Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association

CATHOLIC EDUCATION: TOGETHER IN FAITH

BECOMING ARTISANS OF PEACE

L'éducation catholique: Devenir artisans de Paix ~ October 2026 Bulletin

We hope that you had a blessed start to the new school year. During this month in which we celebrate Thanksgiving we give thanks to God for the precious gift of publicly funded Catholic Education and all who labour to protect and strengthen it. We give thanks as well for the life of St. Francis of Assisi and pray that his shining good example inspires each of us on our journey of "Becoming Artisans of Peace".

"If the only prayer you ever say is thank you it will be enough." Meister Eckart

Michael Bellmore
President

Patrick Daly
Executive Director

Celebrating St. Francis of Assisi

As we prepare to celebrate the feast of St. Francis of Assisi on October 4th, let us reflect on his life and legacy. St. Francis of Assisi understood that peace begins within the human heart and extends outward into families, communities, and the world. His life reminds us that peace is not passive but intentional. It is built through humility, respect, listening, forgiveness, and care for all of creation.

St. Francis of Assisi

Feast Day: On October 4, the Church honours St. Francis of Assisi, whose example inspires us to live the Gospel with humility, joy, and a commitment to bringing Christ's peace to our communities.

Patronage: St. Francis is the patron saint of ecology, animals, the environment, and Italy.

Charisms: service, evangelism, voluntary poverty.

Symbols
The Knotted Cord: A white rope with three knots worn around his brown habit, symbolizing the three Franciscan vows: poverty, chastity, and obedience.

The Stigmata: Representations of the five wounds of Christ (on his hands, feet, and side), which he miraculously received in prayer.

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The Tau Cross: A T-shaped cross that represents salvation, the cross of Christ, and his mission to rebuild the Church.

Animals and Birds: Frequently depicted with birds, wolves, or other wildlife reflecting his respect for creation and his status as the patron saint of animals and ecology.

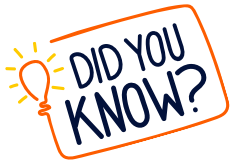
Who is St. Francis of Assisi?

- Born into privilege, St. Francis of Assisi left behind a life of comfort to become a devoted follower of Christ, embracing humility and poverty.
- More than 800 years ago Francis received his call from Jesus while kneeling in prayer before the crucifix in the small, run down chapel of San Damiano near Assisi. He heard Jesus telling him to "go and rebuild My Church". St. Francis eventually realized that Jesus' call was not merely about mortar and bricks, but about revitalizing the spiritual heart of the Catholic Church.
- St. Francis of Assisi was a 13th-century Italian friar who founded the Franciscan religious orders.
- St. Francis created the first live Nativity scene using real animals and a simple manger to help people experience the wonder of Christ's birth.
- Famous for his deep bond with nature, he preached sermons to birds and famously brokered a "peace treaty" between a fierce wolf and the terrorized town of Gubbio.
- St. Francis is often associated with the prayer, "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace." While not written by Francis himself, it reflects the spirit of his life and mission.
- Near the end of his life, he received the stigmata, the wounds of Christ, further solidifying his place as one of the most influential figures in Christian history.

St. Francis ~ A True Artisan of Peace

St. Francis of Assisi is widely regarded as a true artisan of peace, whose life reflected the belief that true peace comes from God and is nurtured through humble discipleship, compassion, and care for others.

For St. Francis, peace was both a message and a way of life. He taught his companions to greet others with, "May the Lord give you peace," and to nurture that same gift of peace within their own hearts.



The term "artisan of peace" was famously popularized by St. John Paul II during the 1986 World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi.

> "Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love"

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Catholic Education: BECOMING ARTISANS of PEACE

The Jubilee Year of St. Francis

The year 2026 marks the 800th anniversary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi, a saint who powerfully embodied what peace-making looks like. Pope Leo has proclaimed a "Franciscan Jubilee Year," inviting the whole Church to reflect on how the example of Assisi's most cherished son can still inspire and guide us.

This special holy year calls us to reflect on his enduring legacy and we are reminded that his witness continues to speak powerfully to our world. More than 800 years ago Francis received his call from Jesus while kneeling in prayer before the crucifix in the small, run down chapel of San Damiano near Assisi. He heard Jesus telling him to "go and rebuild My Church". Francis eventually realized that Jesus' call was not merely about mortar and bricks, but about revitalizing the spiritual heart of the Catholic Church.

And so Francis challenges us with this call today to renew the communities entrusted to our care. His example invites us to be pilgrims of hope and artisans of peace, building relationships that heal, encouraging those who struggle, and creating school communities where every person knows they are loved by God.

As we gather during this Jubilee Year of St. Francis of Assisi, we give thanks for the example of this beloved saint, whose life reflected humility, peace, and a and deep reverence for God and all creation.

May the example of St. Francis accompany us throughout this Jubilee Year, inspiring us to be instruments of peace, bearers of hope, and faithful witnesses of Christ's love.

> "Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible." St. Francis of Assisi

Reflection Questions

How can I model the humility and compassion of St. Francis?

In what ways am I helping my school community become a true community of peace, hope, and belonging?

Prayer Resources

Let us pray.
Loving and Faithful God,
You called St. Francis of Assisi to live the Gospel with simplicity, joy, and peace. Through his example, he became a witness to your love and a source of reconciliation in a divided world.
As Catholic educators, strengthen us in our vocation to serve. Grant us the wisdom to make decisions with justice, the courage to lead with integrity, and the compassion to accompany those entrusted to our care.
May our schools be places where every person experiences welcome, dignity, and belonging.
Help us to become true artisans of peace, forming communities that reflect the love of Christ.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Litany

Leader: St. Francis showed us the path of Gospel peace. Let us ask for his intercession.

Response: Help us become artisans of peace.

St. Francis, servant of the Prince of Peace. ***R***.
St. Francis, lover of God's creation. ***R***.
St. Francis, model of humility and simplicity. ***R.***
When there is conflict in our communities. ***R.***
When we are called to difficult decisions. ***R***.
When relationships require healing and reconciliation. ***R.***
When students need encouragement and hope. ***R.***
When staff need support and understanding. ***R***.
When families seek welcome and belonging. ***R***.
When our world longs for justice and compassion. ***R***.
In all that we say and do. ***R.***
Through our witness to Christ in our schools. ***R.***

Activities

Classroom Activities

- Learn about the life of St. Francis and create a timeline or biography.
- Explore the meaning of peace through Scripture passages such as Matthew 5:9 ("Blessed are the peacemakers").
- Read and discuss stories about forgiveness, reconciliation, and caring for others.
- Create posters illustrating how students can be artisans of peace. For example:
  - choosing kindness over conflict,
  - building bridges of understanding,
  - caring for God's creation,
  - promoting justice, compassion, and reconciliation.

System Level Activities

- Board-Wide environmental campaigns that identify effective practices in stewardship and sustainable practices.
- Collaborate with the parish to introduce Leadership Retreats on Environmental stewardship and its connection to scripture and care for our common home.
- Ensure Caring for our Common Home is part of our Strategic plan.

School Wide Activities

- Create a large mural titled "Building Peace Like St. Francis."
- Design a school-wide peace quilt where each class decorates a square.
- Build a "Peace Tree" and have students add leaves describing peaceful actions they will take.
- Feature student presentations, drama, music, and reflections on peace.
- Schools identify an Eco Schools lead to plan and organize initiatives.

Care for Creation in the Community

- Organize a schoolyard or parish clean-up.
- Plant flowers, trees, or pollinator gardens at home, school or parish.
- Create bird feeders or wildlife habitats.
- Families can develop commitments to reduce waste and care for God's creation.
- Hold a "Creation Walk" where community members observe and pray with nature, reflecting on God's gifts.

How can I follow St. Francis this year by being an Artisan of Peace in my classroom, school, parish, and community?

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Prayer for Thanksgiving

Loving and gracious God,
On this Thanksgiving Day, we pause to give You thanks for the many blessings You have bestowed upon us. We are grateful for the beauty of this land, for the harvest of the earth, and for the gift of family, friends, and community.
Thank You for the food we share, the work that sustains us, and the opportunities we have to grow in faith, wisdom, and love. Open our hearts to recognize Your goodness in all things and to share generously with those in need.
As we gather in gratitude, remind us that every good gift comes from You. Bless our homes, our schools, and our communities with peace, joy, and hope.
May we always be thankful people, caring for one another and for all of creation, following the example of Jesus Christ.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

October: The Month of the Holy Rosary

As Catholic educators and faith leaders, October offers a special opportunity to invite students and staff to pray the Rosary, reflect on the mysteries of Christ's life, and seek Mary's intercession as we strive to be disciples and artisans of peace.

Resources

St. Francis of Assisi, Founder of the Franciscan Order, Patron of Italy

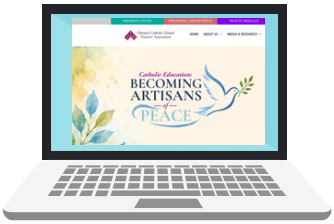
Biography of St. Francis of Assisi Who was St. Francis of Assisi?

Explore the Saints - St. Francis of Assisi

Official / Main website for the Year of St. Francis: Centenari Francescani

National Catholic Reporter: Program of Action on a Culture of Peace

Catholic Education Week Resources



goodnewsforall.ca

Catholic Education Week Resources are available on the newly designed Ontario Catholic School Trustees' website: goodnewsforall.ca

COMING SOON

Catholic Education Week Song

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." (Matthew 5:9)