



Ontario Catholic School
Trustees' Association

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February 18, 2016

TO: Chairpersons and Directors of Education
-All Catholic District School Boards

FROM: Dr. Brian O'Sullivan, Director of Catholic Education

SUBJECT: **Catholic Education Week – May 1 – 6, 2016**
Catholic Education: *Opening Doors of Mercy*

Pope Francis has declared 2016 a “Holy Year of Mercy” as a way for the Catholic Church to “make more evident, its mission to be a witness of mercy”. The Holy Year began on December 8, 2015 and will be celebrated until November 20, 2016. Throughout the year, there will be a series of jubilee celebrations on the theme of mercy for teenagers, deacons, the sick and disabled, prisoners, catechists and clergy.

As well, Pope Francis opened the Vatican’s Holy Door on December 8th. The Holy Door is opened to evoke the concept of forgiveness which is the main focus of a Holy Year. The theme of human sin and God’s mercy is illustrated in fifteen of the sixteen bronze panels that make up the Vatican Holy Door, with episodes from both the Old and New Testaments, including the Fall of Adam and Eve, the Annunciation and the Merciful Father and the Prodigal Son. There are seven such Holy Doors around the world including one in Quebec City.

Catholic Education Week 2016 combines both the theme of mercy and the act of opening doors of reconciliation, mercy and forgiveness to all around us.

Included in this package, please find a letter from Pope Francis sending cordial greetings on the celebration of Catholic education in our Ontario Catholic schools. Also, please find a summary chart of ideas gathered provincially in five OCSTA sessions held across Ontario. This chart contains ideas, month by month, that provide ways your board can celebrate the Holy Year of Mercy (following a calendar of celebrations set out by the Vatican for Holy Year).

We welcome your board’s participation in Catholic Education Week 2016. We encourage each board to work with their local diocese and parish to announce the start of CEW 2016 in the weekend start of Catholic Education Week. As a result of discussions with OAPCE (Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education), we are encouraging parents to join local teachers and school administrators to be part of that parish event, welcoming the start of CEW 2016.

You are to be congratulated for the evangelizing work you accomplish each day in Catholic education in our journey of faith – trustees, students, parents, teachers, administrators and support staff. By your work, you proclaim that our Catholic system is grounded in faith and in the Gospel values proclaimed by Jesus.

As part of CEW 2016 celebrations, we are happy to announce a province-wide Student Mass on Tuesday, May 3, 2016 in all Catholic high schools across Ontario. This event, organized by our Catholic Student Trustees is a celebration of youth leadership in Catholic education and we encourage all Catholic boards of education to support this initiative in their local high schools. You are also welcome to celebrate this mass in your board’s elementary schools if you wish. In addition to the provincial mass, there are several social justice activities that were designed for both elementary and secondary schools. We thank the staff at the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace for designing the activities for May 3. These activities are included in the package and are at the discretion of each board to use on May 3 following the provincial mass. An overview of the Mass can be found in this package.

There are some new features for CEW 2016 that we want to draw to your attention:

- By now, you will have received a memo and a link to a Student Trustee video. Our provincial student leaders are challenging your local youth leaders to submit a 2-minute video on behalf of your board to capture how you “Open Doors of Mercy” in your district. These clips are due to OCSTA by April 4th and will be combined into one video that will be sent out to our boards to be played at the province-wide mass.
- Instead of sending discs containing our CEW theme song and resource package, all CEW 2016 materials will be posted on the OCSTA website at: www.goodnewsforall.ca.
- In late March, we will have completed video clips of Ontario Bishops providing greetings to students that can be played at each of your local schools during the May 3 province-wide mass. We will not send these out as discs; instead, these will be posted on the OCSTA website for you to download.
- In the past, we have provided an assessment form in the CEW package for schools/school boards to provide feedback on the CEW package and CEW. However, this year, we will send you a Survey Monkey survey, under separate memo, the week after CEW 2016.

Finally, I would encourage you, as part of your Holy Year celebrations, to learn more about the important work of our Catholic education community. From a global perspective, you are encouraged to read Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si’* (On Care for Our Common Home)¹ which examines the human roots of our ecological crisis and underscores a need for theology and spirituality to move us forward to solve this crisis.

You are encouraged to read about the recent work of our **regional Catholic Curriculum Consortia**, the **EOCCC** and the **Catholic Curriculum Corporation (CCC)**, the work of **CARFLEO (Religious and Family Life Educators)**, as well as the recent publications of **ICE**, **OECTA**, **CPCO** and **OCSOA**.

Equally important, we encourage you to read widely on current social, economic and political matters addressed by our Ontario and Canadian Bishops. There are many to choose from but several topics include: assisting refugees, the global poor, global economic justice, the environment², choosing a government and the importance of Catholic social teaching³.

Before concluding, I would like to thank the team of writers and musicians who came together from several Ontario Catholic boards and Catholic organizations this autumn to produce the resources you have today in this Catholic Education Week package. Their work is most impressive!

Catholic Education Week is an ideal opportunity for all of us to celebrate the many accomplishments of Catholic education – and to deepen the relationship with our Catholic educational partners.

Sincerely in Catholic Education,



Dr. Brian O’Sullivan
Director of Catholic Education, OCSTA

¹ http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html;

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/faith-and-justice/readers-guide-laudato-si>

² <http://www.cccb.ca/site/eng/commissions-committees-and-aboriginal-council/national-commissions/justice-and-peace/documents>

³ <http://acbo.on.ca/downloads/social-justice/>