



NEWS NEWS NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thousands To Attend Catholic Faith Leadership Youth Rallies In Oakville

From November 17 - 19, 2009, the Halton Catholic District School Board in partnership with Mary Mother of God Church in Oakville, will be holding three one-day *Catholic Faith Leadership Youth Rallies* for the more than 2,100 Grade 8 students within the Halton Catholic District School Board.

Building on the long standing tradition at Mary Mother of God Church to host youth rallies for Grade 8 students preparing for confirmation, this initiative provides the students with the opportunity to experience a powerful day of music, faith and social time with their peers.

This year's *Catholic Faith Leadership Youth Rallies* have been planned by a sub-committee of the Board's Focus on Faith Steering Committee, chaired by Carol Hryhorsky, Principal of St. Catherine of Alexandria School and with Colleen Gamble, Pastoral Assistant at Mary Mother of God Parish. Each rally day will run from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., ending with Mass celebrated by the Most Reverend Bishop Bergie, Auxiliary Bishop of Hamilton. Parish priests connected with the participating feeder schools of each rally day have been invited to concelebrate at the Mass with Bishop Bergie.

"Our *Catholic Faith Leadership Youth Rallies* were created specifically to affirm and engage our Grade 8 students, who are experiencing a very important sacramental year", explains Alice Anne LeMay, Chair of the Halton Catholic District School Board. "These students in our Catholic schools and parishes are now completing their initiation into the Catholic Church with the sacrament of Confirmation. These rallies are intended to encourage our young Catholic leaders to go forth and tell the good news and really celebrate their faith with their peers."

Mary Tessari, Superintendent of Staff Development and Faith Formation and Corpus Christi Family of Schools, Halton Catholic District School Board explains that "the curriculum for Grade 8 in our Catholic schools is strongly based upon the Apostles Creed, which is the defining statement of our faith that we are proud to profess. These rallies will enable our students to further explore its meaning. Reflecting our Board's 2009-2011 *Focus on Faith* theme - "Hear the Word of the Lord, Learn to do Good, Seek Justice", these rallies will challenge our students to explore the subtheme of 'Are You Thirsty?' - thirsty for God in every way."

The Rally days for the elementary schools have been scheduled as follows:

Tuesday, November 17 - all Burlington Catholic elementary schools and St. Joseph School, Oakville

Wednesday, November 18 - Oak. schools (Holy Family, Mother Teresa, Our Lady of Peace, Pope John Paul II, St. Andrew, St. Joan of Arc, St. John, St. Marguerite d'Youville, St. Matthew, St. Michael)

Thursday, November 19 - all Halton Hills and Milton Catholic elementary schools and Oakville schools (St. Bernadette, St. Dominic, St. James, St. Luke, and St. Vincent)

The keynote speaker for the rallies is internationally acclaimed Chris Stefanick (www.chris-stefanick.com) who will speak to the youth about quenching their thirst for God, while addressing age appropriate questions like 'Why should I go to mass?'

The praise and worship music will be lead by the Matt York Band (www.Matt-York.com). Matt is a parishioner at Mary Mother of God Church and a graduate of the Halton Catholic District School Board. He has toured worldwide and won many awards and nominations for his music. Matt has recorded some of his favourite praise and worship songs that will be played and shared at each rally. This music is also an important part of the day as it will be sung at the Mass, which is the highlight of each rally day.

The local Catholic secondary school chaplaincy leaders have formed a group of 10 students from their school to create a team of 'Young Apostles', who will act as leaders at each of their feeder school youth rallies - mentoring the Grade 8 students from their feeder schools by encouraging them to join in the actions to the songs;

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(Thousands To Attend Catholic Faith Leadership Youth Rallies in Oakville cont'd)

participating in the Gospel drama as well as serving as ambassadors to Grade 8 students who will be encouraged to make the connection with and later attend their local Catholic secondary school during the year. The emcee for the youth rallies is Brian Dunn, Chaplain at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Secondary School in Oakville, who was instrumental in coordinating the participation of the high school leaders.

In preparation for this rally a teaching package, equipped with the Apostles Creed skit outline and lesson plan, a CD PowerPoint on the Apostles Creed, a CD by the Matt York Band with praise and worship music that was recorded especially for this event, a 5 foot tall *Apostles Creed Cross*, constructed by students under the direction of Construction Technology teacher Mark Bradley at Holy Trinity Catholic Secondary School in Oakville and ribbons and Chris Stefanick's book "Do I Have to Go?" was sent out to the schools to assist the Grade 8 teachers to help prepare the students for their rally day.

Mary Tessari, Superintendent of Staff Development and Faith Formation and Corpus Christi Family of Schools, Halton Catholic District School Board, notes with pride that "during the course of these Catholic Faith Leadership Youth rallies, our Grade 8 students will experience a wonderful day of celebrating our Catholic faith. They will sing praise and worship songs, be inspired and challenged by a motivational speaker, share lunch with their friends and make new ones, and then gather at the end of the day to celebrate Mass - to hear the Word of the Lord, to learn to do Good and to share and encourage one another to continue to SEEK JUSTICE as commanded by Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Our Board is most appreciative of the efforts and commitment of our Principals, Vice-Principals and teachers who inspire, instruct, and model the richness of our Catholic faith for our youth and, in so doing, bring the Gospel to life in our schools and communities."

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About the Halton Catholic District School Board

The Halton Catholic District School Board, a provincial leader in student achievement in literacy and numeracy, as well as in Special Education, provides the best of Catholic education to over 29,000 students of all ages at 50 faith-centred learning communities in Burlington, Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville. Committed to servant leadership, continuous school improvement planning and the preservation of the enduring gift of Catholic education, the Board is an exciting and dynamic system in which to learn, grow and work.

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