CATHOLIC VIRTUAL ONTARIO

CVO – GROWING TOGETHER IN FAITH

LIVING RELATIONALLY:
THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

Catholic Virtual Learning Resource

Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association

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OPENING PRAYER

O God, Trinity of love,
from the profound communion of your divine life,
pour out upon us a torrent of fraternal love.
Grant us the love reflected in the actions of Jesus,
in his family of Nazareth,
and in the early Christian community.
Grant that we Christians may live the Gospel,
discovering Christ in each human being,
recognizing him crucified
in the sufferings of the abandoned
and forgotten of our world,
and risen in each brother or sister
who makes a new start.
Come, Holy Spirit, show us your beauty,
reflected in all the peoples of the earth,
so that we may discover anew
that all are important and all are necessary,
different faces of the one humanity
that God so loves.
Amen.

– Pope Francis, Given in Assisi, at the tomb of Saint Francis, on 3 October,
Vigil of the Feast of the Saint, in the year 2020.

"We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop."
— Blessed Saint Teresa of Calcutta

A SHARED WORLDVIEW

As teachers in Catholic schools, we share a Catholic Christian worldview grounded in service and community. Through our professional practice, guiding students with our hearts and minds, the broader community, both present and future, also benefits. Catholic learners, moved by the Holy Spirit, will eventually contribute to society through their own Christian witness, continuing a pattern of flourishing and love.

"Peace be with you!
For the sake of the Lord,
I will seek your good."
(Psalms 122)

A SHARED COMMITMENT

Regardless of the specific role we have in Catholic education at any given time, we are all educational leaders. Educating youth unites responsibility with service, a transformative element of our vocation. In fact, teaching is a vocation that fosters all other vocations, motivating students to apply learning meaningfully as life-long, engaged and contributing citizens.

Grounded in Gospel values, Catholic education nurtures an inclusive learning culture of high expectations for all learners across all learning environments. Diversity is championed as a strength, so that students with different backgrounds and experiences are collectively inspired to achieve their fullness of humanity and promote the common good. Created in God's image, all learners matter.

"In his Letters, Saint Paul…confirms the profound unity that exists between all the baptized, in whatever condition they are bound to…equal because every one of them is a new creature in Christ. Every distinction becomes secondary to the dignity of being children of God, who, through his love, creates a real and substantial equality. Everyone, through Christ's redemption and the baptism we have received, we are all equal: children of God. Equal."
– Pope Francis General Audience, September 8, 2021

FOREWORD BY GEORGE MCAULEY

As a lifelong learner and career Catholic educator in the field of anti-racism and equity, I am honoured to be a contributor to ***Living Relationally: The Dignity of The Human Person.*** Catholic Virtual Ontario has produced a resource that appeals to the heart (moral imperative) and the head (legal imperative) of the educator as it stresses the importance of adapting an equity stance in Catholic education.

Leaning heavily on our faith, this resource calls all of us involved in Catholic education to be more attentive and intentional when serving our ever-evolving diverse clientele.

> "There is no such thing as 'just a job' in a Catholic school. There are only various forms of Christian service, each calling for extraordinary dedication." — *This Moment of Promise*

Quite often, in our chosen vocation, the knowledge acquired through experience and learning is overlooked as non-scientific and strictly for anecdotal purposes. The benefits of the work driving equity, diversity and inclusion, while quantitatively immeasurable, are known to have immediate and positive long-term effects for those we serve as Catholic educators.

This resource not only underscores the **what** and the **why** of this very important work, but illuminates a clear path to the **how.** While the Catholic Social Teachings and the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations provide the foundation of the work, the resource utilizes Growing Success, activating Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction and Assessment as methods through which educators can effectively transform their practice by living relationally, honouring the dignity of each person.

Positioning the voice and choice of the learner at the centre of the education process is key to maximizing learner well-being, engagement and achievement. Catholic Virtual Ontario has done an excellent job guiding the educator in prioritizing the culture, traditions and individual identities of each learner when program planning. Using this approach, the educator periodically assumes the role of learner, in order to achieve a more effective position as educator.

Catholic Virtual Ontario demonstrates, through word and action, a full commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion in preparing materials and learning objects for our current and future generations of learners.

> "And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister." (1 John 4:20-21)

As educators use this resource to inform their practice, it is important to note that it is not a simple read-then-file resource. ***Living Relationally: The Dignity of The Human Person,*** requires the Catholic educator to employ a growth mindset. This invites us to invest and then re-invest in the acquisition of knowledge that brings us closer to our learners. At times, this is hard work because it is heart work. But this investment allows our learners to reap benefits that will last them a lifetime.

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"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy." — *Prayers Peace Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi*

INTRODUCTION

CATHOLIC EDUCATION: AN ENDURING LEGACY OF LIVING RELATIONALLY

Catholic schools in Ontario have a rich and vibrant history of educating the whole child as learners and as followers of Christ. This education has inspired students from diverse races, cultures, backgrounds, economic and societal status and beliefs to develop into spiritually and morally formed, community-oriented individuals. Inspired by abundant, ongoing experiences and interactions with fellow Catholic learning community members, students in Catholic schools become increasingly aware of how their individuality equips them to live consciously and intentionally in community and in relation to one another.

The unique gifts and talents God has bestowed upon humanity and which Catholic schools nurture, combine to recall the profound legacy of Catholic education. Ontario's Catholic schools collectively form an essential, thriving school system that contributes to the rich tapestry of society. With Christ as model and guide, students in Catholic schools today are empowered with the understanding, grace and skills to embrace a shared responsibility to promote justice and advocate for equity for all. Future generations who fulfill all aspects of their potential in solidarity with fellow community members will ensure this legacy endures in the years and decades to come. We embrace our profound role in shaping millions of faith-filled learners into optimistic, contributing members of society who realize their fullness of humanity in communion with their fellow citizens.

This resource invites us to recognize and appreciate the ways in which, as a Catholic community, we promote the dignity of the human person through living relationally. As a result, five central domains have been developed to frame this document and highlight the many ways that Catholic schools embrace and champion how every child is created in the image and likeness of God:

Domain I: Our Catholic education stance,
Domain II: Our Catholic moral calls to action,
Domain III: Our Legal calls to action,
Domain IV: Our Pedagogical calls to action,
Domain V: Our Acknowledgements and Commitments.

These domains underscore what makes us unique and what we have in common. By living relationally, we celebrate how similarities and differences inspire conversation and enrich understanding. In Catholic schools we celebrate who we are with and in relation to those around us.

"Dialogue offers a chance to understand one another better, to share one another's gifts, and it creates a space where the Gospel message can ignite a spark within our hearts and transform each of us."
— Pastoral Letter to Young People, 2022

I. LIVING RELATIONALLY: OUR CATHOLIC EDUCATION STANCE

In the context of Catholic education, living relationally involves creating a safe, welcoming learning community that is transformational because it responds to the dignity of each person.

The people at the heart of Catholic education — students and their families, school and system staff — have the right to be treated as individuals created in the image of our loving God. This right is intrinsic to how Catholic education prioritizes human dignity and solidarity, shaping faith-filled learners who continue to develop knowledge and demonstrate a deep love of God throughout their lives. As Catholic educators, we have the great gift of Christ as lifelong example, companion and guide. This unique gift inspires encounters with the Sacred throughout our work alongside our colleagues, our students and their families. Created in the image and likeness of God, every student, from every country, every circumstance, deserves respect, dignity and love.

The flame icon* and accompanying reflection questions connected to the domains that frame this resource signal opportunities to be still, contemplate and discern. As an activity that facilitates understanding and development, education intrinsically promotes looking outward and inward. Through reflection, we connect to God and recognize our collective moral imperative to ensure that all students feel and believe they are an essential part of the Catholic learning community. Following the example of St. Ignatius, we enter the practice of repetition, prompting us to be attentive to how and where the Spirit leads us.

*

"FRATELLI TUTTI. With these words, Saint Francis of Assisi addressed his brothers and sisters and proposed to them a way of life marked by the flavour of the Gospel. Of the counsels Francis offered, I would like to select the one in which he calls for a love that transcends the barriers of geography and distance, and declares blessed all those who love their brother 'as much when he is far away from him as when he is with him.' In his simple and direct way, Saint Francis expressed the essence of a fraternal openness that allows us to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person, regardless of physical proximity, regardless of where he or she was born or lives."
– Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti

"Education cannot be neutral. It is either positive or negative; either it enriches or it impoverishes; either it enables a person to grow or it lessens, even corrupts him. The mission of schools is to develop a sense of truth, of what is good and beautiful." — *Pope Francis*

II. LIVING RELATIONALLY: OUR CATHOLIC TEACHINGS

In a world that is blessed with diversity, our rich Catholic tradition is matched by equally rich resources that guide our Catholic educator stance. Sacred Scripture is full of examples of diverse communities receiving thoughtful and intentional consideration and care throughout a variety of circumstances. Where God promises to lead all people into eternity, Jesus serves as his appointed shepherd, giving his life to bring people into relationship with God as, "one flock, one shepherd." (John 10:16). Always, communities are consoled, protected and uplifted.

Scripture

Sacred Scripture is divinely inspired revelation. Translated from the Greek word apokalypsis, 'revelation' refers to removing a veil so something can be seen.[1] The church echoes this sense of disclosure or uncovering by affirming how "the books of the Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted to put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation."[2] By communicating what God is like and how we are blessed with being created in his image, Scripture also reveals who we are and what we need in order to live according to His Word. Beliefs, values and actions consistent with the truth in Scripture correspond with living relationally, taking inspiration from a Triune God who is one divine essence and three Persons.

Scripture lays out how to live a moral life. Reading, listening to, reflecting on and praying with the Bible, develops our religious literacy as well as discernment, critical thinking and problem solving. Teachings from the Old Testament such as the Commandments, and the Beatitudes from the Gospels, serve as articulations of our faith that have ongoing limitless potential in our lives and relationships. Scripture ensures that, "by hearing the message of salvation the whole world may believe, by believing it may hope, and by hoping it may love."[3]

"...among all the Scriptures, even those of the New Testament, the Gospels have a special preeminence, and rightly so, for they are the principal witness for the life and teaching of the incarnate Word, our savior."
– Dei Verbum § 18

How does Scripture illuminate living in relationship with one another?

[30]You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' [31]The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:30-31)

The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments describe how to live a moral life. Through them, we know how to live in a way that recognizes and fully illustrates our duty to live in communion with Christ. As Catholics, our moral imperative to respect human dignity and live in relationship with one another is therefore deeply grounded in the Commandments.

The Gospel of Matthew brings attention to the connection between morality and human relationships in a dialogue between Jesus and a Pharisee. In response to the Pharisee's question about the most important commandment, Jesus answers unequivocally: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'" (Matthew 22:37-39). When God's love is our guide, our morality serves as our response to that love.

"Each community is called to create a 'God-enlightened space in which to experience the hidden presence of the risen Lord."
– Pope Francis, Gaudete et Exsultate § 18

The Virtues

The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that "A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the good," guiding how we live.4 Living according to the virtues helps us live the moral life as the Ten Commandments instructs.

Cardinal Virtues	Theological Virtues
PRUDENCE	FAITH
JUSTICE	HOPE
FORTITUDE	CHARITY (LOVE)
TEMPERANCE	

How do the Ten Commandments and the virtues guide us to live relationally?

The Sacraments

The sacraments provide us with God's grace, lifelong blessings and affirm our ongoing relationship with the body of Christ. Sacraments of Initiation, Sacraments of Healing and Sacraments of Service individually address specific spiritual needs while collectively strengthening and celebrating our faith.

Like many aspects of life and learning, the many ways in which the Sacraments are expressed in our actions and thoughts consist of elements experienced outwardly and elements that are experienced within.[5] A menu of options posted for student access, for example, occurs because a teacher prioritizes embedding choice and voice into learning. A planning template with open-ended options where students can organize individual ideas is developed by a teacher who recognizes the value of student agency. The unseen motivations behind these visible tools include care, respect and love.

In the celebration of the Mass, we see the unity of the one Body that is called to gather in praise of God's goodness and in celebration of Jesus' saving sacrifice. When we stand together as one community, singing the opening hymn, making the sign of our faith or praying the Our Father, we see outward signs of our unity. Inwardly, we know the Holy Spirit is present, binding us ever closer and strengthening us as individuals to go out into the world, glorifying God by our lives — just as the dismissal at the end of Mass declares.

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit guide, strengthen and sustain moral life. They are bestowed at Baptism and then strengthened at Confirmation.

The fruits of the Holy Spirit emanate from the Holy Spirit. Saint Paul tells us that when we live the fruits of the Holy Spirit, we are open to being guided by the Holy Spirit (Galatians: 5:25)

Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit

How can Catholic learning communities live the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit?

"When we welcome the Holy Spirit into our hearts and allow him to act, Christ makes himself present in us and takes shape in our lives; through us, it will be he – Christ himself – who prays, forgives, gives hope and consolation, serves the brethren, draws close to the needy and to the least, creates community and sows peace."
– Pope Francis, General Audience, 29 Jan 2014

The Beatitudes

Delivered as teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes beautifully illustrate how we are all united and blessed through our faith. Despite different circumstances, experiences, strengths and challenges, God's kingdom is accessible to everyone. As a beatitude people, we all can benefit from a unique relationship with God that is 'blessed,' a powerful message that echoes meaningfully in each line of the sermon.

5 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.
2 And he began to speak and taught them, saying:
3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
11 Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil falsely on my account.
12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5: 1-11).

Through this common ground that calls us to be holy, we respond to a continued collective moral imperative that calls everyone to become disciples of Jesus.

How do the Beatitudes celebrate living relationally?

"Yet if there is one thing typical of the saints, it is that they are truly happy. They found the secret of authentic happiness, which lies deep within the soul and has its source in the love of God. That is why we call the saints blessed. The Beatitudes are their path…the Beatitudes are the way of life that the Lord teaches us, so that we can follow in his footsteps."
– Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis, 1 Nov 2016

The Saints

Pope Francis named the Beatitudes as 'the identity card of the saints' since the saints led lives 'against the grain, a revolutionary life! Saints are the true revolutionaries."[6] Focusing on verse nine's "Blessed are the peacemakers," Pope Francis clarifies that peacemakers are not necessarily quiet or peaceful. Instead, they create peace through intentional work and concentration.[7] Since we are all called to be saints, we can be inspired by their commitment to becoming their best selves by seeking counsel and courage through prayer. Each saint, across different backgrounds, cultures, races and circumstances, is a true revolutionary. Saints such as Anthony of Alexandria, Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys and Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, for example, made positive change by helping others and remaining steadfast and true to God's limitless love. Figures named as Blessed and Venerable are also worthy of imitation. Blessed Carlo Acutis serves as a contemporary model of a youth determined to provide better opportunities for people in his community. Recognizing the power of technology to span distance and time to spread the Gospel, he devoted his technological skills to bringing himself and others closer to God. These diverse examples, from among many others worthy of veneration across the world, illuminate what it means to respond to God's call to serve all.

The Saints exemplify lives that transform through a process known as 'divinization' or 'theosis'. This involves a conversion whereby we are filled with God's grace. Our beliefs, words and actions reflect honouring and loving others.

"Do not be afraid to be saints. Follow Jesus Christ who is the source of freedom and light. Be open to the Lord so that He may lighten all your ways."
– Saint Pope John Paul II

What can be learned from the ways in which the saints lived relationally that will benefit Catholic learning communities?

Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic social teaching (CST) are principles unique to the Catholic faith. They collectively inform the pursuit of a life lived in relation to humanity that is marked by respect, dignity, honour and love. As a unique social tradition of the Catholic faith, the principles are fundamental to our moral vision of equity, diversity and inclusion in Catholic education. Grounded in the social nature of the triune God, Catholic social teaching reveals God as relational — God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Made in God's image, we are called to follow this social example by living relationally. Cultivating relationships characterized by belonging, justice and love reveals a belief that each life is sacred and filled with a God-given dignity.

"Among all educational instruments the school has a special importance…designed not only to develop with special care the intellectual faculties but also to form the ability to judge rightly…to foster a sense of values, to prepare for professional life. Between pupils of different talents and backgrounds it promotes friendly relations and fosters a spirit of mutual understanding…"
– Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis), § 5

Catholic social teaching is a key instrument of the development of our schools. A set of guiding principles that Pope Paul VI fondly called 'the highest values,' they form a truly holistic approach to human development.[8]

1. **Dignity of the Human Person.** The foundation of all Catholic Social Teaching is the inherent dignity of the human person, as created in the image and likeness of God. The Church, therefore, calls for Integral Human Development, which concerns the wellbeing of each person in every dimension: economic, political, social, ecological, and spiritual.
2. **Common Good.** We must all consider the good of others, and the good of the whole human family, in organizing our society — economically, politically, and legally. Human Dignity can only be realized and protected through our relationship with society-at-large. We must love our neighbour, locally and globally, and prioritize the good of the human family over commercial interests.
3. **Solidarity.** Each of us is part of the human family and we are all interconnected and interdependent. Loving our neighbour has global dimensions. We must see ourselves in others and collaborate towards solutions. Solidarity is a recognition that we are 'all in this together,' and is a commitment to strengthen community and promote a just society.
4. **Preferential Option for the Poor**. The moral test of any society is based on how the most vulnerable are treated. God's love is universal, so this principle does not intend that we should focus on the poor to the exclusion of others, but rather that we are called to prioritize those who are in most need of our Solidarity.
5. **Stewardship of Creation.** The Earth is sacred. Creation has its own intrinsic value. We have a responsibility to protect and to cherish the Earth's ecological diversity, beauty and life-sustaining properties. Together, we must hold it in trust for future generations.
6. **Subsidiarity and the Role of Government.** The state is an instrument to promote human dignity, protect human rights, and develop the common good. Subsidiarity holds that such functions of government should be performed at the lowest level possible, as long as they can be performed adequately. When they cannot, higher levels of government must intervene. This principle goes hand-in-hand with Participation, the principle that all peoples have a right to participate in the economic, political and cultural life of society, and in the decisions that affect their community.
7. **Participation.** Human beings are social, and how we live together affects the dignity of the individual and the progress of society. All persons are entitled to participate in community, and in decisions that affect their lives, and cannot be excluded for any reason.
8. **Rights and Responsibilities.** We all have a right to those things which are required by Human Dignity. Rights arise from what we need to live as God intended to us. These are innately linked with our responsibility to ensure the rights of others — that we do not take more than is needed to fulfill our rights at the expense of another's.
9. **Economic Justice.** The economy must serve people, and not the other way around. All persons have a right to dignified work, and to fair wages and working conditions. Work is more than a way to make a living: it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation.
10. **Peace**. To be in right relationship with God and with each other. Peace is the fruit of Charity and the consequence of Justice. It is the sign of caritas in action.

"Education makes an essential contribution to building inclusive and democratic societies, where differences of opinion can be freely expressed and where the wide range of voices can be heard, in pursuit of social cohesion and in a celebration of diversity. Inclusion in education is about ensuring that every learner feels valued and respected, and can enjoy a clear sense of belonging." – *UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, 2020*

THE ONTARIO CATHOLIC SCHOOL GRADUATE EXPECTATIONS

Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy recognizes the values reflected in the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations (OCSGEs). The strategy confirms how the OCSGEs "respect and affirm the diversity and interdependence of the world's peoples and cultures as well as the history, cultural heritage, and pluralism of our society."[9]

The OCSGEs form a unique means through which Catholic education educates the whole child throughout adolescence and into adulthood. As transferrable skills, the OCSGEs include competencies and attributes that help students prosper as contributing citizens into adulthood and beyond. By being provided with multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate the OCSGEs, graduates of Catholic schools are equipped to understand the value of applying their God-given potential throughout their lives. As a result, their relationships, decisions and activities will reflect Catholic social teaching, such as a concern for human dignity, achieving the common good, and the promotion of peace.

Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations — A Vision of the Learner

1. A DISCERNING BELIEVER formed in the Catholic Faith community who celebrates the signs and sacred mystery of God's presence through work, sacrament, prayer, forgiveness, reflection and moral living.

2. AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR who speaks, writes and listens honestly and sensitively responding critically in light of gospel values.

3. A REFLECTIVE, CREATIVE AND HOLISTIC THINKER who solves problems and makes responsible decisions with an informed moral conscience for the common good.

4. A SELF-DIRECTED, RESPONSIBLE, LIFELONG LEARNER who develops and demonstrates their God-given potential.

5. A COLLABORATIVE CONTRIBUTOR who finds meaning, dignity and vocation in work which respects the rights of all and contributes to the common good.

6. A CARING FAMILY MEMBER who attends to family, school, parish and wider community.

7. A RESPONSIBLE CITIZEN who gives witness to Catholic social teaching by promoting peace, justice and the sacredness of human life.

How do Catholic social teaching and the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations affirm interactions between students, families and colleagues that celebrate living relationally?

LIVING RELATIONALLY AS THE CATHOLIC LIVING COMMUNITY

The following graphic is an invitation to consider various components of Catholic content and context when developing connections between the Ontario curriculum and your Catholic learning goals and expectations within your Catholic learning community, the circle is a symbol of God's infinite love, while the central cross reminds us of how we are followers of the resurrected Jesus Christ. Our Catholic worldview and the teachings of the Catholic Church collectively inform and inspire a Catholic learning community that honours the individual within the context of the Home, School and Parish. Catholic education rests within a cultural context that responds to societal issues, fostering a loving relationship with God, with oneself and with others.

"One cannot educate without love. You cannot teach words without gestures, and the first gesture is the caress: to caress hearts, caress souls. And what is the language of the caress? Persuasion. One teaches with the patience of persuasion. Witness, loving kindness, caresses, persuasion." — *Pope Francis, Dialogue With Students, Teachers and Parents, 2019*

III. LIVING RELATIONALLY: OUR LEGAL CALLS TO ACTION

While our faith provides us with a worldview that informs our commitment to living relationally, a range of laws and policies further inform this stance.

The ***Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*** establishes international, fundamental human rights deserving of universal protection. The opening principle simply but effectively states:

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and human rights."[10]

Narrowing in on education, Article 26 of the Declaration affirms the right to education for all people and specifies the goals of learning:

"Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace."[11]

Across Canada, the ***Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*** declares:

15. (1) "Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability."[12]

Provincially, the ***Ontario Human Rights Code*** provides equal rights and opportunities without discrimination on protected grounds such as race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status and disability."[13]

Ontario's Education Act affirms the importance and purpose of the public education system:

- "the foundation of a prosperous, caring and civil society."[14]
- "to provide students with the opportunity to realize their potential and develop into highly skilled, knowledgeable, caring citizens who contribute to their society."[15]

As a Catholic educator, what is my role in ensuring that human rights and education laws are actioned throughout teaching and learning?

If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it." *(1 Cor 12:25-26)*

IV. LIVING RELATIONALLY: OUR PEDAGOGICAL CALLS TO ACTION

When pedagogy anticipates a variety of learners by prioritizing access and demonstrating respect for human diversity, the full Catholic teaching and learning community is transformed. Research conducted by York University reveals learning outcome gaps for students. Black students living in the Greater Toronto Area, for example, have a lower graduation rate at the end of five years (69%) compared to White students (84%).[16] Black students were also twice as likely to drop out of high school (20%) compared to White (11%) and other racialized students (9%).[17] Canadian Indigenous students likewise experience lower education outcomes. 33.65% of those who identified as Aboriginal according to the 2016 Census have no secondary school or equivalency certificate, compared to 18.3% of the remaining Canadian population.[18] The secondary school completion rate for adults living off-reserve is 75% while 48% of those living on-reserve have completed secondary studies.[19]

The Ministry of Education of Ontario's document, *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy,* affirms the deep connection between equity and excellence. Its action plan prioritizes respecting diversity, promoting inclusivity as well as identifying and eliminating discriminatory barriers and biases. Recognizing how Ontario's diversity can be a significant asset, the strategy's guiding principles proclaim how equity and inclusive education:

- are grounded in excellence
- respond to individual needs
- identify and remove
- upholds belonging
- involves the community
- builds on and enhances initiatives
- appears throughout the education system

The strategy offers the following definitions:

Diversity. The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society.

Equity. A condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people, which does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences.

Inclusive education. Education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students.

Ontario's Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation maintain a glossary of helpful definitions. Drawing upon these sources to develop our knowledge helps hold ourselves accountable and enhances our collective journey towards a shared understanding of equity, diversity and inclusion. In this way, we live a common mission to love others as Christ calls us to do.

Ableism. A belief system that views persons with disabilities as less worthy of respect and consideration, less capable or of less value than others. It can limit their opportunities.

Race. A term used to classify people into groups based principally on physical traits such as skin colour or facial features. Race has no biological or scientific basis and is therefore a social construct. Accordingly, it shifts and differs over time, culture and place.

Racial Bias or Racialization. A predisposition, prejudice or generalization about a group or persons based principally on race.

Racism. A belief that one group is superior to others, communicated through individual action or institutional practice that treats people differently because of their colour or ethnicity. It involves one individual, group or system having the power to disadvantage others.

Ibram X. Kendi, author, scholar, professor and Director of Boston University's Center for Antiracism Research, provides the following terms and definitions:

Racist. One who supports a racist policy through actions or inaction or expressing a racist idea.[20]

Antiracist. One who supports an antiracist policy through actions or by expressing an antiracist idea.[21]

Today's societies are characterized by a multicultural and multireligious composition. In this context, "Education contains a central challenge for the future: to allow various cultural expressions to co-exist and to promote dialogue so as to foster a peaceful society." The history of Catholic schools is characterized by welcoming pupils from different cultural backgrounds and religious affiliations. In this context, "what is required […] is courageous and innovative fidelity to know and to dialogue with diversity. "
– The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue, § 27.

What are some conscious and unconscious biases that I bring to my professional practice and how can I address them in ways that bring me closer to my students and to God?

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect." *(Romans 12:2)*

V. LIVING RELATIONALLY: OUR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND COMMITMENTS

The stance we take as Catholic educators is not a neutral stance, but one that is intentionally Christ centred, anti-racist and inclusive. In doing so, we encounter Christ with totality — body, mind, and heart.

As Catholic educators, we:

- acknowledge the blessings we have received, having accessed resources giving us an education and the opportunity to serve the teaching profession,
- acknowledge our humility, understanding that we are continually on a journey of learning, development and potential,
- acknowledge our position of power/trust in education, having the distinct honour and deep responsibility of engaging and empowering learners who will shape the future as active, contributing citizens.

We commit to ensuring our instruction reflects the communities we serve by promoting the dignity of each student while continually examining ourselves and our practice for conscious and unconscious biases.

We commit to a life-long journey of eradicating racism and therefore continually learn, examine ourselves and examine our practice.

What actions can I take that demonstrate intentional learning and the application of an anti-racist pedagogy?

"The entire effort of the Catholic teacher is oriented toward an integral formation of each student." — *William Cardinal Baum*

OUR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: TEACHING AND *LEARNING FOR ALL*

For educational practices to be relational and serve the needs of everyone in the teaching and learning community, they must reflect and respond to the diversity of its members across all learning pathways. Inclusive teaching recognizes that although not all students actively engage in learning all the time, we assume responsibility for all learners through instruction that is designed for all learners. When student voices are amplified and empowered with the agency to share perspectives, interests and preferences, a learning culture that honours and celebrates differences is realized.

We also look to *Learning for All,* K-12, for guidance on serving all students. Our Catholic worldview, combined with the central beliefs from *Learning for All,* form the lens with which we view our students, shaping our moral imperative to respond to the whole child. These beliefs infuse Catholic learning communities with a faith-filled approach, proudly affirming that:

- All students, across unique talents and challenges, can succeed,
- Each student has a unique pattern of learning that can be nurtured,
- Successful instructional practices are research-informed and strengthened by a Catholic worldview and experience,
- Solidarity, the common good, universal design and differentiated instruction are effective and interconnected approaches for meeting the needs of all students,
- Teachers, in partnership with the Church and families, are the key educators for a student's holistic development,
- Teachers need the support of the broader community to create learning environments supporting all students,
- Human dignity informs the view that fairness is not sameness.

"Education needs to aim to do more than prepare young people for the world of work; it needs to equip students with the skills they need to become active, responsible and engaged citizens." — *The Future of Education and Skills,* Education 2030, OECD Report 2018, pg. 4

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL)

What we have in common makes us human. *Learning for All,* K-12 describes Universal Design for Learning as a "teaching approach that focuses on using teaching strategies or pedagogical materials designed to meet special needs to enhance learning for all students, regardless of age, skills or situation."[22] Universal Design therefore provides curriculum access to all students through teaching strategies and a learning environment that are accessible to different learners. As a human-centred process, it starts by understanding the motivators and needs of an education community and subsequently infuses creativity, collaboration, empathy and divergent thinking skills into the environment in which that process lives. When principles of UDL are applied to online learning with intention, the space inspires community members to encounter one another genuinely, contributing to rich cognitive, emotional and spiritual growth and authentic human formation.

UDL calls for multiple means of:

- representation – information and content are presented in different ways to ensure students understand; the WHAT of learning,
- action and expression – students have input on a variety of options for demonstrating learning; the HOW of learning,
- engagement – instruction motivates students and sustains their interest because it reflects their preferences, talents and interests; the WHY of learning.

Considered 'the enabler, the accelerator, the deepener' of impactful pedagogy, technology can provide a powerful means for responsive and inclusive instructional strategies.[23] When the principles of UDL are applied to online learning with intention, the space inspires all community members to encounter one another genuinely, contributing to rich cognitive, emotional and spiritual growth and authentic human formation.

"A good school provides a rounded education for the whole person. And a good Catholic school, over and above this, should help all its students to become saints." – *Pope Benedict 16th, Address to Teachers and Religious, 2010*

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION (DI)

How we differ makes us individuals.[24] *Learning for All,* K-12 describes differentiated instruction as a "method of teaching that attempts to adapt instruction to suit the different interests, learning styles, and readiness to learn of individual students."[25] DI centres on meaningful learning that responds to diversity rather than uniformity, personalization rather than conformity. Whereas UDL provides multiple options across the learning environment, DI moves deeper by tailoring content or tasks based on student interests, preferences, strengths and needs. Three connected, research-informed concepts highlight the importance of DI:

A safe, welcoming and supportive learning environment encourages learning.

Learners thrive on appropriate challenge through learning that is neither too difficult nor too easy.

Learners must make meaning of their learning through connections to previous knowledge and experience.

Technology offers tremendous opportunities for differentiating instruction in the virtual learning environment. Since students are largely familiar with technological tools, this familiarity motivates and provides a sense of security from the outset of learning online. For such positive aspects to endure with students, learning is both teacher-constructed and student-led. This experiential model fosters the full development of the student, awakening meaning and value for oneself and for the world within the Catholic context. Differentiating instruction in the virtual context is successful when all students believe that instruction places its greatest attention on them through technology, rather than on the technology as the medium of delivery. When all students are empowered to be active agents in their learning environments, they develop into Catholic leaders who make a difference in the name of the Lord.

"Education must guide students to face reality, to enter the world with a sense of awareness and responsibility and, in order for this to happen, knowledge acquisition is always necessary. However, the real-expected result is not the acquisition of information or knowledge but, rather, personal transformation. In this respect, motivation is not just a preliminary condition, but must be built: it is a result." — *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion (Instrumentum laboris)*

INCLUSIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES (*FOR* LEARNING, *AS* LEARNING, *OF* LEARNING): GROWING SUCCESS

According to *Growing Success*, a robust assessment process benefits all learners and includes Assessment *for, of* and *as* learning. Instruction that includes assessments as, of and for learning prioritize an inclusive learning environment and opportunities for improving student learning across diverse students by:

- Co-constructing learning goals, success criteria
- Engaging students in collecting information about their learning from different sources throughout instruction
- Incorporating assessments that inform instruction and next steps
- Analysing and interpreting evidence of learning
- Ongoing, specific feedback
- Incorporating peer and self-assessment
- Fostering self-reflection, goal setting and independence

Effective Assessments in the Catholic Virtual Learning Environment:

Since Catholic tradition celebrates the dignity of the intellect, it makes sense that course assessments:

- reflect the tenets of the Catholic faith
- prioritize the socio-emotional needs and well-being of students
- inspire students to demonstrate the OCSGEs (course material should embed the OCSGEs as life-long, transferable skills)
- promote equity by fostering learning and student achievement across student differences
- are framed in a meaningful context that all students can engage with meaningfully
- are developed with student input and honour student voice and choice
- activate creativity and critical thinking
- are designed so that they can be completed successfully across instructional settings

Assessment planning includes considering the question, *"How can my assessments foster inclusivity and community?"* When assessments are communal and social, contributing to the common good, everyone is transformed. Appendix 1 provides a planning template with guiding questions that help position instructional content and learning communities as anti-racist.

How can instruction and assessment be designed so they reflect Catholic principles inspired by sources such as Scripture, the Sacraments, the Beatitudes, lived faith of the Saints and Catholic social teaching, providing students with multiple and equitable opportunities to demonstrate the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations?

"I never say I'm not a racist because I want to be accountable in my relationships with my fellow human beings and realize that being part of a human community of diversity means that we all need to be open and hold ourselves accountable and that begins with learning."
– Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada

SHAPING INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

A positive, anti-racist teaching and learning culture advances the dignity of the human person in education and promotes student learning.[26] While digital tools provide the 'what' that impacts learning, teachers are among the education professionals providing the 'who' as well as the 'how' of pedagogy in action. They ensure that students engage in robust applications of their knowledge and understanding in ways that are truly motivating and meaningful across the diverse spectrum of students. Students accessing virtual learning may learn online, but they are not alone. Incorporating universal design and differentiated instruction into online learning helps ensure the integrity and human dignity of the learning community and the learning environment. Engagement and belonging overcome physical and virtual distance by celebrating community and solidarity.

Educator considerations for implementing an anti-racist pedagogy:

- Community norms are co-created with students and align with Catholic teaching and principles, such as the Beatitudes, morality of the saints, Catholic social teaching. Appendix 1 provides an example of Catholic learning community norms.
- It is assumed that all students hold knowledge and experiences in various ways prior to learning.
- Opportunities for student voices to be amplified and empowered occur throughout teaching and learning (e.g., through e-newsletters, podcasts, panel discussions, online forums, surveys).
- Scaffolded instruction offers diverse ability, interest and cultural literacy entry points into learning (e.g., outlines, infographics, concept maps, video clips).
- Identity, passions, relevance and community contributions are respected and nurtured.
- Big ideas and guiding questions accompany instructional content and activities that invite considerations such as accessibility, equity and the greater good.
- Narratives of people and community contributions are inclusive and are framed in a range of contexts (historical and contemporary), ensuring that all students see themselves and their ancestors reflected positively in the curriculum and therefore as contributors to modern society.
- Students are provided with responsive feedback that honours varying background knowledge, experiences and areas of interest.
- Assessments invite students to share learning experiences in a variety of ways and include open-ended activities that encourage connections to themselves and their community (e.g., oral/visual demonstrations, storytelling, self and peer assessment).

Appendix 2 provides additional recommendations for engaging and empowering all learning community members to acquire and demonstrate learning in a relational culture and environment.

When planning for an anti-racist learning environment that is reflected in relationships, community norms and pedagogical content and activities, a process template can foster awareness and intention. When all students are engaged and feel valued, they are more likely to connect with themselves and others, recognizing their ability to effect positive change as contributing community members. Appendix 3 provides a reflective discernment template to support responsible and responsive instructional planning.

"Study fatigues and wearies the mind and heart. Go from time to time to refresh them at the feet of Jesus Christ under the cross; some moments of repose in His sacred wounds give fresh vigor and new lights." – *Saint Vincent Ferrer*

CONCLUSION

CATHOLIC EDUCATION: A CONTINUING LEGACY OF LIVING RELATIONALLY

For more than 150 years, Ontario's diverse Catholic schools have offered students a unique education. Proudly inspired by John's Gospel which proclaims, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God," Catholic schools do not limit themselves to transmitting knowledge. Catholic education responds to the physical, cognitive, social, spiritual and moral aspect of the child, so that their full person aspires to and achieves to its ultimate, God-given potential.

The inclusive, caring and safe learning environment Catholic schools provide arises from a conscious commitment to help students encounter Christ by living relationally. Living relationally involves a conscious awareness of and appreciation for being interconnected. Like St. Francis of Assisi, who demonstrated an "openness of heart which knew no bounds and transcended differences of origin, nationality, colour or religion," Catholic school community members strive to learn from and uphold the teachings of Jesus Christ. By living relationally, we live according to gospel values that fulfill our entirety — body, mind and spirit.[28]

"Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire." **– St. Catherine of Sienna**

"It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be grounded down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal." — *Pope John Paul II, 15th World Youth Day*

APPENDIX 1: CATHOLIC LEARNING COMMUNITY AGREEMENT

As a responsible Catholic learning community gathering in a learning space, we commit to the following expectations that demonstrate our shared worldview of human dignity, solidarity and the common good for all:

- ❒ placing Christ and the Teachings of the Catholic church of the centre of the student learning experience
- ❒ modelling participation and a positive mindset, open to learning, sharing and possibilities
- ❒ listening actively to speakers and honouring perspectives to strive for the common good
- ❒ using respectful language when speaking and adding comments through the chat function, discussion forums, threads and other tools
- ❒ keeping all comments productive, opening discussion rather than shutting it down
- ❒ responding to ideas, comments and feedback from a place of openness and curiosity rather than judgment
- ❒ maintaining the dignity of others by respecting diverse opinions, agreeing or disagreeing respectfully with ideas rather than with the person sharing the ideas
- ❒ being mindful of how turning video on can help build community and solidarity
- ❒ respecting that people have different comfort levels with turning video on
- ❒ using the mute function when not speaking to limit background noise
- ❒ asking for advance permission to take pictures or make recordings

What other expectations can we add to ensure our virtual learning space reflects Catholic social

"Among all educational instruments the school has a special importance... designed not only to develop with special care the intellectual faculties but also to form the ability to judge rightly…to foster a sense of values, to prepare for professional life. Between pupils of different talents and backgrounds it promotes friendly relations and fosters a spirit of mutual understanding…" — *Delcaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis), § 5*

APPENDIX 2: GUIDELINES FOR PEDAGOGY REFLECTING A RELATIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

Resources

- ❒ Resources prioritize and include primary material.
- ❒ Materials and resources about specific identities, perspectives and histories are written by individuals who identify from within the corresponding community.
- ❒ Materials and resources do not minimize, tokenize or perpetuate stereotypes.
- ❒ Community, heritage and practices are unique resources to appreciate and build upon.
- ❒ Resources and instruction focus on celebrating the joy, innovation and beauty of individuals and groups across identities.

Communication

- ❒ Language is Christ centred, inclusive and uses correct terminology and names of cultures and communities.
- ❒ Specific identities, nations and communities are used and the use of generic labels is avoided.
- ❒ Acronyms are not used to identify individuals or groups.
- ❒ Individuals and groups are named or described in the present tense.
- ❒ Discussions, forums, messages and other forms of engagement and communication do not require students to disclose their identity.

"There is no such thing as 'just a job' in a Catholic school. There are only various forms of Christian service, each calling for extraordinary dedication."
– This Moment of Promise

"Among all educational instruments the school has a special importance... designed not only to develop with special care the intellectual faculties but also to form the ability to judge rightly…to foster a sense of values, to prepare for professional life. Between pupils of different talents and backgrounds it promotes friendly relations and fosters a spirit of mutual understanding…" — *Delcaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis), § 5*

APPENDIX 2, CONT'D

Teaching and Learning

- ❒ Human dignity is honoured across identities; identity and heritage are not assumed and diverse identities are recognized and valued.
- ❒ Learning throughout courses are embedded with activities that are situated in the context of the Catholic worldview and resources, such as Catholic social teaching.
- ❒ Learning empowers students to see themselves as active agents contributing to positive principles and societal change.
- ❒ Students are valued as producers of culture as well as consumers.
- ❒ Societal contributions of community members include contemporary examples.
- ❒ Narratives are recognized and referenced in the same way the corresponding community identifies them (e.g., oral tradition, historical account or mathematical ideas rather than 'myth' or 'legend').
- ❒ Histories and perspectives of past and current events demonstrate a balance of positive and negative.
- ❒ Students are encouraged to connect to learning and activities through their own lived experiences.
- ❒ Learning embeds opportunities to engage with local communities and prioritizes equity-deserving groups.
- ❒ Awareness that cultural similarities and differences between students exist and are not assigned a value.
- ❒ Individual students are not expected to provide information or perspectives about communities or groups they have a connection to or are familiar with through lived experience.
- ❒ Celebrate talents, contributions and achievements across a full spectrum rather than a narrow selection.

"The education of the conscience is a lifelong task. From the earliest years, it awakens the child to the knowledge and practice of the interior law recognized by conscience. Prudent education teaches virtue; it prevents or cures fear, selfishness and pride, resentment arising from guilt, and feelings of complacency, born of human weakness and faults. The education of the conscience guarantees freedom and engenders peace of heart." — *CCC, n. 1784*

APPENDIX 3

As relational, Catholic educators, we are called to proclaim our anti-racist stance by reflecting on conscious and unconscious bias and by cultivating learning communities that:

- ❒ value student cultures and identities,
- ❒ promote student engagement and agency,
- ❒ develop critical consciousness and social justice action.

In what ways does the pedagogy reference culture or race?	**Who and which ideas are underserved or overserved?**
How do activities and assessments encourage all students to draw from and express their experiences and knowledge in equitable ways?	**Who and what is being celebrated?** **Who and what is being overlooked?**
How are voices being explored, amplified and extended to local communities?	**How are voices being recognized as consumers and producers of culture and community contributions?**

What adjustments must occur to honour the human dignity of all learners and what they value?

"Educators are called to be open and professionally knowledgeable when they are leading classes where diversity is recognized, accepted and appreciated as an educational asset that is beneficial to everyone."
– Congregation for Catholic Education, § 5

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"Faced with suffering and hardship, Saint Kateri is an extraordinary example of a young woman who gave witness to her faith in Jesus by modelling courage, perseverance and devotion to prayer and service."
– The Most Rev. Raymond Poisson, Pastoral Letter to Young People, 2022

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you." *(Jeremiah 1:5)*

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"If you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," you do well." – James 2:8

“"Always to be united with Jesus, that is my life's programme.”
– Blessed Carlo Acutis

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“We must seek to listen with faith and humility as we ask the questions: How is the Spirit calling us to respond individually and communally to our present context? Drawing from our Catholic faith and tradition, how can we respond creatively to the challenges and opportunities we face today?”
– Renewing the Promise

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