



ONE FAMILY,
HOPE IN CHRIST

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ST FRANCIS XAVIER
SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Dear Parents,

Season of Advent: At this time of year, many people get swept up in holiday preparations: shopping, parties, decorating, etc. It can be a hectic and stressful time of the year. On Sunday, November 28th, we began the season of Advent. It's a time when we anticipate and long for the coming of Jesus as our loving Lord and Saviour. We anticipate the celebration of Jesus' birth, when he came into the world to save us all from sin and death. The coming of Jesus into our lives at Christmas enriches our journey of faith every day, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist and in our acts of love, charity, and justice towards others. The very fact that the Creator of all humbled himself to become one of His creations should fill us with awe at the tremendous love and sacrifice that very act alone communicates.



In keeping with the CISVA theme "One Family, One Hope in Christ", throughout Advent you can gather as a family for prayer around an Advent wreath. You can focus your efforts as a family on ways to share your bounty with others to experience a more meaningful and impactful Advent Season. Make sure your family takes the time to slow down and reflect on the true meaning of Christmas during Advent as that will help to ensure a truly blessed and Merry Christmas.

A reminder from the past: Pope Francis' TED Talk

A few years ago, I published in the December newsletter the text of a talk given by Pope Francis back in 2017. In it, the Pope speaks of hope and how Jesus is the hope of the world, which of course reminded me of our theme of "One Family, One Hope in Christ."

As we enter a tough time in our continuing struggle with COVID-19, not to mention the danger and destruction faced by thousands in areas of our province devastated by flood waters, it is good to be reminded that when things seem difficult, our hope is there for us in Jesus and the message of hope delivered each Christmas:

We have so much to do, and we must do it together. But how can we do that with all the evil we breathe every day?

Thank God, no system can nullify our desire to open up to the good, to compassion and to our capacity to react against evil, all of which stem from deep within our hearts.

Now you might tell me, "Sure, these are beautiful words, but I am not the Good Samaritan, nor Mother Teresa of Calcutta." On the contrary: we are precious, each and every one of us. Each and every one of us is irreplaceable in the eyes of God. Through the darkness of today's conflicts, each and every one of us can become a bright candle, a reminder that light will overcome darkness, and never the other way around.

To Christians, the future does have a name, and its name is Hope. Feeling hopeful does not mean to be optimistically naïve and ignore the tragedy humanity is facing. Hope is the virtue of a heart that doesn't lock itself into darkness, that doesn't dwell on the past, does not simply get by in the present, but is able to see a tomorrow.

Hope is the door that opens onto the future. Hope is a humble, hidden seed of life that, with time, will develop into a large tree. It is like some invisible yeast that allows the whole dough to grow, that brings flavor to all aspects of life.

And it can do so much, because a tiny flicker of light that feeds on hope is enough to shatter the shield of darkness. A single individual is enough for hope to exist.

And that individual can be you. And then there will be another "you," and another "you," and it turns into an "us." And so, does hope begin when we have an "us?" No. Hope began with one "you." When there is an "us," there begins a revolution.

The third message I would like to share today is, indeed, about revolution: the revolution of tenderness.

What is tenderness? It is the love that comes close and becomes real. It is a movement that starts from our heart and reaches the eyes, the ears and the hands. Tenderness means to use our eyes to see the other, our ears to hear the other, to listen to the children, the poor, those who are afraid of the future. To listen also to the silent cry of our common home, of our sick and polluted earth. Tenderness means to use our hands and our heart to comfort the other, to take care of those in need.

Tenderness is the language of the young children, of those who need the other. A child's love for mom and dad grows through their touch, their gaze, their voice, their tenderness. I like when I hear parents talk to their babies, adapting to the little child, sharing the same level of communication. This is tenderness: being on the same level as the other.

God himself descended into Jesus to be on our level. This is the same path the Good Samaritan took. This is the path that Jesus himself took. He lowered himself, he lived his entire human existence practicing the real, concrete language of love.

Yes, tenderness is the path of choice for the strongest, most courageous men and women. Tenderness is not weakness; it is fortitude. It is the path of solidarity, the path of humility.

Please, allow me to say it loud and clear: the more powerful you are, the more your actions will have an impact on people, the more responsible you are to act humbly. If you don't, your power will ruin you, and you will ruin the other.

There is a saying in Argentina: “Power is like drinking gin on an empty stomach.” You feel dizzy, you get drunk, you lose your balance, and you will end up hurting yourself and those around you, if you don’t connect your power with humility and tenderness.

Through humility and concrete love, on the other hand, power – the highest, the strongest one – becomes a service, a force for good.

The future of humankind isn’t exclusively in the hands of politicians, of great leaders, of big companies. Yes, they do hold an enormous responsibility. But the future is, most of all, in the hands of those people who recognize the other as a “you” and themselves as part of an “us.”

We all need each other.

And so, please, think of me as well with tenderness, so that I can fulfill the task I have been given for the good of the other, of each and every one, of all of you, of all of us.

Christmas Giving: At this time of year we take the time and effort to try to assist those less fortunate than us. Christmas is a time of giving, just as God gave His only Son to us to save us from sin. Over the next while, there will be various opportunities for our students to exercise the gift of giving, from the Giving Tree detailed above that helps the poor families to have presents under the tree at Christmas to our collection of food so those less fortunate than us have a simple meal every day. Sometimes families may feel beset by what seems like constant requests for money, but especially at this time of year it is important for children to feel something can be done to help these people and if buying a present for a child in need gives them that feeling, then we have accomplished something meaningful.

Below are some ideas from <http://www.loyolapress.com> about lessons in giving:

Parents can support their children's spiritual growth by giving them opportunities to put aside their own needs and give to others. Not only will it strengthen personal self esteem, kids will recognize the true joy of helping those in need. Have you tried these ways to share the joy of giving?

1. **Involve your kids in “giving” decisions.**
Explain to your children what portion of your family budget goes toward charity and helping others. Get them involved in deciding which causes to support.
2. **Make giving to others a “given.”**
Studies show that most generous adults had parents who also showed generosity, so be sure that helping others in need is something that your family simply does as a matter of course.
3. **Maintain a balance between giving and receiving.**
Make sure that your children see examples of giving and receiving within the family. Both sides are important for balanced personal development.
4. **Share your own needs with your child.**
Depending on the age of the child, it’s O.K. to occasionally say, “I need some help today. I would appreciate it if you took on some of my usual chores.” Then be specific about what the child can do and how he or she can do it.

5. **Exercise your faith in God's providence.**

Generosity is an attitude toward life. It presupposes the faith that God will provide and the conviction that as we have been given, so we should give.



Christmas Event: We have not yet set upon a definite plan for our Christmas event this year. With so many restrictions and protocols, it is not as simple as previous times as COVID-19 has reared its ugly head yet again. COVID-19 restrictions do not encourage large groups like a class or a choir to sing together in an enclosed area.

We have many talented and creative people on Staff and I am confident we can find something so that we can avoid the COVID-19 Grinch from stealing Christmas!



“Mamas for Mamas”

Last week, we held a ‘casual’ day to raise money for flood victims of the recent floods in the Fraser Valley. I am thrilled to announce that we raised \$3274.50 to support the good work of supporting mothers and their children done by “Mamas for Mamas! I have been here for over 12 years and have never seen such a response for any fundraiser!

St. Francis Xavier School Virtual Open House – COVID-19 has also forced us to change the way we find new students for the 2021-22 school year. As with many things in life now, COVID-19 has necessitated moving to the virtual world.

The date for the SFX Virtual Open House will be **Wednesday, January 12, 2021**. Instead of our traditional in-person tours conducted by some of our Grade Seven students, there will be a series of videos based on various aspects of our school.

At that time, applications for new students from Kindergarten to Grade Seven will be made available, both in the Office and online. As in the past, we rely on our parents who do such a great job in attracting new parents to our school. Virtually every new parent I meet tells of hearing about our school from people whose children are currently enrolled in our school. Thank you for the great 'word of mouth' advertising that you do for our school!



SNOW DAY PROCEDURES

With the closeness of winter, it is a good idea to review the procedures surrounding “Snow Days”. As with many other things, our first priority will always be safety of our students and families. If the roads in the area are considered dangerous for travel, that, among other factors (such as the weather forecast), will be taken into consideration before a final decision is made.



1. In the case of heavy snow, the Principal decides whether to close the school before 6:00 a.m. and informs the PEC chairperson.
2. The Principal informs the staff of the school closure. Classroom teachers are asked to contact their PTA parent representatives so that they may notify the families on their phone list or via a text messaging app (WhatsApp, etc).
3. The Principal contacts the local radio station **CKNW 980 AM**. The office manager will contact the Chinese radio stations **WBFC 1470 AM** and **WJGR 1320 AM**. These media outlets will be contacted before 6:30 a.m. with the announcement.
4. If parents do not receive a call and/or do not hear that St. Francis Xavier School is closed announced on the radio, then school is open. Teachers will be expected to be at school and students will be expected to come to school as well. **Please do not call the school asking if the school is open.** Teachers and office staff are busy enough with their morning duties to continually answer the telephone to answer the same question dozens of times.

December Green Club News

Sustainable Christmas Gift Ideas:

1. For the Chocolate Lovers...**Alter Eco Chocolate- Certified B Corporation, climate neutral**, uses regenerative farming practices, uses compostable, post-consumer recyclable packaging - Available at London Drugs, Buy Low, City Ave Market
2. For the Coffee and Bird Lovers...**Birds and Beans** coffee, organic, shade grown, bird-friendly coffee

Available at birdsandbeans.ca and Wild Birds Unlimited

3. For the clothing lover.... **Ten Tree** clothing- a Vancouver **Certified B Corporation** company, plants ten trees for every item bought uses the most sustainable materials with the smallest footprint possible. Example: a Ten Tree sweatshirt uses **75% less** water than other sweatshirts. Check them out at tentree.ca

4. For Everyone...Experiences.... Check out Christmas light displays, go ice-skating, snow-shoeing, etc. For more ideas <http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/solid-waste/reduction-reuse/create-memories/>

Coming in January.... Ms. Hanlon's favourite sustainable swaps!

Wishing you a very Green Christmas and a Hopeful New Year!

Once again, thank you for your continuous support to our school. May God bless you and your family during the Advent Season, grant you a blessed Christmas and a happy Holiday.

