 1 Lord, make me an instrument of your freedom.

Side 2 Let me live freely, not hooked on uncontrolled needs for approval, recognition, or personal gain.

Side 1 Lord, make me an instrument of your honesty.

Side 2 Let me see life as it really is and live sincerely, with integrity.

Side 1 Lord, make me an instrument of your respect for persons.

Side 2 Let me treat each person with dignity, indeed as having unique value, and may I never put anyone down.

Side 1 Lord, make me an instrument of your compassion.

Side 2 Let me be sensitive to the ideas of others.

Side 1 Lord, make me an instrument of your care for earth.

Side 2 Let me protect and respect the environment and be filled with wonder, at the beauty of creation.

Concluding Prayer:

Presider: Let us pray:

Christ be with us,
Christ within us,
Christ behind us,

Christ before us,
In the path we take,
Christ walk with us.
On the road we tread,
Christ go before us.
Be a lamp for our steps,
And a beacon for our eyes,
That we may know
Through change and growth,
The presence of the One,
Who has said,
" I am with you always." (Adapted from: *Breastplate of St. Patrick*)

All: Amen

Closing Blessing

Presider: Let us pray together for God's continued blessings upon us and our work:

All: May God who is goodness and truth bless us and give us his strength.

May God who is kindness and love, nourish us with treasures of faith, preserving us in all good things.

May God who is Saviour and Redeemer, keep our steps safe from danger, directing us to paths of peace and joy.

May God remain always in our minds and hearts, as we seek to grow in truth, compassion, and grace. Amen.

Celebrating Our Vocation as Catholic Teacher

Introduction

Gathering Prayer: *(Please stand.)*

Presider: Heavenly Father, we gather today as educators and people of faith, to reflect on our vocation and ministry as Catholic teachers.

Open our minds and fill our hearts with the power and strength of your Spirit.

Enkindle in us your love, your sensitivity, and your compassion, as we endeavour to serve you in our school communities.

This we ask through Jesus, your Son, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

(Please be seated.)

Reading: Ephesians 3: 16 - 19

Reflective Song: Holy Ground *(J.M. Talbot: Holy Ground)*

Petitionary Prayer: *(Please stand)*

Presider: Father, we are all called to be people of faith and witnesses to you.

Strengthen us to use our 'gifts'.

Empower us to serve you well in our school communities.

May we reflect you to those whom we meet.

We ask this through Jesus, your Son, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

Leader: For the gift of **vision**,
to see things that we sometimes miss, because our eyes are
earthbound.

All: Give us your insight.

Leader: For the gift of **conviction**,
to fully live and teach the gospel we have been given.

All: Give us your courage.

Leader: For the gift of **poverty**,
To let go of all that clutters our lives.

All: Give us your freedom.

Leader: For the gift of **stability**,
To stay with what we believe and endure the long haul.

All: Give us your fidelity.

Leader: For the gift of **hope**,
To wait for the rebirth, for growth, for completion,
To hope even when it seems hopeless.

All: Give us your patience.

Leader: For the gift of **wonder**,
To be gentle with the mystery of life in us and in others,
To stand on holy ground and worship.

All: Give us your reverence.

Leader: Heavenly Father, we thank you for giving us your Son Jesus and for
entrusting us to do your work here on earth. May we share our gifts
generously and lavishly in service to you.
We pray all of this for your honour and glory. Amen.

Final Blessing:

Presider: Let us pray together for God's continued blessing upon us and our work.

All: May God in his mercy and goodness
bless us and give us peace.
May God nourish us with faith and hope,
preserving us in all good things.
May God keep us safe,
directing us to paths of peace and joy.
May the blessing of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and remain always in our minds and hearts,
as we seek to grow in truth and grace.
Amen.

Closing Song: City of God (CBW III #345) or another suitable song.



**Called to Serve: Called to Lead:
A Mini Retreat During Advent
(Half-Day format)**

I. Introduction and Welcome

(Lighting of the Advent wreath)

II. Opening Prayer: Touch Me

III. Opening Song: Stay Awake

IV. Reflection #1: Vocation / Ministry as Catholic Teachers

A. Small group discussion - re guideline questions BLM *Reflection#1*

a) Who are we? Teacher vs Catholic Teacher

b) What are we called to do? Job vs Ministry

B. Plenary sharing

C. Personal reflection on BLM #2: *Teaching: An Advent Vocation*

Sharing with partner / Sharing in a group

V. Break

VI. Remembering the Catholic Graduate Expectations

*(CD, Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations: A Visual Journey, 2002,
Institute for Catholic Education)*

VII. Remembering Our Vision / Confirming Our Commitment

- Revisiting Our Mission Statement / Pledging Our Efforts

VIII. Closing Prayer Celebration: Proclaiming Our Vision

IX. Closing Song: Every Valley (CBW III #308)



Touch Me

Come, Lord Jesus,
touch me
with love, life-giving as light,
to quiet my anger a little,
and gentle my desperation,
to soften my fears some
and soothe the knots of my cynicism,
to wipe away the tears from my eyes
and ease the pains in my body and soul,
to reconcile me to myself
and then to the people around me,
and then nation to nation,
that none shall learn war any more,
but turn to feed the hungry,
house the homeless
and care compassionately
for the least of our brothers and sisters,
Reshape me in your wholeness
to be a healing person, Lord.

Come, Lord Jesus,
expand me
by your power, life-generating as the sea,
to accept
and use my power,
to do something I believe in
and be something more of who I mean to be
and can be,
to inspire me to dream and move,
sweat and sing,
fail and laugh,
cuss and create,
to link my passion with courage,
my hope with discipline,
my love with persistence,
to enable me to learn from difficulties,
grow in adversities,
gain wisdom from defeats,
perspective from disappointments,
gracefulness from crises,
and find joy
in simply living it all fully.
Release me through your power
to be a powerful person, Lord.

Come, Lord Jesus,
startle me
with your presence, life-sustaining as air,
to open my heart
to praise you,
to open my mind
to attend you,
to open my spirit
to worship you,
to open me
to live my life
as authentically and boldly
as you lived yours.

Come, Lord Jesus,
be with me
in my longing;
come, stay with me
is my needing;
come, go with me
in my doing;
come, struggle with me
in my searching;
come, rejoice with me
in my loving.

From: **Guerrillas of Grace** by Ted Loder

Stay Awake!

Stay Awake! Be ready!

You do not know the hour that the Lord is coming

Stay Awake! Be ready! The Lord is coming soon.

Alleluia, alleluia, the Lord is coming soon.

Prepare! Get ready!

The Lord is coming soon and we must be ready.

Prepare! Get ready! The Lord is coming soon.

Alleluia, alleluia, the Lord is coming soon.

Rejoice! Be happy!

The Lord is coming soon and we feel like singing.

Rejoice ! Be happy! The Lord is coming soon.

Alleluia, alleluia, the Lord is coming soon.



*Rise Up and Sing: Stay Awake: Verse 1
Verse 2 and 3 (Peggy Carney)*

Reflection # 1

I. a) What is a teacher?

b) What is a Catholic teacher?

II. a) What tasks do teachers perform?

b) In what ways is the work of Catholic teaching a **ministry**?

Teaching: An Advent Vocation

As a Catholic teacher I am called to be a person of faith, a person who lives the challenge of the gospel.

I am called to be **watchful** _____

I am called to **prepare** _____

I am called to **be ready** _____

I am called to be **patient** _____

I am called to **trust** _____

I am called to **rejoice** _____

I am called to **hope** _____

I am called to **celebrate** _____

Closing Prayer Celebration: Proclaiming Our Vision (Advent)

(Set up a simple prayer table, consisting of a purple cloth, a crucifix, a Bible, a Christ candle and an Advent wreath. Light the Advent wreath.)

Presider: Please stand and let us pray together...

All: In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Presider: Heavenly Father, we gather in thanksgiving at the end of this day of reflection. We thank you for our time together and for the rich opportunity to gather, remember and celebrate who we are as a Catholic staff and an Advent people of light. Fill us with grace and determination to be instruments of hope and healing in our school community. Strengthen us with faith and zeal to live out our vocations and fulfill our ministry in this school community. We make this prayer in Jesus' name.

All: Amen.

Opening Song: Share the Light *(Rise Up and Sing #158)*

Presider: Please be seated as we listen to the Word of God.

Reading: A reading from the prophet Isaiah: (Isaiah 43: 1 - 3, 10 - 11)
The Word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 27

Response Refrain: The Lord is my light and my help.

The Lord is my light and my help;
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
before whom shall I shrink? **R.**

There is one thing I ask of the Lord,
for this I long,
to live in the house of the Lord,
all the days of my life;
to savor the sweetness of the Lord,
to behold his temple. **R.**

It is your face, O Lord, that I seek;
hide not your face.
Dismiss not your servant in anger;
you have been my help. **R.**

I am sure I shall see the Lord's goodness
in the land of the living.
Hope in him, hold firm and take heart.
Hope in the Lord! **R.**

Advent Song Response: Come Lord Jesus

(Refrain only: Hi God #2 p.18-20)

Come Lord Jesus; come Lord Jesus; come Lord Jesus;
Come and be born in our hearts.

A Litany of Our Vision: *(Please stand.)*

Reader 1: Our students are called to be discerning believers formed in the Catholic faith community.

All: We are all called to be open to discerning and responding to the ongoing ways God speaks to us in order to witness with integrity to our students and one another.

Reader 2: Our students are called to be effective communicators.

All: We are called to communicate through our words and actions that we recognize and honour the dignity of all persons.

Reader 3: Our students are called to be reflective and creative thinkers.

All: We are called to be reflective and creative educators, who vision information, learning, and our response to it, in light of the common good.

Reader 4: Our students are called to be self-directed, responsible, life-long learners.

All: We are called to be people who continuously pursue personal growth and religious literacy in order to help build up the Reign of God on earth.

Reader 5: Our students are called to be collaborative contributors.

All: We are called to provide a life-giving learning environment and school community that invites respectful discussion, creative visioning and inclusive dialogue for all students and staff.

Reader 6: Our students are called to be caring family members.

All: We are called to value, affirm and respond compassionately to the needs of family, school, parish, and the larger community.

Reader 7: Our students are called to be responsible citizens.

All: We are called to be responsible and generous Catholic educators and people of faith, who are intent on building up the Reign of God on earth.

Presider: Loving Father, be with us and sustain us all as we endeavor to minister to our students and one another. Strengthen and bless us in our work. Imbue within us a deep desire and courageous determination to be instruments of your hope and peace. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus, our Lord and friend.

All: Amen.

Closing Song: Every Valley (*CBW III #308*) or another suitable song.

Saint Augustine:

"It is not enough to give to the poor...

we must be poor with the poor,

be hungry with those who are hungry

suffer with those who suffer,

so as to truly live in the love of Christ.

Let us not forget that Christ is in the poor,

in the one who is hungry.

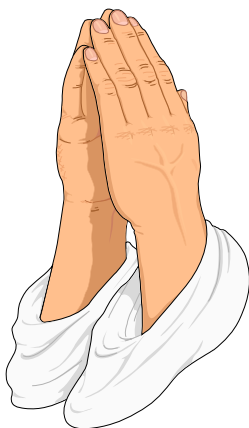
So, let us deny ourselves and look up to crucified Christ.

Our fast will be a way of participating in the Cross of

Christ

and our deliberate choice to fast from our wealth

will become necessary abundance of the poor."

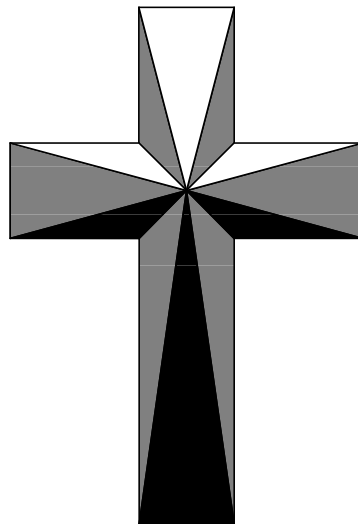


In the Name of Jesus - Reflections on Christian Leadership
By: Fr. Henri Nouwen

" I am deeply convinced that the Christian leader of the future is called to be completely irrelevant and to stand in this world with nothing to offer but his or her own vulnerable self. That is the way Jesus came to reveal God's love...

The way of the Christian leader is not the way of upward mobility... but the way of downward mobility ending on the cross. Christian leadership in the future will be a leadership of powerlessness and humility in which the suffering servant of God, Jesus Christ, is made manifest! "

(Quoted in *Deacon Digest* , May, 1991)



Teacher's Prayer

Creator God, we praise you, the source of all life. Renew our faith and guide us in our ministry as catholic teachers. Let us touch the hearts and minds of those with whom we work.

Lord Jesus, share with us your counsel, so we may choose knowledge over ignorance, wisdom over waste, peace over injustice, community over isolation and service over domination.

Holy Spirit, nurture our growth. Inspire us to give birth to the creative powers within us. Let us come to the fullest of life promised in the Gospel. Amen.

O.E.C.T.A. Prayer

Principal's Prayer

Lord, God,
we ask for the grace of your presence
and the gift of your wisdom
as we gather today in the service of
Catholic Education.

Send us your Spirit to guide us so that we may be
collaborative leaders and genuine
witnesses to the faith and mission we profess.

Make us sensitive to the gifts of others,
enabling them to enrich our school communities.

Under the patronage of
Mary, Mother of our Saviour,
we dedicate ourselves to excellence in education,
respect for the dignity of all persons and the
sanctity of creation.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.

C.P.C.O. Prayer

A Supervisory Officer's Prayer

O God of all goodness and grace,
We praise you and bless your holy name.
We thank you for calling us to lead and serve
in the field of Catholic education.
Help us to be true to that calling:
to be women and men of faith, hope and love.
May we lead with vision, courage and compassion,
and serve with humility, gentleness and kindness.

Strengthen us in our resolve to uphold the true,
the good and the beautiful.
Stand by us in your efforts to promote your reign
of justice, peace and love.
Give us eyes to see things not only as they are
but as they should be,
ears to hear all the voices
from the margins no less than from the centre,
hearts to listen to the needs, hopes and dreams
of all whom we are called to lead and serve.

O Holy Spirit, come and abide with us.
Enliven us with your creative power.
Inspire us with your wisdom and understanding;
Warm us with your love,
so that we may live what we profess to believe
and serve others with generous and cheerful
hearts.

We make our prayer in Jesus' name.
Amen.

OCSOA Prayer

A Prayer for our Vision

A Trustee's Prayer

God our Father,
You inspire us through a heritage that is rich in blessings,
You challenge us to grow, as we remember the struggles of our past,
You call us as partners in the Catholic educational community
To be inclusive of all who seek to learn in the light of faith.

Grant that your Holy Spirit might continue to guide us
So that by the power of Your grace,
Our share in the Church's mission
To spread the Good News of Jesus
May be relevant in the world today,
And point to a future that is filled with hope.

We ask you to bless our work,
That it may serve to protect,
Nurture and rightly guide
In the Catholic faith
Those children You have
Entrusted to our care,
To the glory of your name.

We make this prayer
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

**Renfrew County Catholic
District School Board
Trustees 2003**

A Prayer

May I become at all times, both now and forever
A protector for those without protection
A guide for those who have lost their way
A ship for those with oceans to cross
A bridge for those with rivers to cross
A sanctuary for those in danger
A lamp for those without light
A place for those who lack shelter
And a servant to all in need.

Dalai Lama (Wisdom 246)

Web Addresses for Catholic Education

Eastern Ontario Catholic School Boards:

Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board:

<http://www.alcdsb.on.ca>

Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario

<http://www.cdsbeo.on.ca>

Ottawa Catholic District School Board

<http://www.ocdsb.on.ca>

Renfrew County Catholic District School Board

<http://www.rccdsb.edu.on.ca>

Diocese:

Archdiocese of Kingston:

<http://www.romancatholic.kingston.on.ca>

Archdiocese of Ottawa:

<http://www.ecclesia-ottawa.org>

Diocese of Pembroke:

<http://www.3.sympatico.ca/rcecpembroke/>

Cooperatives:

Catholic Curriculum Cooperative Central and Western Ontario Region:

<http://www.catholic-curr-coop.org>

Eastern Ontario Catholic Curriculum Cooperative

<http://www.eoccc.org>

Northern Ontario Catholic Curriculum Cooperative

<http://www.noccc.on.ca>

Institute for Catholic Education (ICE)

<http://www.tcdsb.org/ice>

Educational Associations:

Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario

<http://www.cpco.on.ca>

Ontario Catholic School Trustees Association

<http://www.ocsta.on.ca>

Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association

<http://www.ocsoa.ca>

Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association

<http://www.oecta.on.ca>

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Additional Resources:

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