

Director's Notes

December 2011

An Overview

Life is full of its ironies! This past week I have relentlessly heard information on Black Friday and the culture of rampant shopping. This compares to a less advertised but far more meaningful date. Just in case you missed it from any media outlet or social media we have just begun the first week of Advent. When I do a comparison of both events, the result is clear. Many place profound emphasis on the goods and services appended to Christmas. Some do not become trapped in the web of consumerism and do have a sense of good news from scripture.

We are about to prepare for the coming of Jesus Christ. This is not a seasonal event. It is life giving sacrifice made for each of us. It is a profound sense of enablement for all of us. We are created by God, we believe in the birth and death of his son and we believe that there is eternal life beyond this world.

Given the comparison of shopping for bargains or the awareness of the road to salvation, the choice for Catholics is clear. We work for a Catholic School District that is committed to emphasize the spiritual side of life. We do so amidst a secular world that sometimes values the materialism of the culture more than the people of that culture. None of us is perfect and we need to be reminded of the lure of consumerism as it impacts our lives and those of our students.

This year's Advent Poster, created by St. James student, Anita Cazzola, is but one recent example of our commitment to "Keeping Christ in Christmas". It is a belief that has been recently articulated by one of our local reporters who prepared a column on this for the local paper. He supports our work in this area.

Catholicity

- Thanks to the Catholicity Council for its sponsorship of the annual Memorial Mass in support of those families in our midst who have lost loved ones this past year. The Mass and Dinner at Loyola House were again appreciated by all participants. We were at capacity for this event.
- Co-chair of the Catholicity Council, Richard Olson, is chairing the annual Diocesan Mass that will be celebrated on Thursday, September 20 here at the Church of Our Lady Immaculate. Thanks to Fr. Dennis Noon for allowing us to host the seven school districts from the Diocese of Hamilton. Keep this date on your calendars.
- We continue to be grateful for the energy and good work of the Faith Ambassador team. Each of our sites has an Ambassador who is there to facilitate events and processes that support our faith journeys. They have recently been involved in a professional development activity.

- We welcome Bishop Crosby to the opening of the new "Our Lady of Grace" chapel at St. James High School. This is the culmination of the vision of Emily Orlando, Chaplain, and many others in that community who came together to create a beautiful sacred space for prayer and sacramental celebrations. This opening will be on November 30.

Student Achievement

- Thanks to all who have contributed to the successful completion of report cards for all elementary students this past month. We acknowledge your time, commitment and dedication to this task. At the end of the day, this is one of many processes that is fundamental to student success.
- This week, we are hosting Information Nights at Bishop Macdonell and St. James for the annual Full Credit Program in Italy. The summer of 2012 should be another successful and meaningful experience for our students. This program is available to any high school student in Wellington County.
- We have just sent out over 30 letters of congratulations to those graduating students from June 2011 who have achieved significant honours in academic achievement. I am always pleased scribe these letters and to observe that each of our secondary schools has about the same number of students on the list. These particular awards are the Queen Elizabeth II Aiming for the Top Tuition Scholarships.
- We now have student apprenticeship applicants on file with the Linamar Corporation. Linamar is fully funding up to 5 young women who will complete some advance work towards apprenticeship, take apprenticeship training and be guaranteed part time and full time work with the company. This is the only partnership of its kind with the Linamar Corporation.

Site Improvement

- We are close to beginning the work on a boundary review for schools in the North and Eastern parts of the City of Guelph. The committee will be making its recommendations on data provided by an external planning consultants. Some of the changes may occur by this coming September.
- Occupational Health and Safety is integrated with the quality of the physical plant in all of our sites. Thanks to Nancy Culham for offering some excellent advice to all of us. As we begin a winter season it is our collective responsibility to reduce preventable accidents. This is not someone else's business. We each have a role to play. Be safe.
- Thanks to Paul Keating and the grounds crew for another outstanding season of service to each of our sites during the past few months. The work is unending and is done with attention to detail. Sincere thanks.
- Sincere thanks to the Human Resources group for the quality Retirement and Service Recognition evening at the Delta Hotel and Conference Centre. We have received many notes of thanks.

Quality

- Many thanks to so many for your contributions to the United Way campaign this year. We are close to goal and can make it with your help. If you have yet to complete payroll deduction, please make an attempt to participate. If you need additional pledge cards please ask your Employee Coordinator on site or email Brian Capovilla.
- Close to 500 students, staff and faculty participated in this year's We Day. Craig and Marc Kielburger wanted me to personally offer thanks to each of you who have participated in the Me To We initiative this past year. We know that you have a menu of activities on your respective sites. This work is a complement to our many projects in the area of social justice.
- Thanks to Joanne Basso, Allan Asselin and Larry Clifford for their many hours in Seoul and Busan, Korea this past month. This is a serious amount of time during weekends and working days and speaks to our commitment to International Education as a tool of enlightenment to our students. Our current and incoming students will indeed be students of the world and we need to facilitate that as much as possible.
- Thanks to all coaches, mentors and advisors who continue to offer their time and expertise in all co-curricular activities in all schools. Your dedication and care are very much appreciated by the entire community.

As we move towards planning for the September 2012 academic year, I remind all of you of the Open Access provisions that, by law, accept any students from any religious background to our secondary schools. We have had many of these students in the past and welcome their presence in our secondary schools. They are expected to fully participate in all of our programs and have done so for many years. The irony here is that many of those working within the District are not aware of this possibility. Please inform your friends and colleagues who may have young people at home who would thrive in our faith based program.

Best wishes to you and your families for a blessed Christmas in celebration of the birth of Christ.

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