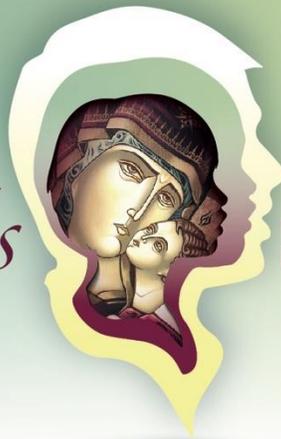


God Calls Us



EACH BY NAME

October 2020

“Joy springs from a grateful heart. Truly, we have received much, so many graces, so many blessings, and we rejoice in this. It will do us good to think back on our lives with the grace of remembrance...Let us seek the grace of remembrance so as to grow in the spirit of gratitude. Let us ask ourselves: are we good at counting our blessings, or have we forgotten them?” (Pope Francis, Homily, 09/24/15)

Our Holy Father shared these words initially when he was preaching to a group of priests and religious in New York. The message, however, is one that transcends vocation and age and whispers into all of our hearts. It is so easy to lose our sense of gratitude and joy when we are being inundated with messages of fear, anxiety, and negativity at every turn, every day. This year, more than ever, as we approach Thanksgiving, it is so important for us to take time to discern and to remember all of the goodness in our lives. There are blessings in each of our lives, and it is important that we never lose sight of them. Counting our blessings with gratitude is the first step of our journey to joy.

The beginning of September seems so long ago. There is no question that we are all learning as we move along the educational journey in Covid times. Families and schools have all been focused on making learning “work” in an environment that is drastically different than the norm, all while trying to minimize anxiety for everyone.

At the time of writing this article, our Division has an enrolment of 43,350 students with approximately 11,513 of those students participating online. Part of the understanding that we have gained as a Division is that we need proper time to be able to plan for and staff our different learning scenarios. As a Division, we have hired 96 teachers to support the learning choices that families made; thankfully, much of the cost of this is offset by the federal education pandemic funding that was announced in September. We are very proud of the way our schools and departments were able to reconfigure in the few precious days between August 28, when parents finalized their Quarter 1 learning decisions, and the first student day on September 2. In many cases, entire school timetables needed to be rebuilt and teaching assignments were changed.

October sees Quarter 2 on the horizon, and this means families will have another opportunity to choose in-school or online learning. You will receive a SWIFT K-12 message by October 5 with all of the information that you will need in order to make an informed decision for your children for the second quarter and beyond. We need to have a firm commitment from our families well before the second quarter begins on November 10 so that we can arrange our staff appropriately.

I will leave you with a thought from Pope Francis' General Audience on September 2, 2020. "The current pandemic has highlighted our interdependence: we are all linked to each other, for better or for worse. Therefore, to come out of this crisis better than before, we have to do so together; together, not alone... Either it is done together, or it is not done. We must do it together, all of us, in solidarity."

Have a blessed Thanksgiving!

Sincerely,

Robert Martin
Chief Superintendent