



Message from GrACE Executive Director

Dear GrACE Advocates and Friends in Christ,

In Alberta, Parents have the choice to send their children to either public or separate Catholic Schools with both systems receiving Government funding. This choice is an essential aspect of education throughout Alberta and beyond.

Catholic Education acknowledges that every individual has boundless potential, which is seen as a gift from God.

Nurturing spiritual, intellectual and social growth contributes, not only to the holistic development of all our Students, but also to the well-being of Alberta's Catholic Education system as a whole.

Catholic Education provides students with a strong foundation in Catholic teachings, values, and moral principles. It helps Students develop their spiritual identity and ethical values within the context of the Catholic faith.

This value-based education emphasizes virtues to include compassion, justice, and service to others. With the result that Students attending Catholic Schools are encouraged to engage in community service and develop a sense of social responsibility for the benefit of wider society.

Catholic Schools celebrate religious events and cultural traditions, fostering a sense of strong community involvement and sense of belonging, as well as, shared values amongst Students and Families.

Catholic Education is also open to all Students, regardless of their religious background. While, it is of a Catholic identity, it is not exclusive, and non-Catholic students are welcome to attend.

By building a supportive community around the gift of Catholic Education, GrACE makes a compelling call to action in support of the vital mission of Catholic Education.

By effectively conveying the significance of Catholic Education and the positive contribution it makes, each and everyone of us can inspire others to join us in our mission to deliver fully publicly funded Catholic Education.

Through our collective efforts and open communication, we can inspire and engage others to actively participate in the GrACE coalition, advocating for the unique benefits and values of Catholic Education.

If you have any questions for GrACE or need assistance, please feel free to reach out to me.

Kate

Executive Director GrACE
Gracedirector7@gmail.com

A Grateful Heart Makes All the Difference

GrACE plays a significant role in supporting and advocating for Catholic Education throughout Alberta and beyond.

There are four main pillars – Unite; Engage; Communicate; Educate – that represent the primary focus areas of goals of GrACE.

These pillars and associated deliverables serve to enhance the presence and impact of Catholic Education, ensuring its continued relevance and success within the broader educational landscape.

GrACE advocates for the rights and needs of Catholic Schools, ensuring the unique character and values of Catholic Education within a secular educational landscape.

Contributing to the collective effort to support and promote Catholic education, Grace is accompanied by Alberta and NWT Bishops Conference; CCSSA; ACSTA in its service to Catholic Education and supplementary role within the wider Catholic Education Movement.

The Alberta and Northwest Territories Bishops Assembly represents the Catholic Bishops in the region. This conference provides spiritual leadership and guidance to the Catholic community, including matters related to Catholic Education. It may offer moral and religious support and insights on the role of Catholic Education in the formation of individuals' faith and character.

CCSSA (Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta) is an organization that represents the Catholic School Superintendents in Alberta, providing leadership; advocacy and support for Catholic Education, sharing best practices and addressing issues that affect Catholic Education throughout Alberta and beyond.

ACSTA (Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association) is specific to Alberta and serves as the voice for Catholic School Trustees and advocates for Catholic Education within the provincial education system; provides faith-formation; fellowship opportunities;

Meet the GrACE Board

Historical Overview

Dedicated to serving and celebrating Catholic Schools and Education throughout Alberta and beyond, GrACE works in concert to foster a sense of unity and purpose in advancing Catholic Education in Alberta and beyond.

GrACE provides an inclusive and welcoming environment to inspire and invigorate the spirit of Catholic Education while promoting an understanding of its benefits to more than 183,500 Students at more than 450 Catholic Schools in 19 Catholic School Districts and 4 Francophone Boards.

The 'seeds' for GrACE began within Catholic Education communities and through conversations. With the encouragement of the Alberta Bishops, on December 12, 2017 a small working group representing ACSTA and CCSSA was tasked with creating a proposal for an advocacy group.

The goal at that time was to establish a partnership that would 'weave together the voices of these parties with strong messaging to ensure that Catholic Education thrives.

Approved by Albertas Bishops a covenant between CCSSA and ACSTA was created.

In October 2018 a GrACE Board was established consisting of 2 representatives from each of the partner boards and the name: Grateful Advocates for Catholic Education (GrACE) was agreed upon.

Supporting ACSTA and CCSSA, GrACE exists as a platform for discussion and exchange at all levels of society to both share experiences but also to address challenges faced by Catholic Education.

In doing so, GrACE provides both a complementary and supplementary role with added value for the wider Catholic Education Family throughout Alberta and beyond.

By bringing together individuals and organizations from different backgrounds and perspectives, GrACE encourages collaboration and a sense of collective responsibility in upholding the mission and values of Catholic Education in our shared society.

Strengthening the cause of Catholic Education by ensuring that it is recognized and protected within the broader educational landscape, GrACE's partnership approach provides further opportunities to address common challenges and opportunities in Catholic Education while preserving the distinctive character and values that Catholic Schools provide.

As GrACE champions its commitment to reach as many people as possible, GrACE's comprehensive approach involves a wide range of strategies, focused on engaging the whole Catholic Community and others who are not within the Catholic Education system.

Beyond Catholic Schools and Educators; Parents, Parishioners and supporters, engagement naturally follows with a diverse range of stakeholders, encouraging open dialogue with all those who share a commitment to quality education and values-based learning, as well as, those less sympathetic and appreciative of faith based education.

Fostering a supportive network, GrACE, in a determined effort to protect and promote the values and beliefs of Catholic Education in an impactful way, naturally expands in a more 'outward' focus, beyond the Catholic Community, to raise awareness; to build support; and to foster a deeper understanding of the value of Catholic Education and the positive impact of Catholic Schools on its Students; the broader education system and wider society, as a whole.



Archbishop Richard Smith
Chair
Archdiocese of Edmonton



Dr. Bryan Szumlas
Vice-Chair
Chief Superintendent, Calgary Catholic School District (CCSSA)



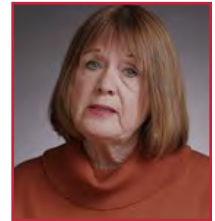
Betty Turpin
Member at Large
Superintendent, Holy Family Catholic Schools



Bishop Gary Franken
Member at Large
Diocese of St. Paul



Vincent MacDonald
Member at Large
Trustee, Lakeland Catholic Schools



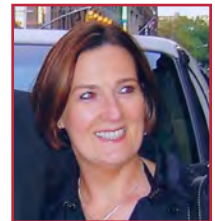
Linda Ellefson
Member at Large
Trustee, Holy Spirit Catholic School Division



Susanna Kaup
Associate Member
Edmonton Catholic School District (REN)



Grant Gay
Associate Member
Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools (REN)



Kate Mallon
Executive Director
GrACE

Meet the CCSSA and ACSTA Boards

In recent weeks CCSSA's and ACSTA's education leaders from across Alberta gathered for Annual Meetings with determination and commitment to Catholic Education

Celebrating the gift of publicly funded Catholic Education throughout Alberta and beyond, I have never experienced more dedicated advocates.

In doing so, GrACE provides both a complementary and supplementary role with added value for the wider Catholic Education Family throughout Alberta and beyond.

By bringing together individuals and organizations from different backgrounds and perspectives, GrACE encourages collaboration and a sense of collective responsibility in upholding the mission and values of Catholic Education in our shared society.

CCSSA Approves a New Constitution

In November of 2023, the membership of the CCSSA unanimously voted to approve a new Constitution. The graphic below shows the new structure. This model makes the CCSSA's Board slightly larger (8 voting members), ensures there is regional representation, and formally empowers the Board to act on behalf of the membership between the four plenary meetings of the membership that are held annually. The model also aligns better with the diocesan structure of the Church in Alberta and ensures the unique perspectives of members in each diocese are represented. This model also creates formal action committees that engage in collaborative work that, upon Board approval, will benefit all school divisions. This model also recognizes the importance of the Alberta Bishops by placing the Bishop Liaison on the Board of Directors and making that Bishop an Associate Member of the CCSSA. This model also enshrines the ability of the GrACE Director, the Executive Director of the ACSTA, and the Alberta Curriculum Resource Coordinator to fully participate in plenary sessions of the CCSSA as Associate Members of the CCSSA.



Meet the CCSSA Board



Ryan Ledene
Past-President



Paul Corrigan
President



Dr. Dwayne Zarichny
First Vice-President



Pat McDonald
Second Vice-President



Ryan Sawula
Diocesan Director
Archdiocese of Edmonton



John Wasch
Diocesan Director
Diocese of Calgary



Chantal Axani
Diocesan Director
Dioceses of the North



Dolorèse Nolette
Francophone Director



Dr. Scott Morrison
Executive Director
Ex Officio

FACTS ABOUT THE CCSSA

- 23 Catholic school divisions
- 86 Regular Members
- 5 Associate Members
- 8-person Board of Directors with 2 ex officio members
- Board of Directors acts on behalf of the membership between meetings
- 4 plenary sessions of the entire membership held annually
- Plenary sessions focus on faith formation and goals in annual assurance plan (e.g. recruiting and forming Catholic teachers and administrators and responding to other problems of practice in Catholic education)



Archbishop Richard Smith
AB Bishop Liaison
Ex Officio

Meet the ACSTA Board



Kelly Whalen
President
Holy Family CSSD



Dawn Miller
Vice-President
St. Thomas Aquinas
RCSSD



Harry Salm
Past President
Christ the Redeemer
CSSD



Mary Martin
Calgary RCSSD



Andrew Gustafson
Christ the Redeemer
CSSD



Miguel Poulin
Conseil Scolaire
Centre-Est



Giscard Kodiane
Conseil Scolaire
Centre-Nord



Geneviève Poulin
Conseil Scolaire
FrancoSud



Mario Paradis
Conseil Scolaire du
Nord-Ouest



Robert Joseph Gratton
East Central CSSD



Terry Harris
Edmonton CSSD



Dean Sarnecki
Elk Island CSSD



Jennifer Landry
Evergreen CSSD



Cathie Langmead
Fort McMurray
RCSSD



John Croken
Grande Prairie
RCSSD



Noreen Radford
Greater St. Albert
RCSSD



John Kuran
Holy Family CSSD



Linda Ellefson
Holy Spirit RCSSD



Vince MacDonald
Lakeland RCSSD



Gemma Christie
Living Waters CSSD



Kathy Glasgo
Medicine Hat
RCSSD



Cynthia Leyson
Red Deer CSSD



Lorette Andersen
St. Paul School
Division



Jolyne De Marco
St. Thomas Aquinas
RCSSD



Susan Waddell
Yellowknife Catholic
Schools

Looking forward to moving together, GrACE; CCSSA and ACSTA has three new Executive Directors this year.

Besides myself, Dr. Scott Morrison took up his new post earlier this year as Executive Director for CCSSA.

While, in recent weeks, Brendan Cavanagh was promoted as Executive Director for ACSTA.

Building on the incredibly successful work of our predecessors to whom we are all grateful, our leadership changes bring fresh perspectives and ideas which we all intend to be beneficial for our respective missions and the Catholic Education Movement we serve.

We plan for continued success and growth of our respective organizations and thank God for the opportunity.



Scott Morrison



Brendan Cavanagh

Celebrate Catholic Education

Publicly funded Catholic Education in Alberta is a unique and cherished historical gift for which we are all grateful.

It is an invaluable offering to both the Catholic Community and wider society, carrying growing responsibility in an increasingly secular world.

Catholic Schools provide an education that goes beyond academic subjects and fosters character development, empathy, and compassion.

Providing exceptional educational opportunities that integrate faith; academic excellence and service to the community, Parents; Teachers and Catholic Educators; School Administrators; Trustees and Clergy create an enriching transformative experience for Students within the Catholic Education System.

Dedicated to nurturing the spiritual; intellectual and social growth of all Students in Catholic Schools, Catholic Educators contribute to the continued growth and success of Catholic Education, preparing students to become compassionate and capable individuals who positively impact society.

With the evolving landscape of Education, it is increasingly important to celebrate Catholic Schools and to extol those aspects that have made the Catholic Schools and Education system influential and valued throughout Alberta and beyond.

GrACE's Newsletter seeks to build a provincial Catholic community by celebrating Catholic education across Alberta.

Students; Parents and Family Engagement:

Dedicated to serving and celebrating Catholic Schools and Education, I am grateful for the strong partnerships that already exist between GrACE and the wider Catholic Education Family - including Parents; Teachers and Catholic Educators; School Administrators; Trustees; Clergy; Parishioners and Community Members - providing exceptional educational opportunities that integrate faith; academic excellence and service to the community, you create an enriching transformative experience within Alberta's Catholic Education System: -

How can we more actively involve even more Parents and Families in our Student's education?

What can we do to foster a strong home-school partnership and provide Parent's with further support for their Child's Catholic School experience?

GrACE continues to emphasize the unique benefits and contributions of Catholic Education, providing a holistic education that combines academic excellence with faith-based values.

As we champion our commitment to reach Catholic Parents and supporters, GrACE provides an inclusive and welcoming environment that encourages dialogue and understanding.

Parents are the first educators and in a synodal Church where we are invited to listen to not only the voice of the magisterium but also the whole people of God in seeking to discern the action of the Holy Spirit, we must fully appreciate our Catholic Parents who chose for their children an education rooted securely in a deep and compassionate, Christ-centred knowledge and understanding of service and sharing both within and beyond the Catholic Community.

Aligned with GrACE's core values, let's explore innovative strategies that will enhance engagement with all of you; your Student bodies; Catholic Parents and Parishioners; and all stakeholders within the wider Catholic Education movement in Alberta and beyond.

The Gift of public funded Catholic Education

I am grateful for the gift of Catholic Education and appreciate the values; teachings and opportunities that Catholic Schools provide.

Our Catholic Faith is at the centre of all our efforts, fostering an environment that nurtures both academic excellence; spiritual growth and a sense of collective responsibility in upholding the mission and values of Catholic education in our shared society.

GrACE is driven by a deep commitment to ensuring access to high-quality Catholic Education.

Catholic Education underscores the importance of Catholic faith in education. It seeks to impart not only knowledge but also the moral and spiritual values that are central to the Catholic tradition. This faith-centered approach aims to nurture students' spiritual growth and character development.

There is clear commitment to excellence in teaching and learning, ensuring that Students receive the best possible education, including rigorous academic programs and high standards of achievement to include fostering intellectual curiosity, encouraging students to question, explore, and think critically about the world around them.

Upfront with the Archbishop

Join Archbishop Smith for a discussion about his own Marian devotion, the significance of Guadalupe to Truth and Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and the theology of the Immaculate Conception.

Our Lady of Guadalupe

Our Lady of Guadalupe is one of Mary's most well-known titles. On December 9, 1531, Mary appeared to St. Juan Diego on Tepeyac Hill, north of Mexico City

Three days later, on December 12, Juan Diego received a miraculous sign from the Virgin Mary. On this same day, centuries later, we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Our Lady of Guadalupe is the Patroness of the Family, as well as the Unborn. When Mary appeared to Juan Diego, she came as the Mother of God and an expectant Mother.

Our Lady of Guadalupe was established by Pope Benedict XIV in 1454. Then in 1999, Pope Jean Paul II declared her 'Patroness of the Americas' and 'Star of the New Evangelization'.

Saint John Paul II is known for his devotion to the Blessed Mother, his commitment to protecting the sanctity of life and his love for the family and shared with us his prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe.



The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
SOLEMNITY: DECEMBER 8

What it is

- It is the **conception of Mary**. Through a special grace from God, she was kept free from Original Sin and lived her whole life free from sin in order to carry out her mission as the Mother of Jesus.
- It is an **ancient Church teaching**. While it was defined as dogma by Pope Pius IX in 1854, the Church has held it as point of faith for centuries before.

What it is not

- It is **not a virgin birth**. Mary was conceived like any other person.
- It is **not the conception of Jesus**. We remember the conception of Jesus on the Feast of the Annunciation, which is celebrated on March 25.

Why we celebrate

Because it is a **gift** that Mary said "yes" to God and bore his Son, Jesus!

The Miraculous Medal also known as the Medal of the Immaculate Conception has this prayer inscribed: "O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to Thee."

Archdiocese of Toronto | www.archtoronto.org

O Immaculate Virgin,
Mother of the True God and Mother of the Church!
You, who from this place reveal your clemency and your pity to all those who ask for your protection;
hear the prayer that we address to you with filial trust,
and present it to your Son Jesus, our sole Redeemer.
Mother of mercy,
Teacher of hidden and silent sacrifice,
to you, who come to meet us sinners,
we dedicate on this day all our being and all our love.
We also dedicate to you our life, our work,
our joys, our infirmities and our sorrows.
Grant peace, justice, and prosperity to our people;
for we entrust to your care
all that we have and all that we are,
Our Lady and Mother.
We wish to be entirely yours and to walk with you
along the way of complete faithfulness to Jesus Christ in His Church:
hold us always with your loving hand.
Virgin of Guadalupe,
Mother of the Americas,
we pray to you for all the bishops,
that they may lead the faithful
along paths of intense Christian life,
of love and humble service of God and souls.

Contemplate this immense harvest, and intercede with the Lord
that he may instill a hunger for holiness
in the whole People of God,

and grant abundant vocations of priests and religious,
strong in the faith and zealous dispensers of God's mysteries.
Grant to our homes the grace of loving and respecting life in
its beginnings, with the same love with which you conceived in
your womb the life of the Son of God.
Blessed Virgin Mary,
Mother of Fair Love,
protect our families,
so that they may always be united,
and bless the upbringing of our children.
Our hope, look upon us with compassion,
teach us to go continually to Jesus
and, if we fall, help us to rise again,
to return to him, by means of the confession of our faults and sins
in the Sacrament of Penance,
which gives peace to the soul.
We beg you to grant us a great love for all the holy Sacraments,
which are, as it were, the signs that your Son left us on earth.
Thus, most holy Mother,
with the peace of God in our conscience,
with our hearts free from evil and hatred,
we will be able to bring to all true joy and true peace,
which come to us from your Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ,
who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit,
lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen

Connect with GrACE Online

Follow GrACE on Facebook and Twitter. Post your pictures and tag us so we can share them and celebrate too. Thanks for being a grateful advocate in support of Catholic education! @GrACE4cathed

† GrACE Facebook address is www.facebook.com/GrACE4cathed

† Grace email is gracedirector7@gmail.com

† GrACE Twitter address is [@GrACE4cathed](https://twitter.com/GrACE4cathed)

† Instagram: [@grace4catholiceducation](https://www.instagram.com/grace4catholiceducation)

Catholic Education Prayers of the Faithful for January 2024

- † For Catholic Education: That as a new year begins, we may choose Christ and embrace the spiritual practices of our Catholic faith, we pray to the Lord.
- † For Catholic Education: That our Catholic schools may inspire students to a life of love and service, we pray to the Lord
- † For Catholic Education: That the teachers in our Catholic schools may be strengthened for their important task in our world, we pray to the Lord
- † For Catholic Education: That our Catholic schools may celebrate the richness of the Catholic faith that we have inherited, we pray to the Lord
- † For Catholic Education: That our Catholic schools may nurture the growth of wisdom and virtue in the young, we pray to the Lord

THE SECOND ANNUAL EDMONTON ARCHDIOCESE



GRADE 6 - 8
SATURDAY, JANUARY 20th, 2024

DOORS OPEN AT 9:45am
RETREAT | 10am - 4:45pm

EARLY BIRD | \$40
AFTER DECEMBER 15 | \$50

COME TO ENCOUNTER THE LORD
HAVE FUN AND BE
EMPOWERED TO BECOME A
MODERN-DAY SAINT!
THE CONFERENCE INCLUDES LOTS OF FUN,
KEYNOTE TALKS, PRAISE AND WORSHIP,
ADORATION, AND MORE.
REGISTRATION FEE INCLUDES LUNCH...

REGISTER HERE



OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP CATHOLIC CHURCH
13 Brower Drive, Sherwood Park AB | 780 - 467 - 5470

GrACE Says Thank You...

Special thank you to the dedicated GrACE volunteers for their tireless efforts to support the work of GrACE. You are SO appreciated by us all!



Michelle Collette
GrACE Treasurer



Jolyne deMarco
GrACE Instagram
Administrator



Grant Gay
GrACE Facebook
Administrator

Further Opportunities to Volunteer

Student Volunteers are warmly invited to represent their School in GrACE's social media campaign; GrACE's new outreach and GrACE's database development.

All thoughts on how we can better utilize technology platforms to ensure even more timely communication channels between and within the wider Catholic Education Family and beyond gratefully received.

Please email gracedirector7@gmail.com to express interest and suggestions.

There are so many positive stories to celebrate Catholic Schools and Education in Alberta and beyond

John W. Costello Catholic School

John W. Costello Catholic School serves Calgary students in Kindergarten through to Grade 6 from Strathcona and surrounding communities. The school opened for the 1998-1999 school year and grew to over 500 students with at least 16 portables before Guardian Angel School was opened nearby. Today we are at 213 students and 26 staff

Beyond academic excellence, our education permeates all aspects of school life with the Catholic faith. Parents and clergy have their role to play by strengthening the relationship of our schools with both home and parish. In addition, all Catholics exercise their responsibility by offering the support of their prayers and advocating strongly for our schools. Every effort counts in the promotion of our Catholic education system here in Alberta.

In Calgary and the surrounding communities of Airdrie, Chestermere, and Cochrane, we are grateful for the 118 schools and over 61,000 students and the thousands of teachers, administrators, support staff, and parents that make up our Calgary Catholic School District.

This is our [Mission](#).

This is our current [Faith theme](#).

These are our [Board priorities](#).

Assistant Principal, Alison Mc Donald, says that as a new leader, she has proudly served the Calgary Catholic School District for 25 years, in the French Immersion program for the most part, and largely at the elementary level. This year marks my very first year in Administration, as the Assistant Principal of John Costello School.

Ever since my practicum, where I was placed in one public and then one Catholic school, I knew I had to be in the Catholic system. The difference was evident and inspiring. Catholicity is what sets us apart.

Embracing the profound significance of Catholic Education, I recognize that for some, it may be perceived as an additional layer. However, this same layer, grounded in the common foundation of Gospel values, serves as the very essence that simplifies and provides a frame of reference permeating life both within and beyond the school. It is this foundation that strengthens our community and interconnects the home, the parish, and the school.

I will continue to strive to prioritize prayer, understanding its transformative power as a guiding force in our daily lives. Additionally, I intend to emphasize the importance of outward signs of our faith, ensuring that the physical spaces within the school, such as the entrance and classrooms, prominently display our Catholic identity. This commitment extends to the continued faith formation of both staff and students, recognizing it as an ongoing journey that enriches our understanding and connection to our faith.

I view Catholic Education as a precious gift, one that should be treasured and shared openly. It is not a hidden treasure but a beacon that needs to be seen, heard, and felt. As a leader, I am dedicated to modeling service, respect, love, and kindness to all, fostering an environment where these values are not just spoken but lived daily. This commitment extends to my interactions within the school community and my active presence in the parish, embodying the essence of our Catholic faith in every aspect of my life.

By actively demonstrating the principles of Catholic Education, I aim to contribute to the vibrant tapestry of our school community, where the Gospel values serve as a guiding light, influencing both individual lives and our collective journey. This, I believe, is the true essence of Catholic education – a transformative force that shapes character, builds community, and leaves an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of all who are part of it. I am truly grateful to have been part of this gift of Catholic Education.



Catholic Education refers to educational institutions and programmes run by the Catholic faith which includes Colleges and Universities and all of whom are known for their commitment to delivering academic excellence while emphasizing the values and teachings of the Catholic Church.

St. Mary's University, Calgary

Marking the beginning of a new phase in St. Mary's University, Dr. Sinda Vanderpool was formally installed in 2022 as St. Mary's as the University's fourth President and Vice-Chancellor and first female appointment.



A gifted and inspiring leader, Dr. Vanderpool says that she is 'very honoured to serve as the President at St. Mary's University and especially humbled to serve and uphold the mission of a learning institution that blends this Catholic Intellectual tradition and its philosophies that enrich the lives of our students and the community.'

Dr. Vanderpool shares her [latest blog](#), written recently in recent months for the Archdiocese of Calgary, with GrACE as she continues to successfully expand St. Mary's position as a leading liberal arts, sciences, and education institution rooted in the Catholic intellectual tradition that is open to all.

In addition to sharing her story and her passions, Dr. Vanderpool sign points her efforts in trying to establish St. Mary's as a gathering place for the Catholic Community to include a [lecture series](#) focused on celebrating our Catholic identity.

Please consider supporting the mission of Catholic education by encouraging your family members and friends who have university-aged students to check out St. Mary's. [The next Open House is on February 10, 2024.](#)

Under its new strategic plan, St. Mary's University intends to become the preeminent Catholic university in Canada. Read more about St. Mary's exciting plans in the new year'.

Calgary Catholic Education Foundation (CCEF)

November 5, 2023

The Importance of Catholic Education Sunday

I often get asked as a nonprofit leader why I am so passionate about publicly funded Catholic education. "Isn't it just a duplication of the public system?" Isn't it outdated as we are a more secular society?" "Why should my tax dollars fund a religious education system?"

All of these, on the surface, are valid and sometimes difficult to answer at that moment, depending on the temperature of the conversation. Something that is not uncommon for any layperson of our faith.

Catholic education was a gift from my parents and their parents' generation and enshrined in our constitution because of their stewardship of our faith. My husband and I have passed it on to our adult children. I want to ensure it's there for their children's children.

I was raised in an English household in Quebec by an Irish Ontarian and an Irish Newfoundlander and was educated in the French Catholic school system. While my bilingualism has served me well throughout my career across Canada, it is

my Catholic education for which I am most grateful. And it saddens me to think that generations of Catholic students in Quebec and Newfoundland no longer have this beautiful gift.

The beauty and the unquantified "je ne sais quoi" of Catholic education is that students place God at the centre of their lives and thus in their world. This applies everywhere in their learning throughout their student career. They are taught to see the signs of God's love around them and His grace in their classrooms, communities, and the world. They experience His grace through relationships with family, friends, and teachers. Students are encouraged to participate in community activities and service to others as part of the Common Good. The Calgary Catholic Education Foundation grants funding for Social Justice and Safe and Faith-Filled school grants where we see student-led projects such as the Medicine Wheel at All Saints High School or the installation of benches for the chapel in St Helena Junior High School.

By teaching students to place God at the centre of their lives and to put others before themselves, our secular society benefits immensely from self-disciplined individuals with a solid moral compass that is gently taught through example and scripture. Our Catholic education system helps the broader community to be the best it can be in these challenging times. Our faith-based education and students have been called "the greatest work of the Church." Both have been gifted with the fullness of faith and the mission of evangelization. These beautiful young students will one day go out into the world to be community leaders and helpers in private and public service, science or business, healthcare, education, or religious life.

The Calgary Catholic Education Foundation, a registered Non-Profit, works year-round to support the 118 schools and over 61,000 students in the Calgary Catholic School District with enhanced learning opportunities. Since its inception in 2008, the CCEF has granted over \$3.4 million to schools and classrooms. On Catholic Education Sunday, we take our message to the greater community through participatory readings testifying to the gift of Catholic education at 45 parishes and 155 mass times in Calgary, Chestermere, Airdrie, and Cochrane. We remind our greater Catholic community of the beauty of the gift of Catholic education and that we need their continued support to ensure it is here for our children's children. The world needs our faith now more than ever.



God Bless

Janet Lymer, CFRE
Executive Director



Advent



Podcast: What have we forgotten about Advent?

Join Archbishop Smith as he shares about Advent as a season of penitence, the purpose of the liturgical year vs. the secular year, Advent as a season of being shook out of our apathy and the irregularity of the fourth Sunday of Advent being the same day as Christmas Eve this year.

[Watch the podcast](#)

Advent with Bishop Jon Hansen



Journey Through Advent video series – The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops presents “Journey through Advent” with Bishop Jon Hansen, CSSR, of the northern diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith. Reflect on the scriptures for the Sundays of Advent 2023 in this joint initiative of the National Liturgy Office, the Office national de liturgie and the Office for Evangelization and Catechesis: www.cccb.ca

[Canadian Catholic News] – For the fourth year running, the [Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops \(CCCB\)](http://www.cccb.ca) is spiritually accompanying Catholics during Advent with short video reflections, inspired by the Gospel readings, published to its YouTube channel and website.

The Journey through Advent video series is a joint initiative of the CCCB’s Office for Evangelization and Catechesis, the National Liturgy Office and the Office national de liturgie.

Bishop Jon Hansen, CSSR, of the Mackenzie-Fort Smith diocese is leading the English reflections and Auxiliary Bishop Alain Faubert of Montreal is presenting the French homilies.

Margaret Shea-Lawrence, the director and commission secretary of the Office for Evangelization and Catechesis, said the series calls for a rededication to the Advent virtues of hope, joy, peace and love.

“It seems to me in these times of distress where there is so much discord, and seemingly a lack of charity, the world needs to manifest these virtues. I hope that the videos provide people with the opportunities to stop and reflect on what it means to live these virtues in their lives.

“Advent is the season of anticipation in which we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ,” continued Shea-Lawrence. “More than ever, I believe people of God are called to witness to the presence of Christ, the Prince of Peace, in our world.”

Since the inception of Journey through Advent in 2020, Shea-Lawrence said individuals, families, parish groups and even Catholic school classes mediate upon the videos.

“Advent is an opportunity to join Isaiah in that longing as we wait patiently for God to reveal Himself to the world,” said the bishop who resides in Yellowknife. “As we do so, we come to realize it is not God who has left us, rather it is we who strayed. And it is God our Father who is gently calling us back. Will we take this opportunity to hear this call?”

[To view the 2023 Journey through Advent videos, visit the CCCB YouTube Channel.](#)

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This Advent, let’s pray for the grace to be able to open our hearts to know the love of Jesus who comes to be with us, and let’s ask for the grace to open our arms and to share his love with others in our lives!



Synod Prayer

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
 as we gather together in Your name.
 With You alone to guide us,
 make Yourself at home in our hearts;
 Teach us the way we must go
 and how we are to pursue it.
 We are weak and sinful;
 do not let us promote disorder.
 Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path
 nor partiality influence our actions.
 Let us find in You our unity
 so that we may journey together to eternal life
 and not stray from the way of truth and what is
 right.
 All this we ask of You,
 who are at work in every place and time,
 in the communion of the Father and the Son,
 forever and ever. Amen.

The Rosary

The power of the rosary is beyond
 description!

The Rosary contains within itself the
 healing power of the Most Holy Name of
 Jesus, invoked with faith and love at the
 centre of each 'Hail Mary'.

Benedict XVI



Pope Francis

Pope Francis emphasized the virtue of listening during his audience
 with the School Sisters of Notre Dame: 'Listening to others is crucial,
 letting their words reach our hearts before responding

<https://x.com/EWTNVatican/status/1724405356250460378?s=20>

We are called, as Christians, to teach the world how to hope again. To
 grow in our own virtue of hope so that we can go out into the world
 and share the hope of Christ with others.



Anima Christi (Soul of Christ)

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
 Body of Christ, save me.
 Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
 Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
 Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
 O good Jesus, hear me.
 Within Thy Wounds hide me.
 Suffer me not to be separated from
 Thee.
 From the malignant enemy, defend me.
 In the hour of my death, call me,
 And bid me come to Thee.
 That with Thy saints, I may praise
 Thee.
 Forever and ever.
 Amen.



We ask you to help us celebrate Catholic Education throughout Alberta and beyond

Assist GrACE:

- † Sign up for GrACE's Monthly Newsletter
- † Share GrACE's Monthly Newsletter
- † Celebrate Catholic Schools and Education
- † Provide information to share in GrACE's Monthly Newsletter
- † Tell your positive stories and benefits from your Catholic School and Education
- † Subscribe to GrACE's Facebook; Twitter and social media pages
- † Enrol Parents to become more actively involved in GrACE
- † Support local GrACE groups in your Parish
- † Ensure the GrACE Database has your correct contact information
- † Encourage a sense of collective responsibility in upholding the mission and values of Catholic Education in our shared society
- † Make a stand for Catholic Schools and Education in Alberta and beyond
- † Assert your choice in favour of Catholic Schools and Education and its values
- † Champion the benefits of Catholic Schools and Education, alongside its broader implications for the spiritual, intellectual, and social development of individuals and society as a whole
- † Action a movement
- † Provide information to share in GrACE's Monthly Newsletter
- † Subscribe to GrACE's Facebook; Twitter and social media pages
- † Share your positive stories and benefits from your Catholic School and Education
- † Post your pictures and tag us so we can share them and celebrate too

Social Media from around the Province

Inspiring Leader ECSD

<https://x.com/EdmCathSchools/status/1724555305776795713?s=20>

Our Lady of Fatima

https://x.com/OLOF_CCSD/status/1724497234803499257?s=20

St. Josephs High School, Red Deer

<https://x.com/SJHSBallAcademy/status/1724482466143171064?s=20>

St. James, CSSD

<https://x.com/stjamesCCSD/status/1724249725036286344?s=20>

Holy Spirit, Metis Week

<https://x.com/HolySpiritRCSD/status/1724449609676685483?s=20>

Pope and next Youth Day

<https://x.com/cnalive/status/1724470001485123930?s=20>

Young People, Joy of the Church

<https://x.com/Pontifex/status/1724396770296222121?s=20>

Vatican News

<https://x.com/VaticanNews/status/1724477041305600290?s=20>