

Catholic Education Week

Each year, the Catholic community of Ontario engages in a week-long celebration of the unique identity and distinctive contributions of Catholic education during Catholic Education Week.

This year's celebration is entitled, "Catholic Education: Nurturing Hope" and will be kept during the week of May 2 – May 7. This theme is important in this period of the pandemic when education – sometimes virtual in format – faces great challenges.

Before and after this special week, we celebrate heroes of our Catholic faith who can inspire us in our task of sharing faith and learning.

The feast of Saint Marie de l'Incarnation on Friday, April 30 precedes Catholic Education Week by a few days. And the feast of Saint Francois de Laval occurs during it on Thursday, May 6.

Marie came from France to Quebec and established the first school for girls, where French and Indigenous students learned together. Marie worked as a missionary to the Natives and other residents in the area, studied the local languages and became so proficient that she later wrote Algonquin and Wendat dictionaries and a catechism in Iroquois.

Bishop de Laval was widely known as a holy man with a great devotion to the poor and a profound desire to build up the Church in New France and to spread the Gospel, especially by education.

Marie and Francois were assisted in their missions by lay collaborators.

Today, in our Catholic schools, the primary role in teaching is taken by lay men and women assisted by the parish priests and the bishops. We are fortunate in the Hearst-Moosonee diocese to have three French-speaking and three English-speaking school boards which support our parents in handing on the faith to their children.



Pope Francis reminds us again and again that our faith and the transforming power of the Cross are meant to be shared. Our faith is about sharing our personal witness to a living relationship with Jesus Christ. A faith that only exists within the walls of the parish church on Sunday, or only long enough to receive a certificate, is not discipleship. It is empty of real content.

Our faith is nourished by our Sunday celebrations but lived in the classrooms and the activities of our schools during the week. It begins with our personal awareness of who Christ is and what He means for each of us. Out of this awareness we have something vital to share with our young people who seek truth and meaning in life. But we cannot share what we do not first possess ourselves. Faith is caught, not taught.

St. Francois de Laval was well known

for his great charity. He even gave away food from his dinner table to feed the poor of New France. The poverty and hunger Catholic educators face is different; it is the hunger for truth and meaning in the life of our young people.

You see, our youth hunger and thirst for Truth, Beauty and Goodness. They hunger for God, for Jesus Christ, their Saviour, their Lord and friend. With the help of the Holy Spirit, our parents and teachers can help alleviate that hunger by sharing their faith in Christ. The example and mentorship of our teachers as adult believers who live what they believe has enormous influence.

The Catholic education system in Ontario exists for one foundational reason and that is to educate disciples of Jesus Christ, young men and women who, through learning, can contribute to the life of our faith community – the Church – as dynamic citizens of our country Canada.

The Hearst Moosonee Diocese is served by these English Catholic District School Boards: Huron-Superior (Sault-Ste-Marie), Northeastern (Timmins), Superior North (Terrace Bay) and the following French Catholic District School Boards: Aurores Boréales (Thunder Bay), Grandes Rivières (Timmins), and Nouvel-Ontario (Sudbury).

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