

2020 CSCO Thanksgiving Newsletter



FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND

(JOHN 6. 1 – 14)

THANKS BE TO GOD!

Happy Thanksgiving everyone!

We give thanks to God for the many blessings we've received.

And we give thanks for the obstacles that have been put in our path like the COVID-19 pandemic, protocols and safety measures.

It's thrown most of us for a loop (and many have died from the novel coronavirus and many more have become very ill with it.)

COVID-19 has affected all of us, for bad and for good.

And now that we're moving into the second wave, Lord have mercy.

Be kind to yourself, to your families, to your students and fellow staff members. Be kind.

And enjoy a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday with family and friends!

For all of our members who are suffering ailments of any kind, know that our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Thank you to our contributing writers for this Newsletter (Issue #13): Damiano Femia, Cosmo Femia, Mary Lozowsky, Jo-Anne Stasiuk, Andrew Hall, Jeff Gendron, Gillian Federico, Nuri Garza, Jolene Smith, Natalie Hleba, Celia Ieradi, Kimberly Coursolle, Leah Daly, Ed MacIntosh, Aidan Murphy, Vincenzo Silvestro, David Dubowits, Don Hall, Roger Richard, Eliza Albano, Gordie Van Putten, Mary De Oliveira, Flo Pianta and Mary Defayette.

THE HOPE FILES

I have found hope and solace in a weekly rosary online recitation every Wednesday and Sunday. Through Instagram, a fellow Chaplain (my twin brother Cosmo Femia) at our school had a great idea of starting Heralds of Our Lady to bring together students, teachers and parents across the board to come together in prayer via a digital platform. It has become a weekly routine with prayer and healing requests and has extended to the greater community in which we live. I am proud to be a constant reader and share in this faith formation that has brought many people together during this most difficult and challenging time.

Wishing you all my best. Keep well and stay safe.

Yours in Christ,

Damiano Femia, O.C.T.

Mathematics and Chaplaincy

Loretto Abbey C.S.S,



The Femia Brothers, Damiano and Cosmo.

Transcendence: A Poem About Becoming More Fully and Authentically Human

Published Aug 26, 2020



Why do we sometimes practice religion

Even when it means,

At times,

Substituting and sacrificing

In its name

A beautiful vision?

Immanence

All around

Immense,

And profound.

People and

Color and

Surprise and

Laughter and

Drinks and

Food and

Family and

Friends and

Romance,

50 years long

Rocking in a chair

Holding softly wrinkled hands.

Maybe suffering,

Limits,

Haunting each moment of happiness

Here and now,

Show us

That this world, by itself,

With all pleasure felt

Is not enough.

Blurred dreams of fullness.

Dreams that can't seem to become

What we think or want.

Mine anyway have not.

So we turn

And look;

through, beyond,

Higher, deeper.

To Transcendence.

Transcendence.

Not numbing novocaine

For people who are afraid of pain.

But beautiful strings

Vibrating

In harmony

Dancing over

Drawing out

With beauty

From a battered, bounded

Earth

Or mind.

Holy.

With hope.

Transcendence

Is the reason

For humble work

Tilling soil

Teaching children

Washing dishes

Watering gardens

Sweat

And tired bodies.

Transcendence

Is why a life

Of simple, unadorned labor

Done with grace

Obtains God's favor.

Transcendence

Is giving up immediate instincts,

To build a fire

With sooty hands

An arched back

And stinging eyes

Because you know

A miracle will happen.

Lighting

And heating the whole house.

Transcendence

Does not demand retribution

For fairness' sake.

It forgives

When even survival is at stake, which,

For the life of me,

I can't make sense of

Except if my own wellbeing

Isn't the most important,

Which,

I can't make sense of

Except if another holds me

Beyond me.

Everything is elevated

To a tremendous plain,

So close,

But beyond any image

Of a sunny sky,

Pearly gates,

Clouds and angels.

I do not know how far

This all will go.

Image by [Free-Photos](#) from [Pixabay](#)



Chris Williams, SJ

Hailing from the one and only Spearfish, South Dakota, Chris (a.k.a. “Spear”) is currently at Loyola University in Chicago to study Philosophy and Spirituality. He slowly marched up the ladder of city life from Omaha, to St. Paul , and now the Windy City - falling in love with bright lights of shows and symphonies and the plethora of great food and drink. The serene Black Hills and its people, however, will still always have a hold on his heart. He loves wasting money on going to movies in the theater, and most of all cherishes his family, friends, and being in the Society of Jesus.

cwilliamssj@thejesuitpost.org / [Post Archive](#)

Mary Lozowsky, chaplain of Christ the King C.S.S. in Georgetown, shared this poem.

The Good Morning God Prayer

Good morning God!
You are ushering in another day,
Untouched and freshly new
So here I am to ask you, God
If You'll renew me too.

Forgive the many errors that I made
yesterday
And let me try again dear God
To walk closer in your way.

But Lord, I am well aware
I cant make it on my own
So take my hand and hold it tight
For I cannot walk alone.



I have enclosed a little write up of the spiritual symbol that I created for my staff this year. We are a staff of 143 in all so they took me most of my free time to make during the summer.

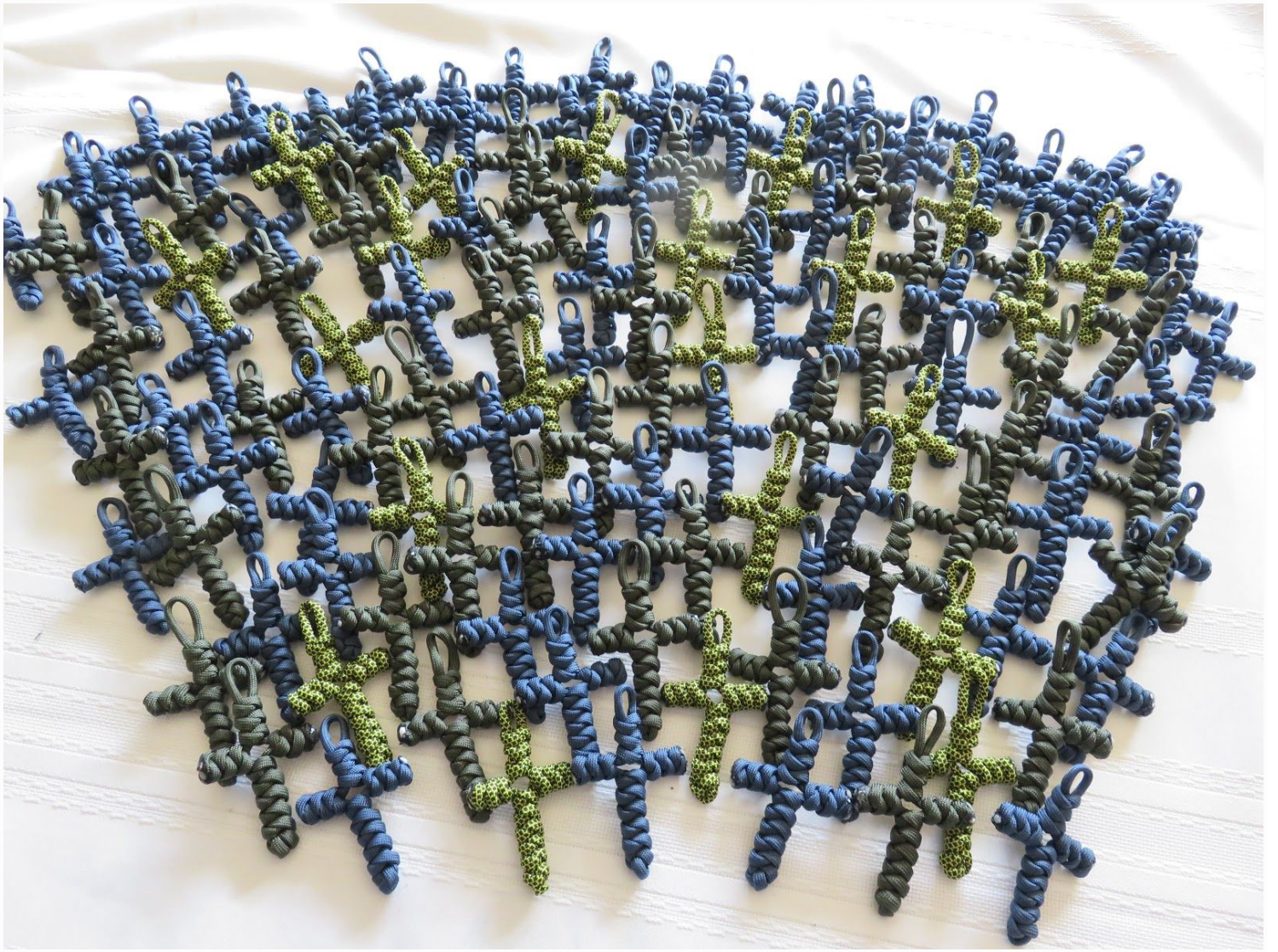
Before our school year begins, I lead a staff opening liturgy highlighting the spiritual theme that will carry us through the year. This year was the third year reflecting on Micah 6:8 with a specific focus on Walk humbly with God. Each year I create a symbol to give our staff that reminds them of the spiritual theme and give it to them at this liturgy. This year, I wanted the symbol to show the depth of God's commitment to us. A symbol of God being with us in our current struggle. I created a cross made by knotting paracord. The cross is such a powerful symbol for us as Christians. Jesus' very human experience of pain, humiliation, and death was transformed into new and eternal life. This woven cross is made by two woven strands carried throughout its structure referencing God walking with us. Each row of paired knots represents the different people and circumstances that we walk with this year. Along with God, we walk with each other as we explore new ways to educate during this pandemic, we walk with family and friends who may need support, we walk with our Indigenous and Black and Coloured brothers and sisters who live with racism. Paracord is often used when camping and climbing. It is a survival tool so these woven crosses will be this for us as well. A physical expression that God is with us. The cord itself is comprised of 7 strands of twisted threads covered by an outer layer. 7 is a significant number from a faith perspective. It is a very sacred number to the Hebrew people and represents completeness and is associated with the perfection of the world and heaven. We remember the significance of 7 days in our creation story. I created them in our school colours symbolizing our support one another as we journey together. Quickly, staff began to put them on their school lanyards and key chains, some of our office administrators hung them in their workstations, some teachers hung them next to their desks or on their white boards. As the weeks passed and staff members saw me, they would tell show or tell me where they put it, some simply pulling it out of their pocket. A simple and concrete expression of Walking humbly with God.

Jo-Anne Stasiuk

Chaplain at Holy Trinity, Kanata, Ont.

God bless you, Jo-Anne, you are the longest serving CSCO chaplain: 34 years and counting!

You were at the very 1st Conference (1987). "I believe I was the youngest one there. In those days it was pretty much all nuns and priests. I was the first lay person hired in my board. Blessed be."





St. John's College Spiritual Tour

As a Chaplaincy Leader, I knew that this would be a year unlike any other. As the school year began, I imagined the things I have done and how I could do them differently. I also tried to think of new ways I could minister to students. One of the new ways I have begun to minister to students, is by doing a spiritual tour of St. John's College. We are blessed at St. John's College to have many reminders of our faith all around us. For example, we have a stewardship hallway, a peace hallway, our math wing of the school has the Beatitudes on the wall, and as you head to our construction room, you will notice the Corporal Works of Mercy on the wall as well. I decided to design a spiritual tour of the school which could be done while social distancing.

The spiritual tour has twenty stops, beginning at my office and ending in the rosary garden. Many students and staff have commented how the spiritual tour, allows them to reflect on things they pass by every day which they never payed attention to or did not know the significance of. During these unfamiliar times, the spiritual tour gives me great joy, knowing that our students can see how God is all around us. Many grade nines have let me know that the spiritual tour not only helps them in faith, but helps them to know their way around the school which gives me great joy as well. I am blessed and thankful to work at a school such as this, where our faith is visible everywhere you look.

Andrew Hall

Chaplaincy Leader

St. John's College, Brantford





SJC Spiritual Tour

Begin in classroom:

Why are we doing a spiritual tour?

The purpose of our SJC spiritual tour is to open our eyes to things we walk past everyday but possibly never truly notice, things that we may see but not truly understand. The following tour serves as an opportunity to gain deeper understanding and meaning, and to see the ways in which faith is constantly around us at SJC. This journey can also serve as a mental health break, being inspired by many aspects of the Catholic Faith. Christian artwork that we see throughout SJC is part of Catholic culture, so this tour seeks to promote Catholic culture, to inspire the souls of students and staff.

Stop # 1: Chaplains Office

Door – Students will view the door to the chaplains office and discuss items on the door such as the St. Vincent de Paul Volunteer poster, the rules for the chaplains office pertaining to social distancing and safety, the images painted on the door such as hands holding the Bible and the words of John 1.1. We will also discuss the words “Discover the joy of faith” which are also painted on the door and how this relates to chaplaincy.

Corkboard outside of office – Students will view the corkboard outside office and will be told the meaning behind the “*Hearts on Fire*” that have been signed by students on the corkboard, as well as pictures and their relation to faith.

Inside office (students won’t enter more than 2 at a time) – Students will view the corkboards in chaplain Andrew’s office which contain pictures of faith initiative activities at SJC. The electric drum will be discussed and how music is a part of our faith at SJC and how music ministry might be experienced this year. The image above his desk of Jesus and young man on a bench with the words Matthew 10:40-41 will be explained and how this relates to chaplaincy.

Stop # 2 – SJC Mission Statement/Crest/Colours

At the top of the stairwell closest to the chaplain’s office, hangs our mission statement. This statement contains an explanation of our crest and colours. This will be explained to students and a particular emphasis will be placed on accept, nurture, and challenge.

Stop # 3 – Beatitudes in Hallway

As students walk toward the chapel, they will see pictures on the walls of the Beatitudes. Attention will be placed on one or two of the beatitudes and how they relate to faith, and how we pass these reminders of our faith every day.

Stop #4 – Gr.9 Art in front of elevator (many hands, each tile)

This art piece depicting a church will be explained, with a focus of how each tile was done by a different student. Students will be challenged to relate this to faith.

Stop # 5 – Glass case in front of chapel

Students will view the art made by SJC students in glass case in front of chapel and be asked to reflect on the meaning and symbols within it.

Stop # 6– Founders of Catholic Education Picture in front of chapel

This picture will be explained and attention will be drawn to the names of founders which are the following: Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, Sisters of St. Joseph of Hamilton, Congregation of the Resurrection, Priests of the Diocese of Hamilton.

Stop # 7 – Sacristy

Before going to the chapel, we will stop at the sacristy and discuss the following questions. What is a sacristy? What items are stored in a sacristy?

Stop # 8 – Chapel

Students will be made aware of where our chapel is located and will discuss items in the chapel as well as their significance. For example, the tabernacle, the altar, holy water font, etc.

Stop # 9 – Religious images in math hallway

Students will view images on the walls of the math hallway such as images of Christ and the stations of the cross. Students will be invited to discuss the images of Christ they see, meanings they see within the images of Christ, and to reflect and discuss why the pictures of the stations of the cross have real people within them. At the end of the math hallway, we will view a sign that describes the stations of the cross as “Purposeful suffering with Christian love.” We will pause and discuss this statement relating to the stations of the cross and ask what does it mean?

Stop # 10 – St. Vincent de Paul Donation Bin & Virtues Hallway

We will then turn left and head towards the cafeteria. We will stop and draw attention to the St. Vincent de Paul donation bin that is now outside the upper caf. We will discuss how St. Vincent de Paul is accepting donations this year, and what items can be accepted, our relationship with St. Vincent de Paul, and how our faith calls us to help those in need. (We will discuss how virtues are good habits that we are all working on).

Stop # 11 – Front Entrance Way

We will discuss items at our front entrance such as the cross, and three-year theme banners. We will discuss the green cloth that drapes around the cross and how it relates to the liturgical season of ordinary time. We will discuss each banner from our three-year theme and how that theme has been lived out at SJC. A special emphasis will be placed on the “Transform” banner and how we can live out the theme of “*Transform*” during this year.

Stop # 12 – Stewardship hallway (near library)

Students will view images in the stewardship hallway such as St. Francis of Assisi and St. Kateri of Tekakwitha. We will discuss these two saints, how they relate to stewardship, briefly discuss their lives, and what they are the patron saints of. Students will also view indigenous images in the stewardship hallway and be asked to relate these images to faith. Attention will also be drawn to the green rule poster which incorporates all world religions on tree branches and states “Do unto the earth as you would have it do unto you.”

Stop #13 – Music/Spec Ed hallway –

As students pass through this hallway, attention will be drawn to images such as the words “Love is the music of the soul”, and an image of Mary holding Jesus in which an angel is playing violin. Students will be asked to reflect on these two images and what it means to them?

Stop #14 – St. John the Evangelist Picture in tech hallway

Attention will be drawn to the image of St. John the Evangelist, and how our school is named after this particular saint. We will discuss his life, what he is the patron saint of, and why he is often pictured with an eagle.

Stop #15: Peace hallway

Students will view images in the peace hallway such as a painting of Pope Francis done by SJC graduate Ania Kogut, a picture/article of SJC graduates Michael Columbo and Nick Teeluckdharry who saved the life of an elderly gentleman, picture and description of SJC graduate and Peace Medal award winner Martin Buenaventura, SKIP certificate of appreciate for our nursing home visits, Board acknowledgement certificate for our Syrian Refugee work, etc. Students will be asked to reflect on these images and how we are called at SJC to be instruments of peace.

Stop # 16 – Corporal Works of Mercy (near construction room) – also see image of God’s creative hand in science hallway

Students will view the *corporal works of mercy* and have them explained. Students will also learn the difference between the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Students will be asked to reflect on ways that they see these works of mercy being lived out at SJC. *(also discuss image of God’s creative hand in science)*

Stop #18 – “Ever Present Teacher” sign (near gym)

We will pause, read, and reflect on the words of the ever-present teacher which says “Let it be known to all who enter St. John’s College that Christ is the reason of this school.” This will be related back to the founders of Catholic Education picture near our chapel. Students will be challenged to consider how God works among us and is constantly teaching us and work through us to teach as well.

Stop # 19 - Catholic Graduates Expectations in Cafeteria

Attention will be drawn to the Catholic Graduate Expectations posted in the cafeteria. Students will be challenged to consider what Catholic graduate expectation they connect with the most and why.

Stop # 20 - Rosary Garden

Students will be introduced to our rosary garden. Students will be made aware of how to pray using the rosary garden, a brief history of the rosary garden, it’s founder Sylvia D’Eramo, and its connection to the chaplet of divine mercy and St. Faustina.

Stop #20 – Return to Classroom

Return to classroom for discussion, feedback, and to hear from students what they appreciated most about the spiritual tour.

Block A: 9:00 AM – “Opening Prayer/Guided Meditation”

The day will begin with a Thanksgiving themed prayer. Staff will then be invited to view a student made guided meditation video, in which students lead our community in a Thanksgiving themed guided meditation which will also tie into our board theme of “*Transform,*” using The Road to Emmaus Gospel story. The guided meditation will allow students to reflect on the following things they are thankful for: 1. A friend, 2. Something in nature, and 3. An experience they have had that they consider a blessing.

End of Block B: 11:15 – “Thanksgiving Video and Grace Before Meals”

At 11:15 all staff are asked to play the following video by Fr. Mike Schmitz entitled “*Giving Thanks Is Necessary.*” On a day in which we are unable to celebrate Mass as a community,

this video allows for us to hear an important pastoral message about Thanksgiving. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjgsV2UUjG8> . At 11:30 grace before meals will take place, challenging us to think of a food they are thankful for, someone in their life that prepares meals, or their favorite restaurant.

End of Block C: 1:50 – “Giving Thanks Through Music”

St. Augustine tells us that to sing, is to pray twice. Music is a form of prayer that helps us give thanks and praise to God. Therefore, please view the following two videos of SJC students performing covers of Thanksgiving themed worship songs. Within these two videos, we witness our peers, trying to help us grow faith. Therefore, students are asked to pause and reflect on a friend they are thankful for that helps their faith.

End of Block D: 2:45 – “Thanksgiving Through the Rosary”

The rosary is one of the ways in which we can give thanks God. It just so happens October is the month of the rosary. Each class will receive a paper rosary bead. At 2:45, teachers are asked to pause and ask the class what they wish to pray for during the month of October. The beads will be collected by Chap Andy. Once collected, all the beads of the rosary which contain classroom prayer intentions, will be placed on the wall near the foods room, right across from the beatitudes that already on the wall. The rosary beads will then be pieced together to form the shape of the rosary on the wall. This activity will allow students the opportunity to give thanks to God through Mary our blessed mother. Right before the bell, we will say a Hail Mary over the intercom to end our day. On Monday October 25th, we will begin our day by praying a decade of the rosary together with these prayer intentions in mind.

Ways to Give Thanks on October 8th

GIVING THANKS

There are three aspects of my life of which I hold close to my heart: FAITH, FAMILY, and FRIENDS. These three I am thankful for. My family and friends who continue to support me, guide me, and love me unconditionally. And my faith which is the cornerstone and the foundation of my life.

Jeff Gendron

Campus Minister

Catholic Central Secondary School

Windsor, ON

Perhaps what I am most thankful for right now is having been gifted with a life which has taught me to be adaptable and resilient so that the imposed demands of working in isolation and learning to overcome a certain level of technophobia have not beaten me down. As I write this, I am able to appreciate a beautiful, early fall day with a brilliant blue sky and breathtaking fall colours just outside my window. I have not, in recent years, had so much opportunity to appreciate the many things which I have so often passed by in my commute to the office.

I am thankful for opportunities to get to know my children and grandchildren better as we find creative ways to be in touch – and I am thankful for a husband and children and grandchildren whose love I know and feel.

I am thankful for a changed pace of life which has allowed me to take some on-line courses this summer and enrich my exploration of my faith.

I am thankful that I work with many wonderful people who share my joy in faith, and also that I have the opportunity to learn from people of other faith traditions and celebrate with them.

I am thankful that God gave me the gift of music and that I get the opportunity to share it in my parish.

I am thankful.....

Gillian

Gillian Federico

System Chaplain and Faith Formation Lead

HCDSB

I am very thankful for:

For the gift of God in my life,

For the faith that He allowed me to have,

For the honour of being totally surrendered to Him,

For the gift of His Blessed and Immaculate mother for us.

The gift of each and every day,

For the gift of being chosen to serve God and to bring Him Glory,

For the gift of my husband, my children, my grandchildren, my parents and relatives,

For the gift of each one of my friends and neighbours,

For the honour to teach and to speak about the love of God to our beautiful students and school communities.

For the gift of my health and the health of all of us,

For the gift of my job and my home,

For the gift and the joy of this very moment,

For the gift of now.

Blessed I am.



BELIEVE IN MIRACLES, for with God all things are possible.

Nuri R. Warzecha.

Chaplain

St. Joseph's Catholic High School.

St. Thomas, Ont.

The pandemic has made me more thankful for my family, my health, our healthcare system, and it has reminded me that people are really good.

We can always find the negative, and this pandemic has shown us where we can improve in a lot of ways as people and as a country. That can be a positive thing too if we really learn from it.

Where I think God resides in all of this is in the daily, often several times a day, examples of people ready to help and to be on the frontline when we need them most.

Jolene Smith

chaplain of St. Michael C.H.S. and CSCO President

Niagara Falls

I am thankful for the opportunity to spend time with my family and to take quiet moments in nature. I am most thankful for my faith in Jesus as it sustains me and gives me hope and purpose.

Peace,

Natalie

Natalie Hleba

Chaplaincy Leader

Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School

Strathroy ON

I am grateful for many many things; namely my health, and the health of my family members and loved ones. I am extremely grateful to still be employed and still have the loving connectedness of my school community, I am very grateful to have a safe home to live in during these times, and I am eternally grateful for the technology that continually connects us all together.

Separately together we find hope, nurture our faith, and embrace the reality of living moment to moment to protect one another.

Celia Ieradi

she/her

Photography and Visual Art Teacher, Chaplaincy Lead

Madonna CSS, TCDSB

During these challenging times I am thankful for the new opportunities of ministering to my school community. Technology can be used to help students connect not only to one another but to their spiritual lives. It definitely has helped me learn and accept new ways of reaching out to people, not only to my students but to my staff as well. Online social justice groups, connect groups, and weekly video reflections has enabled my ministry of Chaplaincy to remain vibrant! God is good!

Gordie Van Putten

Chaplaincy Leader

St. Joseph's Catholic Secondary School

Cornwall, ON

During these challenging times, what are you thankful for?

I am thankful for my faith that keeps me steady regardless of the changes & challenges surrounding me. Our God is good and faithful always.

Kimberly Coursolle

chaplain of St. Patrick High School

Thunder Bay

My instinct is to write a long list of all that I'm feeling thankful for these days. I was home in isolation with my kids most of last week because my son got a cold and while it was super frustrating to be missing work and for them to be missing school, we had such great weather and had so many things to be thankful for. The biggest is that we are all healthy (no COVID19 in the family).

My answer upon deeper reflection is this:

This Thanksgiving, as we find ourselves in the second wave of the pandemic, I am deeply grateful for my staff at St. Mother Teresa High School in Ottawa. What I am witnessing in our school-faith community is moving and inspiring. There is quite a bit of diversity among us in regards to: personal circumstances in regards to health risks, comfort levels with being back at school, tech-savvy-ness, confidence in the subject they're teaching, and so much more. Within this diversity, there is so much unity! The staff is united in the spirit of solidarity to work for the common good. They are acting with

extreme care for their students and for one another. I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to minister within and for this incredible community.

Stay safe and be well,

Peace,

Leah

Leah Daly

Chaplaincy Leader

St. Mother Teresa High School

Ottawa

I am thankful for...

- A God who loves me in spite of how many times I mess up.
- A wife and children who support and encourage me in all that I do.
- The best group of friends that I “shmo” like me could ever wish for.
- A community of colleagues who continues to challenge and enrich me.
- A Parish community that welcomes me into their faith journey.
- A School community that has welcomed me with open arms and made me feel like I have found my new home.

That is what I am thankful for today.

Deacon Ed

Ed MacIntosh

Chaplain of St. Mary's H.S.

Kitchener

When I pondered about what I was thankful for as we approach

Thanksgiving, I thought there was so much, I didn't know where to

begin. But then an old friend came to mind. Lately Jim passed away

in a nursing home; a kindly old soul who always had a good word for everybody.

I remember meeting Jim in our RCIA in the parish. He entered our Program at the age of 78. Jim's wife had passed many years earlier and he had promised her even though he wasn't Catholic he would continue attending Catholic Mass, but would not convert to Catholicism until his poor mother passed. Well she did and he began attending our RCIA. He found things complicated and difficult to understand. When we would ask him what he thought of our videos and handouts he would feel embarrassed and would have to say that he really didn't follow because they were complicated. Over time the only question we would ask of him would be what is the most important thing? His answer was a four letter word "L.O.V.E. "

That my friends is what I am thankful for in these pandemic times. The love of God; the love of my caring spouse, my family, my friends

and colleagues. Love makes the world go around. May you all appreciate the love that surrounds you this extraordinary Thanksgiving as you continue to reflect the love of God to your families and communities. May God bless you all. RIP Jim!

Aidan Murphy

Chaplaincy Team Leader

Saint Peter's Catholic Secondary School

Peterborough

I would have to say that one thing I am thankful for is the time I get to spend outdoors and in nature, thankful for God's steadfast creation which provides me a connection to Him when I am struggling, and thankful for my health and well-being that I am physically able to get outside to walk, run, or simply enjoy the fresh air.

Mary

Mary De Oliveira

Chaplaincy Team Leader

St. Joan of Arc Catholic High School

Barrie, ON

This Thanksgiving I am thankful for my Faith for my wife for my family, nieces and nephews, great nieces and nephews, Godchildren, and friends. This past year with COVID gave me a greater appreciation of those around me those brothers and sisters in Christ who were, are and continue to be available to talk, I am ever so grateful and you know who you are, it gave me new glasses to look through to see the many blessings and the many times God appear in nature and in the gardens around me I am so grateful and so thankful. The time home although difficult allowed me to shed the busyness of life and move back to what was most important in my life. Recognizing my home as my Retreat Centre I did not have to travel far for Silence, Peace, comfort, and God in the middle of everything. Ever so grateful and thankful of my ministry I look forward to going home each day to my Retreat Centre. I have discovered new gifts in photography

and in writing; my wife refers to me as her Poet. I am so grateful and thankful to God for being that guiding light on my journey which continues to be an adventure and I have discovered beautiful people along the way young and old.

I am thankful for the many young people I have the privilege of serving and grateful for the ones who will seek me out wherever I might be in this world to say "hello and do you remember me, Mr. Silvestro?" "Oh Yes" I say "You just made my day." "God bless you" as they go on their way.

I am thankful for all of you in my life. Every time I see you, you make my day.

God Bless You All!

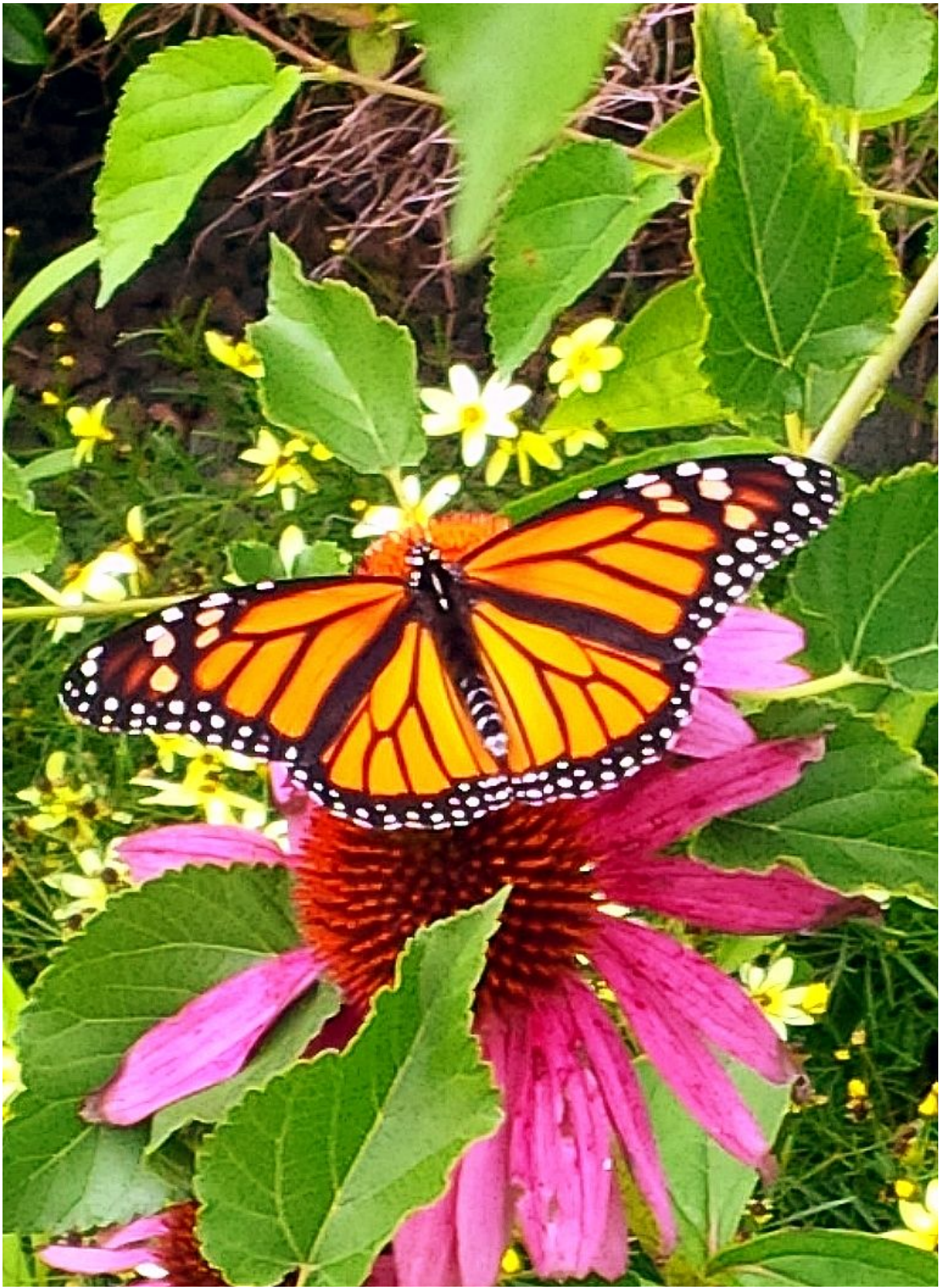
Vincenzo Silvestro

Chaplaincy Leader,

Saint Andre Bessette Catholic Secondary School

London, ON

N.B. This is a picture that I took of a butterfly in my garden:



I'm thankful for the presence of God in the most Holy Eucharist and family. Without the love and humour, I don't know how I would face the days ahead. When we went back to mass, live and in person, was the blessing. I hope never to lose that.

In Christ,

Ms. Eliza Albano

Chaplaincy Leader

Ascension of Our Lord S.S

Mississauga

During these challenging times I am thankful for the “slowing down” of the pace of life in the world—giving me time to reflect and appreciate people and human connection. This includes the people close to me (such as family and friends), also colleagues and students, as well as people I seldom see. I don't take any of these encounters for granted.

Peace and Blessings,

Flo Pianta

Chaplaincy Leader

St Aloysius Gonzaga C. S. S.

Mississauga

I'm thankful for the fact that Covid 19 has greatly lessened usual distractions, forced me to slow down, and build a deeper relationship with family, friends, and the Father, Son and Spirit.

Roger Richard

chaplain of Fr. John Redmond C.S.S.

Etobicoke

Traynor Family Tragedy Reflection

After three consecutive and busy PA Days back in my school, I was hoping to enjoy an extra long Labour Day weekend with my family. However, just after 8:00 AM on Friday, September 4th, I received two back-to-back text messages from different friends which led to this shocking realization: Very early that morning a teacher at my school and three of his children had been shot and killed at home, while his wife survived and a fourth child was already away at university. You probably are now aware of the details and scope of this tragedy involving the Traynor Family of Oshawa.

On Tuesday, September 8th, we, the Paul Dwyer Staff, were going to gather for a Prayer Service. Even with lots of prayer and some input from a few trusted advisors, I struggled most of the weekend to finalize my reflection. An article by Dr. Gretchen Schwenker from "Catholic Update" entitled *Responding to Tragedy with Hope and Love* was incredibly helpful. If this was your school, what would you say given the situation? To follow, please find the reflection I shared with my staff:

"The Lord is near to the broken hearted." (Psalm 34:18)

Dear Friends in Christ,

We gather together this morning under extremely difficult circumstances. We gather together to remember and pray for the repose of the souls of Chris, Brad, Adelaide, and Joey. We gather together to pray for Loretta and Sam, for their healing, for their peace, and for their comfort in the days, weeks, and months to come. We also gather together to pray for all of their family, friends and colleagues, which includes all of us, who have been significantly affected by what has happened.

When a tragedy of this magnitude occurs, there really are no perfect words. No words seem to fully describe the shock, denial, confusion, anger, pain, and deep sorrow we may feel. No words are ever enough to begin to describe how we might struggle to move forward with our lives. An understandable reaction is to ask why this happened at all. Some might even ask, "Where is God?"

Yet, it is in these wrenching moments that we need God the most. As the Dwyer community so incredibly impacted by this tragedy, we turn to each other, however we may be feeling, for support and consolation. We turn to scripture for wisdom. We turn to the Lord to learn how to carry on, as if God is like a good friend who listens intently to us and is a vessel for our grief and incomprehension. We turn to our faith for something to lean on.

As those struggling to live a life of faith, we strive to believe that God is always with us along our journey, no matter how difficult it may become. Pope Francis captures this in writing, *"Faith is not a light which scatters our darkness, but a lamp which guides our steps in the night and suffices for the journey."* (Light of Faith, 57)

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul offers us some sage advice during trying times such as these: *"Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good."* (12:9) He is telling us we can be ourselves, we can be authentic. St. Paul also encourages us to be patient in our suffering,

to persevere in our prayer, and to even weep with those who are weeping. He is inspiring us to be tender and compassionate with ourselves and each other.

Today's Gospel contains words that are especially relatable: *"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens ..."* (Mt. 11:28) Here, St. Matthew also does not shy away from giving us permission to be ourselves, to experience what we may be experiencing.

Additionally, and as is often the case with our Lord, we hear an invitation. *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."* (Mt. 11:29)

Here, Jesus is referencing a yoke, which is a type of wooden harness that is used for oxen to get them to pull a cart or farm equipment. Typically, in Jesus' time, it was one yoke for two oxen. So, Jesus is offering us his support; Jesus is offering to walk right beside us; Jesus is offering to lessen our load, so we can hopefully find some peace and comfort one day again.

My friends, today is a day I am sure we would rather not be facing.

Tomorrow and beyond may seem almost unbearable as well.

But quoting the words of our Principal, Mike O'Brien, who emailed all of us Staff on Saturday regarding today:

"We gather to pray, listen to the Word, to grieve, reflect, to share, celebrate lives, support each other, and be a family."

It is in all of this, both now and in the days to come, where we just might realize that the Lord is near.

Amen.

David Dubowits
Chaplain – Msgr. Paul Dwyer C.H.S.
Oshawa, ON

- Memorial display for the Traynors:



**MSGR. PAUL DWYER
CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL**



“True love begins when nothing is looked for in return.”

~ St. Therese of Lisieux

In sharing these insights and thoughts, it is my sincere hope they will be helpful to others. How do you know if someone is a blessing or a lesson in your life? Although it is possible for people to be both a blessing and a lesson, they are usually one or the other. Are you being loved or are you being deceived? Pause and prayerfully ask God for signs to help you discern. In the end, people never abandon people they love. People abandon people they are using. Too often, we love things and use people. We do not live in a black and white world and relationships are often complicated and messy. We are an imperfect people in an imperfect world.

Be thankful and happy for the gift of friends and never take them for granted. Friendships are special gifts that need to be cared for, tended to and cultivated like a garden. It takes mutual commitment, genuine love, sacrifice, communication, respect, trust, authenticity, honesty, discipline, patience, creativity, good humour, prayer, maturity, timing, chemistry and the grace of God for a life giving relationship to take root, grow and bear fruit. “To love is nothing, to be loved is something but to love and be loved is everything.” ~ unknown

Genuine love is a decision of both the mind and the heart. It is not based on convenience, a passing feeling, a mood swing, the time of day or the season of the year. There is a world of difference between someone who is committed to the relationship only on certain days versus someone who is faithfully committed to the relationship every day. Are you viewed by the other as a priority or an option? In relationships, we need to recognize that not everyone is ready to make a lifetime commitment. In addition, there are those who are incapable to make such a commitment. If you are mutually blessed with a loving friendship and relationship, do not ever let the sun set on your spats and disagreements. In the profound words of St. Francis of Assisi: “Love lightens all difficulties and sweetens all bitterness.”

It is impossible to love someone if you do not love yourself. This is foundational and will determine what you accept and how you allow someone to treat you. Words are important but too often they are cheap, dishonest and meaningless while actions are usually invaluable. Mixed signals and red flags are present for a reason and should never be ignored. When you are blindly in love, this is often difficult and almost impossible to perceive.

Balance is so vital in everything. For example, when a wheel is out of balance or if your workday is out of balance, you will soon know it and the results will take their toll. There are times when relationships are out of balance for a variety of reasons. Do both people have a voice in the decision making? Timing is also a factor that should never be underestimated. People have different needs, values and priorities and these do not always remain the same over time. Are these predominately in sync or are they usually in conflict in the relationship? In the end, the writing is on the wall if the relationship is in a perpetual state of imbalance.

There is much to be said about the importance of moderation. At no time can love ever be rushed or forced. A relationship that heats up too fast usually ends just as quickly. Never beg to remain in a relationship. No matter who you are, what you said or what you did would not have made a difference in a one-sided relationship. When your intentions are pure, you do not lose anyone. They lose you! In contrast to the confusion that is common in a lop-sided relationship, when you are genuinely loved, you will know it. Authentic love is both a human and divine gift. The proof is always in the pudding. St. Therese of Lisieux summed it up beautifully: “Love proves itself by deeds.”

It takes two mature, honest and committed people who sincerely know what they want, and joyfully and unconditionally love each other for the relationship to grow and stand the test of time. St. Paul reminds us that “there is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance.”

There is absolutely no redeeming value being the only one who is fully invested in the relationship and watering a dead plant. If you sincerely love someone and it is not mutual, there is no point remaining in the relationship. Although this is much easier said than done, do not give in to the temptation to ponder the million and one unanswered questions why the relationship ended because nothing will ever have made a difference. You will waste your precious time and only add to the disappointment.

Providentially, some relationships are blocked for reasons that we may never fully understand on this side of eternity. It is okay to not have all the answers and to not have complete closure. Let go ... let God and move on as you cannot live in the past. WONDERFUL blessings that you could never imagine await you in the future. When God answers our prayers, we are being directed. When our prayers are not answered, we are being protected. Trust that “there are more tears shed over answered prayers than over unanswered prayers. When we accept what happens to us and make the best of it, we are praising God.” ~ St. Teresa of Avila

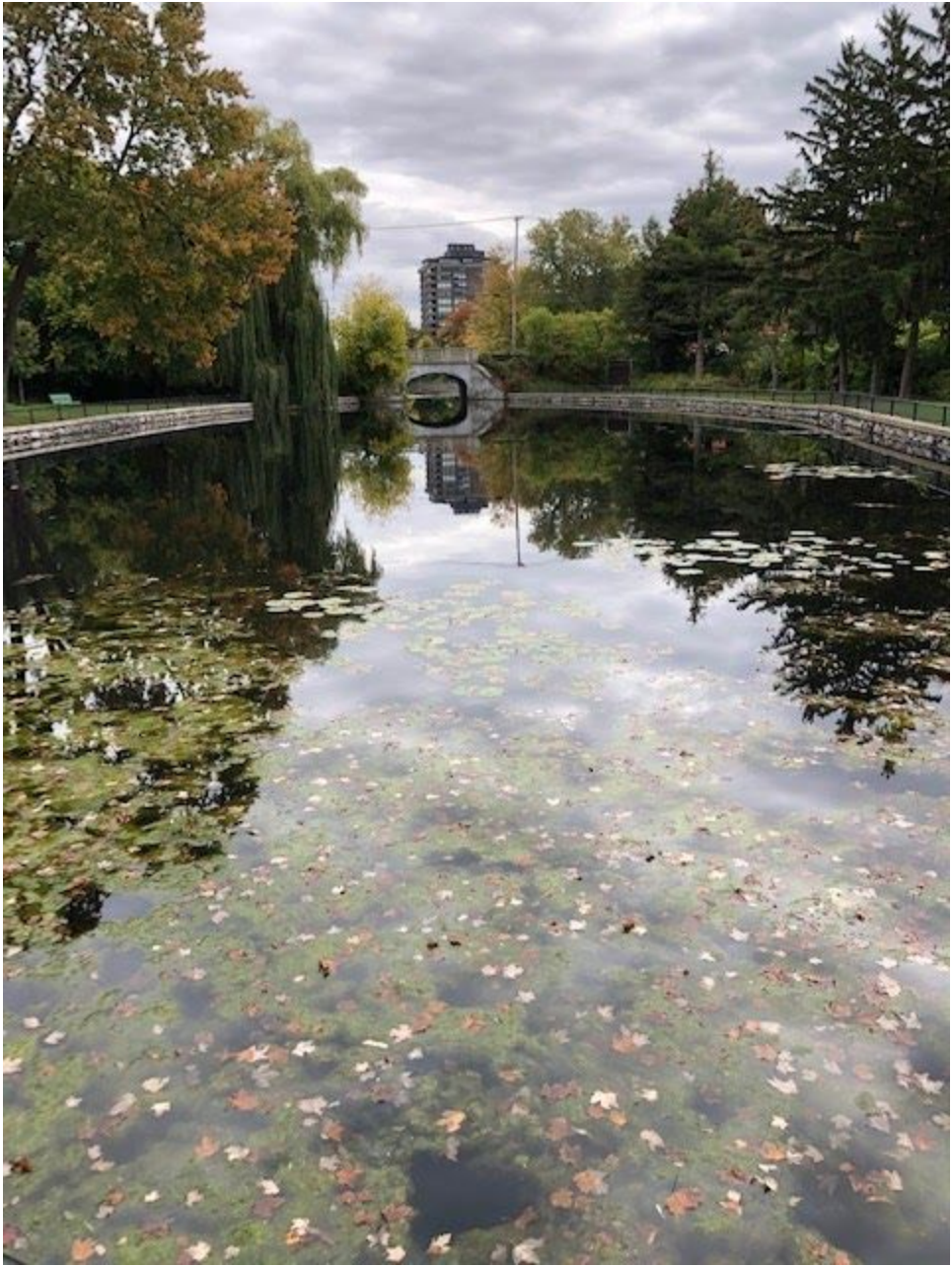
Don Hall

chaplain of St. Mary C.S.S.

Hamilton

- View of my (Mary Defayette) school from the other side of the canal:









Mary Defayette

chaplain of Immaculata H.S.

Ottawa

SJC Student Worship Songs

Since we are unable to gather for Mass today (October 8) at St. John's College, we were going to pause multiple times throughout the day today and look at ways we could give thanks. One of the ways is through music. I challenged students to cover worship songs that would really help us to focus on the theme of Thanksgiving. I have put the student worship covers below:

1. Jacob, Gr.10, "Thank You" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKbuUDL64ak>
2. Ethan, Gr.12, "Amazing Grace" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfNlalITGUE>
3. Anna, Gr.11, "What a Beautiful Name It Is" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLvVzSeRDRg>

Andrew Hall

Chaplaincy Leader

St. John's College

Brantford

As a way of reflecting on what we are thankful for as we approach Thanksgiving, and to give thanks through our faith, I asked Campus Ministry students to create thank you cards for our custodians. Here are a couple pics of the cards and our custodians. The cards included signatures and words of gratitude from students as well as the prayer below:

Dear Lord

We give You thanks and praise

For the custodians of St. John's College

Who work hard during this pandemic

Making sure that our school is constantly clean.

We thank You for these men and women
Who help us to feel safer during these unfamiliar times.
May You bless them for the work they do,
The extra efforts and tasks they perform daily during Covid-19 and
For their kindness, their smiles, and hello's in the hallways
As they go about their work.
We ask for Your blessing and protection over all of our custodians.
Amen.

Andrew Hall







Thank you Damiano, Cosmo, Mary, Jo-Anne, Andrew, Jeff, Gillian, Nuri, Jolene, Natalie, Celia, Kim, Leah, Ed, Aidan, Vincenzo, Roger, Eliza, Gordie, Mary, Flo, David, Don and Mary for contributing to the latest edition of the CSCO newsletter.

CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2020

Please consider sending me your 'Reflections of 2020'.

It could be related to your personal, family or school life.

A paragraph or two is good.

A prayer or a poem is always appreciated.

And photos are always great, too!

Send to Lorenzo Campanelli at cscovp@gmail.com.

Deadline for submissions: December 11 at 12 noon.

