

## 🎵 🎵 Grace Notes from the System Chaplain 🎵 🎵

December 2019

This morning as I got ready for work I was reminded that we were asked to wear red as a sign of support for United Way but also because we are to decorate the CEC lobby this afternoon. Looking through my wardrobe for something red, I found the red hat with the purple ribbon which a friend challenged me to buy as I reached “un certain âge”. For those of you unacquainted with the Red Hat Society, it is an association of women who, although growing older, want to find new expressions of interest and energy. The organisation was stimulated by a poem entitled, “Warning” by Jenny Joseph (a copy of which I was given by my friend in the 1990’s), which begins:



When I am an old woman, I shall wear purple  
With a red hat which doesn't go, and doesn't suit me.

The poem is essentially about being countercultural and behaving differently from what is expected. Although I wouldn't advertise many of the suggested behaviours to students, I have found fun in the message.

This got me thinking on a couple of levels.

1. To be a part of a Catholic school system requires us to be countercultural in many ways as we are challenged to make the gospel the foundation of everything we teach, whether it is math or science or social studies or language arts. It takes a lot of courage to push back against the self-centredness and individualism which threaten to take over our world, to promote the Catholic Graduate Expectations and the virtues they enfold over careerism, the supremacy of marks and material gain.
2. As our communities are transformed with red decorations in preparation for the cultural celebration of Christmas, we need to remember to save some space for the purple: for the celebration of Advent which we observe as the precursor to the Christmas celebration. The Advent wreath on our prayer table or in the foyer is a sign that we are getting ready for Christmas but aren't there yet; the faith-based Advent calendar says that we can wait a little longer for the chocolate and gifts; the prayers and devotions proclaim that Jesus is central to our community and that we are trying to help everyone have an encounter with him every day.



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While you are considering gift giving, why not gift yourself with the time to attend an Adult Faith Formation session?

Monday December 2                      The Courage to Love- an Advent Evening Retreat - Mary Ellen Chown and Joanne Montague on Mary, Mother of Jesus (dinner is provided)

Wednesday January 15                      Loving and Forgiving Are You, O Lord – Fr Joe de Viveiros on Reconciliation

Wednesday February 12, AM              The Road to Bethlehem ...and Beyond – Renata Dean on Parenting

Wednesday February 12, PM              Do You Love Me? Shall We Dance? – Adriana Rerecich

Wednesday March 25                      Reflecting God's Love – David Dayler

Friday April 24- Sat April 25              How Wide Are God's Arms? – Dr. Murray Watson

Wednesday April 29                      7 Moments on the Journey to Emmaus – Dr. Anne Jamieson

Wednesday May 20                      Let All That You Do Be Done in Love – Very Rev. Cornelius O'Mahony

And don't forget Theology on Tap – Wednesday April 15<sup>th</sup>, from 7-9 pm at Fionn MacCool's in Burlington

We look forward to seeing you there. Why not bring a colleague who has never attended an AFF session?

As we move into Advent and towards Christmas, may we remember our call and our promise to see the face of Christ in all less fortunate than we. May our giving this Christmas include the poor, lonely, grieving, discouraged and abandoned and let us bring some light into their lives. May we also give some thought to our stewardship of the environment in our choices of gifts and wrappings, the packaging of things we use every day, and the use we make of fossil fuels.

I know that our schools are making Christmas much brighter for many because of the generosity of kind and spirit which they share at this time of year. Let's make this an all-year-long attitude!

The launching of our HCDSB 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Pilgrimage of the Cross has inspired all of us who have been involved so far with a new joy for the privilege of being a living, Catholic education community. We wish everyone a joyful and meaningful share in this experience in the coming months.

Wishing you and everyone dear to you every blessing for Christmas and the coming year.

Peace,

*Gillian*

**System Chaplain and Faith Formation Lead**

