

Making a Difference in Our Catholic Schools

November 5, 2010 Professional Activity Day

Opening Prayer

INTRODUCTION

Good morning, and welcome to our prayer to begin this day of professional activity. The theme for our prayer this morning is *making a difference in our Catholic schools*. As we take time to reflect on our roles within our Catholic school system, it is only fitting that we begin with prayer: inviting God, who makes all things possible, to bless and guide our day.

OPENING SONG

Please join in our opening song: (Sugg. *Like a Sunflower*, *Young People's Glory and Praise*)

OPENING PRAYER

Let us begin by marking ourselves with 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 are Your people, baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus, Your Son. We ask You to make us receptive to Your Holy Spirit – that we might praise You with one heart, one mind, and one voice, for the wonders You continue to accomplish in our lives and in those we serve. We make this prayer to You through this same Jesus, the Lord. Amen

And now, let us be attentive to God's word.

READINGS AND RESPONSE

Reading 1

A reading from the Gospel of Luke (Lk 13:18-35)

Jesus put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Reflection 1

Jesus announced a Kingdom that was breaking-in and taking hold in human hearts. This Kingdom has little to do with status, power or social prestige. It is quite simply a matter of the heart, which is open to being transformed by grace and reaches out in love to others. Jesus' words remind us that those who seek first to love for His sake will indeed make a difference. Their presence will become a shelter for many who feel buffeted by the demands that swirl about them as they labour to learn.

We place on our table a portrait of Canada's newest saint, Brother André: a humble doorkeeper who opened his heart to the sick and suffering. He confidently entrusted them to God through the intercession of St. Joseph. The Kingdom, planted in his heart at Baptism, grew beyond all imagining and made a difference in the lives of thousands who turned to him for help.

Reading 2

A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew (Matt 19: 14-15)

Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." And he laid his hands on them and went on his way.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Reflection 2

Jesus understood the infinite openness of a child's heart to His Good News. Many of us share the privilege of working closely with children whose hearts are like fragrant gardens brimming with openness to God's love. Their presence makes a difference in our Catholic school communities by making the wonder of the Kingdom come alive. While others are wounded and hardened from an early age, we, like Jesus, see their potential and beauty. We strive to nurture and guide them day by day, knowing that the difference we make in their lives will bear beautiful fruit in its proper time.

We place on our table the fruits of our gardens – each having come to maturity in its proper time because someone has cared for the earth in which it was planted, making all the difference in its growth.

Reading 3

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew (Matt 5, 12-16)

Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Reflection 3

We are salt and light – each of us called to radiate God's love by being who we are, in simplicity and kindness. We are salt and light, and everything we do for love of Jesus and His Gospel makes a difference – in a life, in a school, in the Body of Christ. Our lampstand might be cleaning desks, putting up shelves in a library, sitting at a struggling student's side, or speaking with a concerned parent on the phone. All we do to help our young people learn in the light of faith, no matter how small or unnoticed, makes a difference here and now, and forever – a vast store of treasures, laid away day by day in small acts of love, that awaits us in our heavenly home.

We place on our table a lamp and a package of salt – signs of the Gospel's light and flavour that permeate our Catholic schools and offices each time we strive to make a difference in the lives of those we are called to serve.

Reading 4

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew (Matt 13:10-12,16-17)

Then the disciples came and asked him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" He answered, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. ...But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Reflection 4

Jesus' message was simple, but it invited a courageous response. Not all were able to embrace it or to see its true meaning. Those who valued appearances and social status more than mercy, faithfulness and kindness found themselves unable to understand. There was little room for the Gospel in their hearts, and in the end, even what they had could not take hold. For those who trusted Jesus and His message, there was hope and confidence that God was with them, making a difference in the world through their daily efforts to love and serve in His name.

We place on our table symbols of our service to the Catholic educational community, representing our efforts to make a difference through loving service in Jesus' name.

Reading 5

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew (Matt 5, 1-12)

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.

Then he began to speak and taught them saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Reflection 5

The beatitudes are the heart of Jesus' teaching: a source of hope to all who trust in God's promises. The beatitudes tell us that the Kingdom belongs to all who strive to live the great law of love for God and neighbor written on every human heart. They remind us that our efforts to make a difference in love are precious in God's eyes.

T. Cosentino Renfrew County CDSB, 2010

We place on our table a heart with a cross as a symbol of the Gospel's message of love and all its promises that give hope to everything we do to make a difference in our Catholic schools.

RESPONSE

As a response to our readings and reflections, please join in singing, (Sugg: *Blest are They* CBWIII No. 522)

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

And now, let us bring our needs before God. The response to each petition is: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

1. For the Church, that all who share a common Baptism might find deeper unity in their resolve to make a positive difference in the world for love of the Gospel. We pray... *Lord, hear our prayer.*
2. For the world, that all God's children will learn to see one another as reflections of God's infinite beauty and together build true and lasting peace. We pray... *Lord, hear our prayer.*
3. For all who suffer without a sense of purpose or hope in our world, that they might come to know the difference their lives make when poured out in love. We pray... *Lord, hear our prayer.*
4. In thanksgiving for all whose kindness and service continue to make a difference in our lives. We pray... *Lord, hear our prayer.*
5. For our speakers and activities today, that they will be blessed by God with wisdom and joy. We pray... *Lord, hear our prayer.*
6. For our personal, family and community needs – entrusting them to the goodness and care of our God, we pray... *Lord, hear our prayer.*

And now, let us gather our prayers spoken aloud and those remaining in our hearts and unite them to the constant prayer of Jesus on our behalf, using the words he gave us: ***Our Father...***

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, we bless and thank You for our share in the mission to educate in the light of Your Son's Gospel. May Your Holy Spirit ever remind us of the wonders You promise to accomplish through our efforts to make a difference in His name. We make this prayer to you through this same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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

CLOSING SONG

Please join in singing our closing song, (Sugg. *You Are The Voice*, CBWIII No. 576)

