

Do you love me?



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# Focus on Faith Update 2020

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# "Do you love me?" John 21:15-17

It is often said that necessity is the mother of invention and it is very evident that the Covid-19 pandemic and resultant restrictions on so much of what we have heretofore taken for granted have given birth to a great deal of creativity as we work to nurture our faith in the Halton Catholic District School Board. Many people remark on how much more comfortable they have had to become, not only in the delivery of classroom lessons and on-line meetings but also in the practice of our faith.

Through the efforts of our chaplains and pastoral animators, supported by our Communications Team, IT staff and many willing and talented colleagues, we have seen a veritable flourishing of new and different ways to pray, worship, practise Christian Meditation, counsel, support, respond to the needs of our community and observe the passing of our Church year and civic observances such as Remembrance Day.

Chaplains are conducting on-line "office hours" and offering virtually many of the clubs and services which previously existed in person. Both chaplains and pastoral animators are exhibiting great creativity as they try to find ways to sustain morale and celebrate faith with both students and staff.



The closure of churches and chapels as well as proscriptions against gatherings of any kind have led to the development of on-line chapels - including one on the Board's web page, recorded and live-streamed liturgies, prayers and prayer services on YouTube. Our chaplains have done a stellar job in getting the message of hope out through thoughts for the day, spending many hours recording and uploading their prayers, reflections and music. Pastoral animators, too, have shared their experiences of celebrating at a distance and the learning which that has involved. Many of our pastors and parish teams have joined virtual events or sent recorded messages to help "keep the flame of faith alive" as they too maneuver their way through the different demands on their ministry.

Our CEC staff meet virtually to pray every Monday morning and have observed a number of liturgies including Remembrance Day at a distance, as did our schools. Administrators gather to pray on-line on Monday mornings also to be nourished spiritually for the new and different stresses on their positions.





## **Catholic Education** Week

May 2-8, 2021

Themes for the week:

- Preparing the **Earth**
- Sowing Seeds of Gratitude
- Cultivating **Relationships**
- Harvesting New Fruit

Semaine de

l'éducation

catholique

Catholic

Week

Education

Faith in Halton Goes Digital cont'd ...

Perhaps one of the difficult ministries to sustain at a distance has been

CCCRT

that of Compassionate Care and Crisis Response. Schools have demonstrated some very thoughtful and innovative ways to navigate the waters of sadness and Comparisonate Care and Cristic Response to the contract of the

been added to the CCCRT Resource binder.

Through the use of the Microsoft Teams and Zoom platforms, we have been able to maintain our Theological Education for Leaders program with Michael Saver and Sita Jayaraman, the Eco-Café sessions led by Sister Mary Heather MacKinnon, Adult Faith Formation events with Fr Joseph De Viveiros and Dr Anne Jamieson, and the continuation of our Family of Schools Chaplain-Pastoral Animator teams.



The System Chaplain's "Grace Notes" newsletter moved from being monthly prior to the beginning of the pandemic to daily in the spring and is now distributed weekly with back issues being retained in the Focus on Faith site on the Board web page.

The Pilgrimage Cross is safely housed at Corpus Christi CSS where it was made and we look forward to resuming the journey when it becomes safe to do so.



(Pre-pandemic photo of Pilgrimage Cross at B.R. in February 2020)

#### **News from the Schools**



ST. SCHOLASTICA CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



The start of the 2020 school year has been about the health and safety of our school community. As we socially distance and follow COVID-19 protocols, the ache to feel the love and support of our faith community has never been more acute.

In an effort to feel connected across all divisions, every St. Scholastica Stormy set aside time to connect in reflection and prayer. Theses prayers were then posted on our school prayer wall.

The hallway display serves as a reminder that while there are

many ways that we must stay apart, we are always united in our faith.

Jennifer Leung, Pastoral Animator

But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.. (Matthew 6:6)



Bullying Awareness and Prevention at Holy Cross



The Dream Team at Holy Cross is leading the students in variety of activities to help foster a peaceful, inclusive and accepting school climate. We are hosting special events in November and February to promote bullying awareness and prevention. In November, the students enjoyed writing messages on butterflies to symbolize a reminder of a promise to change and hung them all over the school. Each class wrote and displayed their own prayer for peace. We gathered as a school community virtually for a peace liturgy and each class did their own peace walk while carrying their prayer. It is beautiful to see the students taking the time to read the positive messaging around the school. A special thank you goes out to Ms. Simms

and Ms. Robertson!

Clarine Peric, Pastoral Animator

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you. (2 Thessalonians 3:16)



More than ever, a sense of community and belonging this year is needed due to Covid-19. The pandemic has left many feeling anxious and distressed on a daily basis. So, as a staff community, we have gathered on teams twice a week before school to come together in prayer, reflection and to share our special intentions. Some classes have found it beneficial to continue to partake in daily meditation to help calm their minds and spirit. As a school community we recognize that many families, more than ever, are in need of basic necessities. We always look to Jesus, as our teacher and role model, on the importance of on how to treat our neighbor and our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Through our food drive, which supports the Georgetown Food Basket, we at St. Catherine of Alexandria, successfully collected and donated over 980 pounds of food to help fill the shelves as well as bring comfort and peace of mind to those most in need. Moving forward, our focus will continue to be on maintaining a sense of community.

Yours in Christ, *Nives Zoppas, Pastoral Animator* 

This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. (Joshua 1:8)



Caught In An Act of Kindness

Each teacher on staff received one of these cookies and have been asked to reward a student with it when he or she is "caught" in an act of kindness. I awarded mine this week and the student was surprised and so very thankful.



Mirella DeFazio, Pastoral Animator

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103)

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St. Dominic School took action to "Scare Away Hunger" this Fall. Staff and students brought in non-perishable items to donate to Kerr Street Missions. We collected approximately 1482lbs of items for the 600+ families they are currently serving in Oakville. Our Student Ambassadors led this initiative for the school community.

#### Rachel McNamara – Pastoral Animator

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. (Isaiah 55:1)



Help us create our Rock Garden for Diversity. We are building a prayerful space at the front of our school to celebrate our school community.

Joanne McKay, Pastoral Animator

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. (Matthew 13:31)





#### Where Do I See Christ?

FEEL GOOD MUSIC!

Christ the King staff and students are looking ahead to our school feast day. Since the Feast of Christ the King always falls on a Sunday we celebrate the following day. This year we are asking ourselves, "Where do I see Christ in my daily life?"



educator knows how hard it is to ignite the spark of enthusiasm in our current situation. Yet, our Student Leaders persist in engaging, challenging, building community and working for justice. Their deep sense of mission, their resilience and joy show they have heard the call to be priest, prophet and king.

As the hands and feet of Christ our Student Council has given students ways to celebrate. Virtual pumpkin carving and Halloween custom contests might not sound

particularly Christ-like, but the intention to build community and belonging certainly is. They have also highlighted important social justice issues like anti-racism and inclusion.

Our Mentors are heading up the REDress Project. They have created a video and posters and are

planning a Wear Red Day to coincide with Indigenous Education Month and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. The Student Wellness Club noted the difficulties in building friendships given our restrictions this year. They prepared icebreakers and games for use during break times in class. What a gift to our Grade 9s who have so few chances to get to know each



other! Our Sports Leadership classes are itching to get in and build on this idea.

We expect to see Christ in the solemn or transcendent, but we also can meet Christ in the ordinary, everyday acts of service and love. We can be encouraged by our young people as they continue to do

God's work in practical and compassionate ways.

#### Mary Lozowsky, Chaplaincy Team Leader

The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you<sup>[a]</sup> in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. (Zephaniah 3:17)





Finding God Amidst the Coronavirus Crisis

During these uncertain times of dealing with COVID, it can be difficult for teens to maintain their prayer life and overall faith. To combat this, our Loyola Hawks are looking beyond their own struggles by dealing with the pandemic in thinking of others. While we are called to do good works every day of the year, our students are making a special effort during the pandemic to follow Jesus' example of service. He provided for the hungry and cared for the sick. Like Jesus, our students are doing their best to help other people get the things that they need locally, and globally as charitable organizations struggle to keep up with demand. Within 5 weeks, our Loyola Hawks have collected the following: over 500 pairs of gently used prescription eye glasses for

ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

Global Eye Car; over 500 pairs of shoes for Dr. Simone's CFFC Warehouse; hundreds of diapers, socks and mittens for the Anishnabeg Outreach Indigenous Child and Family Centre and reusable masks for the Development and Peace front-line workers. Our students are always reminded that they give witness to Jesus when they perform works of mercy and acts of love that help us care for the needs of others. They will tell you that they only hear this message at school or at church, but recently a



secular voice made them change their opinion. The local Oakville community recognized their giving spirit by awarding the Loyola Development and Peace Student Club this year's 2020 YMCA Peace Medallion and a \$500 bursary for outstanding contributions to charitable work in the Oakville community. This award reminded them that as the pandemic continues to disrupt the lives of many, creating a negative impact in so many ways, it is be easy to become self centred and forget the teachings of our faith. This award encouraged the students to move forward with purpose and intentionality; to make goodness of their lives in the God-given abilities gifted to them. God, who is never outdone in generosity, will continue to give good things to us. God rewards when we seek to serve him, love him and follow him. The pandemic is proof that we may not always see clearly when we are struggling but God rewards and ultimately, we long to hear the voice of the Saviour himself saying to us well done good and faithful servant enter the joy of the Kingdom.

Kandy Harkin, Chaplaincy Leader

The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. (Matthew 25:40)







On Remeterance day air class decording out school in respect for the souther and veterans who tought and shill take prepared and made our class day literagy and memorial hallway with the hard work of many students we were able to do something beautiful to hanour Const downting but continued because our class feels its worth it to spend time working hard for our veterans. On Remeterance day we remeter the fallen and the hero's, our class is proud to do something even if it's small to respect our splaters.



Oksana Tymczyma, Pastoral Animator

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. (John 15:13)



St Paul School is pleased to present our annual Christmas Celebration screening virtually December 17.

Classes will be showcasing various percussion styles to Christmas classics with hope to gather community to celebrate joyfully the advent of Christmas.

Dita McNeil, Pastoral Animator

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7: 14)



#### ST. THOMAS AQUINAS CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL





These two have been "brewing" other ideas and Fridays in general are a fun place to be at STA. After a long, hard week of focused and disciplined work, we all need some joy-filled release. On the shared lunch hour, music is played in the hallways for the staff. At 12 noon (sharp!), those staff who want to participate in trivia sign on to the Trivia Challenge on Microsoft Teams. Using Kahoot, the questions come quickly and the atmosphere is imbued with tension as the competitive spirit pushes the race to the podium for the prize.



Faith is expressed in many ways. We can see the value of community in everything Jesus did and taught: when he healed people, he restored their physical and mental health *and* he restored their relationship with their

communities. We are nothing if we are not part of some or many



communities. What better way to celebrate community than by precipitating kindness and joy through our favourite hot beverages and snacks, with a regular side portion of trivia.



**A glorious time for tulip planting!** Tulip bulbs were planted as seeds of hope by the Life Skills students, EAs, and both Ms. Treacy's. It is rather accepted that this pandemic is challenging our coping mechanisms. However, let's take a cue from our Special Education department, especially our Life Skills students who will not let this situation deter them from living and experiencing all that life still has to offer.

Adriana Rerecich, Chaplaincy Leader

And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. (Luke 6:31)

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Holy Trinity welcomed Fr. Isaac, from Mary Mother of God Church, who came and blessed our school at the beginning of the year. We are so thankful for our parishes and parish staffs and the connections we have with them. We are also thankful for the blessing Father gave at the beginning of this year that is so different from any other.





In October, we held a "No Tricks, Just Treats", Food and Toiletries Drive for OakHaven. OakHaven is a community resource centre that "strives to provide a safe, welcoming space for people in need in the Central Oakville area." Holy Trinity's Social Justice

League, Student Council and Robotics Club (Team 3161) coordinated efforts to hold this drive. We know that the needs are greater this year, so clubs are working

together and through everyone's generosity, we were able to bring many needed items to OakHaven.



Marie O'Connell, Chaplaincy Leader

But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. (1 John 3:17-18)



Holy Family is a close knit community comprised of one class per grade. The students and staff see each other on most days and kind greetings are always shared in the halls and other common areas between the members of this faithful community. We as group of faithful are committed to exploring the Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations. Once a month students from each class are recognized for their contributions to our faithful community as identified by the Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations. This celebration is consistent to recognizing we are all children of God and each person in their own way is a person of value.

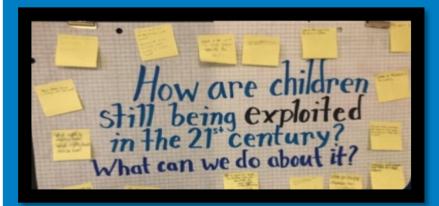
Peter Nolan, Pastoral Animator

He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)



Social Justice Activity – Children's Rights

This meaningful, faith-inspired, social justice activity was conducted in an intermediate grade 7 class. The students were engaged in conversation and in inquiry-based learning on topics that explored the rights of children. Some of the topics that were discussed: \* education (Malala), \* refugees, \* physical abuse, \* abandonment and \* child labour.



A confusing web with an important message. If you had to choose only one children's rights issue to support, does that mean you have to forget about other issues? Absolutely not, because they are all connected. An important learning as we begin to write our persuasive essays



Mary Lamanna, Pastoral Animator

Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever. (Psalm 72:7)

FOCUS ON FAITH UPDATE 2020



At Lumen Christi school we have been holding Friday morning prayer services for staff. These weekly opportunities to gather (at a distance) have been a great comfort and many educators have adopted the practice of engaging in prayer services weekly with their class. Many classes take some time each Friday afternoon to practice Christian meditation, praying in colour, and listen to the Word of God. As we prepare for Advent, we are working on a weekly Teams liturgy with the entire at-school and virtual school community.

#### Laura Hamilton, Pastoral Animator

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)



#### FAITH IN KINDERGARTEN 2020 AT ST. ANNE

The kindergarten teams at St. Anne school begin to frame a natural connection between God, Creation, Home and our Parish. Our Educators infuse the idea of God as creator in our inquires.





At the beginning of the school year, we focus on "ALL ABOUT ME". We invite the students to look closely in the mirror and draw themselves. We discuss how God made each of us unique and special, as well as what we love most about ourselves.

Our kindergarten teams spend a lot of time outdoors. We discuss how God made our beautiful earth and how we can be stewards of earth. We learn that God made all living things and that it is our responsibility to take care of it and show respect. The Children read and discussed THE CREATION STORY and wanted to recreate it.

Patricia Rego and Maria Paolozza, Pastoral Animators



## Ever Heard of Knights 4 Justice?

October 15, 2020 Kovacs, Matthew, KNN, KNN Featured, Xavier Times (School Newspaper)

#### Fighting For Equality, Love and Inclusion

"There\_is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about." – Margaret Wheatley

Knights For Justice; a club run by Ms. Niksic and her inspiring team, is battling against the long-lasting fight against social injustices prevalent within our community and around the world. This club is run by over 30 enthusiastic students who are eager to make a significant change in our community through various projects. Embodying the spirit of St. Francis Xavier by embracing the belief that everyone is equal regardless of their faith and ethnicity is a fundamental aspect of the club. Ms. Niksic's team is here to demonstrate the power of kindness, compassion and teamwork in serving the common good. The first event that the club is hosting is St. FX Knights Scare Hunger which is a Halloween canned food drive! Our goal is to run this initiative in the safest and most productive way possible. We will assign time slots to collect non-perishable items from each classroom to ensure that contact is brought to a minimum. As the school year progresses, we will be hosting several events to raise awareness of social injustices.

It is through our students' dedication to causes like these, that we not only raise awareness among our school community, but play an influential role in the lives of those victimized by the world's most pressing social justice issues. There will be multiple opportunities for students to donate money as well as items for those in need. We encourage you to donate whatever you can as little goes a long way.

Make sure to spread the word amongst yourselves and commit to the cause! Follow us on Instagram @stfxknights4justice to stay up-to-date with our latest initiatives and reach out to us if you have any inquiries!

Written by Maaz Hashmi



2500 cans for Salvation Army Milton

Brian Dunn, Chaplaincy Leader

There is one body, but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up one body. (1 Corinthians 12:12)



#### THANKSGIVING AT ND

Amazing things can happen when people think outside-the-box and collaborate with others!

After the front display for Thanksgiving was all put together, one of our amazing secretaries (Barb Robinson) mentioned how great it would be to take photos in front of the display. "Maybe it should be our Special Ed program!" she said! The wheel started rolling! The next person I saw was our SERT, Katheryn Mercante, and mentioned it to her, who told me that Rob Ponte (teacher for Community Living) was looking for something in terms of arts and crafts for his students! I mentioned it to Rob and he went home to start making homemade 5x7 wooden frames. Mr. Cordeiro said he would pay for the photos to be processed. Within two days, all the students in Spec. Ed. were photographed in front of the Thanksgiving display. The pictures were printed and framed then the students were able to write or draw a message of how thankful they were.



<sup>(</sup>For these pictures, individual photos were taken then the final group shot was created by assembling and editing the individual photos.)

As a bonus surprise for their classroom, the main office staff, guidance, admin and myself -Chaplain Wayne, also took individual pictures which were then edited together to form the final shot all together (see row of pictures above—social distancing group photo making at its best) and we framed an extra copy of their individual pictures in a large IKEA frame with messages telling them how much we are thankful for their joy and love and presence in our school.

From Mrs. Robinson's kind compliment and thought...so much good happened. This is what Catholic partnership is all about!

We indeed gave thanks to God for talents and gifts, smiles, and some special moments in time!

ADVENT and our ANGEL CAMPAIGN at ND

This year is looking very different as we prepare to reflect and pray through our Advent virtually and how we run our Angel Campaign.

There cannot be (due to trying our best to stay safe during these COVID times) classroom cash collections, or a bus full of students buying gifts and groceries on a Sunday afternoon, or a wrapping party! It's all gift cards this year and so we are running a three week Angel Campaign event!

Angel Campaign is needed more than ever during these difficult times! If you can help please feel free to visit our website!





On this day, we pray for the people in our lives that have died. We miss them dearly. We pray that we all know deeply, that life has to end, but love doesn't. We now let God heal only what He can heal. May our dearly departed rest in the arms Christ. May they be in the peace of Heaven.

Wayne Lachapelle, Chaplaincy Leader

But the souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, and no torment will ever touch them. (Wisdom 3:1)



St Benedict did a Thanksgiving Food drive for families in our school community who needed some extra support during the pandemic.

We participated in the Terry Fox walk and raised money for the Terry Foundation.

Michelle De Melo, Pastoral Animator

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for **God** loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:6)



We have been blessed to have had three 'live' liturgies to date; Opening of the School Year; Thanksgiving; and Remembrance Day.

We converted liturgies from Power Point to a live stream on Teams, and invited the school community to join us! As Pastoral Animator, I select one class to do the readings to keep cohorts intact. We incorporate pre-recorded videos, for example a message from our parish priest, and the children laying wreaths for Remembrance Day.

Despite some technical glitches, our staff and school community reflect that this is a beautiful way to connect when we are unable to gather.

This Remembrance Day, we photographed all the students' artwork posted throughout the school, and shared it during our liturgy. The community loved it!! Students are not able to walk throughout the school to admire each other's work, and this was a big hit! We will certainly continue this throughout Advent.

Lee Anne Burke, Pastoral Animator

This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. (Psalm 118:24)



Assumption's CIA: Justice & Service Team has been meeting virtually this Fall, and brainstorming COVID safe ways to promote justice and serve our communities.

Since October was Islamic Heritage month, the group hosted a virtual guest speaker from the National Council of Canadian Muslims who spoke on Islam in Canada and many of the challenges and harmful stereotypes Muslim Canadians face today. Our speaker also spoke on how all forms of oppression are connected, and our responsibility to challenge narratives of hate and promote narratives of care for one another.



In addition to helping our Business Leadership class's Halloween Fundraiser and Food Drive (which raised \$1500 for Food 4 Life and Sick Kids Hospital, as well as brought in hundreds of non-perishable food items for Burlington Partnership West Food Bank!), many of our Crusaders In Action participated in a school yard clean up the first week of November, as this was a service we could provide while following all of our COVID safety protocols!



We're looking forward to kicking off our Christmas Cards for Seniors & Deployed Troops, and learning more about poverty and homelessness in our region in the upcoming weeks!

Although we are looking forward to the day when our group can once again gather in person, we are very happy to find ways to continue to work together in promoting human dignity and serving others.

Andrea Taylor, Chaplaincy Leader

'You shall love your neighbour as yourself. (Matthew 22:39)





The first ever Regional Development and Peace High School Student Workshop took place October 30. Over 100 students from Catholic Secondary Schools of the Dioceses of Hamilton, London and St. Catharines participated in the Workshop. It was facilitated by the Campus Ministry Students of Kings College, University of Western Ontario. They led the high school students in ice breakers, a Development and Peace kahoot, break out groups' discussion, plenary session and word cloud. Students from St. Ignatius of Lovola School in Oakville created and led the Opening Prayer. 33 students of Bishop Reding School in Milton made up the total number of high school participants. The theme was COVID-19: Recovering Together. The students learned about a 'just recovery' for all, especially for their brothers and sisters in the Global South (Latin America, Africa, South-East Asia and the Middle East). In their small groups, they responded to the following questions: How has your family been affected by the pandemic?, What can we do in our local communities to ensure a just recovery for all?, What can we do in our school communities to ensure a just recovery for all? and What will you commit to ensure a just recovery for all? The students' responses were personal and positive: they want to act responsibly and they feel for the plight of their sisters and brothers in the Global South. Rebecca Rathbone, the Regional Animator for Development and Peace presented What is Development and Peace – Caritas Canada? and the current Action and Education Campaign, COVID-19: Recovering Together. And to think, this whole Workshop was carried out virtually. Great work: student organizers and participants! Hope to see you at the next Workshop in the new year (stay tuned for more information)!

Lorenzo Campanelli , Chaplaincy Leader

"The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it". (Psalm 24:1)



Here at Corpus Christi, we engage students in preparing and creating weekly liturgies that are shown on our school website every Friday afternoon. This activity involves choosing a theme based upon the liturgical year or curriculum and selecting applicable readings with appropriate prayers. The class is also responsible for graphic elements and music. The goal of this activity is to increase the visibility and connection of students with the faith life of the school. By using digital presence, we engage students from cohort C with the prayer life of the school. Many of the themes that the students choose are social justice issues. This activity has become an excellent tool to expand upon Catholic social teaching and respect for human dignity.

Rev. Andrija Petresin, Chaplaincy Leader

...so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. (Romans 12:5)