



November 2015
Parent Newsletter



Principal's Message

The MAC community continues to be a vibrant setting for our students! October was a busy month that saw our school collecting an amazing amount of MACaroni for the food bank. Our volleyball teams continue to experience success on the courts. Other highlights include: PLT presentations, thanksgiving celebration, band trips, cross country provincials, awards night, grad council voting, university presentations, pumpkin carving, and Halloween festivities that culminated in a school dance where students had a chance to celebrate together!

November also proves to be a busy month as we plan for our schools SAC meeting, Remembrance Day celebration, music concerts, Mac's got talent, and grad formal pictures! A reminder to parents that we will not be hosting parent teacher interviews any longer. Instead we will continue with our practice of having teachers communicate home via e-mail to keep parents abreast of the goings on in the classroom. I will also be sending out a reminder to all parents reminding them to log into their Power School accounts to check on their child's grades at that point in time.

LEST WE FORGET!

Sincerely,

Mr. John Fiacco
Principal

November Events

- Nov. 8** **PLT Switched to Wednesday**
- Nov. 9** **Remembrance Day Celebration-PLT**
- Nov. 10** **PD DAY –ALL DAY-NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS**
- Nov. 11** **Remembrance Day- NO SCHOOL**
- Nov. 15** **SHAD Presentation-PLT**
U of A MD Ambassadors- PLT
- Nov. 17** **MAC's Got Talent Auditions 12:30-4:30 pm**
- Nov. 18** **NAIT info session-PLT**
- Nov. 21-25** **GRAD Formal Pictures- All Week**
- Nov. 22** **U of A Scholarship Presentation- PLT**
- Nov. 25** **Grant MacEwan Info Session- PLT**
- Nov. 25-26** **Junior High School Feeder Volleyball Tournament**

ATTENTION PARENTS/GUARDIANS:

We recently sent home with your child a “Verification of Student Registration” form.

Please ensure that you go through the verification and make any corrections if needed. Whether there are corrections or not, we ask that you please sign and date the last page of the form and return it to the office as soon as possible.

PLEASE NOTE: It is **very important** that we have correct information. If there is a change of citizenship, please send in a copy of the new paperwork, front and back.

** If at any time there is a change of address and/or phone numbers, please contact the main office as soon as possible with the updated information.

Grad Information

Grad formals will be taking place from Nov. 21-25.

The sitting fee has already been paid for so there is no need for payment.



Upcoming University Open House Dates & Information Sessions

November 15 – SHAD Presentation - SHAD is a Canadian charity that empowers exceptional high school students to recognize their own capabilities and envision their extraordinary potential as tomorrow's leaders and change makers. Each year, SHAD provides the opportunity for 700 students from across Canada and internationally to attend a month-long summer program, in-residence at one of our Canadian **host universities**, focused on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts & math). There are currently more than 15,500 SHAD alumni including 30 **Rhodes Scholars**, Top 40 Under 40 & Top 20 Under 20 award recipients, and many other accomplished professionals, all sharing the transformational SHAD experience. SHAD is based in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

November 18 – NAIT Information session- PLT

November 22 – U of A Entrance Scholarship Presentation- PLT

November 25 – MacEwan University Information Session- PLT

U of A MD Ambassadors High School Outreach

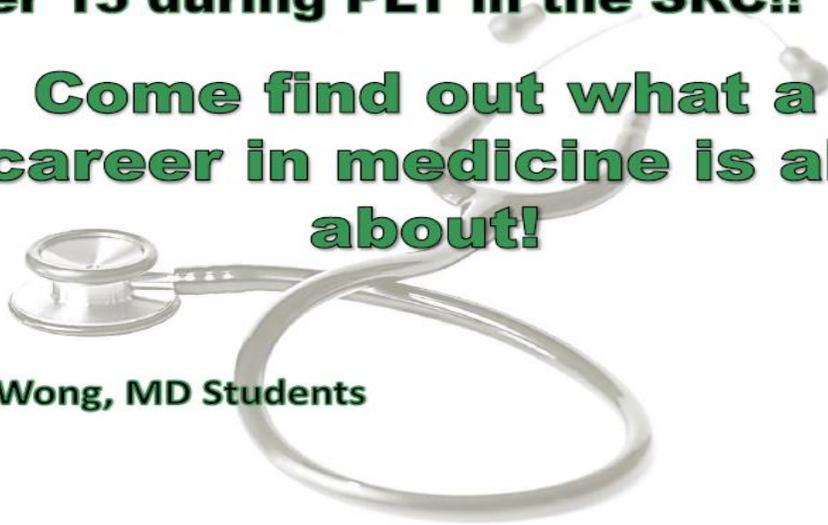
**Archbishop MacDonald
November 15 during PLT in the SRC!!**



**Come find out what a
career in medicine is all
about!**

Speakers Including:

David Fung and Alex Wong, MD Students



MAC Athletics

November

Moving into November, MAC's successful volleyball season is coming to an end while the new season of basketball is beginning. During early November our volleyball teams are entering the intense first rounds of playoffs. We interviewed Reneil F., #4 on the Mens Senior Volleyball team about his teams success and his own interest in volleyball



Spotlight Athlete of the Month

This is Reneil's first year on the Men's Senior Team and he has been very impressed with his teammates and their success as group. He commented, "The key to the success of our season would really be the trust between us and our friendship. Volleyball is not an individual sport but it is a team sport. If there were no trust between us then we wouldn't be able to run any plays, or we would always collide every time a ball would go right between us. Me and my teammates support each other, and encourage each other to play to our full extent. So the key to our success would be the trust between us and our friendship." We also inquired on the team's feelings after winning the big home game against St. Francis Xavier and Reneil shared with us, "My team and I were happy winning against FX. After winning against FX it really pumped us up for our next game and gave us motivation to win our next game." This may be Reneil's first year on the senior team but he has been

playing volleyball ever since Grade 5, “I started playing volleyball in grade 5 in my elementary school. I only tried out for the team just for fun, and thought it would be fun playing in a team with my friends. When I made the team I was ecstatic. After my first practice, I instantly fell in love with the sport.”, Reneil speaks of his start into the sport of volleyball. Finally, we asked him if he would be continuing his volleyball career into university but he informed us that this will be his last year playing.

- Jenna K.



For more information or to **REGISTER** visit:

www.ae.ecsd.net

Call 780 944-2000



DIPLOMA PREP SESSIONS



NEW

Student Resources Provided!

Courses:

- English 30-1**
- Math 30-1**
- Math 30-2**
- Social 30-1**

- Biology 30**
- Chemistry 30**
- Physics 30**
- Science 30**

Locations:

- Archbishop MacDonald School
- Archbishop O'Leary School
- Austin O'Brien School
- Blessed Oscar Romero School
- Cardinal Collins Academic Centre
- Holy Trinity School
- J.H. Picard School
- Louis St. Laurent School
- Mother Margaret Mary School
- St. Francis Xavier School

- 14219-109 Avenue
- 8760-132 Avenue
- 6110-95 Avenue
- 17760-69 Avenue
- 3802-139 Avenue
- 7007-28 Avenue
- 7055-99 Street
- 11230-43 Avenue
- 2010 Leger Road
- 9250-163 Street





WE ARE CALLED...

TO BE LEADERS OF HOPE AND MERCY

November 2016

Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house!"

~Luke 10:5~

This scripture comes from a passage known as *The Mission of the Seventy*. Jesus is giving instructions to his disciples, whom he is sending forth in pairs to all of the nations to prepare the way for him. Imagine the importance of establishing peaceful intentions as they were venturing out into unknown and perhaps hostile environments, making new acquaintances and establishing relationships. This message is just as imperative for our world today. The month of November, which focuses our attentions on the impact of war and oppression as we commemorate Remembrance Day and Holodomor, reminds us that a culture of peace starts at the level of the individual. Each of us has the ability and calling to be a peacemaker. These two events also draw our eyes to the global forum and help us to understand the impact that any abuse of political power has on the world.

Our Board of Trustees held their organizational meeting on October 18. Trustee Laura Thibert from Ward 77 was elected as Chair and Trustee Marilyn Bergstra from Ward 76 was elected as Vice-Chair. Visit our website at <https://www.ecsd.net/BoardofTrustees/Pages/default.aspx> to learn more about our Board and its governance.

Catholic education is very vibrant in the province of Alberta. On November 6, parishes across the province will celebrate the richness of experiences that our students receive through Catholic education. The Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories have written a letter for us. It can be found at <https://www.ecsd.net/AboutUs/catholic-identity/what-is-catholic-education/catholic-education-sunday/Pages/default.aspx>. As stakeholders in Catholic education, it is extremely important that your voice be heard by the Government of Alberta as they move forward with a massive overhaul of the K-12 Curriculum in all grades across the subject areas of Language Arts (English, Français, French), Math, Social Studies, Sciences, Arts and Wellness education. Parents, students, teachers, school staff members, education system leaders and community members are all invited to offer meaningful input into the curriculum development process through online survey responses.

Part A of the survey, which takes about seven minutes to complete, gives the opportunity to share thoughts about the Government's general direction for the development of all new curriculum. Once Part A is completed, there is the option to move to Part B, to indicate what you see as the strengths and gaps in subject areas of interest in our current curriculum, which may take upwards of 15 minutes depending on the number of subjects and grade-specific questions you choose to answer.

The online survey will run from October 18 – November 18. Make sure that your voice is heard by completing the survey at <http://curriculumsurvey.alberta.ca>. The survey results will be used by Expert Working Groups made up of teachers and post-secondary educators in concert with Alberta Education staff as information to help develop new provincial curriculum over the next six years.

We are continually looking at different measures of our success to refine our practice as we move forward. This ensures that our students have the best possible educational experiences. This data analysis happens at both the District and school level. Two of those measures from Alberta Education, the Accountability Pillar and Provincial Achievement and Diploma Exam results, were released in October. You can find those results and other important reports on our public website at https://www.ecsd.net/AboutUs/annual_reports/Pages/default.aspx.

Another measure that we use to assess our performance in many areas and to set targets for growth is our own District Satisfaction Survey. This vital survey gathers opinions from students, parents, and staff on individual schools and on district operations. Every student from grade 4-12 will complete the survey, as will all staff. Every household will receive one parent survey per child enrolled in an Edmonton Catholic School. Please respond to each survey separately from the point of view of each child's educational experience. It is so important that you let your voice be heard. You can either return your parent survey directly to your child's school or use the postage paid envelope and use Canada Post. The District Satisfaction Survey will run from November 1-18. Thank you in advance for your participation.

I would like to leave you with a Tweet from Pope Francis. “Dialogue with others, prayers for all: these are our means to give rise to love where there is hatred, forgiveness where there is offence.” These are the first steps on a pathway to peace.

Sincerely,

Joan Carr
Superintendent

Amoris Laetitia Chapter 2: The Experiences and Challenges of Families

We all have our favorite television family. Whether it be the Waltons or the Simpsons, the Bradys or the Griffins, the depiction of family life and family love on television does not always reveal a lived reality. Reality television has given us many families' stories yet, again and again, we do not necessarily witness a true depiction of familial love and life. Often it is the case that the intended humour or seriousness of a given scenario comes at the expense of someone's dignity or humility. In any event however, the family unit, whether nuclear or extended, and the existing challenges that families face, remain a point of focus, if not fascination, for today's society. Pope Francis shares his views of the many challenges facing the modern family in this chapter.

Pope Francis begins by emphasizing that "the welfare of the family is decisive for the future of the world and that of the Church." (31). Among the greatest challenges to the integrity of the family is the "growing danger represented by an extreme individualism which weakens family bonds as an isolated unit, leading in some cases to the idea that one's personality is shaped by his or her desires, which are considered absolute." (33). Intolerance and hostility in families are the result of such focus on the individual. The fast-paced and stressful nature of modern living requires that personal freedom be purposed towards 'noble goals' that seek to edify the individual towards directing energy and making positive, life giving choices else, if misdirected, "can foster attitudes of constant suspicion, fear of commitment, self-centeredness and arrogance." (33). The point is made that increasingly, in many countries where marriage is on the decline, more and more people are "choosing to live alone or simply spend time together without cohabitating." (33). Loneliness, feelings of isolation contrasted with "the fear of entrapment in a relationship that could hamper one's individual goals" (34) reveal the complexity of issues surrounding why people are or are not entering into marriage.

As Christians, we are reminded that we cannot "stop advocating for marriage simply to avoid countering contemporary sensibilities, or out of a desire to be fashionable" (35). To the contrary, we require "a more responsible and generous effort to present the reasons and motivations for choosing marriage and the family" as a "way to help men and women better respond to the grace that God offers them." (35). Pope Francis expresses the need to have a 'healthy dose of self-criticism' when it comes to our modern understanding of marriage. He says: "at times we have also proposed a far too abstract and almost artificial theology ideal of marriage, far removed from the concrete situations and practical possibilities of real families." (36). Throughout this chapter we hear the call to engage in deeper and more meaningful discourse on the need to "form consciences, not to replace them" (37) when it comes to developing a healthy understanding of marriage; especially in light of complex situations.

Pope Francis asks us to have a generous and grateful disposition towards valuing 'family relationships that are marked by mutual respect.' (38). When speaking of families, particularly those impacted by secularism, Pope Francis reminds us of the power of the sacramental life, especially Eucharist and Reconciliation, which provide "grace that helps (us) face the challenges of marriage and the family. We are challenged to consider the need to "inspire a positive and welcoming pastoral approach capable of helping couples to grow in appreciation of the demands of the Gospel." (38). Further to this, he expresses his concern that "we have often been on the defensive, wasting pastoral energy on denouncing a decadent world without being proactive in proposing ways to find true happiness." (38). This speaks to the incongruent messages that many people have heard over the years and which they must contemplate in developing their understanding of marriage and family life. In many cases "people feel that the Church's message on marriage and family does not clearly reflect the preaching and attitudes of Jesus, who set forth a demanding ideal yet never failed to show compassion and closeness to the frailty of individuals" e.g. The Samaritan woman. (38.).

This chapter progresses with the articulation of further issues and challenges that are paramount to our comprehension of how family life and marriage are impacted today. The key topics include how the demands of work leave parents tired with less time for positive or quality interaction with their children. From this we see the rise of television / gaming addictions (50). Next is discourse on drug addiction, alcohol, and gambling and how “ we see the serious effects of this breakdown in families torn apart, the young uprooted and the elderly abandoned, children who are orphans of living parents, adolescents and young adults confused and unsupported.” (51). Pope Francis also provides commentary on how “many countries are witnessing a legal deconstruction of the family, tending to adopt models based almost exclusively on the autonomy of the individual will.” (53). Apathy, narcissism, divisiveness, violence and hatred are the bi-products of our times. Pope Francis assures us however, that the strength of the family “lies in its capacity to love and to teach how to love. For all a family’s problems, it can always grow, beginning with love.” (53).

It is important that we be mindful of the very real challenges that face families today. Pope Francis reminds us that “we are called to protect our humanity, and this means, in the first place, accepting it and respecting it as it was created.”(56). Once more, we live in a world where the notion of family and marriage are often diluted or distorted by how they are depicted on television and main stream media. We often pay far more attention to those fictional or virtual families than our own ‘real’ family. “The Synod’s reflections (particularly in this chapter) show us that there is no stereotype of the ideal family, but rather a challenging mosaic made up of different realities, with all their joys, hopes and problems.”(57) Pope Francis concludes this chapter with a most hopeful perspective on the value he places on family and marriage: “the Church is conscious of the need to offer a word of truth and hope...the great values of marriage and the Christian family correspond to a yearning that is part and parcel of human existence.” (57). Pope Francis concludes this chapter with thanksgiving: “I thank God that the many families, which are far from considering themselves perfect, live in love, fulfil their calling and keep moving forward, even if they fall many times along the way.” (57).

Whatever your favorite TV family show may happen to be, whether from a classic or modern reality based show, we must never lose sight that the most important family, is the one we break bread with, the family we were blessed into, with all its inherent challenges and joys.

What I Learned from the Jubilee Year of Mercy

Pope Francis' Jubilee Year of Mercy, which started on December 8, 2015, is drawing to a close on November 20, 2016.

In convoking this Extraordinary Jubilee, the pope wanted to direct our attention "on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father's actions in our lives . . . a time when the witness of believers might grow stronger and more effective."

Well, a year later, I have to ask myself what have I done during the Year of Mercy? Will it have come and gone like another New Year's resolution gone bad? Or has it really changed by life for the better?

To answer that question, I come back to Moses and the Burning Bush.

According to the Book of Exodus, God speaks to Moses through a burning bush on Mount Horeb. At the encounter, God appoints Moses to lead the Israelites out of captivity, out of Egypt and into Canaan.

"As Moses looked on he was surprised to see that the bush though on fire, was not consumed. So Moses decided: I must go over to look at this remarkable sight, and see why this bush is not burned" (Exodus 3: 2-3).

The burning bush attracts Moses as something mysterious. It becomes the earthly symbol of the Mystery of God.

I love what happens next!

"When the Lord saw that Moses had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.'"

Paying attention. Notice it's only when Moses does a double take and pays attention that only then does God speak to Moses. Maybe the burning bush was always there. But Moses failed to notice.

God always speaks. My problem is that I tend to do most of the talking and oftentimes fail to pay attention to what God is saying. I busy my life and miss the burning bush opportunities when God so wishes to speak to me.

Back to the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

I so need mercy in my life.

And when I was really trying hard to listen to the voice of God, I was blessed with not one, not two, but three graced moments of mercy in the same week! Talk about paying attention to the burning bush.

One. I had met some new friends and we were trying for months to get together for a meal. They were born in Ukraine but had lived in Canada for years. I was curious about their story. Finally, I ran into them unexpectedly and asked them if they were free for supper the next evening. They surprised me by asking if I was free right now; get in the car, we're going out for supper! And so we did. Over supper, I learned that both were of Jewish heritage and had escaped the Holocaust, eventually finding refuge in Canada. Both were very young when their families were killed by the Germans, and they feared that they would be next. Their stories were heart-wrenching.

I had never met Holocaust survivors up front and centre. I knew their tragic story from school and what I learned later as an adult, but I have never had the experience of listening first hand to the horror that this then young teenage girl and boy endured. And yet where I expected to find lingering pain and unforgiveness, I heard only gratitude and love for life and freedom. Mercy in action. I can't explain it any other way.

Two. That same week, I had the pleasure to attend this year's Knights of Columbus Supreme Convention in Toronto. Canada hosted, a rare opportunity. I arrived in Toronto on the Monday and had arranged to have supper with one of my best friends, a bishop from the United States. When he didn't show, I called learned that he had experienced some last minute health issues and had to cancel (he's ok now!). I called another friend, but he was already out on the town with friends for supper. I called another friend; he had just flown in from Krakow and World Youth Day and was going to bed. I gave up (I only have two friends!) and went to the hotel restaurant. I sat next to a couple from Vietnam. They were wearing Knights of Columbus nametags and we struck up a conversation.

As we were enjoying our supper and talking, I had this uncanny feeling that I had met the wife before. Sure enough, she had spoken at the 2008 International Eucharistic Congress in Quebec City (Archbishop Jorge Bergoglio, now

Pope Francis, was also a speaker!). She spoke about her brother, Cardinal François-Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, who died in 2002. (Rather coincidentally, I attended his funeral in Rome while at “Baby Bishop’s School”). Under the communist government the Cardinal was imprisoned in a re-education camp for 13 years, nine in solitary confinement. His crime? He was a Catholic. In 2007, when Pope Benedict XVI began the beatification process for the Cardinal, he wrote:

“During thirteen years in jail, in a situation of seemingly utter hopelessness, the fact that [the Cardinal] could listen and speak to God became for him an increasing power of hope, which enabled him, after his release, to become for people all over the world a witness to hope – to that great hope which does not wane even in the nights of solitude.”

Mercy in action.

Three. At the same Knights of Columbus Convention, I ran into a friend, Father Brian Kolodiejchuk. Father Brian is a Ukrainian Catholic priest from Winnipeg. Where it gets interesting is that in 1997 he met Mother Teresa of Calcutta and was associated with her until her death in 1997. He became a member of the Missionaries of Charity Fathers and his claim to fame is that he served as postulator of the cause of canonization of Mother Teresa. At the canonization this past September, Father Brian stood next to Pope Francis during the ceremony and presented her cause to the Holy Father who declared her to be Saint Teresa.

Over a meal, Father Brian and I spoke about Pope Francis’ desire to canonize Mother Teresa during the Jubilee Year of Mercy. Father Brian sees this as fitting, since Saint Teresa is seen both inside and outside the Church as an icon of God’s mercy to those in need. Mercy in action.

Well, as you can see, I was blessed just in one week to have encountered three privileged moments of mercy. And that’s only because, like Moses, I was paying attention. And how many more did I miss when I wasn’t?

In any event, this has been for me a most beautiful Jubilee Year of Mercy. Thank you Pope Francis for your gift.

And you, how is God’s mercy and compassion changing your life?

God bless!

Bishop David