



**Epiphany**

“Like the Magi, we too must allow ourselves to learn from the journey of life, marked by the inevitable inconveniences of travel. We cannot let our weariness, our falls, and our failings discourage us. Instead, by humbly acknowledging them, we should make them opportunities to progress towards the Lord Jesus.”

Pope Francis, January 6, 2021

[Pope's Homily](#)

May the Lord Jesus make us true worshippers, capable of showing by our lives, his loving plan for all humanity. Let us ask for the grace for each of us and for the whole Church, to learn to worship, to continue to worship, to exercise this prayer of adoration often, because only God is to be adored. Pope Francis



**Catholic Education Prayers of the Faithful for February**

- That our Catholic schools may be inspired by the example of the many great saints who have gone before them and who intercede for them, we pray to the Lord.
- That our Catholic schools may inspire students to a life of love and service, we pray to the Lord.
- That our Catholic schools may fill students with a love for learning and a desire to change the world for the better, we pray to the Lord.
- That the teachers in our Catholic schools may be strengthened for their important task in our world, we pray to the Lord.

## 2020 Fall Regional GrACE Meetings

Thank you to the 77 grateful advocates and the 4 Bishops of Alberta for your attendance and participation in the fall regional GrACE meetings. Each meeting was recorded and transcribed and a number of key themes were identified. Your “hope-filled” conversation and insights were inspiring and so appreciated!

I am hopeful about our ongoing connection with our priests. They are always willing to do more. There is talk about Catholic education at church. We have our parishes behind us.

*Participant*

### Themes Emerging from Regional GrACE Meetings

1. Catholic schools are excelling at being who we are: communities of faith
2. Clergy have been more present and there is a deepened relationship between parish and school.
3. Opportunities and possibilities have been created by the growing use of technology and Zoom.

GrACE is causing us to think about Catholicity. Where I see hope is in the conversations GrACE is putting me into. I’m hearing teachers who aren’t nuns standing up for Catholic education. I think that’s very hopeful.

*Participant*

GrACE has heightened our level of sensitivity as to what we do in our school division to show that we are Catholic.

*Participant*

Date	Diocese	Participation
November 24	Grouard-McLennan Archdiocese	15
November 26	Edmonton Archdiocese B	15
December 3	Calgary Diocese	15
December 8	St Paul Diocese	20
December 17	Edmonton Archdiocese A	16
		<b>81 Total</b>

Our hope is leaning on prayer. I think there’s a lot of hope in our schools because of that. Our staff are leaning on their hope and it brings comfort.

*Participant*

Being authentically Catholic is our best way to be a witness.

*Participant*

**We don’t have to have all the bells and whistles but just be who we are.**

*Participant*

Students are embracing service projects. The opportunity to provide for those who have less. I see hope in the kids’ involvement in our district’s involvement with Catholic social services.

*Participant*

Thank you for all the work. Having the templates, the discussion questions, not having to rethink the wheel. We’re not in this alone. Having one source makes that so much easier. Being able to know that we’re all advocating for the same thing. Thank you for what you do!

*Participant*

We see hope in the calmness in our schools and in the growing connections with our parishes. Advocacy has been increased on social media.

*Participant*

I’ve seen hope in my tours of the schools, when leaders are prayer warriors. Prayer and our faith in the risen Christ acts as a security blanket and provides a level of normalcy during this time.

*Participant*

When we place the Bibles in the hands of our children, there are so many moments of excitement and pride from our students. I cried. The students hold the Bibles like they are precious. Talk about hope.

*Participant*

**You can't talk about Catholic Education without talking about hope.**

*Participant*

Our students with their teachers are still asking questions, attending the sacraments, learning though growing in faith. Two of our teachers became Catholic through the RCIA program. We see hope in the questions that our high school students ask as they return to their faith and yearn for meaning within our secular society.

*Participant*

In the past the geography has prevented us from gathering. Here we are now with the benefits of technology.

*Participant*

For all of you in Catholic education we're not alone. Faith is stronger than COVID. Amen.

Quebec has been without Catholic schools for a number years and their parishes suffer. Catholic schools support parishes. Going forward it is why we need Catholic schools more and more. It's a two-way relationship: the school and the parish.

*Participant*

Now we're doing monthly liturgies of the word and all staff will do it at the same time in our schools. The staff say, "That's what I needed."

*Participant*

We have new opportunities that were not happening before: students leading prayer, engaging families and parishes at home, engaging our parish priests, sending videos from priests to our classrooms, now we're seeing priests' faces in our classroom more than we might have otherwise.

*Participant*

Our Catholic schools have done a phenomenal job!! Our schools have remained open, welcoming, safe places for students and a place for parents to connect. We have been a beacon of light in the darkness. What a powerful image.

*Participant*

### Feedback Regional GrACE Edmonton A

- I invite everyone to consider reading the book TRIAL as it provides an account of the demise of Catholic education down east. We did share this in the Catholic Dimension.
- I appreciated hearing the good news stories.
- I appreciate finding out about the resources that are available to us and am looking forward to the availability of the presentation on the demise of Catholic schools in eastern Canada.
- Excellent collaboration!
- The overview of what has been done, where we are going and hearing from other jurisdictions were very helpful. I like the idea in the current situation to not try to do everything but set one goal. I would also like that the resources shared today can be shared with me. A big thanks for everything!
- This has really helped me in orienting myself within our Catholic Education community. I can already see lots of areas in which to collaborate. Seems like there are some excellent opportunities for digital ministry in conjunction with schools during COVID. Definitely agree that a central source (website) for collecting and distributing info would be great.

***Listening to all the other GrACE groups and what they are doing is so helpful!***

## Alberta's Catholic School Districts: Meet Northern Alberta in the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan

There are 17 Catholic School Districts in Alberta. As well, Alberta's four Francophone boards also offer Catholic education in specified schools. All in all, more than 183,500 students attend 450 Catholic schools in our province. Mark 5 of a Catholic School encourages us to build and share a communal spirit. In the spirit of community, GrACE encourages you to get to know more about Alberta's Catholic School Districts and their leaders.

In the month of January we introduce you to the four Catholic and Francophone school districts in the **Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan**: Grande Prairie and District Catholic Schools, Holy Family CRD and Living Waters CSSD. Serving Francophone students in this area is the Conseil scolaire du Nord-Ouest.

**Grande Prairie & District Catholic Schools** serve 5,600 students and currently operates 13 schools in the communities of Grande Prairie, Beaverlodge, Fairview, Sexsmith and Spirit River, with plans to open two new schools in the city of Grande Prairie in the fall of 2022.

**Holy Family Catholic Regional Division** serves 2,100 students in nine schools in the communities of McLennan, Peace River, Grimshaw, Valleyview, High Prairie and Manning.

**Living Waters Catholic Separate School Division** is actually part of three dioceses: Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan, Archdiocese of Edmonton and Diocese of St Paul due to the fact that its regional communities are located in three distinct regions. With 7 schools in the three communities of Whitecourt, Slave Lake and Edson, Living Waters Catholic serves 2,100 students.

**Conseil scolaire du Nord-Ouest** offers Francophone Catholic education in one Catholic school, Ecole Heritage in Falher. Ecole Heritage is a regional school, welcoming 155 students (Pre-K-12) from over 10 communities in the Peace and Smoky River region. The school community and school board collaborate with the local parish and diocese to enhance its Catholic programming.

About the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan

[Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan](#)

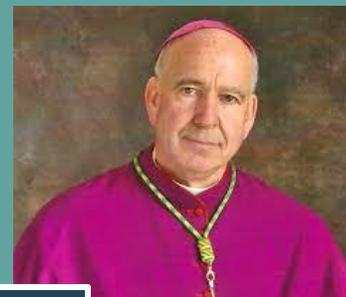
The Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan was created by Pope Paul VI in 1967, as a gift to Canada on her centennial. Before becoming an archdiocese, it was the Apostolic Vicariate of Grouard (1927-1967), itself having been carved out of other Apostolic Vicariates. An apostolic vicariate can be understood as a missionary region which is reasonably expected to increase in population and financial self-support so as to become a diocese at some future time.

The scattered population, numerous isolated communities, and insufficient indigenous financial resources make us a missionary diocese still. For the time being, we rely on Catholic Missions in Canada, and the generosity of its donors, to be able to maintain our parish churches, missions, and priests.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan encompasses about 225,000 sq. km. of northwestern Alberta. It extends from Valleyview in the south to High Level and Fort Vermilion in the north; and from Slave Lake in the east to the Alberta-BC border in the west. Another way to describe it is as covering the western half of Treaty Eight land.

## Meet the Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan: Archbishop Gerard Pettipas

Archbishop Pettipas was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia. At the age of 26 he was ordained a priest on May 7, 1977 by Bishop Thomas Benjamin Fulton. He was appointed as archbishop of Grouard-McLennan by Pope Benedict XVI on November 30, 2006.



## Book Recommendations from Archbishop Pettipas

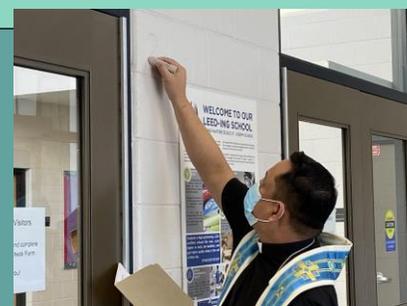
Over the past year, these are some of the books I have used for my own spiritual reading and reflection. I share these not so much to recommend these particular works, but to encourage you to keep good reading close at hand.

- Finding Christ in the Crisis: What the Pandemic Can Teach Us. Written by Father Harrison Ayre, a young priest from Victoria BC and Michael Heinlein, writer and editor at Our Sunday Visitor Press in the US. A fine appreciation of how we might approach the pandemic from a spiritual point of view.
- The Beatitudes and Woes of Jesus Christ, by Father Joseph R. Jacobson. Most of us remember Fr. Joseph, from our own archdiocese. In this book, he uses the beatitudes from Matthew's Gospels (and the beatitudes and woes from Luke's Gospel) to reflect a conversation between the reader and God.
- For the more serious reader, but you need not be a theologian, is the trilogy of books on Jesus of Nazareth by Joseph Ratzinger – Pope Benedict XVI needs no introduction. These are entitled The Infancy Narratives, From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration, and Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection. In size, these three works go from small, to medium, to large, but all three are filled with excellent insights.
- Still Green and Growing: A Practical Spirituality for the Second Half of Life, by Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie. Archbishop Lavoie writes from a background of Indigenous ministry, as well as many of the stumbling blocks that most of us experience: grief, faith and hope, addictions, death.
- Le Saint Enseignant: Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, saint patron des éducateurs, by George Van Grieken, FSC. This biography, in French, tells of the trials and triumphs of the founder of the Brothers of Christian Schools in France in the 1600s, and his innovations in the formation of teachers for poor boys in northeastern France.

## Catholic Education Around the Province

### *École St. Joseph School Whitecourt, Alberta (Living Waters Catholic Separate Schools)*

To recognize the Epiphany on January 6, 2021, we invited our Parish priest, Father Benjie, into our school to bless the entrance way with a chalk blessing. This traditional blessing will be a symbol of hope for the new year. With the ending of 2020, we felt that it was important to start anew with a blessing for our school building and all who enter through our doors. Father Benjie blessed our foyer with chalk on all four walls to recognize the Three Wise Men and as an invitation for Jesus to always be welcome in our school. We hope that by chalking our entrance way, 2021 will be a year of hope and a time for gathering together to celebrate our faith.



## Elk Island Catholic Schools' Submission for January GrACE newsletter

### How is faith alive in your Catholic schools?

Despite the pandemic, the focus on prayer has remained strong in our schools, especially over the Advent season. Continuing to be creative with virtual Christmas concerts, presentations and acts of kindness for others is a joy to witness.

### What does faith look like in your virtual or in-person school life?

- Many small but effective displays of the joy of the birth of Jesus through artwork, acts of kindness and keeping the Christmas story front and center.
- Staff being creative in the way they run assemblies and school masses. Our community priests have been doing their class visits through Google Meets.
- We are amazed by the flexibility and creativity of our staff, students and parishes on how they continue to live their faith and be the hands of Christ.

Six-year-old donates nearly \$5,000 to help the homeless by selling paintings

See News article:

[https://www.fortsaskonline.com/local/six-year-old-donates-nearly-5-000-to-help-the-homeless-by-selling-paintings?fbclid=IwAR2Y8dA4qwLCWDL9By2X6eHgoa6x9aMmH7tdr3aqBbygzTBAY\\_idGuODgS0](https://www.fortsaskonline.com/local/six-year-old-donates-nearly-5-000-to-help-the-homeless-by-selling-paintings?fbclid=IwAR2Y8dA4qwLCWDL9By2X6eHgoa6x9aMmH7tdr3aqBbygzTBAY_idGuODgS0)



### Faithfully January stories

Thank you to the Diocese of Calgary for publishing two new Catholic Education Stories.

From Calgary Catholic  
[30 Days of Prayer to St Joseph](#)

From STAR Catholic  
<https://www.catholicyc.ca/blog/grandma-rose>

We encourage you to share them widely.



Written by Grandma Rose Kostuik. Rose is a wife and mother for five children. She has nine grandchildren and three great grandchildren. She and her husband are members of Sacred Heart Parish in Wetaskiwin, AB. She is a long serving member of the CWL. Rose considers herself to be a lifelong learner and also enjoys gardening, baking, reading, playing cards and staying active both mind and body.

Roman Catholic Diocese of Calgary @calgarydiocese - Jan 21  
At the beginning of their long-distance dating life, Chelsea and Joseph Lawrence started invoking the intercession of the great Saint with a Novena. Now a family of 4, and St. Joseph hasn't stopped helping them since. loom.ly/GFuQWE #CatholicYYC



## Necessity is the Mother of Invention: Faith in the Pandemic

While the pandemic has changed the ways that we can interact with one another, it has also presented new opportunities to keep faith alive in our Catholic Schools in Living Waters. Advent and Christmas is usually a joyous time of long-standing traditions. This year, we reimagined our traditional Christmas concerts. Our students at Vanier Community Catholic School (K-6) in Edson, participated in a faith-based black light activity. As you can see, this is a new way of sharing a faith based message – Halleluiah indeed!

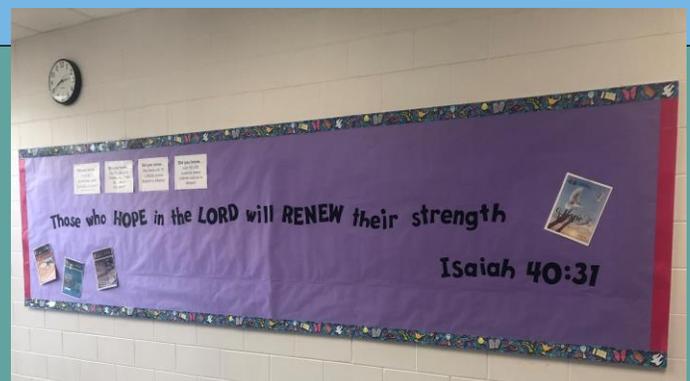


**LIVING WATERS CATHOLIC**  
SEPARATE SCHOOL DIVISION



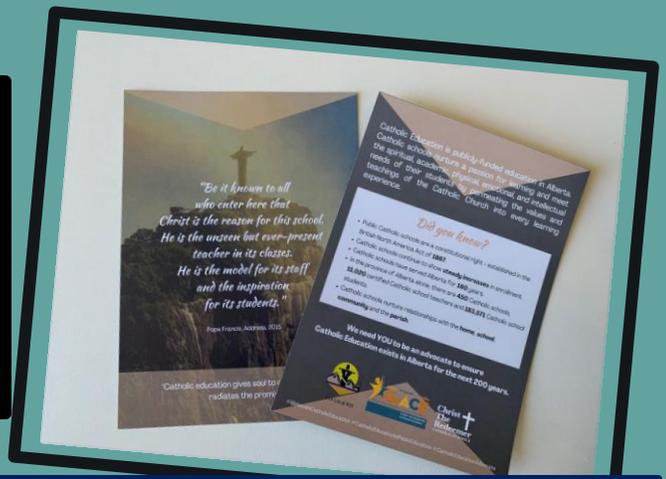
At Ecole St. Joseph (Gr. 4-12) in Whitecourt we were initially challenged by not being able to sing. However, an Educational Assistant, Laurie Martinot, shared her talents and came up with the idea of a Christmas Concert that used sign language to share the message of faith and joy. This was a unique and inclusive approach that allowed the school to make a new tradition, while honoring the spirit of the season.

The students and staff of Living Waters have shown that they will meet the challenges of the pandemic with creativity and community. Toward this end, our advent service projects had a focus on giving to our own communities. Whether creating hampers for families within our schools or participating in clothing drives, the Living Waters Family stepped up to share our good fortune with others. In the end, we modeled Mark 5 by demonstrating that when life is difficult we are stronger together, even if we have to remain physically apart. Faith is alive and we continue to model the way forward. After all, the early Christians faced significant challenges. The pandemic does not need to be a barrier to faith, but could be viewed as a force for creativity and building new traditions. As Isaiah 40:31 states: "Those who HOPE in the LORD will RENEW their strength."



## Christ the Redeemer Catholic

CTR Catholic's, GrACE CTR and ATA Local 29 collaborated on cards to advocate for Catholic education. These cards will be provided to staff, schools and local parishes to use to support their conversations in advocating for Catholic education. The image of the Redeemer statue was used to connect the school district and its stakeholders, but to also remind all who come across this image that Christ is the Redeemer of the world.



In light of the ongoing need to wear masks in public spaces, CTR Catholic's ATA Local 29 purchased masks for every faculty member across the district – an opportunity to not only advocate for Catholic education, but to offer an additional mask to use both inside and outside the classroom.

## Calgary Catholic School District

At CCSD, our GrACE group has been meeting virtually to share updates and the encouraging and good news stories of Catholic education. Our group includes representatives from our Board of Trustees, Diocese of Calgary, CWL, Knights of Columbus, parents, Chief Superintendent and school staff. We all agree that our pandemic experience has reminded us of the value of connection with others and the need to continue to share good news.

Faith is alive within our Catholic schools in both visible and invisible ways. The visible faith is evident as it is embedded within the programs/events and aesthetics of our school culture. The invisible faith is a flowing inclusive faith; a faith that penetrates hearts, highlights gifts, guides goals, blesses relationships, and creates a deep sense within our community that we are all one family, in Christ. **Teacher**

## How is faith alive in your Catholic schools?

Faith is alive in our Catholic Schools in our moments of prayer. Distanced we may be but united in prayer as the body of Christ we are. The great unifier is our Lord. He unites us, sustains us and is our hope. **Teacher Chaplain**



As parents, when we see how teachers readily share their faith and love for Christ with our children, we know that faith is alive and active in our Catholic schools. During the period of distance learning, teachers continued the in-person classroom practice and led our kids in prayer before they began their virtual lessons. These little acts of faith teach our children to always trust in God despite the circumstances. **Parent**

I know faith is alive in our Catholic school when we do our daily classroom visits. From prayer corners to art activities, students are engaged in faith learning as it is truly permeated in our schools. We can also see faith in action in how the members of our community treat each other with respect and kindness. A perfect example is when a Grade 7 boy lost his white ear bud case in the snow and 10-15 other boys searched for it even after the boy had given up. We continue at Prince of Peace School to "catch" students doing great things. This year we recognize students with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit by working in partnership with our local A&W and providing some gift certificates for their accomplishments in role modelling our faith for one student in every grade every month. **School principal**



**Lakeland Catholic Schools**

During the Advent season, Holy Family Catholic School, a K-12 school in Waskatenau, had a tradition of sending home a daily "Joy" bag with prayers and cookies to each and every family. The families would then send the bag back to the school with a prayer or best wishes for the staff and the students. These prayers were then typed out and were hung on the tree. Due to Covid, this simply could not happen this year so they looked for another way that the whole school could be involved in decorating the tree. They decided to have a look at the family of Jesus and learned about the Jesse Tree. Daily, all students read information and completed a reflection. and then each grade level took their turn coloring the symbols and hung them as a decoration on their school Christmas tree. It was a great season of learning and a way to continue to create unity within the school.



**DID YOU KNOW YOU CAN DIRECT YOUR PROPERTY TAXES TO SUPPORT CATHOLIC EDUCATION?**

Catholic Education is funded through education property taxes, grants and general provincial revenue. Taxes declared in support of the Catholic separate school district in your municipality benefit your children.

**Your taxes support Catholic Education by:**

1. Recognizing and affirming the constitutional right of Catholic separate school boards to requisition municipalities for education taxes.
2. Maintaining a vital connection between school boards and their electors. Taxation serves as a means of accountability for school trustees to provide quality education to those in their local communities, including those without school-aged children.
3. Providing a stable source of funding for public education and allowing for a public declaration of support by electors for Catholic Education.

**To ensure your property taxes are supporting your Catholic separate school:**

1. Declare your school support as "separate" on your annual property assessment notice and tax bill. If a declaration of school support is not filed by a property owner, the property assessment and tax bills are directed to the public school district.
2. To change your support designation, complete and submit a School Support Declaration form, obtained from your local city, town or municipal office.

**Check your property bill to confirm your support for Catholic education!**



Epiphany art was created this week by grade 1's at home while learning online. Great job! @GrACE4cathed @CCSD\_edu



Read **Grandin News** Article: *Fully Alive*. *Alberta Catholic Schools' new resource*.

[Grandin Media Fully Alive article](#)

Help us on Facebook!! Please tag GrACE in your Facebook posts, and we will share it right away!

GrACE Facebook address is [www.facebook.com/GrACE4cathed](http://www.facebook.com/GrACE4cathed)

**GrACE Top Tips for Advocacy this month**

- Share
- Pray
- Encourage
- Get informed

1. Choose 2 friends or family to share this newsletter with. Ask them to pass it on.
2. Pray for Catholic education and for safety and graces for teachers and students during this pandemic time.
3. Send an email to your parish priest to encourage him in his efforts with Catholic schools. Share the intentions for Catholic education with your parish.
4. Get informed. How many Catholic school districts exist in Alberta? How long has Catholic education been part of our province's history? What are the marks of a Catholic school and how do they make Catholic education distinct?