

St. James School

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Dear SJS Families,

I have received feedback from a number of you about some choices that I have made during the past couple weeks. Your feedback and input is very important to me. You are the community I serve and what you think is both valued and respected.

I have made mistakes. My first mistake occurred during our school-wide assembly on Thursday, February 22nd. During this assembly I spoke about the following ideas:

As Christians, we are called to be loving, patient and kind with those who hurt us. That Christ showed us the example of praying for others when they hurt us. I pointed out that when we are hurt or suffering that this is a precious moment as we are closest to Christ when we feel this way. We are closest to Christ because he too suffered and remained loving to those who hurt him. So, what we do at that moment is precious, important, and not a time for violence or hatred. So, when someone hurts us on the playground, we are not to hurt them back, but rather, walk away, find help and pray for them. I realize non-violence is a lot to ask, but I told the kids it is one of the highest ideals that we can aspire to, and if they choose to respond to hurt the way Jesus did that they can change the world.

Now, in the passion of the moment, I did say that if a parent tells you it's okay to hit someone back that they are wrong (I hear this justification for violence more times than I'd ever hoped to) and that sometimes children can speak the truth to their parents in a way that no one else can... respectfully of course. This statement has come back to me from a number of parents now, concerned that I have told the children not to trust/listen to their parents. This of course was not my intention, but I can see how my words could confuse our students and create tension between home and school. For this I am deeply sorry. I truly value the role of parents in our school community and failed to realize the potentially negative impact of my words. Please forgive me. At our next school assembly, I will reassure the students that parents are their primary educators

ST.JAMES CATHOLIC SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

"As an essential instrument in strengthening the Catholic faith, St. James School exists to develop the whole person as a Christ-centered member of our community"

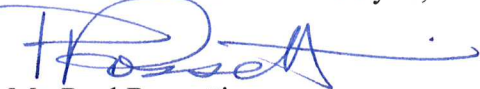
and that my role at the school is to support them in teaching their children in the way of Christ and to be successful members of our greater society.

I need to acknowledge that it is also my role to uphold Christian values to the best of my understanding, and at times this puts me in conflict with parental ideas/philosophy. I stand behind my understanding of Christ's call to non-violent resistance and its role in the school environment; however, these philosophical conflicts with parents occur rarely and are dealt with, respectfully, on a one-to-one basis. I should not have spoken about it to the students in the way that I did. That was a poor choice on my part, and I see how it could be undermining to parental authority. So again, please forgive me.

My second error in judgement was with regard to Pink Shirt Day. I chose to make Pink Shirt Day a uniform day instead of participating in the greater community's observance of this worthy cause. In doing so, a number of you have expressed your concern and dismay about this choice. You have said that by choosing not to participate in Pink Shirt Day that I have sent a message that we at SJS hold ourselves as better than others, that we are unhelpful bystanders in the cause against bullying, that I have jeopardized our reputation in the community, and that we are sending a message to our students that these ideals don't matter. Again, this was never my intention, but I can see how my choice could lead to these conclusions. It is also clear to me that this cause is deeply meaningful to our community. Thank you to those of you who took the time to voice your concerns. It is through this kind of open communication that our community can grow and that I, as it's leader, can improve and learn to serve you better. This is my most sincere desire. So, rest assured, that next year we will wear pink shirts on Pink Shirt Day. We will engage fully in this community event and we will honour those of us who have been victims of bullies in the past and work towards the highest ideals of love, forgiveness, empathy, and unity in both the present and the future. Please forgive me for any harm, stress, or disharmony my choice caused you or your family.

I deeply appreciate the time you've taken to read this letter. Thank you for voicing your opinions, concerns, challenges, and support. You have helped me to grow as an individual and as a leader. You have helped to make our school community a better, more unified, place where all are welcome. Please, continue to bring forward your ideas and feelings. It is by actively working together that we grow closer to each other and to God. It is through conflict that we are made better. Thank you.

The Peace of Christ be with you,



Mr. Paul Rossetti

Principal