

**STUDENTS WITNESS SPIRITUAL GROWTH OF THEIR TEACHER**

The sense of family and belonging at Aileen Wright English Catholic School in Cochrane grew stronger last week as students and staff celebrated their mass in honour of teacher Debora Fleming who converted to Catholicism earlier this year. Mrs. Fleming's Grade 7 class prepared and actively participated in the mass which was celebrated at Transfiguration Parish in Cochrane.

As part of his introductory remarks, Father Hervé Sauvé took the time to explain to the children the steps that were taken by Mrs. Fleming to become Catholic. "When most of you were born, you were brought to be baptized because of the will of your parents to give you the gifts of the Holy Spirit and to bring you into Jesus' family," noted Fr. Sauvé. "Mrs. Fleming has this same deep desire in her heart. After approaching her principal and the parish, she began to meet with one of our representatives, Mrs. Labelle. They journeyed together for one year, reading, writing and learning about the Christian faith. Last Easter, she felt ready to become a member of our Christian community. During the Easter Vigil, a special bonfire was lit and blessed before it was used to light the Paschal Candle. This same fire from the Pascal Candle is used during a baptism as a symbol of our faith. And this same fire was used to baptize Mrs. Fleming." He then invited Mrs. Fleming to come forward with her baptismal candle and receive the sacred flame from the Paschal candle, which represents the light of Christ in our world.



Father Hervé Sauvé assists Teacher Debora Fleming as she lights her baptismal candle from the Paschal Candle at Transfiguration Parish.

He also explained that while bishops, priests and deacons are generally the ones who have the privilege to baptize, our Catholic Church believes so strongly in the importance of this sacrament to salvation that in an emergency, anyone can perform a baptismal ceremony.

Principal Andrea Iserhoff is grateful that students were able to witness such an important step in the faith journey of one of their teachers. "As a Catholic school community, we are fortunate to be able to integrate our Christian principles and values to our teachings, to pray together, to find strength in the Church and to prepare for sacraments as we mature in faith together," stated Iserhoff. "Learning is more than simply the acquisition of knowledge and skills; it is about our journey as Christians as we strive to become good stewards of God within our community. Today, we were able to welcome a new member within our Catholic family, and celebrate this holy rite as a community. It was a personal growth experience for our students and for all of us. I want to extend our sincere appreciation to Mrs. Fleming for allowing us to share in her spiritual growth. We congratulate her on her conversion which will allow her to teach with the spirit of God within her as she guides our students in their own academic and spiritual growth."

In order to convert to Catholicism, individuals prepare through the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA). During these religious classes, students are asked to pray, study the scriptures and learn the catechism. Throughout the process, they gain a greater understanding of and appreciation for the mystery of salvation, the virtues, and the life of faith, liturgy and charity.

**For more information, please contact Mélanie Bidal-Mainville, Community Relations Officer**

