

## ♪♪ Grace Notes from the System Chaplain ♪♪ Special Lenten Edition

*"Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly;  
gather the people." (Joel 2:15)*

With Ash Wednesday a week away, we need to get serious about how we are going to make Lent meaningful for ourselves and those to whom we minister. And rest assured that I consider any work we do for others, directly or indirectly, to be a ministry, so that all of us who work in education are called to minister to others. One cannot give what one does not have so this is the time to fill ourselves up in the best way possible through our relationship with God so that we, in turn, have spiritual, emotional and physical energy to give to others. The first reading for Ash Wednesday, from the book of Joel, reminds us every year that we need to take stock of ourselves, be repentant for the ways we have strayed away from God and practise fasting and prayer.

But, the second reading reminds us that we are ambassadors for Christ, that "now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!" (2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2) The words of Jesus in the gospel for that day (Matthew 6:1-6; 16-18) warn us off false piety and just bid us to go about the practice of almsgiving, prayer and fasting in a quiet and unobtrusive way; thus, we live our discipleship with joy and not acting as if we are being deprived. With that in mind – and the admonition to wash our faces and not be like the hypocrites – we need to put our effort into the actions that the Ash Wednesday liturgical action foretells. The ashes are a valuable reminder of what Lent is about but have no significance unless we wear them to promise a change of heart and action.



Shrove Tuesday needs to be more than just a day to eat pancakes before we give up the chocolate; it needs to be the day we all commit ourselves to a deeper and more meaningful journey and conversation with Christ. That includes our commitment to the principles of *Renewing the Promise*, to be communities in which we accompany each other in the discovery of our shared story with Christ and how each of us is loved. We are called to be a part of the "New Evangelisation" which builds deeper and lasting relationships with Christ and with

each other. Our faith calls us to live the gospel values of faith, hope and love (1 Cor 13:13), "to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with [our] God (Micah 6:8) in a way which transforms us and invites others to join us – to become joyful disciples. For the record, the practice of eating pancakes on Shrove Tuesday is a cultural – rather than a religious – practice; it doesn't even figure in the Ordo Or Liturgical Calendar. We see it as an opportunity to celebrate community before beginning our Lenten journey. Historically, it was a day to empty your kitchen of all rich foods – butter, eggs, sugar

(hence the pancakes) – much the same as a Jewish family will empty their house of anything containing leaven prior to Passover. The focus was rather on being ‘shriven’ or going to confession to enter into the Great Fast absolved of one’s sins.

As was mentioned in the last edition of *Grace Notes*, fasting and prayer go hand in hand, especially in Lent. Here’s a link to an article which might give you some “food for thought” on the subject.

[https://aleteia.org/2020/02/17/have-your-best-lent-yet-with-this-genius-plan-for-fasting-and-prayer/?utm\\_campaign=NL\\_en&utm\\_source=daily\\_newsletter&utm\\_medium=mail&utm\\_content=NL\\_en](https://aleteia.org/2020/02/17/have-your-best-lent-yet-with-this-genius-plan-for-fasting-and-prayer/?utm_campaign=NL_en&utm_source=daily_newsletter&utm_medium=mail&utm_content=NL_en)

There are also some great resources available on the Development and Peace: Caritas Canada website, including a Way of the Cross which is presented in pdf and powerpoint formats. See: [https://www.devpc.org/en/lent/resources?field\\_material\\_type\\_public\\_value=theological](https://www.devpc.org/en/lent/resources?field_material_type_public_value=theological)

We do need to remember that we are exhorted to follow our journey in Lent with joy, not by expressing our misery at whatever deprivation we feel is being imposed on us – or we impose on ourselves.

I remember the L’Arche hymn which was very popular a few years back:

Lord Jesus, you shall be my song as I journey.  
I’ll tell everybody about you wherever I go.  
You alone are our life and our peace and our love.  
Lord Jesus, you shall be my song as I journey.

En français:

Jésus, je voudrais te chanter sur ma route.  
Jésus, je voudrais t’annoncer à mes frères partout.  
Car toi seul es la vie et la paix et l’Amour;  
Jésus, je voudrais te chanter sur ma route.

It was composed in French by “Les petites soeurs de Jésus” (“The Little Sisters of Jesus”). It is a song that Jean Vanier loved very much. He asked for it to be sung during the Faith and Sharing retreats. It is used a lot at L’Arche.

You can hear a beautiful rendition of this at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFxmIT\\_NJyo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFxmIT_NJyo)

You are also invited to participate in the 24 Hour Fast for HCCEF during Holy Week, when you can choose to fast from food 🍴 or electronics 📱 or uncharitable thoughts 😊 or.....whatever has meaning for you or the team that you generate. Information is attached to this newsletter.

*Wishing you a blessed and fulfilling Lent,*

*Gillian*



**FAST FROM..... FOOD?  
ELECTRONICS? SOMETHING ELSE?  
YOU WILL HELP STUDENTS IN  
NEED TO SUCCEED**

**Registration begins February 18<sup>th</sup>  
HCCEF.ORG**

## **ABOUT THE HCCEF 24 HOUR FAST – April 7-8, 2020**

The Season of Lent starts on February 26 - a season for prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Fasting will connect us to our neighbours who are in need – those who are forced to fast by their poverty. People of many cultures and religious traditions - including Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Taoists, Jains and Hindus, to name a few - practice fasting. The goal may be religious purification, self-discipline, sacrifice, deepening one's prayer life, raising consciousness of hunger in our world and acting in solidarity with the poor.

As Christians, we recall the forty days Jesus spent fasting and praying in the desert and generally combine our fast with almsgiving or fundraising. Our Baptismal promise is to show Christ's love to those in need. Fasting can help us to understand the suffering that our neighbours experience, and lead us in our efforts to alleviate that suffering.

We are inviting members of the Halton community to join the "HCCEF 24 Hour Fast" on April 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>, to help raise much-needed funds for HCDSB Students & Families in Need.

Fasting can take many forms, including from food, from electronics or from something else. Participants can choose how they would like to "fast".

Schools (students, staff & parents), parishes and other community groups/individuals are invited to join a team, ask their friends and family to sponsor them, and help a GREAT cause – HCDSB Students & Families in Need.

Register as part of your team. Each team will be able to set their own Dollars Raised Goal.

Similar to a Walk-a-thon or Run-a-thon, participants would get pledges (online & paper) from friends and family.

Pick your own "Celebration" or "Incentives" if your team reaches your goals – i.e. Principal and Vice-Principal will get a pie in the face, or get dunked in a dunk tank..... Be creative!

## **24 HOUR FAST CHAMPION**

We are asking each school/parish to recruit a person to be a "24 Hour Fast Champion" (or more than one person if you wish). They will be asked to rally people to join your team; to create excitement for the 24 Hour Fast so your team can reach your Goal.

Potential ways to create awareness:

- 1) In person - Share with people the impact they will have by participating
- 2) Website, Social Media, Email, Newsletters

The "24 Hour Fast Champion" will receive information and resources to help your team to be successful. We will also be available to chat over the phone or via email to answer any questions.

## WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE & HOW?

More information will be sent to your “24 Hour Fast Champion” on how people can register, and the logistics of the 24 Hour Fast. However, here are some of the basics:

### WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

- Adults or students, which could include:
  - Fasting from food – we recommend adults or possibly secondary students
  - Fasting from electronics – any age that the school feels is suitable
  - Fasting from something else – use your discretion on what is suitable
- Students not participating in the Fast are welcome to participate in other ways if the school chooses. Perhaps a Dance-a-thon, Civvies Day or an activity that represents “fasting” for them...your choice.

### WHAT ARE YOU BEING ASKED TO DO?

1) Fast from Electronics, or Food, or something else if you like, for 24 hours from Tuesday, April 7<sup>th</sup> to Wednesday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

- *Notes regarding Fasting from food:*
  - *Most people will be able to Fast for 24 hours without any side effects*
  - *Some people probably shouldn't Fast for 24 hours*
  - *Children under 12 years or the elderly*
  - *Pregnant or nursing mothers*
  - *People with some medical conditions or specific dietary needs*
  - *If you are unsure, check with your family physician first*
  - *Listen to your body. Please do not put your health in jeopardy because you have been fasting.*
  - *Hydrate well – juices with low acidity are good options*
  - *Choose easy to digest foods to eat after your “Fast” – i.e. breads, pasta, rice*

2) Fundraise to help students in need – see “How” below.

### WHEN?

- April 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> - You choose the 24 hour period – perhaps 7am to 7am, or 1pm to 1pm...any 24 hour period would be fine...you choose.
- Some schools have mentioned that they are looking to do some fun activities with their students during the Fast. If you are Fasting from Food, please keep in mind that participants are encouraged to decrease their activity levels. Get lots of sleep, and choose activities that will help take their mind off eating (i.e. movies, reading, board games).
- In previous years, teams have broken the Fast together as a community on the second day, and enjoying a meal together.

### WHERE?

- Fast wherever you would like – home, school, work...you choose.

## HOW?

### 3 Easy Steps

- 1) Register for the “HCCEF 24 Hour Fast” through our website – HCCEF.ORG - (we will also utilize the Canada Helps website).
- 2) Ask friends, family and neighbours to sponsor you or to join your team...the more the merrier.
  - a. Online through the Canada Helps website is a very effective way to raise funds, but a paper pledge form will also be available.
  - b. Charitable tax receipts will be issued directly through the Canada Helps website for online donations, and through the HCCEF Office for other donations.
- 3) Fast on April 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>.

## YOUR IMPACT

### THE NEED

- Poverty remains a powerful factor in whether a student succeeds in school.
- Low-income students in Halton face financial barriers to learning. For example:
  - Basic Necessities like food and clothing
  - School activities with a fee like school trips or sports teams
- 10.5% of children in Halton live in low-income households – an estimated 3600 HCDSB students.

### WHY DONATE?

- Our faith guides us to help our neighbors in need.
  - “...whatever you do for the least of these, my brothers and sisters, you do for me...” Matthew 25:40
- Education directly influences students’ life chances – and life outcomes.
- Every child deserves the opportunity to succeed ○ The Achievement Gap – An achievement gap can form between low-income students and their peers due to financial barriers to learning.
- Mental Health Challenges – Social exclusion, shame, anger, stigma, low self-esteem, low confidence and loss of hope are all issues related to student poverty.
- Every student needs to have HOPE, DIGNITY & EQUITY.

*“Your gift upheld the dignity of every family at a time when poverty’s bite is most keenly felt in our school community.” – HCDSB Principal*

*“Thank you so much for the gift cards. This has helped me and my boys a lot with clothes and food especially this Christmas season. I don’t know what I would have done without these gift cards, at this time that me and my boys are grieving. We really appreciate it, thank you.” – HCDSB Parent*

## QUESTIONS?

Contact Marc Clare – Executive Director, HCCEF

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