

Catholic Community in Action

When I was doing research for my dissertation on the Catholic principalship, I interviewed Catholic principals across the province and met with focus groups in six of Alberta's Catholic school districts. One common insight came up repeatedly and seems even more pertinent today. Catholic principals said that defining moments for their Catholic schools often centered around times of loss and tragedy; times when our faith provides hope. We, as Catholics, respond to crisis with prayer, with love, and with service. This is the gift of Catholic education and a treasure for us as educators.

In Alberta, Canada and around the world, life as we know it has been turned on its head. What has not changed is our God. He remains faithful and is at work in each and every situation. Catholic schools "put a little skin on Jesus" by allowing our students and families to encounter Jesus through us. We witness, we pray, we proclaim and we serve. Catholic schools are well equipped to bring hope and meaning during this pandemic. We're doing it now and we'll continue to do it through Jesus our Lord and savior.

Bonnie



Chaplain MT is hanging out with her favorite BFF "Jesus" and misses her Thunder Famiglia! "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9
St Timothy School@sttimscochrane

"When I am afraid, I put my trust in you."
Psalm 56:3



Positive Posts
Catholic Schools in a time of crisis.
Reaching out to our students and families with FAITH and HOPE.



"Our hope is that people will have the experience of being united in prayer, especially at a time when we are isolated."
Catholic News Service @CatholicNewsSvc

#popefrancis: "We want to respond to the pandemic with universal prayer, compassion & tenderness. Let's remain united and let people most alone and suffering know we are near. Let us pray for medical workers, police & government leaders."

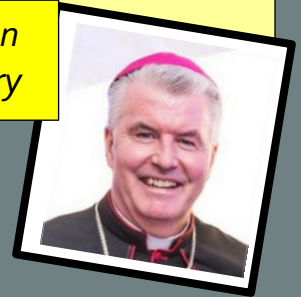
Excerpts from Bishop McGrattan's homily at the Mass of Installation for Chief Superintendent of Calgary Catholic School Board, Dr. Bryan Szumlas
March 11, 2020



"The renewal of our Catholic schools will involve this prophetic vision and stance of Jeremiah. We need to speak boldly and advocate for the importance of a Catholic vision of education. At the heart of Catholic education are values that transcend us. Values that constantly renew the 'face of Christ' in the community of the school and its educational programs. These values are essential if Catholic education is to truly remain Catholic. They are: the Dignity of the Human Person, a Sacramental World View, Prayer and the Sacraments and the sense of Community. As the prophet speaks not in his own words but the words of God, so to the Catholic school must speak in the words and actions of Christ. This is the prophetic role of a Catholic educator."

"Christian leadership must always begin with the focus on the community. A Christian leader must first be a servant, one who is called from within the community and who is entrusted with this role of responsibility, of service. To be first a servant to others. Christian leaders are those who know the community but who also place the needs of the community first before their own. It is the example of Christ himself who was a shepherd leader."

Bishop McGrattan
Diocese of Calgary



INTRODUCING....Hot off the press The 5 Marks of a Catholic School

Presentation
& Videos

The Five Marks of a
Catholic School



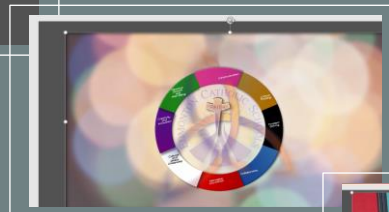
Where it all began.....

• The 5 Marks of Catholic School was introduced to Catholic educators in Alberta in 2014 at a Catholic Education symposium hosted by ACSTA.

• Most Reverend J. Michael Miller, CSB from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver was the keynote speaker and is the author of "The Five Marks of a Catholic School".



The 5 Marks of a Catholic School presentation and video is now available for your use with all stakeholders. Designed to be an entire presentation in 90 minutes or chunked into 5 x 20 minute presentations. Ideal for school councils,



Special thanks to the Catholic school districts who provided in-kind support to the 5 Marks GrACE Initiative:

- Elk Island CSRD
- Holy Family CRD
- Edmonton CSSD
- Christ the Redeemer Catholic District
- Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District



GrACE Top Toolkit Tips

1. Pray daily, pray individually, pray together remotely, pray!
2. On social media, post pictures of Catholic community in action. Tell the faith stories.

Dear students,
Please know that your teachers are not enjoying this time away from the classroom. We think about you, we hope you are safe and healthy. We miss your stories, we miss your smiles, we miss you and we miss our classrooms with the energy you bring.

Love,
Your teachers



Yesterday, in response to the Pope's plea to pray the rosary with him on St Joseph's Feast Day, over 150 staff from across the CTR district joined in to pray together on ZOOM! We continue to pray for healing and restoration. #bettertogether #CTR@GrACE4cathed

We are all trying to make sure our students continue to learn the "content" but don't forget to provide some resources for faith & well being. We are in unprecedented times and when we come out of this, good mental health will be more important. #Catholicedchat Maria Hawk, Ed.E

Positive Posts
Reaching out to our students and families with FAITH and HOPE.

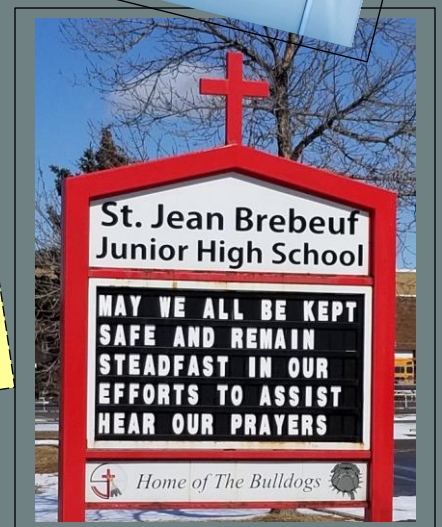


PRAYER FOR FAMILIES

Heavenly Father,

Please bless our families with Your love and protect us from harm. Give us grace to forgive, strength to overcome the difficulties we face, and keep us together when the world tries to pull us apart.
In Jesus Name, Amen.

Thinking about all of our students and families during this time. Sending prayers of hope and strength #faith OLV Chestermere



Faithfully Stories

Thank you to the Diocese of Calgary for partnering with GrACE to publish a monthly Catholic education story in their Faithfully blog.

Special thanks to Joann Bartley, Holy Spirit Catholic Schools for authoring the first story: **Shining a Light on Catholic Education**. Read below for an excerpt. For full story go to <https://www.catholiccyyc.ca/blog/shining-the-light-on-catholic-education>

In our Catholic schools today, our students are not living a “Sunday Catholic” kind of life. They are learning to know our faith deeply and they live their faith every single day. I can think of no better description of what is happening in our Catholic schools than with the words from the Gospel of Matthew. “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before human beings, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” Our students are the light – they are shining brightly every day, not just on Sundays, because of the good and holy work that is happening in our Catholic schools. I am proud to be part of the story.

Joann Bartley
Director of Religious Education
Holy Spirit Catholic School Division

GrACE, Faith and Covid19

Our school division was in the throes of rolling out community GrACE groups just as the Premier announced that student access to schools and parish communities are closed. Initially, I was, and still am concerned about my students, my duties as a teacher; the health of my family and school community. I could also be concerned about bathroom tissue but I digress.

Social isolation does some strange things to my mind. Over the weekend while I was cooped up in my house, fresh from watching Mass on Facebook (in my pajamas with a coffee) I thought (audible gasp) what about GrACE? Despite the closure of our parishes and schools, being denied to meet as groups and the concept of social distancing, we can still be advocates for GrACE.

Here is a short, far from comprehensive list, of GrACE-ful ideas for you and your school, parish, or community during these confusing and uncertain times.

- Encourage your Catholic Schools to send a message of hope to parents and families, thanking them for choosing Catholic Education in Alberta since 1859. They can have a GrACE link for activities or invite their schools to send the GrACE newsletter out to all families.
- Create a GrACE live session on the GrACE Facebook page to discuss ways to promote Catholic Education.
- Add a GrACE prayer, intention or message to your parish’s or school’s social media platform.
- Priests, through virtual Mass or digital homilies, can invite parishioners to pray for Catholic Education and its success across Alberta.
- Contact someone (text, email, phone, or message) and tell them your good news story about Catholic Education.

Matthew’s Gospel speaks of people of faith and trust (Matthew 21:22 “Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive”). Pray for a timely end to the abnormality of the world and have faith that we are reaching out to each other during this time of need. I am “GrACEful” for Catholic Education.

Submitted by: Lynn Karasiuk James,
STAR Catholic School Division, Leduc

Catholic Education Prayers of the Faithful for April

- For Catholic Education: That our Catholic schools may make known God's plan for all creation, we pray to the Lord.
- For Catholic Education: That the leaders of our Catholic schools may be encouraged and comforted in the love of God, we pray to the Lord.
- For Catholic Education: That our Catholic schools may always receive their identity from the teachings of Christ Jesus, we pray to the Lord.
- For Catholic Education: That our Catholic schools may be a place of healing and safety in a hurting world, we pray to the Lord.

COVID 19 Pandemic-A Catholic Prayer Response

As Catholics we have a blessed gift in our faith during times of trials and uncertainty. Sometimes the reasons for all of our prayers are disguised as challenges for us and our families. I strongly believe that our faith keeps us better equipped to handle those difficult moments in our lives.

As we consider how to do life in the midst of mass confusion and widespread fear, one of our recent stories reminded me of Jesus' words in Matthew 6: "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink ... but seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

These are vital words for us. And yet in difficult times when the tolls of afflicted and death rise and life as we know it has stopped, it can be difficult to actually put those words into action in our lives and in our hearts. How do we "not worry about tomorrow" and instead "seek Him first."

In times of trial, doubt or uncertainty... turn to God's goodness. Come to the Lord in prayer. In prayer, we are reminded of God's truth which emboldens our strength ... hope and our courage.

How do we not worry and live lives of courage, not fear? Scripture and the dark-hours experiences of our persecuted brothers and sisters tell us that prayer is our action point. Jesus calls us to pray because that is where we find His presence.

The mission of GrACE is to

inspire,
invigorate and
embolden

the *spirit* of Catholic education in order to **unite, engage, educate** and **communicate** with one voice on its behalf.

Here are specific prayerful messages for this time of uncertainty

- Pray that God would calm fears and that His people would be reminded we have a different identity—one of courage, not of fear.
- Pray that the church would be a calming presence and radiant light in the face of so much confusion and darkness.
- Pray that we would be people of compassion who intentionally reach out to others
- Pray for world leaders as they work with healthcare organizations and the medical community to develop next steps.
- Pray with researchers and biologists as they work to develop a coronavirus vaccine. Pray for wisdom and insight.
- Pray with first responders who are triaging, testing, and treating increasing numbers of people. Ask God to give them patience, wisdom and a gentle spirit.
- Pray with church leaders as they offer insight and wisdom to their congregations and communities.
- Pray for those whose jobs or hours have been cut due to economic downturn. Pray for parents who are struggling to work and care for their children
- Pray that we as God's people would be unified as one Church and would be reminded of our hope in Christ and the truth that our Savior who died and rose for us has already overcome the world.
- Pray that we would be people who read His Word and take both His call and His promises to head and heart.

Submitted by Mark Hickie ,Vice Principal, St Clare School, Calgary Catholic School District

Subscribe to Faithfully.

Read and share stories on Catholic education and our Catholic faith [Faithfully](#)

Serving you and praying for Catholic education
Dr. Bonnie Annicchiarico, Director of GrACE
GrACE email is gracedirector7@gmail.com