

# A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE

Renewing the Promise Series | Monograph #6 Winter 2019 | Published by Institute for Catholic Education

## The Hope in Our Hearts: Living Our Faith Every Day

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*This sixth monograph in the Renewing the Promise series highlights how faith is lived every day in schools, a theme that was identified as part of the Renewing the Promise symposium conversation. This monograph invites us to focus on integrating faith in our daily lives. “For it is with your heart that you believe...” (John 10:10)*

The presence of God is at the heart of our daily experience and being a person of faith brings with it the responsibility to express our faith in daily life. As we fully integrate faith into our lives, we find that it manifests itself in the way we understand situations, how we respond, the actions we take, and the way we relate to each other. As people of faith, hope guides our response to circumstances and love characterizes our relationships with others. Social responsibility, generosity of spirit, and a commitment to contribute to the common good are attitudes and values inherent to a believer. All of these aspects of living faith add to a personal sense of belonging in community and deepen our relationship with God. In our schools this deep relationship with God is reflected in the way we strive to develop the whole person in ourselves, in our students, and how together we live out God’s call each day. The faith community in each Catholic school provides community members, staff, parents and students alike the opportunity to both find and offer accompaniment and support to one another.



**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled; Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God (Matthew 5:2-11)**

### Framework for Understanding and Responding to Living Our Faith Every Day

Transforming beliefs into action is our call every day in Catholic schools. Living our faith starts with understanding what the heart feels, the head thinks, and the hands can do. It is the heart that sustains our thinking and our doing because “love” is at the core of our faith. Issues and commitments arise every day in schools and being strong in our faith leads us to right actions. This framework invites reflections and response by students, teachers, education workers, principals, vice-principals, parents and support staff about living faith every day.

	HEART	HEAD	HANDS
<b>A Framework for Understanding and Responding to our Faith Every Day</b>	<p>“For it is with your heart that you believe...” (John 10:10)</p> <p>Trust that God loves unconditionally.</p>	<p>“Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance in what we do not see.”</p> <p>God’s love inspires understanding of daily life.</p>	<p>...work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love....(1 Thessalonians 1:3) The life of Jesus guides actions.</p>
<b>Student</b>	Does God love me just the way I am?	Does God know that I sometimes make poor decisions?	How do I give back to my community?
<b>Teacher and Education Workers</b>	Does God love me just the way I am? How do I convince my students that God loves them unconditionally?	How do I connect my students’ everyday experiences to God’s presence in their lives?	How do I guide my students to choose right actions?
<b>Principals and Vice-principals</b>	Does God love me just the way I am? How do I nurture the school community to place their trust in God?	How do I inspire faith and hope in my leadership role?	How do I ensure that my actions reflect gospel values?
<b>Parents</b>	Does God love me just the way I am? How do I create trust within our family?	How do I help my child understand God’s love?	How do I show my children that I love them unconditionally?
<b>Support Staff</b>	Does God love me just the way I am? How do I develop trusting relationships?	How can my interactions reflect God’s love?	How do my actions support the community of faith?
<b>Trustees</b>	Does God love me just the way I am? How do I reflect God’s love in my leadership role?	How do I lead a system built on trust?	Do my actions invite trust?
<b>Clergy</b>	Does God love me just the way I am? How do I build trusting relationships?	How do I help the school community understand God’s love?	How do my actions reflect Jesus’ ministry?
<b>Chaplaincy Leaders</b>	Does God love me just the way I am? How do I support school leaders in building trusting school communities?	How do I bring God’s love alive through prayers and worship?	How can I help support social justice opportunities in the community?

## Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations ([iceont.ca](http://iceont.ca))

Catholic teaching views human life as an integration of body, mind and spirit. “Rooted in this world view, Catholic education fosters the human search for knowledge as a life-long spiritual and academic quest. Intellectual development is encouraged, and such growth includes both academic and religious literacy. The mind and its capacity for rational analysis are seen as gifts from the Creator to be used and enjoyed. In this sense, learning and knowledge are infused with faith. In Catholic education, the commitment to maturity of mind and academic excellence is always in reference to God’s revealed wisdom as to life’s purpose and meaning. As an agent for social justice and peace, Catholic education promotes human potential towards the fullness of life to become whole persons as God intends.”<sup>1</sup> The Catholic Graduate Expectations deconstruct the various aspects of human formation and guide educators in assisting students to develop their potential and live their faith. They serve as a touchstone and reference point for the learning experiences provided for students, always building on faith and deepening understanding of God’s love. “The expectations for Catholic graduates, therefore, are described not only in terms of knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in the world of work or post-secondary education, but in terms of values, attitudes and actions that adhere to the foundations of our Catholic faith.”<sup>2</sup> The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations serve as a lens for Catholic educators, informing our collective efforts to respond to the world in a distinctively Christian manner in order to serve students and their families. In this way, the OCSGEs ground our work, and our relationships in the broader mission of our Church, and, most importantly, in the message and person of Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup> Catholic graduates are formed to live their faith and be “responsible citizens who promote equality, democracy and solidarity for a just peaceful and compassionate society.”<sup>4</sup>

## Virtues Education: A Shared Responsibility

In an effort to integrate into publicly funded education a more holistic approach to pedagogy that recognizes the importance of morality in the growth of children, the Ontario Ministry of Education introduced a character development initiative, Finding Common Ground. Ontario Catholic schools responded to this mandate by choosing to adopt virtues-language in implementing the required expectations. This approach allows Catholic schools to re-acquire a valuable concept in our faith tradition, compels us to recognize God’s role in the character development of our students and helps us to focus on specific habits that foster and protect the freedom to which we are all called.<sup>5</sup> The Catholic social teachings identify the content and context for student experiences. Catholic virtues identify character traits that guide student thinking to action. Virtues are nurtured through a disposition to do good and give the best of oneself. Developing virtues in our schools is a shared responsibility. Students habits of mind and heart are strengthened when they are engaged in learning about and practising virtues. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that the virtues that guide our actions are: faith, hope, charity, temperance, fortitude, justice and prudence. Learning about these virtues helps students develop personal resources such as integrity, courage, honesty, perseverance, strength, compassion, responsibility, empathy, self-control, respect, kindness, love, acceptance, optimism, fairness, forgiveness and gratitude.



**God loved us into existence and never stops loving...God never gives up on us.”**

**(John 3:16)**

## Continuing the Conversation by Reflecting on our Faith and Social Teachings

When Catholic school communities continue the conversation about living faith daily, it has a profound effect on students’ faith development. Catholic educators “practice the art of accompaniment by

helping students realize that their own unique story is given greater meaning and purpose in knowing and living the story we share in Christ.”<sup>6</sup> The school community supports students in growing big hearts and engaging in encounters where strength and vulnerability, openness and inclusivity helps us to be there for each other in the way that Jesus did for his community. Continuing the conversation reminds us that God is in the detail of our daily lives and supports us all in growing our faith. The chart below provides a way to reflect on Catholic social teachings and our practice, as we continue the conversation.

The ‘doing’ of our faith means carrying on Jesus’

work in the world. Jesus worked for peace and justice and people of faith are peacemakers and promoters of justice in the world. Jesus taught, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled; Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” (Matthew 5:2-11). The Catholic church has a vision of the divine destiny for all people. In the spirit of gospel teaching, the church promotes all aspects of justice. The social justice teachings of the Catholic church provide the context for the “doing.” They guide our actions and help us live out our faith daily, as Jesus did during his ministry.

### Continuing the Conversation with Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

### Reflective Questions for the Catholic Educator

#### Human Dignity

The dignity of every person is the foundation of Catholic social teaching.

How can we teach students about the dignity of each person?

How can we create a learning environment that makes all students feel welcome, safe and valued?

How do we use the curriculum to support students’ knowledge and understanding of human dignity?

#### Community and the Common Good

Life is fully lived when we are in relationship with others through community.

What opportunities can we develop for students to build positive relationships with each other?

How can we create a sense of community within the school?

What opportunities can we facilitate to involve students in the church community?

#### Rights and Responsibilities

Human rights and responsibilities protect human dignity.

How can we teach students about human rights and responsibilities?

What can we do to connect human rights and responsibilities to students lived experiences?

How can we create local and global opportunities for students to explore their understanding of human rights and responsibilities?

#### Option for the poor and vulnerable

We are all responsible for caring for the poor.

How do we lead students to understand that caring for the poor is part of being a responsible citizen?

What ongoing opportunities can be created for students to work with the poor and vulnerable?

What resources can be used to help students understand the importance of a charitable stance?

<p><b>Participation and Subsidiarity</b> Everyone has the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives.</p>	<p>How can we teach students to take responsibility for decisions that affect their lives? What learning opportunities can we create for my students to participate in decision making? How can we use the curriculum to help students experience the process of inquiry and problem solving?</p>
<p><b>Dignity of Work and the Rights of the Worker</b> The rights of the worker take precedence over the work itself.</p>	<p>How can we teach students that all work is good and important for human development? How can we foster the development of a strong work ethic and the importance of work relationships? What curriculum connections can we make to lead students to understand that labour takes precedence over wealth?</p>
<p><b>Stewardship of Creation</b> We are responsible to care for the world we live in.</p>	<p>How can we use <i>Laudato Si</i> to inspire students to care for the world? What opportunities can we create for that allows students to experience stewardship? How can we teach the curriculum through the lens of stewardship?</p>
<p><b>Solidarity</b> We commit ourselves wholeheartedly to the good of all.</p>	<p>How can we model that we all belong to one family and are committed to each other? How can we provide learning opportunities that help students to understand and celebrate differences? How can we use the curriculum to demonstrate examples of historical events that support the good of all?</p>
<p><b>Role of Government</b> Government has a moral responsibility to promote human dignity, protect human rights and build the common good.</p>	<p>How do we teach students that people in power have a moral obligation to look after the common good? How do we facilitate experiences for students to lead responsibly in their classrooms and school? How can we use the curriculum to connect students to both local and global examples of effective governing?</p>
<p><b>Promotion of Peace</b> Peace involves mutual respect between people and nations</p>	<p>How can we teach our students about the positive impact of peace in a community? How do we create opportunities for students to experience restorative justice? How can we involve students in the promotion of peace in the wider community?</p>

## Summary

The reflection above builds on our Catholic communal nature. In this changing world our Catholic schools provide students with firm ground on which to stand when students, teachers and education workers, principals and vice-principals, parents, support staff,

clergy, trustees and chaplaincy leaders all work together. Coherence in thought and action moves us forward. Together our wisdom, courage and creativity along with the integrity of our work together ensures a solid foundation for students.

## References

1. *Educating the Soul, Writing Curriculum for Catholic Secondary Schools*, 1998.
2. *Educating the Soul, Writing Curriculum for Catholic Secondary Schools*, 1998 (page 9)
3. *Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations*, Institute for Catholic Education, 2011.
4. *Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations*, Institute for Catholic Education, 2011.
5. Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, “Character Development and the Virtuous Life, 2007”)
6. *Renewing the Promise*, A Pastoral Letter for Catholic Education, 2018, (page 7)

## Monograph Series — Renewing the Promise

Issue	Series	Renewing the Promise Theme	Monograph Title
1	Winter 2018	Framework	<i>Heart, Head, Hands: A Framework for Considering Contemporary Issues in Catholic Education</i>
2	Fall 2018	Moving to Action	<i>Let the Gospels Lead the Way</i>
3	Fall 2018	Nurture Community Relationships	<i>Understanding and Cultivating Authentic Community</i>
4	Fall 2018	Rekindle Mission and Values	<i>Inspiring Students to Love God More</i>
5	Fall 2018	Develop Faith and Catholic Identity	<i>Developing Faith and Identity in Our School Community</i>
6	Winter 2019	Live Faith	<i>The Hope In Our Hearts</i>
7	Spring 2019	Engage Student Voice	<i>Courage on the Journey</i>
8	Spring 2019	Encourage and Nurture Leadership	<i>Shepherding and Serving</i>

Published by:



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