



Discussion Guide

Renewing The Promise

**A Pastoral Letter for Catholic Education
from The Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario**

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Discussion Guide

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Introduction to the Discussion Guide

In the spring of 2018, in conjunction with Catholic Education Week, the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario (ACBO) released a Pastoral Letter for Catholic Education entitled *Renewing the Promise*. The letter invites all those who share responsibility for Catholic education in Ontario to reflect on the challenges and opportunities of the present moment, and offers encouragement to discern how the Spirit is calling us to respond.

Letters invite a response, and a prayerful and thoughtful consideration of this letter will be meaningful for all involved with Catholic education. Reflecting on the implications of its message in community is of particular benefit. As Jesus assures us, “where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” (Matthew 18:20)

Renewing the Promise invites us, both individually and communally, to discernment leading to understanding and to action. To facilitate this reflection and response, the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE) has prepared this discussion guide which proposes several different approaches to reflection, depending on the time available, the intended audience, and on the context of your local community.

Background to the Pastoral Letter

Following a province wide process of consultation that engaged thousands of participants from the Catholic education community, Ontario’s Catholic Bishops responded with a Pastoral Letter supported by the community’s prayerful reflection and valuable input.

With the release of *Renewing the Promise* (2018), a Pastoral Letter in the tradition *This Moment of Promise* (1988) and *Fulfilling the Promise* (1993), the Bishops have provided us with a very positive and affirming message. The letter uses the scriptural account of the *Road to Emmaus* as the basis for their reflection on the mission and vision of Catholic education, celebrating that a true encounter with Jesus can and does take place, each and every day within our Catholic schools. The Bishops encourage all who share responsibility for Catholic education to continue to nurture and strengthen Catholic schools as communities that exemplify, in word and in deed, the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Using the Guide

This discussion guide provides suggestions for facilitating reflection and discussion about the Pastoral Letter and is intended for audiences in school boards, schools, partner associations, dioceses, parishes and other faith communities.

This guide contains a variety of options for exploring the Pastoral Letter, that range from single sessions between 45 minutes and several hours in length, as well as approaches that could be structured as half day workshops, or facilitated as multiple sessions, spread out over the course of a year. The most suitable option will depend upon the time you have available and the audience for your session.

Option One (45 – 60 minutes)

- an overview of the Pastoral Letter
- suitable for all groups

Option Two (60 – 90 minutes)

- a more thorough review of the Pastoral Letter
- includes a focus on and questions associated with particular roles in Catholic education (e.g., students, teachers, support staff, etc.)

Option Three (120 minutes)

- an interactive approach, utilizing small and large groups to explore the complete Pastoral Letter
- each small group explores a different section, and reports back to the large group

Option Four (Multi-session)

- recommended for discussion with groups intending to focus on the letter over a series of meetings

Appendix A

- Optional Opening Prayer

Appendix B

- Sample Participant Response Sheet with questions related to the various roles in Catholic Education (Options 2, 3 and 4).

Appendix C

- Worksheet to guide personal reflection on the Pastoral Letter

Appendix D

- PowerPoint Presentation Template should you wish to develop one to assist with facilitation of discussion

Additional Resources — Going Deeper



We look to the future of Catholic Education with great hope because we are blessed to have so many committed and faith-filled educators and leaders whose witness to faith provides a compelling example to our young people. The Catholic education community is encouraged to support opportunities for faith formation for all members of the community that are inviting, engaging, and purposeful.”

Within the Pastoral Letter, the Bishops note the importance of providing opportunities for adult faith formation, and offer their encouragement to school boards and partner organizations to undertake the development and delivery of such offerings.

A variety of additional sample activities and formats are provided within this guide, and can be found on the Institute for Catholic Education website (www.iceont.ca). These additional resources are intended to provide practical suggestions that model a variety of ways that schools, school boards or groups can go deeper into the Pastoral letter through a commitment to prayer, study, discernment and reflection. The resources can be adapted and used with a variety of groups, and also serve as examples of sessions that could be developed to provide opportunities for adult faith formation on topics that are suggested by the Pastoral Letter and go beyond a simple exploration of the text.

Board facilitators, faith animators, and/or Board leadership teams will find many natural opportunities to explore the letter in a variety of ways that are timely, relevant, and meaningful. The shared experience of discussing and exploring the letter through a variety of approaches not only deepens understanding and appreciation on the part of school leaders, but builds the capacity for leaders to then take the experience and share it with other school staff in a manner that will best suit individual communities. These activities, and others like them, can assist groups to enter into a commitment of reflective faith formation that is inviting, engaging and purposeful using this Pastoral Letter to renew our promise to Catholic education, both individual and communal.

Sample Activities

- Going Deeper — Exploring the Road to Emmaus (a half day retreat)
- Going Deeper — Exploring Salvation History (an adult faith formation session)
- Going Deeper — A Comprehensive School Level Plan for Exploring the Pastoral Letter for a school staff to explore the Pastoral Letter over the course of the school year, linked to liturgical and school year calendar
- Going Deeper — Exploring connections between *Renewing the Promise* and the OECTA Prayer
- Going Deeper — Exploring connections between *Renewing the Promise* and the OCSOA Prayer
- Going Deeper — Exploring Connections between *Renewing the Promise* and the CPCO Prayer
- Making Connections — *Renewing the Promise* and Achieving Excellence in Ontario's Catholic Schools

Individuals, groups, and School Boards are encouraged to develop their own approaches to introduce the Pastoral Letter within the local community, and are also invited to share resources and materials developed with the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE). ICE will highlight best practices, profile innovative practices and will make additional resources available for use within Catholic Educational communities across the province.

From Reflection to Action

As we reflect, individually and communally, on the call to Renew the Promise of Catholic Education, how we listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, both within our own heart and in the insights shared by others, is of paramount importance. Listening with an open mind and heart, and being willing to hear both affirmation and challenge, will enable all of us to identify ways to deepen our faith, and to express that faith through our commitment to love and justice. Ultimately, the Pastoral Letter invites each of us to listen and discern, and more importantly, as we respond to the call, to move beyond reflection to action.

Preparation for Facilitators

As the facilitator of a group session focused on *Renewing the Promise*, begin by reading the Pastoral Letter, and consider which of the suggestions included in this guide (pages 11 – 24) seem best suited to your intended audience given your time and context. Each of the proposed approaches identifies key themes and includes some questions to guide discussion.

Prior to facilitating the session, you are encouraged to spend some time in personal reflection about the key themes and key focus questions included in the option you have chosen. Consider: given your particular context and audience, what additional key themes will be important for your audience and what other key questions might you use to engage your audience meaningfully with the letter?

An overview of each section of the Pastoral Letter, including specific page references, is included in the pages that follow.



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An Introduction (page 3)

Catholic educators discover ways to make meaning and affirm their significant roles in Catholic education in the Ontario Bishops' letter *Renewing the Promise*.

Revealing new interpretations of everyday life in schools that bring rich connotations into view and honouring the experience of educators, this Pastoral Letter brings the great depth of experience of Catholic education into focus and makes current the experiences of our earliest educators while navigating the culture challenges in our schools today and interpreting them in light of our faith.

Having listened to the insights from the province-wide process of consultation that engaged thousands of participants from the Catholic education community, Ontario's Bishops respond in this letter with an invitation to dialogue with our story of faith supported by the community's prayerful reflection and valuable input.

Recognizing the consultation gave voice to expressing Catholic education as both faith formation and formation for witness to justice, the Pastoral Letter addresses the shared sense of purpose and clear sense of mission and vision as essential for Catholic educators moving forward as a community and inspires all to renew the great promise of Catholic education.

What additional key themes do you identify as you reflect on this section of the letter?

What additional key questions may be important to your audience?

Our Current Context (page 4)

In our schools, we continually imagine with each other the call to re-tell the story of our faith and reflect on those experiences that significantly affect identity and community in order to offer new possibilities for both. The Pastoral Letter provides guidance and support as we transform our vocations in this place and time in Catholic education, honours our experiences and reflects critically as we move forward in leading our students. New connections and promises are made in the letter that offer greater meaning to the life in our schools while affirming diverse voices, roles and strengths and deeply valuing the critical role that educators play in Catholic schools today. The Bishops assert Catholic education's role in supporting families and shaping students in their search for the hope in their hearts as they come to know and encounter Jesus through the beauty of the gospel.

The Pastoral Letter celebrates the contribution that Catholic schools make to the social and environmental fabric of society in partnership with families and church communities that together reflect and act on God's presence in the world bringing gifts responsive to the signs of our times. Amidst social turmoil, students seek a sense of direction, a goal to give meaning to their lives and Catholic schools have the unique opportunity to accompany students in their search for truth, justice and an appreciation of the goodness of God. The letter encourages Catholic schools to continue to listen with faith and humility and ask, how is the Spirit calling us to respond to today's challenges and opportunities?

What additional key themes do you identify as you reflect on this section of the letter?

What additional key questions may be important to your audience?

The Road to Emmaus (page 5)

The true encounter with Jesus can and does take place every day in our Catholic schools and we continually renew the promise that Jesus will be with us always as we work together to strengthen our Catholic schools as communities that exemplify, in word and deed, the good news of Jesus Christ. We find a memorable example of this encounter in the Gospel account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). Jesus nurtures his relationship with the disciples through dialogue and teaching and restores the joys of believing through the breaking of the bread, presence, friendship, and unconditional love. In similar ways, Catholic schools have the ability to restore the joys of believing.

What additional key themes do you identify as you reflect on this section of the letter?

What additional key questions may be important to your audience?

A Community That Accompanies (pages 6 – 7)

On the road to Emmaus, Jesus helps his disciples to understand the faith and teaches us that the art of accompaniment is about taking the time to walk alongside one another to listen, and in so doing, to transform. Each person in a Catholic school practices accompaniment by helping students realize their own unique story is given greater meaning and purpose in knowing and living the story we share in Christ. Our faith is about an encounter with God — an incredible love story that inspires faith and joy. God never gives up on us. Catholic schools are communities of accompaniment where the story of our salvation is known and shared, offering the encouragement that comes from knowing that Jesus walks with us. People are at different stages on the journey and we recognize this as we accompany with great respect, patience and love and invite all to deepen their understanding of Christ and his Church.

What additional key themes do you identify as you reflect on this section of the letter?

What additional key questions may be important to your audience?

A Community That Builds Relationships (pages 8 – 9)

Catholic schools are places where efforts are made to strengthen those who have lost their faith by inviting students and their families into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. The experience of community in the schools can gently fan the embers until they burst into flames. People often feel a special presence when they enter a Catholic school and this comes from Christ who is proclaimed through word and example and is evidenced by the way people care for one another. Catholic schools witness to Christ and by doing so help to reveal Him to others. The school plays a meaningful role in facilitating the relationship between the parish and the home and through the school, parents and families can be drawn into the life of the parish. Catholic schools nurture a sense of respect, cooperation and the development of trust that helps to encourage effective working relationships.

What additional key themes do you identify as you reflect on this section of the letter?

What additional key questions may be important to your audience?

A Community That Encourages Engagement and Instils Hope

(pages 10 – 11)

The more students see and understand themselves as the beloved children of God, the more they will want to love God with all their heart, mind and soul and we know that the more we love God, the more we love our neighbour and the more we engage in community. Catholic schools help to promote engagement with the local and global community through acts of charity and by witnessing to social justice and care for the environment. Schools are places where staff and students are encouraged to enter into scripture, doctrine and worship and actively express their faith through acts of love towards their neighbours. The more schools foster and nurture Catholic identity, the more we promote that identity in service and witness to the world. Our faith calls us to engage with the world, have hope and inspire it in others.

What additional key themes do you identify as you reflect on this section of the letter?

What additional key questions may be important to your audience?

A Community That Forms Joyful Disciples (page 13)

Catholic schools always strive to join their work of education with the explicit proclamation of the gospel and are a most valuable resource for the evangelization of culture. As hearts and minds are opened to the transforming love of God, Catholic schools help to form joyful disciples, demonstrating the joy of believing and witnessing the good news to the communities that they serve.

What additional key themes do you identify as you reflect on this section of the letter?

What additional key questions may be important to your audience?

Renewing the Promise (page 15)

Catholic schools are places where children and young people may find solid and enduring values to give hope, meaning and purpose to life through an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship and the certain knowledge of God's unwavering love provide a firm place to stand in shifting times. The promise is that true encounter with Jesus can and does take place each day in schools. Together we renew that promise by continuing to strengthen our schools as communities that exemplify the good news in word and deed. School staff together with church leaders form joyful disciples ready to renew the promise as we respond to the challenges and opportunities of the present moment.

What additional key themes do you identify as you reflect on this section of the letter?

What additional key questions may be important to your audience?

Reflections and Encouragement to the Partners in Catholic Education (pages 16 – 22)

Students

The demands of our consumer driven society and the noise of social media may lead students to think that they are alone. Know that you are loved by God and God is with you always. The world may sometimes make you feel like you are not good enough, not wealthy enough, not attractive enough, or not special enough. Jesus loves you perfectly and without limits and is always at your side encouraging and helping you to be the best you can be as you offer your service to the world as an instrument of peace and justice. Ask Jesus to help you become a good student, a true friend and a loving son/daughter. Never forget to love and worship Jesus.

Parents

You are the first and most important educators. Immerse your children in the unconditional love of God. Parish and school are there to support you in caring for and nurturing your children. Teach your children to pray and pray with them. Find strength in knowing that Jesus is always at your side and know that your example of life grounded in faith is a powerful witness for your children and an antidote to the hopelessness that often permeates our times.

Teachers and Education Workers

You are powerful witnesses to the presence of Jesus in the lives of our students and you provide the good soil each day for the roots of faith to grow in our students. You provide a welcoming environment for students, listen to their stories and help them to connect the biblical story to their own lived experience and create inclusive places of learning that invite and enable every student in your care to grow fully to be all that God hopes them to be. You model gratitude for the gifts that we have been given by God each day and you nurture your students' confidence in their ability to make the world a more loving and just place through their good works and witness. The kindness, love and attention they experience in your care will be reflected in their relationships with family and community. As always, keep Jesus at the center of the school and at the center of their lives.

Support Staff

You offer loving service to those who depend on you and yours is the voice of welcome. You each bring unique expertise, skill and talents to create learning communities that are places of warmth and welcome. Working alongside educators, you care for children and help schools fulfill their mission. Your model of service and generosity of spirit offers important witness to the value of the gospel message.

Principals/Vice Principals

Your attention to the spiritual and cultural dimension of the school is an important part of your mission and provides inspiration and hope for all members of the school community. Continue to cultivate a Eucharistic sensibility and let the pattern of the Eucharist guide you as you gather the school community, break bread and help bring hope to the world. Together with staff, ensure an environment of welcome and hospitality. Model for staff how best to minister to children and young people. Listen to their stories and tell stories of our faith and your own faith journey. Bring staff together in prayer and community celebrations that include opportunities for Mass. Include the parish priest and pastoral team in the life of the school community. Guide staff to the sacramental life of the parish to assist parents with the ongoing faith formation of their children. Serve with joy so that those you encounter are encouraged and empowered in the work of going forth to proclaim the gospel in their lives.

Trustees

Let your public discourse be guided by trust and respect and commitment to the truth as Jesus modelled with his disciples. All voices need to be heard and all persons need to be recognized and respected for their inherent dignity and goodness. In your decision making, setting of policies, nurturing of leaders, seek goodness that models compassion, wisdom and care. Allow your faith, love of God, and compassion and respect for each other to inform your decisions and pray together and work closely with the local bishop and diocesan staff as you seek to grow in your faith and deepen your knowledge and understanding of Church teaching. Allow the Holy Spirit to emerge from the creative tension of balancing budgets and offering programs for students, families and the communities you serve. Let your public actions be a visible sign of what we profess as a Catholic community and an expression of God's love and mercy in this world.

Directors and Supervisory Officers

You are called to model a life centered in the person of Jesus and privileged to give witness, personally and professionally, to the person and teachings of Jesus Christ. Your word and your actions inspire and influence all who work in Catholic schools. Let your voice speak with love and respect and reflect compassion and understanding. As you build relationships, the atmosphere of trust, respect and honesty you establish is critical in creating a community able to engage and accompany. You play a particular role in nurturing working relationships. Let your actions match your words in guiding communities rooted in our Catholic faith that invite everyone to encounter Jesus each day as we accompany one another.

Clergy and Pastoral Teams

Your words of encouragement and support, your ministry of presence whenever possible, your invitation for all to engage in the life of the parish community are all necessary and important. The goal of Catholic education is to prepare hearts using the language of love, dialogue and service. The essence of our vocation is love, as Pope Francis reminds us. It is not about the great things we do, it is about doing little things with great love. This is the heart of joyful discipleship and the foundation of Catholic education.

What additional key themes do you identify as you reflect on this section of the letter?

What additional key questions may be important to your audience?

The Breaking of the Bread (pages 22 – 25)

Great hope for the future of Catholic education is inspired by the many committed and faith-filled educators and leaders whose witness to faith provides a compelling example to young people. Catholic education remains committed to the essential work of forming leaders in our faith tradition for the future. We need such leaders to ensure that our schools are communities that build and nurture relationships and accompany and engage those in the community, and ultimately giving witness to the joy of the Gospel. School boards are encouraged to support processes for faith formation for emerging leaders and to approach this important task in ways that are thoughtful, intentional and well-resourced. In a rapidly changing world, our schools provide a firm ground upon which to stand because they are founded on Christ who is the sure foundation. It is in Christ that we will find the wisdom, the courage, the creativity and the integrity to work together in realizing the great promise of Catholic education.

What additional key themes do you identify as you reflect on this section of the letter?

What additional key questions may be important to your audience?

Four Options to Explore the Pastoral Letter



© Do This To Remember Me by Ed De Guzman



Option One

Overview of the Pastoral Letter (45 – 60 minutes)

See Appendix A (page 25) for suggestions for an Opening Prayer for this session.

It is helpful for the group to commit to a **working covenant** for the time of reflection and sharing:

- We are encouraged to be *fully present*; as much as possible, we will set aside other concerns to listen carefully to ourselves and others;
- We are encouraged to listen to one another *with an open mind and heart*, avoiding judgment and assumptions;
- We are encouraged to engage in *honest and respectful dialogue*, making “I” statements rather than using “we” or “you”;
- We are encouraged to always *recognize* that *we are all members of the Catholic community*.

This attitude of respect and trust makes the awareness of spiritual movements possible. As we reflect on the Pastoral Letter, we hope to discern the Spirit’s action within ourselves and one another. The focus of our attention during these conversations is both the other person or persons in the conversation as well as ourselves and what we are experiencing.

Our guiding questions are: “What do I hear within me? What do I hear from others? How is God acting among us?”

Begin by reading together pages 3 and 4 of the Pastoral Letter. Then choose from the questions on the next pages.

A. Introduction (pages 3 – 4)

The Pastoral Letter describes the current context of Catholic education in Ontario with both its challenges and its opportunities.

1. How do you experience these challenges and opportunities locally?
2. Are there other challenges and opportunities that you would add?
3. Why is it important to identify both challenges and opportunities?

The letter describes the spiritual purpose of Catholic schools and the promise we are called to renew. God’s enduring and unconditional love is identified as an encounter with Christ wherein we know him and can share with others our friendship with him. This true encounter can and does take place each and every day within our Catholic schools.

4. In what ways do you see this encounter with Christ taking place for students, staff and parents?
5. How can the spiritual purpose of Catholic schools be strengthened in our local community?

B. Read together page 5 of the Pastoral Letter

1. What catches your attention in this Gospel story (provided in summary on page 5 of the Pastoral Letter, and also found in Luke 24:13-25)?

C. Read together this passage from page 10 of the Pastoral Letter and consider the questions below.

“The disciples on the road to Emmaus are overwhelmed by grief. Their expectations for the future have been dashed and in the face of uncertainty and danger they are withdrawing from their community and its challenges. In his encounter with them on the road, Jesus provides them with hope for the future where none seemed possible. In breaking open the story of salvation history, and his own role within it, Jesus gives them understanding where there only seemed to be meaningless suffering. Ultimately, through this loving encounter, Jesus evokes within them a strength and courage not to run away, but to go back into difficult circumstances with a passion to share with others the good news they have received. The result is a deep re-engagement with their community and with the world, with all of its challenges and opportunities.

The story of Emmaus recounts a very human experience. The disappointment and despair experienced by the two disciples on the road is not unlike the challenges frequently faced by young people today. The message is clear; hope, courage and resolve can be found through a loving encounter with Jesus.

Catholic education forms communities of faith that help students experience the love of God. The more our students see and understand themselves as the beloved children of God, the more they will want to love God with all their hearts, minds, and souls. This in turn moves them to love of neighbour which bears witness to justice and charity. Jesus says, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." The more we love God, the more we love our neighbour and the more we engage in the community.

The Christ-centred mission of each school, by its very nature, contains a call to service in the greater community. Catholic schools form disciples with a social conscience who put their faith into action. Students and staff help to promote engagement with the local and global community through their many acts of charity and by their witness to social justice and environmental stewardship."

1. How do these reflections connect to your experience of Catholic education as an individual? How do they connect to our experience as a community?
2. As you reflect on the messages of the Pastoral Letter, what is setting your heart on fire?
3. What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result?
4. What concrete action(s) will you take?
5. How is our community being called to respond?
6. What concrete action(s) can we take?
7. What can strengthen the commitment and ability of our community to take this action?

Option Two

A more thorough review of the Pastoral Letter and questions related to particular roles in Catholic Education — e.g., students, teachers, support staff, etc. (60 – 90 minutes)

See Appendix A for suggestions for an Opening Prayer for this session.

It is helpful for the group to commit to a **working covenant** for the time of reflection and sharing:

- We are encouraged to be *fully present*; as much as possible, we will set aside other concerns to listen carefully to ourselves and others;
- We are encouraged to listen to one another *with an open mind and heart*, avoiding judgment and assumptions;
- We are encouraged to engage in *honest and respectful dialogue*, making “I” statements rather than using “we” or “you”;
- We are encouraged to always *recognize* that *we are all members of the Catholic community*.

This attitude of respect and trust makes the awareness of spiritual movements possible. As we reflect on the Pastoral Letter, we hope to discern the Spirit’s action within ourselves and one another. The focus of our attention during these conversations is both the other person or persons in the conversation as well as ourselves and what we are experiencing.

Our guiding questions are: “What do I hear within me? What do I hear from others? How is God acting among us?”

Begin by reading together pages 3 and 4 of the Pastoral Letter. Then choose from the questions on the next pages.

A. Introduction (pages 3 – 4)

The Pastoral Letter describes the current context of Catholic Education in Ontario with both its challenges and its opportunities.

1. How do you experience these challenges and opportunities locally?
2. Are there other challenges and opportunities that you would add?
3. Why is it important to identify both challenges and opportunities?

The letter describes the spiritual purpose of Catholic schools and the promise we are called to renew. God’s enduring and unconditional love is identified as an encounter with Christ wherein we know him and can share with others our friendship with him. This true encounter can and does take place each and every day within our Catholic schools.

4. In what ways do you see this encounter with Christ taking place for students, staff and parents?
5. How can the spiritual purpose of Catholic schools be strengthened in our local community?

B. Read together page 5 of the Pastoral Letter

1. What catches your attention in this Gospel story (provided in summary on page 5 of the Pastoral Letter, and also found in Luke 24:13-25)?

C. Next, choose and read together the section(s) of the Pastoral Letter that applies to your role(s) in Catholic Education. A Participant Response Sheet for this section is found in Appendix B.

Renewing the Promise (pages 15 – 22)

The Bishops note, “As your bishops, we are leaders entrusted to teach so that all will grow in holiness, and shepherds called to accompany our flock on the journey. In that spirit, we offer the following reflections and encouragement to our partners in Catholic Education.”

Students (page 16)

As you read the Bishops’ reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Parents (pages 16 – 17)

As you read the Bishops’ reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Teachers/Education Workers (page 17)

As you read the Bishops' reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Support Staff (page 19)

As you read the Bishops' reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Principals and Vice Principals (page 19)

As you read the Bishops' reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Catholic School Trustees (page 20)

As you read the Bishops' reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Directors of Education and Supervisory Officers (pages 20 – 21)

As you read the Bishops' reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Clergy and Pastoral Teams (page 21)

As you read the Bishops' reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?



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Option Three

An interactive approach, utilizing small and large groups to explore the complete Pastoral Letter (120 minutes)

See Appendix A for suggestions for an Opening Prayer for this session.

It is helpful for the group to commit to a **working covenant** for the time of reflection and sharing:

- We are encouraged to be *fully present*; as much as possible, we will set aside other concerns to listen carefully to ourselves and others;
- We are encouraged to listen to one another *with an open mind and heart*, avoiding judgment and assumptions;
- We are encouraged to engage in *honest and respectful dialogue*, making “I” statements rather than using “we” or “you”;
- We are encouraged to always *recognize that we are all members of the Catholic community*.

This attitude of respect and trust makes the awareness of spiritual movements possible. As we reflect on the Pastoral Letter, we hope to discern the Spirit’s action within ourselves and one another. The focus of our attention during these conversations is both the other person or persons in the conversation as well as ourselves and what we are experiencing.

Our guiding questions are:

- What do I hear within me?
- What do I hear from others?
- How is God acting among us?

To explore the Pastoral Letter together, form exploratory groups.

It is suggested that you break the Pastoral Letter into four Exploratory Groups:

Exploratory Group 1: pages 3 – 7
Exploratory Group 2: pages 8 – 13
Exploratory Group 3: pages 15 – 19
Exploratory Group 4: pages 20 – 25

Each exploratory group reads together the section of the Pastoral Letter assigned to them, and uses the suggested questions (all, or some chosen by the group) to explore and deepen their understanding of the content. Each group should establish who will record emerging insights, and who will present to the large group.

Once the allotted time for preparation has taken place, each exploratory group reports back to the whole group on their section of the letter — taking questions, and initiating discussion as appropriate.

Suggested timing:

- Opening Prayer, Introduction and establishment of Exploratory Groups (15 minutes)
- Group Work (45 minutes)
- Break (15 minutes)
- Exploratory Groups Report (approximately 45 minutes — 8 to 10 minutes each)

Exploratory Group 1

A. Introduction (pages 3 – 4)

The Pastoral Letter describes the current context of Catholic Education in Ontario with both its challenges and its opportunities.

1. How do you experience these challenges and opportunities locally?
2. Are there other challenges and opportunities that you would add?
3. Why is it important to identify both challenges and opportunities?

The letter describes the spiritual purpose of Catholic schools and the promise we are called to renew. God's enduring and unconditional love is identified as an encounter with Christ wherein we know him and can share with others our friendship with him. This true encounter can and does take place each and every day within our Catholic schools.

4. In what ways do you see this encounter with Christ taking place for students, staff and parents?
5. How can the spiritual purpose of Catholic schools be strengthened in our local community?

B. Read together page 5 of the Pastoral Letter.

1. What catches your attention in this Gospel story (provided in summary on page 5 of the Pastoral Letter, and also found in Luke 24:13-25)?

Note: To deepen your exploration of the Road to Emmaus story, see Additional Resources.

C. A Community That Accompanies (pages 6 – 7)

The letter speaks about the art of accompaniment. It is about taking the time to walk alongside one another, to listen and to teach, and in doing so, to transform. Our Catholic schools do this on a daily basis as they model the Emmaus experience. Staff practice the art of accompaniment by helping students realize that their own unique story is given greater meaning and purpose in knowing and living the story we share in Christ.

1. How do you understand this insight? How do you see the *art of accompaniment* taking place in our community?

The letter also states, “It is important to recognize that people are at different stages on that journey. Jesus provides the model for how our schools and parish communities need to accompany students and families with great respect, patience and love, inviting all to deepen their understanding of Christ and his Church.”

1. What are the implications of this for you personally, and for our community?
2. How are you/we being called to respond?

Exploratory Group 2

A. A Community That Builds Relationships (pages 8 – 9)

The Pastoral Letter describes the need for a new evangelization, and states that “the experience of community within the school can gently fan the embers until they burst into a flame of faith.”

1. What examples have you seen where the experience of community in a Catholic school has significantly deepened the faith of its members?

The work of Catholic schools involves initiating, facilitating and maintaining trusting relationships with and among the Catholic educational partners. A sense of respect for the unique expertise and strengths of each and generous cooperation that acknowledges and celebrates the accomplishments of all is essential to develop the mutual trust that nurtures effective working relationships.

B. A Community That Encourages Engagement and Instils Hope (page 10 – 11)

1. How does the encounter with Jesus on the road to Emmaus provide a source of hope for the two disciples?
2. What are the implications for Catholic education communities?

Pope Francis also reminds us that to be formed in the faith is not simply to be able to profess it on our lips, we must also live it with love; faith works through love. This calls us to avoid the false dichotomy between those who think the primary focus of Catholic Education is faith formation and those who think it is to witness to justice. The truth is we cannot say one is more important than the other because we need both in order to be faithful to Christ and his teaching.

1. Why do you think this insight was included?
2. What are the implications of this for you, and for our community?

C A Community That Forms Joyful Disciples (page 13)

1. How do you understand what it means to be joyful disciples?

Exploratory Group 3

A. *Renewing the Promise* (pages 15 – 19). A Participant Response sheet for this section is found in Appendix B.

Within the Pastoral Letter, the Bishops note:



As your bishops, we are leaders entrusted to teach so that all will grow in holiness, and shepherds called to accompany our flock on the journey. In that spirit, we offer the following reflections and encouragement to our partners in Catholic education.”

Students (page 16)

As you read the Bishops’ reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Parents (pages 16 – 17)

As you read the Bishops’ reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Teachers/Education Workers (page 17)

As you read the Bishops’ reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Support Staff (page 19)

As you read the Bishops’ reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Principals and Vice Principals (page 19)

As you read the Bishops’ reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Exploratory Group 4

A. *Renewing the Promise* (pages 20 – 21). A Participant Response sheet for this section is found in Appendix B.

Within the Pastoral Letter, the Bishops note:



As your bishops, we are leaders entrusted to teach so that all will grow in holiness, and shepherds called to accompany our flock on the journey. In that spirit, we offer the following reflections and encouragement to our partners in Catholic education.”

Catholic School Trustees (page 20)

As you read the Bishops’ reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Directors of Education and Supervisory Officers (pages 20 – 21)

As you read the Bishops’ reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Clergy and Pastoral Teams (page 21)

As you read the Bishops’ reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

B. The Breaking of the Bread (pages 23 – 25)

The Liturgy is the primary way the Church teaches. ...The Eucharist has the power to heal, unify, and inspire our diverse school communities.

1. How have you experienced celebrating the Eucharist as healing and unifying?
2. How can we affirm and strengthen the role of the Liturgy in Catholic schools?

We look to the future of Catholic education with great hope because we are blessed to have so many committed and faith-filled educators and leaders whose witness to faith provides a compelling example to our young people. The Catholic education community is encouraged to support opportunities for faith formation for all members of the community in ways that are inviting, engaging and purposeful.

3. Reflecting on our experience, how is our Catholic Education community responding to this encouragement?
4. Thinking about our commitment to faith formation in our community, what is the greatest strength of our current efforts? What results do we see? What other opportunities might we consider?

Note: Groups who wish to deepen their exploration of the Emmaus Story and/or Salvation History will find supplemental resources on the ICE website (www.iceont.ca) or on pages 58 – 66 within this discussion guide.

Option Four

Multi-session exploration of the entire Pastoral Letter

This option is most suitable for groups that meet regularly, and wish to explore the Pastoral Letter more deeply over time (e.g., monthly principal meetings, staff meetings, Catholic school council meetings, etc.)

See Appendix A for suggestions for an Opening Prayer for this session.

It is helpful for the group to commit to a **working covenant** for the time of reflection and sharing:

- We are encouraged to be *fully present*; as much as possible, we will set aside other concerns to listen carefully to ourselves and others;
- We are encouraged to listen to one another *with an open mind and heart*, avoiding judgment and assumptions;
- We are encouraged to engage in *honest and respectful dialogue*, making “I” statements rather than using “we” or “you”;
- We are encouraged to always *recognize* that *we are all members of the Catholic community*.

This attitude of respect and trust makes the awareness of spiritual movements possible. As we reflect on the Pastoral Letter, we hope to discern the Spirit’s action within ourselves and one another. The focus of our attention during these conversations is both the other person or persons in the conversation as well as ourselves and what we are experiencing.

Our guiding questions are: “What do I hear within me? What do I hear from others? How is God acting among us?”

It is suggested that you break the Pastoral Letter into four sessions:

Session 1: pages 3 – 7
Session 2: pages 8 – 13
Session 3: pages 15 – 21
Session 4: pages 22 – 25

Session 1

Begin by reading together pages 3 and 4 of the Pastoral Letter. Then choose from the questions on the next pages.

A. Introduction (pages 3 – 4)

The Pastoral Letter describes the current context of Catholic education in Ontario with both its challenges and its opportunities.

1. How do you experience these challenges and opportunities locally?
2. Are there other challenges and opportunities that you would add?
3. Why is it important to identify both challenges and opportunities?

The letter describes the spiritual purpose of Catholic schools and the promise we are called to renew. God’s enduring and unconditional love is identified as an encounter with Christ wherein we know him and can share with others our friendship with him. This true encounter can and does take place each and every day within our Catholic schools.

4. In what ways do you see this encounter with Christ taking place for students, staff and parents?
5. How can the spiritual purpose of Catholic schools be strengthened in our local community?

B. Read together page 5 of the Pastoral Letter

1. What catches your attention in this Gospel story (provided in summary on page 5 of the Pastoral Letter, and also found in Luke 24:13-25)?

Note: To deepen your exploration of the Road to Emmaus story, additional resources may be found on the ICE website (www.iceont.ca) or on pages 47– 52 within this discussion guide.

C. A Community That Accompanies (pages 6 – 7)

The letter speaks about *the art of accompaniment*. It is about taking the time to walk alongside one another, to listen and to teach, and in doing so, to transform. Our Catholic schools do this on a daily basis as they model the Emmaus experience. Staff practice the *art of accompaniment* by helping students realize that their own unique story is given greater meaning and purpose in knowing and living the story we share in Christ.

1. How do you understand this insight?
2. How do you see the *art of accompaniment* taking place in our community?

The letter also states, "It is important to recognize that people are at different stages on that journey. Jesus provides the model for how our schools and parish communities need to accompany students and families with great respect, patience and love, inviting all to deepen their understanding of Christ and his Church."

1. What are the implications of this for you personally, and for our community?
2. How are you/we being called to respond?



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Session 2

A. A Community That Builds Relationships (pages 8 – 9)

The letter describes the need for a new evangelization, stating that “the experience of community within the school can gently fan the embers until they burst into a flame of faith.”

1. What examples have you seen where the experience of community in a Catholic school has significantly deepened the faith of its members?

“The work of Catholic schools involves initiating, facilitating and maintaining trusting relationships with and among the Catholic educational partners. A sense of respect for the unique expertise and strengths of each and generous cooperation that acknowledges and celebrates the accomplishments of all is essential to develop the mutual trust that nurtures effective working relationships.”

1. How does this speak to the context of our community?
2. What is the gift, and what is the challenge, of implementing this insight?

B. A Community That Encourages Engagement and Instils Hope (pages 10 – 11)

1. How does the encounter with Jesus on the road to Emmaus provide a source of hope for the two disciples?
2. What are the implications for Catholic education communities?

“Pope Francis also reminds us that to be formed in the faith is not simply to be able to profess it on our lips, we must also live it with love; faith works through love. This calls us to avoid the false dichotomy between those who think the primary focus of Catholic education is faith formation and those who think it is to witness to justice. The truth is we cannot say one is more important than the other because we need both in order to be faithful to Christ and his teaching.”

3. Why do you think this insight was included?
4. What are the implications of this for you, and for our community?

C. A Community That Forms Joyful Disciples (page 13)

How do you understand what it means to be joyful disciples?

Session 3

Renewing the Promise (pages 15 – 21). A Participant Response sheet for this section is found in Appendix B.

Within the Pastoral Letter, the Bishops note:



As your bishops, we are leaders entrusted to teach so that all will grow in holiness, and shepherds called to accompany our flock on the journey. In that spirit, we offer the following reflections and encouragement to our partners in Catholic education.”

Students (page 16)

As you read the Bishops’ reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Parents (pages 16 – 17)

As you read the Bishops’ reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Teachers/Education Workers (page 17)

As you read the Bishops’ reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Support Staff (page 19)

As you read the Bishops’ reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Principals and Vice Principals (page 19)

As you read the Bishops’ reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Catholic School Trustees (page 20)

As you read the Bishops' reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Directors of Education and Supervisory Officers (pages 20 – 21)

As you read the Bishops' reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Clergy and Pastoral Teams (page 21)

As you read the Bishops' reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you? What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result? How is our community being called to respond? What concrete action(s) will we take?

Session 4

A. The Breaking of the Bread (pages 23 – 25)

"The Liturgy is the primary way the Church teaches. ...The Eucharist has the power to heal, unify, and inspire our diverse school communities."

1. How have you experienced celebrating the Eucharist as healing and unifying?
2. How can we affirm and strengthen the role of the Liturgy in Catholic schools?

"We look to the future of Catholic education with great hope because we are blessed to have so many committed and faith-filled educators and leaders whose witness to faith provides a compelling example to our young people. The Catholic education community is encouraged to support opportunities for faith formation for all members of the community in ways that are inviting, engaging, and purposeful."

3. Reflecting on our experience, how is our Catholic education community responding to this encouragement?
4. Thinking about our commitment to faith formation in our community, what is the greatest strength of our current efforts? What results do we see? What other opportunities might we consider?

Note: Groups who wish to deepen their exploration of the Emmaus Story and/or Salvation History will find supplemental resources on the ICE website (www.iceont.ca) or on pages 58 – 66 within this discussion guide.

Opening Prayer



© Road to Emmaus by Robyn Sand Anderson

Loving God,

We thank you for our Catholic education community as we journey in faith together. Help us to accompany each other in prayerful discernment, and support us as we continue to grow as joyful disciples of Jesus who bring good news to the world.

Ignite our hearts with the fire of your love. Inspire us to instill hope in each other and to live out a strong commitment to justice in all that we do.

Deepen our commitment as we work together to renew the promise of Catholic education.

We make this prayer through Jesus, our Lord and teacher.

Amen.

Participants' Response

The following questions are for groups exploring particular roles in Catholic education in Options 2, 3 and 4.

1. As you read the Bishops' reflections and encouragement for you, what particularly speaks to you? Why is that important to you?
2. What is one thing you would like to commit to personally as a result?
3. How is our community being called to respond?
4. What concrete action(s) will we take?

Renewing the Promise – **A Personal Reflection**



Renewing The Promise **A Pastoral Letter for Catholic Education**

A Community that Builds Relationships

In the spring of 2018, the Bishops of Ontario (ACBO) released a Pastoral Letter on Catholic Education, *Renewing the Promise*. With the release of the letter, the Bishops have provided us with a very positive and affirming message. The letter uses the scriptural account of the **Road to Emmaus** as the basis for their reflection on the mission and vision of Catholic education, celebrating that a true encounter with Jesus can and does take place, each and every day within our Catholic schools. The letter invites all those who share responsibility for Catholic education in Ontario to reflect on the challenges and opportunities of the present moment. Letters invite a response, and a thoughtful reading of this letter can be meaningful for all involved with Catholic education.

You are encouraged to read the Pastoral Letter, *Renewing the Promise*, and to spend time reflecting on how it speaks to you directly, given your personal experience and perspective, and its meaning for you within your role and context.

A Community that Accompanies

Catholic schools are described as communities that accompany, and staff, parents and community members practise the art of accompaniment as they take the time to walk alongside one another, listening, and teaching, and in so doing, transforming.

1. In what ways have you accompanied others?

2. In what ways have you been accompanied within your community?

3. What more can you do?

A Community that Builds Relationships

Catholic schools are described as communities that build relationships. A sense of respect for the unique expertise and strengths of each and generous cooperation that acknowledges and celebrates the accomplishments of all is essential to develop the mutual trust that nurtures effective working relationships.

1. In what ways have you been affirmed by others for the role you play in Catholic Education?
2. In what ways have you affirmed others for their contributions?
3. What can you do to build trust, and encourage meaningful cooperation within your community context?

A Community that Forms Joyful Disciples

Catholic schools are described as communities that form joyful disciples. In the **Joy of the Gospel**, Pope Francis speaks about the joy that comes from Christ. On a daily basis, Catholic schools demonstrate the joy of believing and witness the Good News to the communities they serve.

1. In what ways does our community demonstrate the joy of believing?
2. How is this joy evident to those within the broader community?
3. How do you choose to serve your community in witness to the Good News in your life?

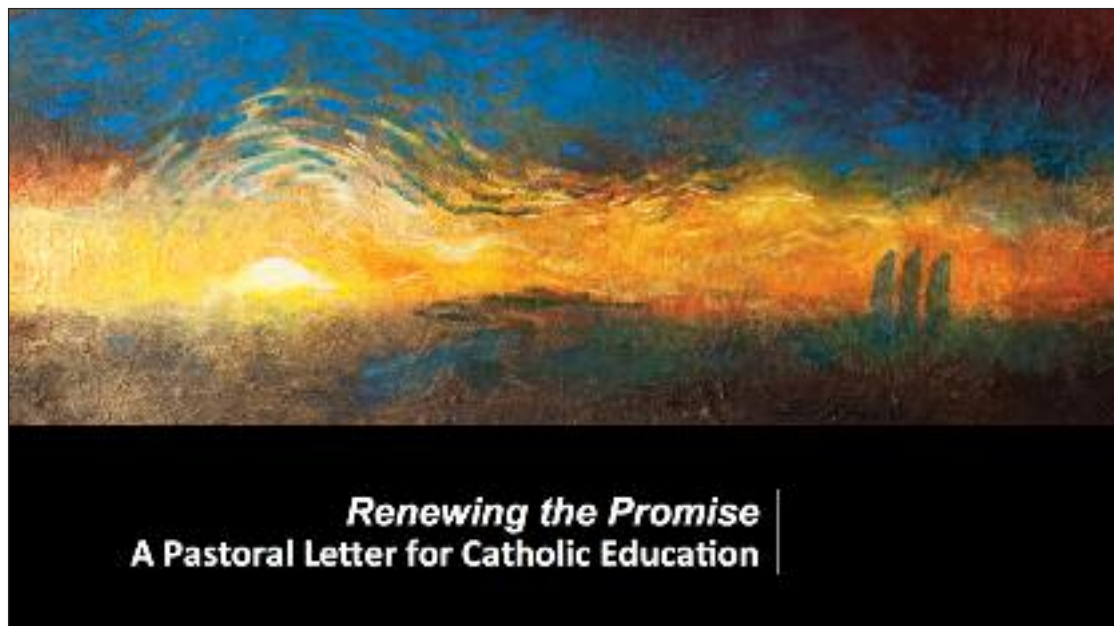
Growing in Faith

The Catholic education community is encouraged to support opportunities for faith formation for all members of the community in ways that are inviting, engaging, comprehensive and purposeful. Our apostolic faith is built on the witness of those who have experienced the Risen Christ in their lives and who have shared that truth in the way they live: close to Jesus, receiving the Eucharist, engaged in parish life, serving their family and those most in need.

1. Where do you find opportunities to grow in knowledge and understanding of your faith?
2. What kinds of opportunities for adult faith formation are most impactful for you?
3. How can you contribute so that your faith community meets your needs, and those of others?

Renewing the Promise – PowerPoint Presentation Template

Go to www.iceont.ca/news-and-updates/renewingthepromise to download the PowerPoint presentation template.



A Community Builds Relationships



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A Community That Encourages Engagement and Instills Hope




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A Community That Forms Joyful Disciples



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Renewing the Promise



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The Breaking of the Bread



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Next Steps



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Going Deeper – Exploring the Road to Emmaus



© Appearance On Road To Emmaus by Carolyann Thomas Jones

A half day retreat format, developed by Fr. Con O'Mahony, Vicar for Education, Diocese of Hamilton

The Road to Emmaus, from the Gospel of Luke, 24:13-25.

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

While they were talking, and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad.

Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?"

He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him."

Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over."

So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!"

Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24:13-25)

Walking and Talking Together

Questions for reflection and sharing.

1. What kind of roads have you travelled on this past year?
2. What were the hills, valleys, empty stretches, busy freeways, etc.?
3. Give your road a name.
4. Where did you find filling stations, rest areas on your road?
5. As you travelled on this road did you...
 - Encounter any roadblocks?
 - Get stuck?
 - Find an unusual treasure?
 - Meet someone who helped you find direction?
 - Risk a road less travelled?
 - Search for your way back home?
 - Cross over a bridge to new freedom?
 - Fall into a ditch and work your way out?
 - Spend time in a serene place?

Moving Forward Together

“The disciples on the road to Emmaus are overwhelmed by grief. Their expectations for the future have been dashed and in the face of uncertainty and danger they are withdrawing from their community and its challenges. In his encounter with them on the road, Jesus provides them with hope for the future where none seemed possible. In breaking open the story of salvation history, and his own role within it, Jesus gives them understanding where there only seemed to be meaningless suffering. Ultimately, through this loving encounter, Jesus evokes within them a strength and courage not to run away, but to go back into difficult circumstances with a passion to share with others the good news they have received. The result is a deep re-engagement with their community and with the world, with all of its challenges and opportunities.

The story of Emmaus recounts a very human experience. The disappointment and despair experienced by the two disciples on the road is not unlike the challenges frequently faced by young people today. The message is clear; hope, courage and resolve can be found through a loving encounter with Jesus.

Catholic education forms communities of faith that help students experience the love of God. The more our students see and understand themselves as the beloved children of God, the more they will want to love God with all their hearts, minds, and souls. This in turn moves them to love of neighbour which bears witness to justice and charity. Jesus says, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” The more we love God, the more we love our neighbour and the more we engage in the community.

The Christ-centred mission of each school, by its very nature, contains a call to service in the greater community. Catholic schools form disciples with a social conscience who put their faith into action. Students and staff help to promote engagement with the local and global community through their many acts of charity and by their witness to social justice and environmental stewardship.”

(Renewing the Promise, page 10)



© Emmaus Path by Carolyann Thomas Jones

1. What have we received that sets our hearts on fire?

2. Complete this sentence:

It would be a great blessing for our Catholic schools if five years from now...

Going Deeper – Exploring Salvation History

An adult Faith Formation session, developed by Dr. Anne Jamieson, Director of Catechesis, Diocese of Hamilton

The Pastoral Letter, *Renewing the Promise*, from the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, affirms:

“Catholic schools are communities of accompaniment where the story of our salvation is known and shared.” (page 7)

“Staff practice the art of accompaniment by helping students realize that their own unique story is given greater meaning and purpose in knowing and living the story we share in Christ.” (page 6)

Salvation history, made known to us in Sacred Scripture and by Sacred Tradition, is not a dead history but the living Word of God’s great love for us.

1. Who have been your best teachers in sharing this story with you?
2. How do you tell the story?
3. From creation, through the patriarchs, the prophets, the Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ, and the coming of the Holy Spirit, what moments in all of that speak to you most clearly?
4. How do you see **your** story intertwined into **the** story?

Let's reflect once again the story of God's salvation.

I. In the Beginning

- Eden was God's plan for perfect relationship and communion — it still is.
- God gave us everything we needed and gave us free will to choose it or not — and continues to do so today.
- God made us for that perfect relationship and communion — and still does.

Read Genesis 2:7. Scripture says:

⁷ then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

We reflect:

Breathe in the breath of God that makes us a living being like Adam. Consider what it means that we are called to perfect communion with God and one another. Consider what it means that we are gifted with the very Spirit of God. Consider what your response and your responsibility is to this call to relationship.

II. God Saves: The First Passover

- The Old Testament tells the story of people who struggled to be faithful, who repeatedly chose their own path rather than the path of life. Enslaved in Egypt, the people were losing hope. But God desires our true freedom. He hears the cry of his people who are oppressed. He has a plan to save us.

Read Exodus 12:1-14. Scripture says:

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: ²This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. ³Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. ⁴If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. ⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. ⁷They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ⁹Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. ¹⁰You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. ¹¹This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the Lord.

¹²For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. ¹³The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

¹⁴This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

We reflect:

The blood of the lamb saved the people from death and slavery. The blood of Jesus Christ saves us from death and slavery. What has the power to enslave us now?

III. God Calls Us Back

- The people are freed from slavery and yet still struggle. They remain free to choose relationship or not, and often wander away or even reject relationship. Not wanting us to remain apart from him, God sends prophets to call us back to right relationship.

Read Jeremiah 7:1-7. Scripture says:

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ²Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah, you that enter these gates to worship the Lord. ³Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you in this place. ⁴Do not trust in these deceptive words: "This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord."

⁵For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, ⁶if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, ⁷then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever.

We reflect:

How does that voice speak into your life today? What other gods have we gone after (that is, what have we given priority to, our full allegiance to, our life's energy to, other than God)? What is one thing you can do to amend this?

IV. God Sends His Only Son

- When the time was right, God sent his only begotten son into the world to save us. He is “God-with-us” Emmanuel.

Read Galatians 4:4-7. Scripture says:

⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. ⁶ And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

Read the Gospel John 1:1-5, 14 and 29-34. Scripture says:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it...¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth...

²⁹ The next day he [John] saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’ ³¹ I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.” ³² And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³ I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

We reflect:

He is full of glory, grace and truth. He is the Son of God. Jesus Christ. The mystery that ‘the Word became flesh and dwelt among us’ is so profound, we bow as we pray these lines in the Creed. God comes to touch us in the flesh. Can we testify with John that we have seen and know who he is? What is our testimony? How is your humanity touched or transformed by the divine touch?

V. The Resurrection

Read Pope Benedict XVI speaking on Easter 2009:

"Jesus is risen not because his memory remains alive in the hearts of his disciples, but because he himself lives in us, and in him we can already savour the joy of eternal life.

The resurrection, then, is not a theory, but a historical reality revealed by the man Jesus Christ by means of his "Passover," his "passage," that has opened a "new way" between heaven and earth (*cf. Heb 10:20*). It is neither a myth nor a dream, it is not a vision or a utopia, it is not a fairy tale, but it is a singular and unrepeatable event: Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary, who at dusk on Friday was taken down from the Cross and buried, has victoriously left the tomb. In fact, at dawn on the first day after the Sabbath, Peter and John found the tomb empty. Mary Magdalene and the other women encountered the risen Jesus. On the way to Emmaus the two disciples recognized him at the breaking of the bread. The Risen One appeared to the Apostles that evening in the Upper Room and then to many other disciples in Galilee.

The proclamation of the Lord's Resurrection lightens up the dark regions of the world in which we live. I am referring particularly to materialism and nihilism, to a vision of the world that is unable to move beyond what is scientifically verifiable, and retreats cheerlessly into a sense of emptiness which is thought to be the definitive destiny of human life. It is a fact that if Christ had not risen, the "emptiness" would be set to prevail. If we take away Christ and his resurrection, there is no escape for [us], and every one of [our] hopes remains an illusion. Yet today is the day when the proclamation of the Lord's resurrection vigorously bursts forth, and it is the answer to the recurring question of the sceptics, that we also find in the book of Ecclesiastes: "Is there a thing of which it is said, 'See, this is new?'" (*Ec 1:10*). We answer, yes: on Easter morning, everything was renewed. "Death and life have come face to face in a tremendous duel: the Lord of life was dead, but now he lives triumphant" (*Easter Sequence*). This is what is new! A newness that changes the lives of those who accept it, as in the case of the saints." (*Urbi et Orbi*, Easter 2009 – Pope Benedict XVI)

We reflect:

We often say that we are a resurrection people. This must mean we proclaim Christ as our savior from death and sin. Pope Benedict XVI speaks of what can make our life empty. How does our proclamation of Christ risen from the dead counteract these dark regions of the world?

VI. The Church

- Jesus Christ establishes his church and promises us the guidance in truth of the Holy Spirit.

Read the Gospel of Matthew 16:15-19. Scripture says:

¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

Read the Gospel of John 15:26. Scripture says:

²⁶ When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:27-31, and 13:13: Scripture says:

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But strive for the greater gifts And I will show you a still more excellent way...¹³ And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Our Tradition affirms:

The laity go forth as powerful proclaimers of a faith in things to be hoped for, when they courageously join to their profession of faith a life springing from faith. This evangelization, that is, this announcing of Christ by a living testimony as well as by the spoken word, takes on a specific quality and a special force in that it is carried out in the ordinary surroundings of the world. (Lumen Gentium, 34)

We reflect:

This is the church into which we have been baptized – made members of the one Body, made sharers in Christ’s life and death and resurrection, made priest, prophet and king for the good of the world and the good of the Church. How do you live out your membership in the body? How do you support other members of the Body? How do you take responsibility for the gifts and duties that come with being a member? How are you a person of prayer, a person who witnesses, a person who is authentically caring for the poor?

VII. The Journey Continues

- We do not yet live in the perfect communion. We are a people on a journey, still waiting, still participating in the unfolding story.

Pope Francis says: "The whole of salvation history is the story of God looking for us."
(Twitter: @Pontifex June 9, 2013)

He has been looking for us all along. Return to Genesis and read Genesis 3: 6-9. Scripture says:

⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

⁸They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"

VIII. Your Story

- This resource may be used for personal or group reflection.

We reflect:

Where is your story connecting to the story? Where have you had an experience of:

- God's awesome love
- God's life in us
- Leaders and prophets sent to call us back
- Crucifixion
- Resurrection
- Your participation in the Church as a sharing of the Spirit's gifts given to you
- The guidance of the Church

Hymns to enhance your reflection:

<i>CBW III 517</i>	Lord Jesus, We Must Know You
<i>CBW III 525</i>	Christ From Whom All Blessings Flow
<i>CBW III 576</i>	You Are the Voice
<i>CBW III 691</i>	Lord, You Give the Great Commission
<i>Celebrate in Song 6.15</i>	There is a Longing
<i>Celebrate in Song 6.23</i>	Holy is Your Name
<i>Glory and Praise 187</i>	City of God
<i>Glory and Praise 267</i>	Something Which is Known

Going Deeper – A School Level Plan for Exploring the Pastoral Letter

**Developed by Mary Theresa Coehne, Vice-Principal,
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Reflecting on The Pastoral Letter for Catholic Education — *Renewing the Promise 2018–19*

Overview of Resource

This resource is intended to provide a guide by which Boards can go deeper into the Pastoral Letter through a commitment to a prayer and reflection process for the school year. It is developed to call our attention to the question, “what is the promise?” and affirm our commitment to our Christ-centred Catholic education system. A natural avenue for implementation would be with a Board facilitator and the Board principal/leadership team. There is the ability for the leaders to then take the experience and share it with other school staff in a manner that would best suit each individual community. This process could certainly be supported by the facilitator.

The inspiration for the resource comes directly from the letter:

“We look to the future of Catholic Education with great hope because we are blessed to have so many committed and faith-filled educators and leaders whose witness to faith provides a compelling example to our young people. The Catholic education community is encouraged to support opportunities for faith formation for all members of the community that are inviting, engaging, and purposeful.”

Through this resource model, groups can enter into a commitment of reflective faith formation that is inviting, engaging and purposeful using the Pastoral Letter to Renew Our Promise to Catholic Education, both individual and communal.

Notes:

- Participants would benefit from a hard copy of the letter and a journal.
- In some of the beginning sessions there are specific suggestions/links to the school community. These are designed as examples; the hope would be that the participants would naturally implement the suggestions when appropriate for their schools.

Session One — August

(30 minutes): Call to Renew the Promise

Part 1. Introduction and Overview (10 minutes)

It is helpful for the group to commit to a **working covenant** for the time of reflection and sharing.

- At the meeting officially (re)introduce the letter (guided by pages 3 – 4 and 15) and draw attention to the quote on page 24:
“We look to the future of Catholic Education with great hope because we are blessed to have so many committed and faith-filled educators and leaders whose witness to faith provides a compelling example to our young people. The Catholic education community is encouraged to support opportunities for faith formation for all members of the community that are inviting, engaging, and purposeful.”
- Explain the process of prayer, reflection and faith that will take place over the school year and be guided by this letter from our Bishops.
- Allow a few moments for individuals to reflectively look at the images of the Pastoral Letter (perhaps playing quiet music in background).
- Invite all who have gathered to consider the images and the letter they have read and think about what speaks to them at this time (consider a brief conversation, writing this down, etc).

Part 2. Going Deeper (10 minutes)

Share from page 4:

“It seems natural to ask the question, what is the promise we are called to renew? ...Within the context of Catholic education, the promise is that this true encounter with Jesus can and does take place, each and every day, within our Catholic schools. Together, we commit to renew the promise as we work together to strengthen our Catholic schools as communities that exemplify, in word and deed, the Good News of Jesus Christ.”

Invite all in the room to read the section of the letter addressed to them (pages 16 – 21) and reflect using questions such as:

1. What does this specific message from our Ontario Bishops say to me?
2. How does it invite me to renew my promise and commitment to Catholic education?
3. How am I called to respond through action and prayer?

Read the message for students, page 16 – aloud. What does this specific message to the students of our schools mean to all of us as we renew our promise?

Part 3. Prayer (10 minutes)

Proclaim the Gospel: Luke 24, 13-35

Share the re-tell on page 5.

Invite God to help all who have gathered to recognize the times when our hearts will be burning within us as the new school year begins and they travel the road together.

Allow a quiet moment after inviting all to silently share their personal commitment/renewal with God.

Offer prayers of petition with an invitation for participation.

Close with Board/school Prayer or Mission Statement.

Session Two — September

(30 minutes): Invited to Accompany our Community on the Road

Part 1. Lectio Divina (10 minutes)

Introduce and lead the practice of Lectio Divina using the road to Emmaus account, Luke 24, 13-35.

Offer an opportunity for individuals to share in small groups or to journal based on their experience of the prayer. They may want to consider the questions:

- What spoke to me as I listened and reflected with the Gospel?
- How does this Gospel connect to September and this new school year?

Part 2. Accompaniment (5 minutes)

Ask the group to open the letter to page 22 and look at the artwork Road to Emmaus by Robert Sand Anderson. Allow a moment for quiet and then share the text of page 6: A Community That Accompanies while they continue to gaze at the art. Draw their attention to the image on the cover of the letter, and lastly, the image on page 6.

Highlight the depth of what is explained in the few short paragraphs (page 6), emphasizing the paschal mystery and unpacking the Catholic understanding of transformation. Finally, put a spotlight on the *art of accompaniment* through the following quotes:

“While **walking with** the disciples on the road, Jesus is able to share the story of our faith with them.”

“This is what Pope Francis means when he speaks about the *art of accompaniment*. It is about **taking the time to walk alongside** one another, to listen and to teach and in so doing, to transform.”

Part 3. Reflection: Christ in our Schools (15 minutes)

As September is often a time of goal setting, it would be appropriate to invite participants into consideration of Christ centred accompaniment at the Board level and even a personal level. These guided questions could be used to help to support this reflective thinking and forward planning.

- Think about your school: the staff, the students, the parents; the entire community.
- Who are the individuals that are easily accompanied?
- Who are the staff/adults in our schools that need accompaniment? Who are the students? How do we walk with them?
- How do we listen to all we encounter on the road?
- How do we teach?
- How do our actions invite transformation?
- How does this accompaniment renew our commitment to Christ and Catholic Education?
- Consider inviting a small group sharing after some personal reflection time.

Close the September session with a communal prayer.

Note: Opening Prayer for Parent Council Groups (September)

The first parent council meeting of the school year would serve as an excellent opportunity to (re)introduce the Pastoral Letter to your school council. Our Bishops recognize: "School councils are opportunities for faith formation and collaboration, where parents and school staff learn from each other, pray together, and work alongside each other to ensure all children have opportunities to grow in faith and in their learning." (page 16)

Session Three — October

(20 minutes): An Opportunity to Express Gratitude for Catholic Education

Part 1. Lectio Divina (10 – 15 minutes)

Invite the participants to read the text of page 15 with focus on the first paragraph regarding the history of Ontario’s Pastoral Letters of Catholic education and the current context of Catholic education in the province. Invite the conversation to go deeper by shifting focus to the Eucharist, page 23.

Have participants consider the questions:

- Why are we (collectively) grateful for the gift of Catholic education?
- Why am I grateful for the gift of Catholic education?
- How can gratitude help to renew our/my promise and commitment to Catholic education?

Invite participants to write a statement of gratitude:

I am grateful for Catholic education because: _____

_____.

Thank you, God, for guiding me to this vocation. May gratitude help us to renew our promise.

Part 2. Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin by sharing the first paragraph on page 4, Catholic schools have a unique...

Share The Road to Emmaus on page 5.

Encourage group members to share their gratitude statement: I am grateful for Catholic education because...After each sharing the group can respond: May gratitude help us to renew our promise.

Close by offering each other the sign of peace.

Note: Community Gratitude

Thanksgiving offers the perfect time to share our gratitude for Catholic education. Suggestions:

- Remarks at a school mass or liturgy and/or in prayers of petition
- School Twitter feeds, newsletters, websites
- Student written prayers, reflections, activities
- Conversation with staff, students, parent councils, etc.

We are grateful because: "Catholic schools are places where children and young people may find solid and enduring values to give hope, meaning and purpose to life through an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ." (page 15)

Session Four — November

(25 minutes): A Community That Builds Relationships

Part 1. Remembrance, Peace and Kindness (20 minutes)

Share the following quotes of with the group allowing some time for thought/comments.

“People often comment that when they enter a Catholic school they feel a special presence. This does not come from the building or even the religious symbols that are important witness to our faith. The presence comes from Christ who is proclaimed by word and example, and is evidenced in the way people are for one another.” (page 9)

The analogy of St. Paul is helpful; there is one body, but many parts. They need one another and must work together in harmony, “that there be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another.” (page 9)

“Principals/ Vice Principals: As leaders of schools, cultivate a Eucharistic sensibility. Let the pattern of the Eucharist guide you as you help to shape and animate a Catholic school culture where the love of God is found in an encounter with Christ Jesus: gather your school community, tell the story, break the bread, and help to bring hope to the world. Together with staff, ensure that it is an environment of welcome and hospitality. Model for your staff how best to minister to children and young people. Listen to stories they tell and witness to them the stories of our faith and of your own faith journey.” (page 19)

Invite the group to reflectively consider one/ some/all of the following questions:

- What can the foci of this month and the Pastoral Letter solidify for us regarding the social state of our Catholic schools?
- What is important for learning, growth and development of our students?
- How should we focus our energy on renewal for our Catholic schools this month?
- How do we renew ourselves so that we have the strength and fuel to continue to give to others?
- Who should we ‘walk with’ this month?
- Who does Jesus invite us to show love and kindness to?

Part 2. Prayer (10 minutes)

Enter into Lectio Divina using Luke 24,13-35.

Option — offer an opportunity for individuals to share in small groups — what spoke to them as they listened and meditated on the Gospel?

In closing, offer a prayer for peace and healthy relationships suited to the needs of the group.

Note: Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week

Ontario has designated the week beginning on the third Sunday of November as Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week to help promote safe schools and a positive learning environment. Encourage leaders to remind their communities of the following:

We are disciples; we are called to accompany each other. This means we “do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God.” (referenced on page 11)

Further, from page 10:

“Catholic education forms communities of faith that help students experience the love of God. The more our students see and understand themselves as the beloved children of God, the more they will want to love God with all their hearts, minds, and souls. This in turn moves them to love of neighbour which bears witness to justice and charity. Jesus says, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” The more we love God, the more we love our neighbour and the more we engage in the community.”

Session Five — December

(5 minutes per week): Advent

Facilitators may consider a way to connect the letter to the liturgical season through a Board activity or might send weekly quotes from the Pastoral Letter with Advent messages or reflections. Some quotes for consideration:

“God loved us into existence and never stops loving; even though we may sometimes reject that love, God never gives up on us. We see this in our salvation history as people encountered the love and mercy of God. It reached a decisive moment when God, who so love the world, gave us his only Son so that we might have eternal life.” (page 7)

“Our Christian faith is about an encounter with God; it is an incredible love story that inspires hope and joy.” (page 6)

“The story of Emmaus recounts a very human experience. The disappointment and despair experienced by the two disciples on the road is not unlike the challenges frequently faced by young people today. The message is clear; hope, courage and resolve can be found through a loving encounter with Jesus.” (page 10)

“The Christ-centred mission of each school, by its very nature, contains a call to service in the greater community. Catholic schools form disciples with a social conscience who put their faith into action.” (page 10)

Session Six — January/February

(25 minutes)

Part 1. Resolution: Renewing Renewal (10 minutes)

- Use the natural motivation of January to invite the group to re-consider their thinking from August and September around the call to *Renew the Promise* of Catholic education.
- Offer the quote from page 4 again: It seems natural to ask the question, what is the promise we are called to renew? "...Within the context of Catholic education, the promise is that this true encounter with Jesus can and does take place, each and every day, within our Catholic schools. Together, we commit to renew the promise as we work together to strengthen our Catholic schools as communities that exemplify, in word and deed, the Good News of Jesus Christ."
- Invite participants to go back in their journals and explore what they have written.
- Have individuals consider their reflections and promise regarding their vocation and offer a re-affirmed resolution for this new calendar year.

Part 2. Students (10 minutes)

- Have the participants read through the message to students, page 16.
- Invite them to dialogue in small groups, consider: How do students come to know Christ at _____ school? How does my/ our leadership help support this formation? Invite the groups to share authentically with each other and allow the needs of the students to guide the conversation.

Board/Leadership Dialogue — based on this New Year reflection, where do we need to go on this path of renewal? How can we support each other? How can we support our school communities?

Session Six Cont'd

(25 minutes)

Part 3. Prayer (2 minutes)

Pray together:

God of mercy,

We thank you for the gift of Catholic education.

We walk in faith and thanks, guided by those who have gone before us, who nurtured and sustained Catholic education.

Inspired by our Catholic Graduate Expectations, we acknowledge that the promise of Catholic education is within us, that it is a promise that we live out in our families and communities and that it is a promise that we proclaim in acts of justice and compassion in word and deed.

We make this prayer that we may live out the promise of Catholic education for many more years to come. Amen.+

(Catholic Education Week *Renewing the Promise* prayer 2018)

Session Seven — March

(20 minutes): Lent

Part 1. Our Call to Serve

Invite the group to share some of the Lenten almsgiving activities that are (or will) take place in their school communities.

Ask participants to re-read pages 10 – 11 of the letter and to consider (for a second time), the part of the letter that is addressed to them (pages 16 – 21).

Aware of the activities and the areas of the letter, ask the group to consider:

- What am I called to do during Lent?
- How am I called to lead during Lent?
- How can I share my Lenten journey for the good of the school community?
- How does this help to renew the promise?

Part 2. Prayer for Lenten Leadership

Proclaim one of the scripture readings of the day or offer a Lenten prayer.

Conclude by connecting the road of Lent to the Road to Emmaus. Offer a prayer for all present, that they may feel God's accompaniment this Lent and that they may accompany others in a manner that illuminates God's everlasting love.

Session Eight — April

(20 minutes): Resurrection

Part 1. Lectio Divina (2 minutes)

Lead the practice of Lectio Divina using the road to Emmaus account, Luke 24, 13-35.

Offer an opportunity for individuals to share in small groups or to journal based on their experience. They may want to consider the questions: What spoke to me as I listened and reflected on the Gospel? How does this Gospel root me in the season of Easter?

Part 2. Easter in the Pastoral Letter (10 minutes)

Invite the group to read through pages 7 and 13. Have them jot down key thoughts and messages that speak to them as they are reading. Ask them to share their thinking/reflection with a small group, and then, the larger group. Guide consideration of the process of renewal (directly connected to the letter) and to the liturgical seasons of Lent and Easter and how we are invited to renew our promise to Christ and our vocations in Catholic education.

In closing, invite the group to join in the Our Father.

Session Nine — May

(60 minutes): Celebration of the Eucharist

Part 1. Reflecting on Catholic Education Week (10 minutes)

Invite leaders to celebrate the joys and blessings of Catholic education by sharing stories about the Catholic life of their various school communities with the large group.

- What happened during this special week?
- What 'encounters on the road' are we joyful about?
- How do these times foster renewal in our Catholic schools?
- How did we/do we share this story with others?

Part 2. The Eucharist (5 minutes)

Share page 23 of the Pastoral Letter with the group.

Part 3. Celebration of the Eucharist (45 minutes)

Invite all to a mass in celebration of Catholic education and the journey of renewal that has been inspired by the Pastoral Letter.

Session Ten — June

(30 minutes): Called to Christ

Part 1. Looking Back (10 minutes)

- Invite the group to flip through the Pastoral Letter and their journals, being aware of what stands out for them. Allow some time for the leaders to reflect on their journey this year.
- What was the promise the Board team was called to renew?
- Have them consider individually or in small groups: How has this commitment to renewal impacted me/us this year? What has this experience made me/us more aware of? How has it invited me/us to meet Christ on the road?

Part 2. Looking Forward (10 minutes)

Share pages 3 and 24 – 25 with the group. Invite consideration of where the Board team is called to journey from this place of ending and beginning. This could be an excellent place to collect feedback (in a manner suitable to Board needs) to help to plan next steps.

Part 3. Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

Decide on the form of prayer celebration that would best suit the group of leaders. Invite collaboration and the spirit of renewal through Christ to guide the time together.

OECTA Prayer and Renewing the Promise

OECTA Prayer	Renewing the Promise	Reflections
<p>Creator God, we praise you, the source of all life. Renew our faith and guide us in our ministry as Catholic teachers.</p>	<p>"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; ...how can we respond creatively to the challenges and opportunities we face today?" (page 4)</p>	<p>As teachers you... (page 17) ...are powerful witnesses to the presence of Jesus in the lives of our students, and you provide the good soil each school day for the roots of faith to grow in our students.</p>
<p>Let us touch the hearts and minds of those with whom we work.</p>	<p><i>A Community That Forms Joyful Disciples</i> (page. 13). "The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus...Catholic schools play an important role in proclaiming the joy of believing."</p>	<p>...remember that Jesus was a great teacher...allow him to inspire you by his example ...ask him to support you in your vocation.</p>
<p>Lord Jesus, share with us your counsel, so we may choose knowledge over ignorance, wisdom over waste, peace over injustice, community over isolation and service over domination.</p>	<p><i>A Community That Encourages Engagement and Instils Hope</i> (page 10). "Hope, courage and resolve can be found through a loving encounter with Jesus...the more we love God, the more we love our neighbour and the more we engage in community."</p>	<p>...create inclusive places of learning that invite and enable each child and young person in your care to grow fully to be all that God wants them to be.</p>
<p>Holy Spirit, nurture our growth. Inspire us to give birth to the creative powers within us.</p>	<p><i>A Community That Accompanies</i> (page 6). "Staff practice the art of accompaniment by helping students realize that their own unique story is given greater meaning and purpose in knowing and living the story we share in Christ...it is an incredible love story that inspires hope and joy."</p>	<p>...send your students home to their families with enthusiasm for the opportunities that are present in their lives, and with confidence in their own abilities to make this world more loving, and more just, through their good works and witness.</p>
<p>Let us come to the fullness of life promised in the Gospel. Amen.</p>	<p><i>A Community That Builds Relationships</i> (page 9). "Catholic school communities provide many opportunities for students and staff to know, love and serve the Lord. People often comment that when they enter a Catholic school they feel a special presence. ...this presence comes from Christ who is proclaimed by word and example, and is evidenced in the way people care for one another."</p>	<p>...strive to keep Jesus at the center of your school community and the center of your lives.</p>

OCSSOA Prayer and Renewing the Promise



OCSSOA Prayer	Renewing the Promise	Reflections
<p>O God of goodness and grace, We praise you and bless your Holy Name. We thank you for calling us to lead and serve in the field of Catholic education. Help us to be true to that calling: to be women and men of faith, hope and love.</p>	<p><i>A Community that Builds Relationships</i> (page 9). "A sense of respect for the unique expertise and strengths of each and generous cooperation that acknowledges and celebrates the accomplishments of all is essential to develop the mutual trust that nurtures effective working relationships.</p>	<p>As leaders of school systems, you... (pages. 20 – 21) ...are called to offer leadership in the service of others in the spirit of accompaniment. You play a particular role in nurturing working relationships.</p>
<p>May we lead with vision, courage and compassion, and serve with humility, gentleness and kindness.</p>	<p><i>A Community that Accompanies</i> (page 6). Pope Francis speaks about the art of accompaniment "...taking the time to walk alongside one another, to listen and to teach, and is so doing, transform."</p>	<p>...build relationships and the atmosphere of trust, respect, and honesty you establish is critical in creating a community able to engage and to accompany.</p>
<p>Strengthen in us our resolve to uphold the true, the good and the beautiful. Stand by us in our efforts to promote your reign of justice, peace and love. Give us eyes to see things not only as they are but as they should be, ears to hear all the voices from the margins no less than from the center; hearts to listen to the needs, hopes and dreams of all whom we are called to serve.</p>	<p><i>A Community That Encourages Engagement and Instils Hope</i> (page 10). "Jesus gave his disciples understanding where there only seemed to be meaningless suffering. Jesus evokes within them strength and courage not to run away, but to go back into difficult circumstances with a passion so share with others the Good News they have received. The result is deep engagement with their community and with the world, with all its challenges and opportunities. ...The message is clear; hope, courage and resolve can be found through a loving encounter with Jesus."</p>	<p>... create communities of faith and your words and actions inspire and influence all those who work in Catholic schools.</p>
<p>O Holy Spirit, come and abide with us. Enliven us with your creative power; Inspire us with your wisdom and understanding; Warm us with your love, so that we may live what we profess to believe and serve others with generous and cheerful hearts.</p>	<p><i>A Community That Forms Joyful Disciples</i> (page 13). "As faithful disciples of Jesus, we celebrate God's joy which longs to break into the world. After the disciples encounter the Risen Lord, they are filled with great joy and they are excited to share it with others. ...The joy of believing is manifest in the hearts and lives of those who faithfully follow the Lord."</p>	<p>...lead with words that set the vision and the tone. Let your voice speak with love and respect, and reflect compassion and understanding.</p>
<p>We make our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen</p>	<p>"The joy of the believing is manifest in the hearts and lives of those who faithfully follow the Lord."</p>	<p>...guide and animate communities that invite students, staff and families to encounter Jesus each day, as you accompany one another.</p>

CPCO Prayer and Renewing the Promise



CATHOLIC
PRINCIPALS'
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Institute for
Catholic Education

CPCO Prayer	Renewing the Promise	Reflections
<p>Lord God we ask for you're the grace of your presence and the gift of your wisdom as we gather today in the service of Catholic education. Send us your spirit to guide us so that we may be collaborative leaders and genuine witnesses to the faith and mission we profess.</p>	<p><i>A Community That Builds Relationships (page 8).</i> "Catholic schools are places where the 'New Evangelization' can take root by inviting students and their families into a deeper relationship with Christ. The experience of community within the school can gently fan the embers until they burst into a flame of faith."</p>	<p>As school leaders...(page 19) ...your attention to the spiritual and cultural dimension of a Catholic school is an essential part of your mission, and provides support for all members of the school community.</p>
<p>Make us sensitive to the gifts of others, enabling them to enrich our school communities.</p>	<p><i>A Community That Accompanies (page 6).</i> "It is important to recognize that people are at different stages on the journey. Jesus provides the model for how our schools...need to accompany students and families with great respect, patience and love..."</p>	<p>...together with staff, ensure an environment of welcome and hospitality and come together in prayer, in fellowship and community celebration, and Mass.</p>
<p>Under the patronage of Mary, Mother of our Saviour, we dedicate ourselves to excellence in education, respect for the dignity of all persons and the sanctity of creation.</p>	<p><i>A Community That Encourages Engagement and Instils Hope (page 10)</i> "The Christ-centered mission of each school, by its very nature, contains a call to service the greater community."</p>	<p>...cultivate a Eucharistic sensibility and animate a Catholic school culture where the love of God is found in an encounter with Christ Jesus.</p>
<p>We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.</p>	<p><i>A Community That Forms Joyful Disciples (page 13).</i> "On a daily basis, Catholic schools demonstrate the joy of believing and witness Good News to the communities that they serve."</p>	<p>...serve with joy in such a way that those you encounter are empowered and encouraged in the work of going forth to proclaim the Gospel with their lives.</p>

Making Connections: *Renewing the Promise* and Achieving Excellence in Ontario's Catholic Schools

Promoting Student Well-Being	A Community That Accompanies	A Community That Builds Relationships
<p>Equity and Inclusive Education To achieve an equitable and inclusive school climate, schools will strive to ensure that all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable and accepted. We want all staff and students to value diversity and to demonstrate respect for others and a commitment to establishing a just, caring society.</p>	<p>Catholic schools are communities of accompaniment where the story of our salvation is known and shared, offering the encouragement that comes from knowing that Jesus walks with us. In addition to being places of teaching and learning, Catholic schools live the Emmaus experience as they witness to the Risen Lord. It is important to recognize that people are at different stages on the journey. Jesus provides the model for how our schools need to accompany students and families with great respect, patience and love, inviting all to deepen their understanding of Christ and his Church.</p>	<p>“The work of Catholic schools is one of initiating, facilitating and deepening relationships with a variety of educational partners. It is the unique expertise and generous cooperation of all that acknowledges and celebrates the accomplishments of each and develops the mutual respect and effective working relationships of St. Paul is helpful in many parts. They must work together and there must be no dissension when members may have different views of another.” (1Cor. 12:20)</p>
<p>Safe and Accepting Schools A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included and accepted, and actively promote positive behaviours and interactions. Principles of equity and inclusive education are imbedded in the learning environment to support a positive school climate and culture of mutual respect. A positive school climate is an essential component of prevention of inappropriate behaviour.</p>	<p>Pope Francis speaks about the art of accompaniment as that of taking the time to walk alongside one another, to listen and to teach, and in so doing, to transform. Our Catholic schools do this on a daily basis as they model the Emmaus experience. Staff practice the art of accompaniment by helping students realize that their own unique story is given greater meaning and purpose in knowing and living the story we share in Christ.</p>	<p>Catholic schools provide opportunities for students to love and serve the community. They comment that when they go to school they feel a sense of safety that does not come from religious symbols but from the witness to our faith in Christ who is present in every example, and is evident in the care for one another and the love of one another’. Catholic schools witness to Christ and in doing so, they love others.</p>
<p>Mental Health One of the guiding principles in ‘Supporting Minds’ is healthy development, hope and recovery. Individuals are resilient and have an inherent sense of hope for the future. Service providers will reinforce the personal strengths of children and youth to help them develop a sense of safety, self-worth, and mastery over their future and to help adults achieve personal fulfillment, meaningful social roles and positive relationships within the community.</p>	<p>Our Christian faith is about an encounter with God; it is an incredible love story that inspires hope and joy. In the sacrament of baptism, we are given the great commission to go forth, infused with the divine virtues of faith, hope and love, and make disciples by witnessing to Christ and his Gospel.</p>	<p>Just as all the parts of a body ensure a healthy body, educational partners must support one another so that education remains effective.</p>
<p>Healthy Schools Healthy schools need to focus not just on academic success, but also on the whole child and student — their cognitive, emotional, social and physical development. The research is clear: healthy students are better prepared to learn, and education is a key determinant of health.</p>	<p>It is important to recognize that people are at different stages on the journey. Jesus provides the model for how our schools need to accompany students and families with great respect, patience and love, inviting all to deepen their understanding of Christ and his Church.</p>	<p>A sense of respect and the strengths of each partner in cooperation that celebrates the accomplishments of each is essential to develop a healthy school that nurtures effective working relationships.</p>

Amidst the social turmoil, young people are eager to find solid and enduring values which give meaning and purpose in their lives... Catholic schools are places where children and young people may find solid and enduring values to give hope, meaning and purpose to life through an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship, and the certain knowledge of God's unwavering love for us, provides a firm place to stand in shifting times. (*Renewing the Promise*)

Steps	A Community That Encourages Engagement and Instills Hope	A Community That Forms Joyful Disciples
<p>Public schools involves building and maintaining trusting relationships among the Catholic members. A sense of respect for the gifts and strengths of each member and cooperation that celebrates the common good of all is essential to building trust that nurtures healthy relationships. The analogy of the Church; there is one body, but we need one another and we are in harmony, 'that there is one body, but the members are the same care for one another' (1 Cor 12:25)</p>	<p>Catholic education forms communities of faith that help students experience the love of God. The more we love our students see and understand themselves as the beloved children of God, the more they will want to love God with all their hearts, minds and souls. This in turn moves them to love neighbour which bears witness to justice and charity. Jesus says, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matt. 25:40). The more we love God, the more we love our neighbour and the more we engage in community.</p>	<p>The joy of believing is manifest in the hearts and lives of those who faithfully follow the Lord. Catholic schools play an important role in proclaiming the joy of believing. Pope Francis states, "Catholic schools, which always strive to join their work of education with the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, are a most valid resource for the evangelization of culture."</p>
<p>Communities provide many opportunities for students and staff to know and love the Lord. People often describe the special presence when they enter a Catholic school as the building or even the atmosphere that are an important part of the experience. The presence comes from the love proclaimed by word and deed witnessed in the way people live – 'see how they love one another' Catholic schools witness to the love of God so help to reveal Him to the world.</p>	<p>The disciples on the road to Emmaus are overcome by grief...Jesus gives his disciples understanding where there only seemed to be meaningless suffering. Ultimately, through this loving encounter, Jesus evokes in them a strength and courage not to run away, but to go back into difficult circumstances with a passion to share with others the Good News they have received. The result is a deep re-engagement with their community and with the world, with all of its challenges and opportunities. The story of Emmaus recounts a very human experience. The disappointment and despair experienced by the two disciples on the road is not unlike the challenges frequently faced by young people today. The message is clear; hope, courage and resolve can be found through a loving encounter with Jesus.</p>	<p>As faithful disciples of Jesus, we celebrate God's joy which longs to break into the world. The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow and inner emptiness and loneliness. "With Christ, joy is constantly born anew." (Evangelii Gaudium)</p>
<p>Members must work together to build one body, so too must all the members collaborate and rely on one another to ensure that Catholic schools are healthy and strong.</p>	<p>Catholic schools promote what is good, true and beautiful while at the same time demonstrating that it is rational to believe. This too, is part of Catholic identity. The more we foster and nurture Catholic identity, the more we promote the expression of that identity in service and witness to the world. Our faith calls us to be engaged with the world around us, to have hope, and to inspire it in others.</p>	<p>Catholic schools, which always strive to join their work of education with the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, are the most valuable resource for the evangelization of culture. (Evangelii Gaudium)</p>
<p>Members bring their unique expertise and generous contributions and accomplishments of all is built up the mutual trust that sustains working relationships.</p>	<p>The story of Emmaus recounts a very human experience. The disappointment and despair experienced by the two disciples on the road is not unlike the challenges frequently faced by young people today. The message is clear; hope, courage and resolve can be found through a loving encounter with Jesus.</p>	<p>Our Catholic schools help to form joyful disciples as hearts and minds are opened to the transforming love of God and the flame of faith in action.</p>

Renewing the Promise and Achieving Excellence in Ontario's Catholic Schools

Promoting Student Well-Being	Students	Parents	Teachers and Education Workers
<p>Equity and Inclusive Education Commitment to our students' well-being is the driving force behind everything we do in education. Parents want our schools to bring out the very best in their children and help them reach full potential. Everyone who works in education...shares that same commitment.</p>	<p>Know that you are never alone. You are the beloved child of God, and he is with you always.</p>	<p>In a world that is sometimes beset with negativity and acrimony, remember your example of life, grounded in faith, is a powerful witness for your children...</p>	<p>Create inclusive places of learning that invite and enable each child and young person in your care to grow fully to be all that God knows and hopes them to be.</p>
<p>Safe and Accepting Schools Ontario schools should be a place where everyone — children, students, staff, parents and the community — feels welcome, safe and respected. A safe, inclusive and accepting school environment is essential for student well-being and achievement.</p>	<p>Jesus is a kind and wise teacher and a healer of all your hurts, who will bring you peace and joy.</p>	<p>Work with the school community to help your child realize the gifts they have been given by our Creator God.</p>	<p>Each day provide a welcoming environment as students arrive to school. Listen to their stories, and help them discover the connection between the larger biblical story and their own lived experience.</p>
<p>Mental Health People with lived experience of mental illness and/or addiction are valued members of their communities. They deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. It is important for communities and providers of services to work together to eliminate stigma and discrimination.</p>	<p>While the world may sometimes make you feel like you are not good enough, not wealthy enough, not attractive enough, or not special enough, Jesus knows you perfectly and loves you without limits.</p>	<p>Just as Jesus heard the words of his Heavenly Father, share these words with your sons or daughters: "You are my beloved child in whom I delight!"</p>	<p>Model for them the gratitude we have for all that has been gifted to us through God's bountiful goodness: the meals we share, the friendships we value, the quality of education we experience in the province of Ontario.</p>
<p>Healthy Schools All educators are expected to create a learning environment that will support not only students' cognitive, emotional, social and physical development but also their mental health, their resilience, and their overall state of well-being.</p>	<p>Jesus is always at your side encouraging you and helping you to be the best that you can be as you offer your service to the world as an instrument of peace and justice.</p>	<p>While children are definitely a particular gift for parents, they are also God's gift for our world. They form the next generation of God's people, tasked to respond to the enormous challenges and opportunities they are inheriting.</p>	<p>At the close of the day send them home to their families with enthusiasm for the opportunities that are present in their lives and with confidence in their own abilities to make this world more loving, and more just though their good works and witness.</p>

Together, we renew that promise by continuing to strengthen our Catholic school communities that exemplify the Good News of Jesus in word and in deed...May we work together to form joyful disciples ready and eager to renew the promise as we respond to the challenges and opportunities of this present moment. (*Renewing the Promise*)

Support Staff	Principals and Vice-Principals	Trustees	Directors and Supervisory Officers	Clergy and Pastoral Teams
You are the stewards of our physical space and facilities; without your diligence, hard work and attention to detail, our offices and classrooms would be less welcoming.	Together with staff, ensure that it is an environment of welcome and hospitality. Model for your staff how best to minister to children and young people.	...all voices need to be heard, and all persons need to be recognized and respected for their inherent dignity and goodness.	As leaders of school systems...Let your voice speak with love and respect, and reflect compassion and understanding.	Your words of encouragement and support, your ministry of presence whenever possible, your invitation for all to engage in the life of the parish community...
Your model of service, and generosity of spirit offers important witness to the values of the Gospel.	In addition to your role managing a safe and efficient learning environment and leading the instructional efforts of your staff, your attention to the spiritual and cultural dimension of a Catholic school is an essential part of your mission.	In your decision making, in the setting of policy, in the nurturing of leaders, seek goodness that models compassion, wisdom and care.	As you build relationships among parents, students, clergy, pastoral teams, teachers, staff, and community members, the atmosphere of trust, respect, and honesty you establish is critical in creating a community able to engage and accompany.	Your partnership with our schools and your ministry to them has long been a foundation for the success of Catholic Education in the province of Ontario, and continues to be critical to the success of our shared mission.
Each day you offer loving service to those who depend on you. Yours is the voice of welcome to our parent community.	Gather your school community, tell the story, break the bread, and help to bring hope to the world.	Let your public actions be a visible sign of what we profess as a Catholic community and an expression of God's love and mercy in this world.	Let your actions match your words, guiding and animating communities, rooted in our Catholic faith, that invite students, staff, and families to encounter Jesus each day, as we accompany one another.	The goal of Catholic Education is to prepare hearts using the language of love, dialogue and service. The Holy Father reminds us that the essence of our vocation is love.
From the scriptures we know that Jesus welcomed children, and your work alongside educators, to care for children, helps our Catholic schools to fulfill their mission.	Serve with joy in such a way that those you encounter are empowered and encouraged in the work.	Allow the Holy Spirit to emerge from the creative tension that exists in balancing budgets and providing rich educational programs for children.	Your words and your actions inspire and influence the efforts of all those who work in our Catholic schools. Your words describe the vision, set the tone, and inspire the actions of all those who share the work.	Our Catholic schools present a tremendous opportunity for the new evangelization and can be a powerful tool in helping you connect with students and families...it is not about the great things we do; it is about doing little things with great love.

Artworks*

Cover	Road to Emmaus (Daniel Bonnell at www.fineartamerica.com)
Page 2	Emmaus 2 (www.carolynnthomasjones.com)
Page 8	Encounter (www.jvcartworks.com)
Page 20	Do This, To Remember Me (facebook.com/pg/eddeguzman1955)
Page 27	Appearance to Mary Magdalene (www.carolynnthomasjones.com)
Page 36	With Mary Magdalene 2 (www.carolynnthomasjones.com)
Page 40	Road to Emmaus (www.robynsandanderson.com)
Page 52	Appearance on Road to Emmaus (www.carolynnthomasjones.com)
Page 57	Emmaus Path (www.carolynnthomasjones.com)
Page 91	Journey (www.jvcartworks.com)

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