

Will you say “Yes”?

I recently had an experience that reminded me of the power of “yes”. At our recent GrACE Board meeting, in the last 5 minutes of a three hour agenda, the conversation circled around the need for hope in this time of COVID. An idea was suggested: “Let’s host an evening of hope bringing messages of faith to our Catholic educators.” “Yes,” someone answered and let’s add worship music, maybe someone like Steve Angrisano could do that.” “And don’t forget to have some humor,” said another. There’s nothing like laughter to lighten our hearts.”

Within the span of no more than 10 minutes, multiple ideas were shared, a draft plan, location and date were selected, and a few of us were charged with taking care of the details. Within less than a week, a Night of GrACE: A Message of Hope was launched! Every idea shared was manifest. The Holy Spirit was at work!

We are often reminded of Mary’s “Yes” to God. Mary’s yes allowed the Holy Spirit to move within her. We pray to have the same faith and to say yes to God when the time arises. We pray to have the humility and trust that Mary had when she was asked to be the mother of the son of God.

Often those opportunities are right before us. God is right here, right now. A wise Catholic principal once told me, “I believe that every day I have the opportunity to be a page in the New Testament that God is writing right now. “Don’t we all have that same opportunity?”

Will you say, “Yes”?



**AN EVENING OF GRACE:  
A MESSAGE OF HOPE**

**WHEN**  
November 29, 2020  
7pm – 8pm

Be renewed as Alberta’s Bishops reflect on the Advent message of HOPE

**WHERE** ZOOM IN...  
<https://tinyurl.com/NightOfGrace2020>

REFLECT, RENEW AND REST IN THE LORD

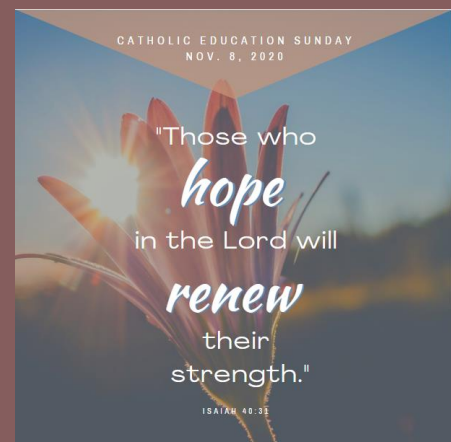
Featuring music and stories from Steve Angrisano

Young and old alike embrace the passionate message of faith, hope and love woven throughout his music and storytelling. Always rooted in a spirit of humility and faithfulness, Steve’s easy, honest style of ministry is born from who he is: a committed witness to the life and love of Jesus Christ.

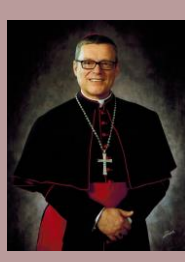
Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.  
Isaiah 40:31

*When we say “yes”, God is most often inviting us to what is already within our capacity---inviting us to see our ordinary roles as sacred. Like Mary, can we accept the deepening of the lives that we have already been given? Can we say “Yes” and let life be sacred?*

Catherine Wiecher Brunell  
[Saying Yes to God: Mary's Yes](#)



## Meet Alberta's GrACE Board



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GrACE Director  
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Grateful Advocates for Catholic Education (GrACE) is supported by:

- † Alberta Bishops
- † Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association (ACSTA)
- † Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta (CCSSA)

## Catholic Education Prayers of the Faithful for December

For Catholic Education:

- for protection and graces during this time of Pandemic, we pray to the Lord.
- for our educators and school staff called to live a life of love and sacrifice during COVID- 19, we pray to the Lord.
- for Catholic Education: That our Catholic schools may reveal the glory of God in all that they do, we pray to the Lord.
- for Catholic Education: That the teachers in our Catholic schools may be strengthened for their important task in our world, we pray to the Lord.

### GrACE Top Toolkit Tips

#### **RENEW- give fresh life and strength to**

- your GrACE group
- the regional conversations with the Bishops
- your commitment to take one step forward

#### **HOPE with confidence that you are not alone as you**

- Access the many resources available to you
- Share your ideas and updates with other GrACE
- Pray for Catholic education



## GrACE Around the Province

**STAR Catholic Division GrACE** met for the first time in October to talk about ideas for GrACE 2020-21. We know we will have to rely on social media to spread our good news due to the current situation.

- We prepared a video with some of our parish priests for Catholic Education Sunday Nov. 8th. Our priests are so critical to the success of Catholic Education and we appreciate their thoughtful reflection.
- Our advent campaign includes requesting pictures of advent wreaths and nativity scenes from home/parish/school.
- We are working to create an infographic of Alberta & STAR Catholic statistics on Catholic Education.
- We include the GrACE Newsletter at School Council meetings and invite each school council to submit a story and picture about their support of Catholic education.
- Parishes are invited to post the GrACE Newsletter on their parish website.
- Schools are invited to post GrACE Newsletter on their website.
- We will use #ShareYourGrace, #IBelieveinCatholiEd on social media for an event
- Catholic Ed prayers of the faithful have been shared and are being used at Sunday parish masses and school mass/liturgies.
- We plan to hi-light Year 1 of STAR Faith Plan - Disciples of the Word
- We plan to hi-light the 5 Marks of Catholic Education and call out to all schools for pictures/stories to submit to the GrACE newsletter and/or Calgary Diocese Faithfully newsletter.

### Elk Island Catholic Schools

This month, St. Theresa participated in the 'Grins for Grands' program, and created over 300 letters and cards for seniors living in centers affected by the pandemic. We can't wait to spread some joy to our community, we are all in this together!

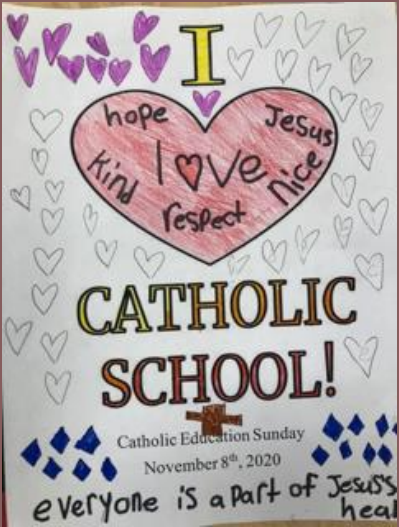


Elk Island Catholic Schools' Grace Group created a video for Catholic Education Sunday. It can be found [here](#)

# Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools

Members of the GrACE CTR Committee planned and delivered a GrACE Teacher Workshop on Friday, November 6th in advance of Catholic Education Sunday for all staff at Christ the Redeemer Catholic School Division. The goal of this workshop was to reignite the fire for advocacy in Catholic Education by reviewing a history of Catholic education, and reflecting on the personal call to the vocation of a Catholic teacher. At the end, teachers were challenged to consider one way they will go deeper into serving as WITNESS. Have a look at some of their submissions!

## St Kateri Catholic School, Grande Prairie



“

***"You've got to believe that God is in control of your life. It may be a tough time but you've got to believe that God has a reason for it and he's going to make everything good."***  
**-Joel Osteen**

Being home with my children from March until June, trying my best to homeschool and navigate in our changing world, was a struggle for me. I enjoyed my time that I had with my children but the learning from home made me realize how much dedication and patience a teacher has to have to get through a day. I found a new appreciation for our teachers. Moving forward, when it was time for my children to head back to school, I was not hesitant at all. The information shared with parents from our Division and from our school made me feel comfortable, trusting and hopeful. When we trust in the Lord, all things are possible. Being part of a Catholic school has made this transition easy for me and my family as it calls on our faith and hope in God, inviting us to rely on His peace and calming presence.

**KATHY**  
**Parent from CTR Catholic**



A beautiful testimony from a parent with Christ the Redeemer Catholic School Division.

Thank you for sharing how being a part of a Catholic school during these trying times has restored your faith and given you hope.

## The Body of Christ: Reimagined

Many of us at Edmonton Catholic Schools remember vividly the day we last all gathered together as a faith community. It was Tuesday, February 4, 2020, and the temperature that morning measured a brisk -16 degrees Celsius. While the weather was cold outside, our hearts and minds were alight inside as we prayed, listened, and learned; a day deeply rooted in our faith and uniting us together in the Body of Christ.

It is difficult to comprehend the months since that time. Soon after that gathering, information spread quickly about the Coronavirus. The world around us, in many cases, had already begun to experience the affects of the pandemic, and country after country felt the impacts of the virus.

As we moved forward, we welcomed a new school year and with that brought a deepened sense of faith in our Father and hope in our journey. We pressed forward, and on Thursday, October the 29 our Division was able to gather again with renewed faith. And although the world, and even our school Division, was a very different place, our hearts and minds were still alight with love.

Unable to gather in large groups, Faith Development Day 2020-2021 was reimagined as a virtual experience that included a Eucharistic Liturgy featuring our Division Chaplains, Father Glenn and Father Julian, keynote addresses by acclaimed speaker David Wells, musical interludes by famed musician Jesse Manibusan, and opportunities to pray, listen, learn, and share. The day was a welcome distraction and a much needed reprieve.

The Edmonton Catholic Schools virtual Faith Day is a beautiful example of how faith communities are coming together in unique ways. Although we were not able to be together physically, we were all able to share in our love of our Father together as one and we welcomed all with opened hearts and minds to begin anew.

As time passes, we are learning our need for one another in ways we may not have expected. While the Faith Development Days celebrated at the Edmonton Convention Centre remain happy memories, we are on this journey together. The online world may never be a perfect substitute for real-life communities, but we can still unite as the Body of Christ through technology.



Some beautiful iconography of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Edmonton Catholic Schools Lumen Christi Centre [#ecsdfaithinspires](https://www.edmontoncatholic.ca/faith-development)

## Calgary Catholic School District celebrates 21 years of Faith Days

For the past 21 years, Calgary Catholic School District has been celebrating the gift of publicly funded Catholic education with annual Faith Day celebrations for all staff. These days begin with a liturgical celebration and then enhance and build our knowledge and appreciation of our Catholic faith with engaging speakers, reflections, activities and music. This year, due to physical distancing requirements, our Faith Days turned virtual and were celebrated simultaneously in each of our schools and worksites on October 29 and 30 – 121 locations in all!

Wondering what it looks like when 5000 staff gather to celebrate our faith together? Check out this video montage of the previous 20 years of Faith Day celebrations created by CCSD teacher/chaplain MT Vecchio Romano [here](#).



Fort McMurray Catholic Schools

COVID-19 has changed many things in our daily lives, but we can still share our faith! Grace 4 sacramental prep is being done in schools.

*Come Lord Jesus*



Introducing...

**Stacey MacNeil, the Alberta Catholic Education Curriculum Resource Coordinator**



Hello, My name is Stacey MacNeil, and I am the Alberta Catholic Education Curriculum Resource Coordinator (ACE CRC) with the Council of Catholic Superintendents of Alberta (CCSSA) and a Religion Specialist with Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools. My origins began with strong Catholic roots from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, before moving to Alberta 16 years ago to teach in the Catholic school system. My educational journey includes a Bachelor of Arts, a Bachelor of Education specializing in Indigenous Education, a Graduate Certificate in Catholic School Administration and an expected convocation in October 2021 with a Masters in Religious Education from Newman Theological College.

The ACE CRC is responsible for coordinating the Catholic Curriculum in Alberta's province, working with all Catholic stakeholders, including the Catholic Curriculum Advisory Committee. The committee comprises the Bishop Liaisons of Alberta/Northwest Territories, CCSSA (Council of Catholic School Superintendents), and ACSTA (Alberts Catholic School Trustees). The ACE CRC works closely with CCSSA Executive Director ensuring effective Catholic leadership, coordination of curriculum, and working with REN (Religious Education Network) to ensure that teachers and students have an authentic Catholic curriculum to grow in faith and relationship with Jesus.

The tasks for the ACE CRC include supporting the implementation of the Fully Alive resource, the Grade Nine Religion Pilot, Health and Wellness Outcome, and identifying areas in the curriculum needing support for teachers. The tasks on the horizon for the ACE CRC include developing and maintaining a Religion Curriculum and Resource repository, supporting Pearson's work Catholic Kindergarten Curriculum, and any recommendations brought forth from the Catholic Curriculum Advisory Committee.

My Catholic faith is central to my life outside of work in developing my faith life and parish life. My parish life involves Eucharistic ministry, adoration, volunteering with St. Vincent de Paul, and facilitating sacramental preparation. The advent season brings the Backpack Campaign in my school community, which I co-ordinate with Jennifer Quinlan and becoming a head-Christmas elf for the Magic of Christmas Foothills. In my downtime, I enjoy reading, watching films, Christian Yoga, and spending time with my Godchildren, who call me G-MO for Godmother.

**GrACE Regional Fall 2020 Meetings**

- Nov.24- Grouard-McLennan Archdiocese
- Nov. 26-Edmonton Archdiocese B
- Dec. 3- Calgary Diocese
- Dec. 8- St Paul Diocese
- Dec. 17- Edmonton Archdiocese A

**ADVENT PRAYER**

Father in heaven, our hearts desire the warmth of your love and our minds are searching for the light of your Word. Increase our longing for Christ our Savior and give us the strength to grow in love, that the dawn of his coming may find us rejoicing in his presence and welcoming the light of his truth. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.  
Amen



# A Story of Advent and Catholic Education

By Adrian Textor  
Calgary Catholic School District

## Leap of Faith

Advent is a choice. When thinking of Advent, I think of all the amazing individuals I have worked with in three different schools in the Northwest part of Calgary and the choice I made six years ago to make a major change in my career.

**Hope** – I had decided I had had enough. I was ready to leave my teaching job at a school here in Calgary and move to our Catholic system – a “leap of faith,” if you will (pun intended). I was hoping to gain back the passion I had lost in being overworked, feeling underappreciated and sensing that nothing was going to get better.

**Peace** – I thought I would never work with a staff as good as the one I had left, but every staff I have worked within our district has been welcoming and understanding. Every day there is peace in my heart when I see the people I get to work with, both adults and children. The level of professionalism and care for our students humbles me.

**Joy** – Every day I work in our district is a gift. I can teach my faith openly. I have a better work/life balance. I have administrators who put me and my well-being first. I have students and parents who say “thank you” and care about me as a person and as their teacher.

**Love** – Love is the gift I am trying to give back daily. Since coming to our Catholic education community, I forgive more easily, listen better and am more patient, kind and understanding. I once heard a report that brain research indicates that we learn how to be kind to others through experiencing kindness ourselves. Jesus has called me to a higher set of morals and values, to a higher level of kindness. I am choosing love.



**GrACE Facebook address is**

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