



Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
Professional Activity Day Opening Prayer
Following Jesus With Mary

INTRODUCTION

At the outset of this day of Professional Activity, let us take a few moments to reflect on the distinctiveness of our Catholic schools, and the place of Mary in our walk as disciples of Jesus, her Son.

OPTIONAL: OPENING SONG

Please join in our opening song, (Sugg: *Hail Mary, Gentle Woman*, verse 1)

OPENING PRAYER

Let us begin, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
 And let us pray.

God our Father, you have called each of us to share the Good News of Jesus through our distinctive Catholic school life and curriculum. Open our hearts this morning to welcome your word, just as Mary welcomed the Word that took flesh in her womb for our salvation. We make this prayer to you through Jesus Christ your Son and our Lord. Amen.
 And now, let us listen to God's word.

READING

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:12-14, 2:1-4)

Then the Apostles returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

The word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION

Pentecost is Christianity's great turning point after the death and Resurrection of Jesus. The promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit emboldened our Lord's followers with a clear sense of mission, and led each of them to go out and preach the Good News in new ways. Mary was with them as they prepared to receive the Spirit. She had welcomed the Holy Spirit into her whole being, to bring Jesus into the world. Continually led by the Spirit, she raised Jesus with

Joseph and taught him with a heart completely open to the Father's will. By the grace of God, Mary knew the Holy Spirit, and Jesus – the Fruit of her union with the Spirit – like no one else. Mary's wisdom, example and intercession were a special light that helped guide the first followers of Jesus, her Son. The same is true of Mary in her relationship with us today.

What might this mean for us in our own mission in Catholic schools? The Spirit continues to animate our lives as messengers of the Gospel: We too are sent out to speak the language of the Gospel in new ways – through every area of our curriculum – through Math, the Natural and Social Sciences, Language, Religion, Technology and the Arts. We proclaim the Gospel as we foster respectful behaviour, cooperative play, reverent prayer, through discipline and restorative practices. In all these things, the Spirit is at work in us and through us. Like the first followers of Jesus, we too can draw close to Mary to be that special light of wisdom and intercession for our needs. In her company, we will come to better know the Holy Spirit, and Jesus, her Son.

With confidence in her motherly care, let us join the countless generations of Christians who have turned to Mary with the words of the Angel Gabriel, and requested her prayers along life's way:

Hail Mary, full of grace...

Holy Mary, Mother of God...

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Let us pray for the Church. That all who are called to spread the Gospel with their lives will recognize in Mary an Advocate, Mother and friend.

We pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us pray for the world. That all God's children will learn to listen for the movement and guidance of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

We pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us pray for all who suffer in our families, communities and world, especially those who accompany loved ones through hardship and pain. That like Mary, they might gain strength from the Holy Spirit and the solidarity of kindred souls beside them at the foot of the cross.

We pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us pray for ourselves – that what we learn and discuss today will help equip us more fully to announce the Gospel in every subject area and dimension of school life.

We pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.

For our own needs and those of our friends, colleagues and loved ones.

We pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us gather the prayers we have spoken and those remaining in our hearts and with one voice, unite them with the constant prayer of Jesus on our behalf before the Father, using the words He gave us: ***Our Father...***

CLOSING PRAYER

We praise and thank you O God, for calling us to this marvelous task of announcing the Gospel through Catholic education. Like Mary, may we be open to the movement of your Holy Spirit, and the wondrous things you seek to do in our lives. We make this prayer to you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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

OPTIONAL: CLOSING SONG

Please join in our closing song, (Sugg. *Hail Mary, Gentle Woman*, verse 2)