

🎵 🎵 Grace Notes from the System Chaplain 🎵 🎵

May 2019



As a Scot, I was raised to know that my country's motto was "Nemo me impune lacessit" or, in the Lowland Scots tongue, "Wha' daur meddle wi' me". The story goes that a Viking warrior, stepping on a thistle and letting out a yell, warned the Scots of an impending invasion. Apparently, that is the origin of the thistle as the emblem of Scotland. So what is dismissed by many as a nasty weed became the symbol of a country which has contributed to the world in many ways. (And many of you will be soon be cursing them as they force their way up in your garden!)

Canada's motto, "A mari usque ad mare" – From sea to sea (Psalm 72:8) – was originally adopted during the process of Confederation as a goal because Canada did not yet extend from coast to coast; however, by 1871 it was a reality. Many organisations hold dear to mottos which describe their vision or hoped-for outcome.



Recently, I found my mind drifting to our Board motto: **Achieving. Believing. Belonging**, which forms the foundation for our Strategic Goals. After some contemplation, I came to the realisation that these three words are indelibly linked as a process; however, I see them as functioning flipped over: when we help people to feel that they belong they come to believe in the institution and, more importantly, in themselves. Then, they are able to achieve and to continue to set goals for themselves which add to the sense of belonging and reinforce belief in themselves...and so on. So perhaps they are a rolling triangle – and we all know that the triangle is only a strong form when all three of its arms are functioning well.

Jesus taught that "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me." (Matthew 10:40) That would suggest that when we make people feel welcome and treasured we help them to understand that God welcomes and treasures them also. To know that one is valued and loved just as they are by the people around them and by God goes a long way to building self-esteem and belief in one's capability to be whatever they commit themselves to – and hence the achieving.

Our Theological Theme continues to be "Do You Love Me?" and being loved is one of the best ways of belonging. Jean Vanier was a strong and vocal proponent of the primacy of the need to belong, which even Maslow acknowledged can overcome the physiologic and security needs.



Our much-beloved Jean Vanier has gone home to the loving arms of the Father and he has left us a great legacy of understanding of the need to belong. There is an excellent set of video clips made with him on the subject available on YouTube or at

<http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/ssjv/belonging.html?index=1> (which also includes a study guide).

Vanier understood the need to belong and be loved and is well-known for his initiative which developed into the world-wide network of the L'Arche communities for differently-abled people, those who were/are not always welcomed and accepted by other communities. One of the characteristics always identified by those who visit a L'Arche home (there is one in Hamilton) – or Daybreak, as the L'Arche community in Richmond Hill is known, is the joy. Those from Jean Vanier Catholic Secondary School in Milton who visited L'Arche in Trosly will tell of how Jean was just one of the people in the family, helping

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with the chores, laughing and living with those to whom he opened his home so many years ago. Jean will be missed; his spirit is alive and well among the many who knew his love.

A tiny child needs not only food and shelter but something more... much more... a feeling of love, that someone cares for him, ready to die for him, that he is really loved, that he is important... precious. And so he begins to live and begins to sense the value of his being. And so it is that life rises in him and he grows in confidence in himself and in his possibilities of life and of creation. "JEAN VANIER, TEARS OF SILENCE

We have come to the end of our Adult Faith Formation sessions for the year, ending with two very much enjoyed events which were both outside school hours: the Board Retreat and Theology on Tap.

Murray Watson's discussions with us about Jesus' Jewish heritage and how we as Catholic Christians need to understand this to have a better understanding of Jesus, elicited many comments like, "I've been a Catholic for x years and I've never heard any of this before". Being able to see connections between the Sabbath prayers we shared and the prayers of the Mass helped us to recognise our deep roots in the traditions of Abraham.

Fr Andrij Figol led an engrossing session at Theology on Tap about our Eastern Rite brothers and sisters within the Catholic Communion. Once again, people learned many new things and seemed delighted with the discovery.

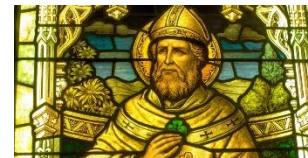
As we continue with our Theological Theme for another year, my challenge is to continue to organise sessions which are relevant, life-giving and faith-forming. Given the difficulties of obtaining supply coverage these days, we may try to offer more events which can be attended without having to have classes covered. Please let me know if you think this would work, and if you'd prefer after school, evening or Saturday sessions. Stay tuned.

I had the privilege once more of participating in the Hamilton Diocesan Youth Rally and need to share with you the immense amount of energy shared by everyone who was a part of that day.

June is a season of sweetness and sadness. For the most part people are excited about the coming of summer and vacation; however, the end of the school year also means people moving on - to new levels of education, to new positions within schools, to retirement – and there is a certain sadness in saying goodbye. What is commonly known as the Irish Blessing is a favourite for times like this:

May the road rise to meet you,
may the wind be ever at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
and the rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of his hand.

Read more at <https://www.beliefnet.com/inspiration/2009/02/irish-blessings>



With every blessing,

Gillian

System Chaplain and Faith Formation Lead