

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.

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. For more information go to: www.acbo.on.ca.

In Theme Five we will

- discuss a common project, shared by all people, to build a society that reflects human dignity and value.
- examine the characteristics of just behaviour and the meaning of social justice.
- analyze two issues related to social justice: poverty and respect for life.
- explore the necessary qualities and skills to do the work of social justice.
- reflect on the virtue of solidarity, which is commitment to the common good of all people.

Working together at school and at home

- As adolescence begins, some young people become more aware of social issues. When families talk about items in the news — government decisions, controversial issues, community concerns — and encourage young people to participate in these discussions, they are helping to create awareness of what it means to be members of society.
- Ask your child to tell you about the virtue of solidarity, which is highlighted in this theme. The word *solidarity* means unity or sharing common goals. In class, we will examine how we express solidarity in our classroom and then apply this understanding to the whole human family. When families volunteer their time to help others, work to create change when people are suffering, and speak out against obvious injustices, they are teaching their children important lessons about the meaning of solidarity.
- Understanding justice begins at home. There are many family events that provide an opportunity to talk about justice — disagreements between children, creating a schedule for household tasks, or a discussion of privileges. In school, we will discuss the difference between being treated fairly and being treated identically. The difference is not hard to understand, but can be difficult to accept. Arguments at home like “but everyone else is going,” are based on the idea that fair treatment means identical treatment.
- We will be discussing both absolute poverty and relative poverty. We will also examine some attitudes to those who struggle economically. When children hear adults, especially family members, talking about the social welfare system in a negative way, it has an impact on them. It fails to communicate the positive aspects of our common responsibility to contribute to members of society who are having difficulties. We will also examine society’s attitude toward possessions and money. Parents or guardians often respond to children’s request for something by saying, “We can’t afford it.” This may be true, but it’s important for

children to realise that money isn't the only issue. There are other questions to think about: Do we really need this item? Are we buying it because other people have it?

- Respect for human life at all stages is a fundamental commitment of our faith. At school we will discuss abortion and euthanasia. Most young people of this age have strong pro-life attitudes. Several years later, when they may have personal contact with someone who is facing an unintended pregnancy, these attitudes can be severely challenged. For this reason, it is extremely important for parents or guardians to communicate a message of compassion for those who have resorted to abortion, even as they defend the fundamental right to life of the unborn child. We all need to be reminded that it is not our place to judge people; we leave that to God.
- In the last topic of Theme Five, we will consider some of the personal qualities and skills needed to work for a more just world. These qualities are hopefulness, commitment, empathy, critical thinking skills, and creativity. The students will learn about some people who demonstrate these qualities and skills in their efforts to create greater social justice in our world. You might ask about these people and what your child found particularly interesting about their work.

Teacher: _____ Date: _____

School telephone: _____