

Friday, February 12, 2021

To the Parishes who support St James School,

Good Morning,

Father Peter has asked me to write you all this letter to provide an update on the state of affairs at St. James School. As I write this letter, we are nearly a year into the global COVID-19 pandemic and, in all honesty, the past year and a half have been a very challenging time for our little school community. However, by the Grace of God, the unwavering support of our parish communities, and the loyalty of our school families and staff, we are weathering the storm!

Frankly, things are not how we like them to be right now. We have lost some of our amazing families to homeschooling, we are unable to gather for Mass as one body, nor gather together for all those great community builders that we have enjoyed in past years. We found ourselves, last Spring, unable to celebrate our Grade 7 graduates, unable to celebrate Confirmation, First Communion, and First Reconciliation as we have been accustomed to doing. However, I am proud to say that despite a significant increase in COVID-19 cases in our greater community and after having experienced a few positive exposures within our school community that we have not had any internal spread of the virus at school. This is due to the exceptional work done by our custodial team and our education staff who have gone the extra mile to implement our COVID-19 safety protocols and cleaning procedures. We continue to do our best to navigate these uncharted waters together, and though we have found continued success in many areas, the impact is real and we are all tired. As Father Peter has counselled me many times, these are the moments to put our trust in the Lord and allow the Blessed

Trinity to carry the weight. As Jesus Himself instructs, “Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Mathew 11:28). And so, as humble followers of the Way, we trust and carry on.

Our school has been able to maintain a student population of just over 160 students. We continue to employ 30 people in various capacities, but all of whom support the development of the whole child at St. James School. We continue to find creative ways to navigate our “new normal” with joy and community spirit. We are running a diverse number of programs including: extra curricular sports for our intermediate students, Art Club, a Liturgical Dance Team, literacy support for all students, a well respected Special Education Program, a full-time hot lunch program, and both Music and French instruction for all students K-7, while remaining the number 1 ranked school in Vernon and an impressive 140 of 931 schools in the Province of BC according to the Fraser Institute.

We continue to find ways to fundraise in order to keep our tuition manageable for the most people possible, while being mindful not to put our supporting parishes in financial hardship, and still providing an excellent educational experience for our students. This is a challenging tension to hold, but one I am grateful to have the support and guidance of our Local School Committee, Parent Support Group, and the finance committees of Our Lady of the Valley and St. James churches. A big thank you to those of you who support us via our Take Home Supper program. If you have yet to take advantage and wish to support the school in this way, while enjoying an incredible meal on Wednesdays, please contact the school office or take a look on the rccv.org

website for more information. This remains one of our most successful revenue generators, especially during the pandemic when other opportunities are limited.

I am happy to report that we maintain an excellent relationship with our Diocesan Office, including Bishop Joseph, the CISKD Board of Directors, acting CFO Deacon Paul Murphy, and our Superintendent Ms. Holly Paluck. It takes a large team of faithful people to make a school like ours run and I am grateful to all for their contribution.

And finally, I wish to thank you, the members of our parish communities. I continue to be humbled by your unwavering support for our school. You support us in prayer, in time, in referrals and references, and in financial support as both individuals and as a collective through the parish subsidy we receive every year. This support goes a long way to ensuring that we can continue to support families in nurturing the seed of Faith planted in our young people. As an essential instrument of the Catholic Church, we see this work as our primary responsibility. I am often asked what tuition buys at SJS, and I can say without a moments hesitation that immersion in our Catholic Faith is what we offer; this is our North Star, our guiding light, our fixed direction — to walk with Jesus our Living Hope and in Him be of service to others. So, again, from the bottom of my heart, thank you for your ongoing commitment to supporting Catholic education in our community. Thank you for your prayers, please keep them coming, we still have a long way to go, but I firmly resolve that together we can continue to offer this oh so necessary gift to our children.

Together in Christ,

Paul Rossetti
Principal of St. James School