

CATHOLIC STUDENTS FOCUS ON ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION WEEK 2006

Respect for all of God's creation is the focus in our Catholic schools this week, as students and staff celebrate Catholic Education Week. The theme this year, "And God saw that it was good!" is particularly relevant in reflecting Catholic education's commitment to help students cultivate an appreciation for God's gift of creation and develop a deep sense of moral purpose in fulfilling humanity's responsibility as stewards of creation.

Director of Education Paul Toffanello believes that this theme resonates deeply with contemporary ecological consciousness and with the spirituality of today's young people. "An ecological vision, rooted in Christian belief, offers an inspiration to youth that gives them hope and meaning and a motive for service," stated Toffanello. "The events planned within our schools this week are a reflection of our appreciation for our planet and the environment in general. The universe and all that exists within it is bursting with significance and purpose for those who have eyes to see it as God sees it and as God would have us see it."



Father Pat Lafleur celebrates mass at St. Paul School in Timmins as students present a recycling box, pine cones and a globe as symbols of appreciation for all of God's creation.



Classes at Sacred Heart School in Timmins spent time learning about the environment through student projects displayed in their Art Gallery.

Catholic Education Week is marked by special activities at all grade levels, including prayer celebrations and service activities. Highlights include an art poster contest at Aileen Wright English Catholic School in Cochrane about the preservation of the environment and the creation of an "And God saw that it was good!" mural at St. Anne English Catholic School. At St. Jerome School in Kirkland Lake, students will be planting trees as symbols of God's creation on Friday, followed by a reading of the popular book, *The Giving Tree*. The yearly Art Gallery at Sacred Heart School in Timmins is taking place today, with all art projects focus on the preservation of our planet. Such activities will help students understand the importance of protecting the earth's resources and learn simple way to accomplish this goal as part of our mission as children of God.



The Social Justice class at O’Gorman High School is leading a series of information sessions in our elementary schools to bring an important message about global water issues. Through slide presentations, experiments and a short video which they edited and compiled themselves, they are engaging students in a number of activities. Teacher Anne Marie Gagnon has been very impressed with the proactive stance taken by her students to generate awareness about the necessity to conserve, protect and manage water in a manner that demonstrates concern for the common good. “The students have been very creative in their approach and preparation for these visits,” stated Gagnon. “This class continually amazes and impresses me with the dedication and compassion with which they undertake each project. By putting faith into action, they have taken that important lead into becoming discerning citizens with a concern for the rights of all people.”

Board Pastoral Care Worker Mike Buhler also played a central role this week by visiting classrooms at O’Gorman High School throughout the week to discuss farming issues in Canada, focussing on the threats caused by Terminator Seed technology. Students will have the opportunity to sign a petition to the Prime Minister calling for a greater focus on the protection of the environment and respect for the farming industry by preventing field testing of Terminator Seed technology in Canada.

Catholic Education Week 2006 began on a Sunday to highlight the partnership that remains the foundation of Catholic education. We particularly want to underline the relationship of Catholic schools with the broader Church community, especially with the parishes that remain the centre of the worshipping faith community.

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

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Northeastern Catholic District School Board

101 Spruce Street North
Timmins, Ontario P4N 6M9
Tel: (705) 268-7443 Fax: (705) 264-0333
www.ncdsb.on.ca

P. Toffanello, Director of Education
C. Landers, Chair of the Board