

Grade 5, Theme Five

Family Letter

Dear Family,

We are ready to begin the last theme of *Fully Alive*, our family life program. Because the partnership of home, church, and school is so important, this letter is written to let you know what we talk about in class, and to offer some ideas for your involvement. For more information, please go to www.occb.on.ca.

About Theme Five

Theme Five of *Fully Alive* is called “Living in the World.” We are not simply individuals who have relationships with family members and friends. We are also members of human society, brothers and sisters within the whole human family, and caretakers of the earth. As the students get older, they are encouraged to recognize that they have a unique contribution to make to the world, one that cannot be made by anyone else. Their participation in creating a world that reflects the goodness of God is needed.

In Theme Five we will:

- explore the meaning of community through the example of the family.
- discuss an example of a strong community, and identify some of the signs that are present in good communities: respect, communication, sharing resources, and depending on each other.
- learn about a parish community in Ontario that has established a relationship with a parish near Nairobi in Kenya, and is sharing much needed resources, and their prayers.

Working together at school and at home

- If your family is involved in an effort to share resources with those in need, be sure to include your child in these efforts. Whether it is collecting items for the food bank, sponsoring a child in another part of the world, or supporting a group of missionaries, it’s important for your child to be part of this activity. Children learn to get involved and participate in efforts to make the world a better place by the example of their families.
- If you or someone or someone in your family has been involved in helping communities in other parts of the world, you could visit our class and tell the students about this experience.

Teacher: _____ Date: _____

Theme Five Topics

Love one another as I have loved you.

John 15:12

The final theme of Grade 5 has four topics. The opening topic invites the students to reflect on the world as they experience it at home, at school, in the parish, and in their neighbourhood. These familiar settings lead to the next topic, which explores the meaning of community. In Topic 3 the students examine four significant characteristics of good communities. The final topic introduces the idea of the world as community, and features a parish community in Ontario that has developed a relationship with a parish community in Kenya, Africa.

Topic 1 — My World

Community, first discovered in the family, grows slowly, as members reach beyond individual interests and recognize love's binding power.

Robert J. Hater, *Holy Family*

Summary

This topic helps the students understand the meaning of community. The teacher and students identify some of the familiar settings (home, school, parish, and neighbourhood) in which the students experience their life in the world. This discussion leads to the topic of community, and some examples of different kinds of communities.

Main Ideas

- As people grow up, the world they live in and understand becomes larger.
- A community is a group of people who have special interests in common.
- A good community is made up people who care about each other.

Family Participation

- As part of this topic, the students discussed the meaning of community, and looked at some examples of the special interests shared by different communities: parish; an ethnic group, like the Vietnamese or Italian community; a school community; a professional group, like the medical community; a neighbourhood, town, or city. You might ask your child to think of all the communities to which she or he belongs. What common interests are shared by these communities?

- The students have started a collection of stories about communities from newspapers (including local community papers and ethnic papers), parish bulletins, community newsletters, and school newsletters. If you have a copy of a local neighbourhood paper or a newsletter from a group to which you belong, you could give it to your child for this classroom project.
- Communities are as strong as the people who belong to them. When children see their parents' commitment to the parish, the local school, an ethnic organization, or a neighbourhood event, they are learning the value of participation. When there are problems in neighbourhood communities, and families become involved in trying to solve them, children learn not to blame others or to complain about difficulties, but to do something to change the situation.

Topic 2 — Communities are Like Families

May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Romans 15:3-7

Summary

This topic continues to explore the meaning of community, and helps the students recognize some of the characteristics of good communities. The teacher and students discuss some positive qualities of the small community of the family, and then look for some of these qualities in a story about a parish community, “St. Monica’s Parish Community.”

Main Ideas

- The positive qualities of a loving family are important for all communities.
- Some of these positive qualities are: appreciation and respect for each unique member of the family; sharing feelings and experiences; welcoming visitors; settling differences and forgiving each other; and trying to be helpful and unselfish.

Family Participation

- You and your child may enjoy reading together the story, “St. Monica’s Parish Community.” You will find it at the end of this theme. Are there communities to which your family belongs that have some of the same qualities as St Monica’s parish? Some qualities the students

discussed at school include: working together to solve the problem of raising money for a new furnace; recognizing and appreciating the talents of the people in the parish, and making adults with disabilities feel welcome in the parish.

- In today's world, it can be difficult for families to find time for community participation, whether it be in the neighbourhood, parish, or the school their children attend. As a result, children have fewer opportunities to see the impact that dedicated people can have beyond the small community of the family. When children see adults spending time and energy organizing a neighbourhood event, taking part in a cleanup of an area in their city, collecting books for a school community with limited resources, or helping a neighbour during a difficult time, they are learning an important lesson about living in the world. We are made for participation and for service to our communities.

Topic 3 — Signs of a Good Community

Now there are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord, and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

Summary

This topic helps the students understand four essential signs of a good community, and recognize their importance. The teacher and students explore the four signs, and examine their classroom and school community for evidence of these signs.

Main Ideas

- A community is a group of people who have special interests in common. Our classroom is a community, and so is our school.
- Four important signs of a good community are respect for individuals, communication, sharing resources, and depending on each other.

Family Participation

- You might ask your child to tell you about the four signs of a good community that were discussed during this topic. At school the students looked for examples of these signs in the classroom, the school, and neighborhood. You could talk about these signs in your family and in

other communities to which your family belongs.

- Children of this age need and enjoy the experience of teams and other organized groups. They discover the pleasure of participating and of shared achievements. It is through such groups that they learn to appreciate the creation of something that is larger than any one individual.
- Respect for each individual is a sign of community that begins at home. Too often parents discipline their children for being messy or for lack of respect for property, but overlook lack of respect for people. It's important to let children know that rudeness and meanness are far more serious than a messy bedroom or a broken window
- Sharing resources in the home is the foundation for learning to share resources within other communities. It's important for brothers and sisters to share toys, books, and games and to consider them as resources for the family, rather than as private property. Time and energy are another family resource. You can encourage your child to use these resources wisely and generously within the family and in the wider community.
- It is good to let our children know that God made us to be members of communities. Our contribution matters. Showing up for a game because the other team members are depending on us, working co-operatively in the classroom, showing an interest in the people in our neighbourhood, praying for each other — these are our responsibilities as members of the human community.

Topic 4 — The World as Community

In charity there is no excess.

Sir Francis Bacon

Summary

The final topic of this theme helps the students look far beyond the small world in which they live, and recognize that people all over the world live in communities and have many of the same concerns and needs that they have. The teacher and students read a special feature about the relationship between two parish communities, one in Ontario and one in Kenya, Africa.

Main Ideas

- All over the world people live in communities, and want their communities to be good places to live.

- People around the world have the same needs as we do for food, shelter, clothing, and work. Like us, they need to depend on other people, share thoughts and feelings, and to know that they matter and belong.
- We are all part of the huge family of people whom God created — the world community.

Family Participation

- You and your child may enjoy reading the feature about Holy Rosary parish in Ontario and Mary, Mother of God parish in Kenya. You will find it at the end of this theme.
- If your family is involved in efforts to help people in other parts of the world, be sure to include your child in these efforts. Explain why it is important to contribute in some way, and invite your child’s participation — giving a small portion of his or her allowance, helping with a fundraiser at the parish or school, or asking for a donation to a special cause as one of his or her birthday presents.
- Children of today are more informed than those of the past about the great variety of cultures and traditions that are part of our world. The internet, television documentaries and news shows, and other media provide a lot of information. Children are also more aware that human suffering is part of our world — natural disasters, armed conflicts, poverty, hunger, and disease. These problems can frighten them and make them feel powerless. Not all families have the material resources to help alleviate these problems, but they all have an invaluable resource — prayer. By praying together for those who are suffering, we are helping our children understand that we are connected to the world community through our prayers.
- At the end of this topic, which also marks the end of the program for the year, the students said a prayer together, “A Light for the World.” You will find it at the end of the section, *Fully Alive* Grade 5 prayers. Your family may want to say this prayer together.

Theme Five Stories

Topic 2: The teacher and students read this story about a parish community.

St. Monica Parish Community

St. Monica parish is in a city in Ontario. The pastor, Fr. Bijak, has been at St. Monica for four years. He likes to say that it’s the best parish in the world. “It’s the people,” he tells his friends. “They’re so friendly and helpful. When something needs doing, there are

more volunteers than there are jobs.”

Last winter, the parish needed a new furnace, which was going to be very expensive. The parish council met with Fr. Bijak to discuss the situation.

“How are we going to raise the money? That’s the problem,” said Mrs. Strano.

“What about a lottery?” asked Mr. Macdougall. “Although I don’t know what we could offer as prizes,” he added.

“I know,” Mrs. Strano said suddenly. “We can be the prizes! We’ll call it the ‘People Lottery’.”

Everyone looked surprised.

“Let me explain,” she said. “Just think of all people in this parish with special talents. If we ask for some volunteers to share their talents, I’m sure we can come up with lots of prizes.”

Mrs. Strano’s idea turned out very well. They sold five hundred tickets and offered twenty prizes. Some of the prizes were:

- babysitting for four evenings
- small carpentry jobs
- homemade dinner for six
- three tutoring sessions in using the internet and e-mail
- five guitar lessons
- a handmade quilt
- professional photograph of your family
- spring clean-up of your lawn using environmentally friendly products

Everyone agreed that they should have another “People Lottery” the following year.

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There are always a lot of activities going on at St. Monica parish. The parish bulletin is full of news and keeps everyone in touch with what is happening.

St. Monica Parish Bulletin

• **Bundle Sunday:** St. Vincent de Paul society will be collecting clothing at St. Monica parish next weekend from 3 p.m. Saturday to 2 p.m. Sunday. The truck will be in the parish parking lot. Please be generous.

• **Please don’t forget** your food donations. The Food Bank depends on us. Leave bags of food (cans, cereal, powdered milk, baby formula, etc.) at the back of the church after any mass. “For I was hungry and you gave me food.”

- **Parish Council meeting** this coming Thursday at 7 p.m. Everyone welcome.
- **Holy Land Pilgrimage** next March: Explore the roots of your faith as you walk in the steps of Jesus, Mary, and the Apostles. For more information, please contact Joan Riddell, our Lay Pastoral Assistant.
- **Home Visitations Ministry:** There are people in our parish who cannot be with us to celebrate the Eucharist because of illness or old age. If you know of someone who would like a home visit for prayer and communion, please call the parish office.
- **Baptism Preparation:** The next preparation class will take place the first Saturday in December from 1 to 3 p.m. in the parish hall. Parents must be members of St. Thomas More parish. For more information, please call the parish office.
- **Piano:** Do you have an old, playable piano that you would be willing to donate to our church? We need a piano for our new choir at the 10:30 Sunday Mass. We would be most grateful if you can help us make beautiful music for the Lord. Please call the parish office with good news!

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Near St. Monica church there is a residence for adults with disabilities. Several of the people who live there come to church at St. Monica. The parish members decided to develop a buddy system so that these adults would feel welcome and comfortable in the parish. Each Sunday, one of the parish members is a buddy for one of the adults from the residence. This has led to some special friendships and to the discovery of hidden talents. One of the adults with disabilities has a wonderful singing voice and has joined the music group at the 10:30 a.m. mass.

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Together, Fr. Bijak and the people who belong to St. Monica parish have built a strong and generous community. "The parish is like a big family," one of the parishioners explains. "When I come into the church, I feel at home."

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Topic 4: The teacher and students read this special feature about Holy Rosary parish in Ontario and Mary, Mother of God parish in Kenya.

A few years ago, Steve and Rachel Macmillan went on holiday to Africa, a place they found very beautiful but very poor. They fell in love with Africa and came home with a strong desire to do something about what they had seen. They met with other members of Holy Rosary, their parish community, and talked about what the parish might do. They knew they couldn't save a whole continent, but they thought they could help the people in one village. They decided, in Steve's words, "to expand the boundaries of our parish."

In 2005, Holy Rosary parish twinned with Mary, Mother of God, a parish in a poor town called Embulbul in Kenya, Africa. The people of Embulbul have many needs, but the parishioners of Holy Rosary decided to help the people in their sister parish who are hurt by HIV/AIDS. In Africa, many people die of this terrible disease every day, leaving behind thousands of children with no one to take care of them. The parishioners of Holy Rosary decided they would offer their help in three areas. They would try to help children orphaned by AIDS, help the families of people suffering from AIDS, and help grandmothers who are left to care for their orphaned grandchildren. Holy Rosary would give their assistance in two important ways. The parishioners would offer financial support and they would offer prayers.

Soon after, Steve spoke at the end of Mass one Sunday to the whole congregation. He said, "I think that if I were to stand up here today and tell you that a member of our parish was suffering from AIDS or if a child had been orphaned by AIDS in our parish, that we would help. Well, I'm here to tell you that there are members of our parish who are suffering and do need our help and it doesn't matter if their address is on St. Clair Avenue or in Africa."

The people of Holy Rosary sponsor orphans from Embulbul by raising money for things like food and clothing and also for school tuition and schoolbooks. Some money goes to support grandmothers and some goes to pay for medicine. Sponsoring one

orphan costs less than \$300 for a whole year, and the parishioners of Holy Rosary now sponsor about 125 orphans.

The people of Holy Rosary remember their other promise of help, too. They pray for the families of Mary, Mother of God parish in Embulbul and every Sunday they pray especially for one of the AIDS orphans in the Holy Rosary community.

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