

Opening Prayer

Every Educator a Special Educator

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

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

INTRODUCTION

Good morning. As we begin our day of professional activity, it is fitting that we start out in prayer. I invite you to stand now, and join in our opening song, (Sugg. *The Servant Song, verses 1-3.*)

OPENING PRAYER

Let us begin our prayer marked by the sign of our faith: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us pray: Lord, we come before You this morning with our accomplishments, expectations, concerns, joys and deepest desires. We ask You to bless our gathering today. May it renew our efforts to bring the light of understanding to the special needs students You have called us to serve. We ask You this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Let us be seated and listen to God's word.

READING

A reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (1Cor 12, 22-27)

[T]he members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

The word of the Lord.

-Thanks be to God

REFLECTION:

(adapted from a Reflection by Jan Bentham, OCSB)

A child was traveling on a path from Kindergarten to Grade 12. The way was often lonely and unfamiliar. Along the way, the student was beaten up emotionally by the demands of the curriculum, the pressure to succeed and his own deficiencies in learning. He felt that his abilities did not match demands. He felt defeated.

The student lay on the path, unsure of himself, afraid to fail and with nowhere to turn. Who could understand how he felt? He felt that he wanted to give up. The wounds from his school experiences were deep. He did not want to read, it gave him no joy. Numbers and instructions made him nervous. There was no joy to his learning. He felt that his skills were not recognized. And so, there he lay afraid, hurting and in need of help.

Along came an educator. He saw the student stranded on the path. He thought to

himself; “I’ve taught many students like this one. He’s just not motivated. If he doesn’t do the work—then he doesn’t get the marks. It is his problem. He’ll learn that he has got to put forth more effort. I’ve got other students to attend who are more deserving of my attention.

Along came another educator. This educator was dedicated, hard working and thorough. She tried to help the student on the path. She led him through many activities and worksheets, projects and assignments. She was sure to give him indications of where he was performing compared to others. She gave him marks for everything he completed. Unfortunately, he continued to do poorly. She hugged him and left him lying on the path. “I did everything I could and he still couldn’t learn. There must be someone else who could help him---I have tried.”

When the student was at his lowest and no longer able to go on, another educator appeared. This educator stopped to get to know the student. She observed him as he learned. She took notes about the times when he learned the most. When she saw that he wasn’t successful, she changed the way she taught him. She tried all different strategies. She planned with his learning style in mind. She saw him as a person, not just a number. She talked to other educators, she read about all different kinds of learners. She brought him to a place where he could succeed. He began to feel good about himself. He began to answer questions, seek out opportunities for learning, explore his creative ideas and evaluate himself. He knew that his educator saw him as someone who could learn and succeed. He began to believe what he was told.

The educator and the student both moved on. She often inquired about his journey. She was sure to share her wisdom about the student’s success with his new educators. On this path, the educator and student had created a covenant, a covenant to learn.

Which of the three fulfilled the calling of the Catholic educator?

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Let us pray for the Church. That all who share a common baptism might heed the Spirit’s call to unity and peace.

We pray... Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us pray for the world. That compassion and peace might flood the hearts of all God’s children and flow out through their lives.

We pray... Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us pray for those who suffer in our homes, communities and schools. That they might encounter the consolation and kindness of Jesus in our attentiveness to their needs.

We pray... Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us pray for our presenters today. That the Holy Spirit will give them words that support our work to educate students with special needs.

We pray... Lord, hear our prayer.

For all our intentions...

We pray... Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us unite all our prayers – spoken aloud and in the quiet of our hearts and unite them with the prayer of Jesus, using the words He gave us: *Our Father...*

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, we thank you for calling us to the marvellous work of Catholic education. May our efforts to educate special needs students always be animated by the peace, love and joy of your Spirit. We make this prayer to you in the name of Jesus, our Teacher and Lord. Amen

And may Almighty God bless us: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

CLOSING SONG:

Please join in our closing song,
(Sugg. final three verses of the *Servant Song*)