

Maintaining Relevance Today, Tomorrow and Into the Future **RCCDSB Leadership Team Opening Prayer**

INTRODUCTION

Good morning. As we begin this day of professional dialogue, let us turn to God in praise, thanksgiving and supplication for all of our needs and also the needs of all of those whom we serve.

OPENING SONG

Please join in our opening song,

(Sugg: *This is the Day*)

OPENING PRAYER:

And let us begin with the sign of our faith: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

And let us pray, O God, we praise and thank you for the gift of our faith that never ceases to grow old, and for the Good News of Jesus that is relevant in every age. May our prayer this morning deepen our gratitude for Your call to work, live and love for the sake of the Gospel. We make this prayer to You in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

READING:

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles (Ac 17: 22-32)

Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him - though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'

Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art or imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man

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whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, "We will hear you again about this." At that point Paul left them. But some of them joined him and became believers, including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

The word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

REFLECTION

Athens at the time of St. Paul could be described as a place of state-run religious accommodation. It honoured the many life philosophies, deities and cults of its citizens. Each served their own gods and movements while meeting their obligations to the state. In a sense, Athens was similar to secularized North America and many parts of Europe today. The secularized society accommodates each group within it, acknowledging its right to exist as long as it does not disrupt the state. Each group's values and worship are relevant for its own members, but subservient to those of the state. In the secularist mentality, no single group or set of values, other than those of the state can lay claim to being relevant for all.

Paul's preaching in Athens rocked the boat. He proposed a saving message that was relevant to everyone in every time and place. His prophetic message answered the deepest longings of every human heart, as does our message as Catholic educators. Jesus, the answer to every life's ultimate questions "is the same yesterday, today and forever." (Heb 13:8). Anchored in him, our message continues to be relevant - more than ever - despite the voices that would relegate it to accommodation in a secularized education system as just one among many.

PSALM RESPONSE (Ps. 2)

Response: *Their message goes out through all the earth.*

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims His handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

R~ Their message goes out through all the earth.

There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

R~ Their message goes out through all the earth.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

For the Church: that it always be a living witness of the goodness of God.

United in faith, we pray to the Lord. ***R. Lord, hear our prayer.***

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For the freedom to worship God in our country: that we never take this gift for granted. United in faith, we pray to the Lord. ***R. Lord, hear our prayer.***

For those who struggle with mental, physical and emotional pain: that they may find healing and consolation in Christ Jesus. United in faith, we pray to the Lord. ***R. Lord, hear our prayer.***

For refugees in Canada: may the Lord bring comfort, acceptance and love as they embark in a new chapter of their lives. United in faith, we pray to the Lord. ***R. Lord, hear our prayer.***

For students all across our Board: that our leadership may strengthen the values and beliefs we share in common with our brothers and sisters in the faith. United in faith, we pray to the Lord. ***R. Lord, hear our prayer.***

For today's youth: that we may guide them to learn and grow in their journey of faith. United in faith, we pray to the Lord. ***R. Lord, hear our prayer.***

For Catholic education: that it continue to be a faithful and constant reminder of God's deep love for us. United in faith, we pray to the Lord. ***R. Lord, hear our prayer.***

For all of us gathered here today: that we will continue to take up our calling to find ways to bring the Word of God to those we serve. United in faith, we pray to the Lord. ***R. Lord, hear our prayer.***

And now, let us join the prayers we have voiced and those remaining in our hearts, and with one voice unite them to the constant prayer of Jesus on our behalf before the Father, using the words He gave us: **Our Father...**

CLOSING PRAYER

All praise and glory to You, O God for the Good News of your saving love for us in Christ that is relevant and uplifting in every age! Give us the wisdom of your Spirit, to speak to the needs of our times with language that gives meaning, purpose and joy to all those you have called us to serve in our Catholic education system. We ask you this through this same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

CLOSING SONG:

(Sugg. *They'll Know We Are Christians*)