

Charting the Future in Challenging Times

Opening Prayer for a **School Council Professional Development Evening**

Virtue Link: Faith, Hope, Love, Justice, Temperance, Fortitude

Catholic Character Themes: Community, Compassion, Discipleship, Reverence, Solidarity, Stewardship

Introduction:

Good evening. We are here this evening to reflect on charting the future of our Catholic schools in these challenging times. As we look forward into the wind and waves, we must rely all the more on Christ, who strengthens us and ensures our course. So often in the midst of our struggles, we, like the apostles tend to forget that Jesus is with us in our boat. And so, it is only fitting that we begin this evening of reflection and dialogue with prayer to the One who accomplishes all that is good in our in our homes, our schools, parishes and wider communities. Please join us in our opening song.

OPENING SONG:

Suggested: The Treasure ©Ralph Peter Wilderness Music, 1993

OPENING PRAYER:

Let us begin this evening of reflection marked by the sign of our faith:
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Lord, we have come together to chart a course through the challenges to our Catholic schools. As we plan for our future, help us to never lose sight of Jesus, your Son, who gives meaning and purpose to our share in the Church's mission; for apart from him we can do nothing. We make this prayer to you in His name. Amen

Reading :

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew:

One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they put out, and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A wind-storm swept down on the lake, and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. They went to him and woke him up, shouting, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he woke up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; they ceased and there was a calm. He said to them, "Where is your faith?" They were afraid and amazed, and said to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?"

(pause)

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Reflection:

As disciples of Christ, we are called to invite our Lord into the discomforts and challenges we encounter along our pilgrim way. In this Gospel story, the disciples invite Christ into their fear, and are filled with wonder and awe at his response. We too are invited to experience the blessing that comes when Christ is part of our turbulent journey. As we let go of our comforts, distractions and desire to control life's outcomes, and invite him into our difficulties and pain, we can begin to recognize him more clearly in all those who struggle: among the poor, in our homes, parishes, communities and schools. *Be with us Lord in these challenging times.*

All: Guide us O Lord as we journey.

As disciples of Christ, we are called to set aside our narrow vision, and to recognize the great miracle and mystery present in the person next to us: my neighbour, my colleague, my friend - each in their own unique way testifying to the Word made flesh, who glorifies us in becoming human. Each of us - an inexhaustible reservoir of possibility, whose God-given potential continues to unfold before our eyes, if we call on Christ to open them. *Be with us Lord in these challenging times.*

All: *Guide us O Lord as we journey.*

As disciples of Christ, we are called to let-go of our self-centeredness, to recognize and affirm the unique reflection of the divine image in every human life: a life brimming with possibility; a life made for others, in need of friendship, longing to serve with self-giving love; a life made for the infinite, waiting to be liberated from dread and opened to meeting its deepest desires; a life in whose laughter, tears, burdens and joy, God says "I Am." *Be with us Lord in these challenging times.*

All: *Guide us O Lord as we journey.*

As disciples of Christ, we are called to recognize the uniqueness of one another's story – a story winding its way to fulfilling a call spoken before we were born. In Christ, we are each a precious song, charged with meaning, crafted for a wonderful purpose; working, waiting, sometimes running towards, at other times fleeing, the unending symphony for which we were created. *Be with us Lord in these challenging times.*

All: *Guide us O Lord as we journey.*

As disciples of Christ, we are called to reverence the mystery of God's presence within one another. Made in the divine image and likeness, each of us is a dwelling place of the Trinity, called to become what we cannot fully understand, created to freely know the possibilities to which God is calling us, and to freely respond to the movement of divine grace in our lives. Like the disciples who contemplated Jesus with wonder and awe, we too must seize the challenges that threaten our securities from time to time, and therein, find the opportunity to call on Christ, to reassure us, to give us eyes to see his wonderful work in one another, and to strengthen us to move forward with confidence, convinced of the role to which we are called as partners in the Catholic educational community. *Be with us Lord in these challenging times.*

All: *Guide us O Lord as we journey.*

Let us bring all our hopes, our fears, our concerns and dreams for our lives, the lives of our loved ones, friends, communities and schools together, uniting with one mind and heart before the Father, using the words that Jesus taught us:

Our Father...

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord God, you created us to be co-workers in your divine plan, whose beauty and goodness far surpass anything we can imagine. We ask you to be part of our dialogue this evening. Grant that your Son and the wisdom of His Spirit might accompany us as we consider what it means to chart our future as a Catholic educational community in these challenging times. With confidence in your abiding care, we make this prayer to you through Christ our Lord. And may almighty God bless us: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

CLOSING SONG:

Suggested: The Treasure By Ralph Peter