

Dear Family,

We have come to the fourth 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.

About Theme Four

Theme Four of *Fully Alive* is called “Growing in Commitment.” Each one of us is challenged to grow in commitment to God and to each other. This is part of what it means to be fully human. Growth toward maturity is never a straight path. As children learn to make more decisions about their lives, they need to know that freedom is best understood as a freedom *for*, rather than a freedom *from*. Commitment is really the free gift of ourselves to being the best people we can be at each stage of our life. For more information go to: www.acbo.on.ca.

In Theme Four we will

- examine the meaning of commitment as a choice to be involved, to give ourselves to other people and to our activities.
- explore the commitment we have to ourselves, which is a commitment to be the people God created us to be.
- look at our commitments to others, especially family members and friends.
- discuss a story about the death of a family member and the importance of family commitment when facing difficult challenges.
- consider the meaning of a commitment to the future and the significance of moral development as we grow up.
- reflect on the virtue of temperance and its importance as developing people learn to accept more responsibility for themselves.

Working together at home and at school

- At school, the students will reflect on what it means to be committed to themselves. An important idea in this theme is that for young adolescents a commitment to themselves is a commitment to develop and grow toward maturity. For this to happen, they need the support, guidance, and commitment of their families.
- A commitment to oneself during adolescence has unique challenges because of the many changes that occur during this life stage. The students will discuss the need to be patient with themselves, not to give up on themselves, to find a balance between being too easy and too hard on themselves, to stay involved, and to pay attention to their relationship with God. These are also good ideas for parents or guardians of young people. Parents or guardians need patience, since maturity doesn't happen overnight. The early years of adolescence can be difficult for young people and their families. Both need the help and guidance of daily prayer.
- You might ask your child about the virtue of temperance, which is highlighted in this theme. Temperance is the virtue that guides and helps us control our desire for pleasure. This virtue is particularly significant for adolescents, since it is in this stage of life that they begin to assume more responsibility for their decisions, activities, and behaviour. Parents or guardians can help their young people understand that their desire to assume more control of their lives requires the ability to discipline themselves.

- We will be reading and discussing a story about a family death. This story, part of a topic on commitment to others, reflects the power of unconditional commitment among family members when facing serious challenges, like the death of a loved one. The experience of loss is universal, but it has particular challenges for adolescents. They experience their emotions very powerfully, but often have difficulty effectively communicating their feelings. This is particularly true of young adolescents. When young people experience the death of someone important to them, they need opportunities to talk about their loss and share their memories. Parents or guardians can provide these opportunities by sharing some of their own feelings and by talking about the experience of grief. At school, the students will learn that there is no correct way to grieve. Some people find it easy to talk about their feelings; others do not. But no matter how a person grieves, as time passes, feelings of deep sadness usually ease. For some young people, however, a significant loss can lead to depression and require help from a specialist in adolescent depression.
- We will be examining the meaning of a commitment to the future. An important idea in this topic is that the price of moving from childhood to adolescence is to give up living only in the present. Adults look after the future for children, but adolescents assume more responsibility for themselves and need to pay attention to their hopes and dreams for the future. Some young adolescents are drawn toward risky behaviours that threaten their future — underage drinking, drug use, shoplifting, and early sexual activity. Parents or guardians should try to help their young adolescent have a sense of the consequences of his or her behaviour. It is certainly true that many adolescents make some mistakes in the process of growing up, but most also learn from the experience.

Teacher: _____ Date: _____

School telephone: _____