

Planning the Road Ahead for our Catholic Schools

INTRODUCTION

Good evening. As we begin this gathering of our school councils, let us bring our activities and hopes before God – Source, Strength and promised Destination for all who seek to live the Gospel with a sincere heart.

OPENING SONG

Please join in our opening song: *We are Called*, verses 1 and 2.

OPENING PRAYER

And let us pray: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Father of Light, it is You who gives us all that is good in the power of Your Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ, Your Son. We ask that You awaken in us Your Spirit's gift of wisdom, that we might see, understand and plan according to Your holy will for our Catholic board of education. We make this prayer to you through this same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

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

READING

A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans (Rom 8: 31b-39)

If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION

It is good to know that Christ, who calls us to labour in the field of Catholic education, will never abandon us. We can also take consolation in knowing that our call to educate in the light of the Catholic faith is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who inspires, guides and strengthens all who share in this blessed mission. The dynamic of our strategic planning, then, is one of discernment and response: listening for the wisdom of the Spirit through the voices of stakeholders, students, leadership and staff, and plotting a course that aligns our duties to the state with our share in the Church's evangelizing mission at this moment in history.

What an awesome and privileged role we are invited to play in the growth of God's kingdom in the hearts of our students and staff. We recognize that, "if the Lord does not build the house, then in vain do the builders labour." (Ps 27, 1) And so, we cling to Christ – the way, the truth and the life; we strive to build in the wisdom and strength of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of the Father.

PRAYER RESPONSE

Inspired by our rich heritage and challenged by the struggles of our past, we are an inclusive Catholic educational community called to express our mission as Church, to pass on the Good News of Jesus Christ, to make it relevant in the world today, and to be the hope for the future. The response to our petitions is, *Free us, to affirm and celebrate the Good News*

- as we strive to facilitate an active faith journey rooted in prayer and the sacraments. **R/**
- as we strive to enhance relationships among members of the home, school, parish and extended community. **R/**
- as we strive to foster a world view shaped by the Catholic conversation about life's meaning and purpose. **R/**
- as we strive to nurture the giftedness, self-worth and potential of each individual. **R/**
- as we strive to reverence the dignity of the whole person. **R/**
- as we strive to integrate the Catholic faith tradition in a critical analysis of the arts, media and technology. **R/**
- as we strive to sustain safe school environments characterized by warmth, hospitality, good humour and joy. **R/**

The response to the petitions will now be,

Open our hearts to the mystery and promise of endless discovery in Christ.

- as we hear your call to develop and implement a distinctive Catholic curriculum based on the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations. **R/**
- as we hear your call to make a difference – as faith-filled community builders. **R/**
- as we hear your call to challenge the consumer culture with lives dedicated to the principles of social justice in the spirit of Gospel values. **R/**
- as we hear your call to model a servant leadership style following the example of Jesus. **R/**
- as we hear your call to claim our role as global stewards cherishing the environment and all life in it. **R/**
- as we hear your call to engage in the pursuit of life-long learning. **R/**
- as we hear your call to love unconditionally. **R/**

You are the Vinegrower, O Lord, Christ the vine and we the branches. Grafted to his body at Baptism and emboldened by the Holy Spirit, we ask for the strength to *act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly* with You, using the words he gave us: ***Our Father...***

CLOSING PRAYER

We thank you, Lord for calling us to be stewards of the vision that guides our share in the Church's mission to pass on the Good News of Jesus Christ. Pour out on us the wisdom and courage of Your Spirit, that we might discern and confidently plan for our future in accordance with your holy will. We make this prayer to You through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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

CLOSING SONG

Please join in our closing song, *We are Called*, verses 3 and 1.