

Embrace the Spirit

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Religious and Moral Education Council
The Alberta Teachers' Association



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Spring 2016

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A Note from the Editor



I lingered over the preparation of this issue of *Embrace the Spirit* because it is my last one! I am allowing myself the indulgence of a full-length article to reminisce about the past 13 years: “Reminiscing and Letting Go.” Dean Schneider, the editor-elect, shares his thoughts on the tug-of-war between truth and mercy. I will leave it to him to introduce himself in the next issue.

“Kaleidoscope” features Living Waters Catholic Schools, and we have an additional contribution from Evergreen Catholic in the “Students’ Corner.”

Tomás Rochford’s series “Fides et Ratio” comes to its conclusion in this issue.

I allowed myself a little trip down memory lane by pulling two articles from previous issues. A book review and some news about Conference 2016 round out this spring’s offerings.

You will note that our editorial board has dwindled considerably. Committed to maintaining the quality of the journal, Dean needs your help and support. The main responsibility of the editorial board is to help Dean find appropriate content by making suggestions for articles and inviting (nagging) teachers and administrators to contribute student work, lesson plans, reflections and reviews. If you have a passion in an area of religious and moral education, you could offer to become a columnist or write a feature article. Please help the journal to continue to be a source of sound information and teacher voice.

Consider nominating a deserving colleague for one of RMEC’s awards—check out our website for details and deadlines.

Adieu!

Dorothy Burns



From the President



First of all, a heartfelt thank-you to the members who voted for me to continue as president of the Religious and Moral Education Council for another term. It has been my privilege to serve in this capacity.

Our council membership is steadily growing: we are currently at 199 members. This is a great improvement, as it was only a few years ago we were struggling to reach 100 members. If you know someone who would benefit from an RMEC membership, point them toward the ATA website, www.teachers.ab.ca.

Our fall conference was another success. Thank you to Ron Baier and the conference committee for their tireless efforts ensuring this event was valuable to all who attended. The topic of science and religion is an important one. Many students believe that science and religion are mutually exclusive: either a person believes in science or they believe in religion. Karlo Broussard helped us to understand that science and religion actually go hand in hand. In fact, he told us, many scientists were devout Catholics. God is the God of science. The Church is not threatened by scientific truths. As St Pope John Paul II stated, "Truth cannot contradict truth." This is an integral message for all.

Finally, I thank Dorothy Burns for her many years of service as the editor of *Embrace the Spirit*. May God bless her future endeavours.

As well, welcome to Dean Schneider, our new editor. Thank you, Dean, for sharing your talents with us.

God bless.

Carl Fakeley



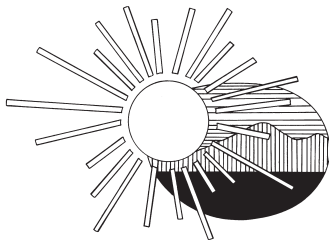
Editorial Board 2015/16

Dorothy Burns, Editor, Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools, Okotoks

Dean Schneider, Assistant Editor, Clear Water Academy, Calgary

Sandy Talarico, Newman Theological College and Edmonton Catholic Schools, Edmonton

Embrace the Spirit is in need of new editorial board members to help us find good stories by being our eyes and ears around the province. Being on the editorial board is not a huge time commitment, and you will not have to write articles (though articles are always welcome). The main task of an editorial board member is to help us plan for and find content for *Embrace the Spirit*. If you are interested, please contact Dorothy Burns (dburns@redeemer.ab.ca) for more details.



Religious and Moral Education Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association

Mission Statement

The Religious and Moral Education Council exists to inspire and foster learning communities by providing professional development for teachers to help them nurture the moral, ethical and spiritual lives of students.

Vision Statement

The Religious and Moral Education Council will, in search of peace and the common good, be a principal resource for Alberta teachers.

Values

We are committed to serving teachers of all traditions and cultures, through the values of faith, dignity, respect and collaboration.



Reminiscing and Letting Go

Dorothy Burns

In his book *The Holy Longing* and also in his “Guidelines for the Long Haul,”¹ Father Ronald Rolheiser speaks of the part of the paschal mystery often neglected: the ascension. He describes how the apostles had to let Jesus go so they could receive the Spirit to live the life they were called to without him physically present. Such a letting go is, in a sense, a death. Rolheiser speaks of how people can remain stuck in a certain place because they cannot let go. When it is time to let the old ascend, Rolheiser recommends naming what has blessed us and then releasing it. This last article is my way of naming, with gratitude, the blessings of the past thirteen years and then letting them go, ready to receive anew the spirit to live my next stage of the journey. Ultimately, it is better to let go than to be pushed out.

In my time as editor I have worked with six presidents: Ed Jean, Ron Zacharko, Kyle Porter, Mark Nixon, Sharon Malec and Carl Fakeley. I feel as if things have come full circle—Ed was president when I took over as

editor in the fall of 2003. We are now working together on the executive of REN (Religious Education Network).

As I was cleaning out my files and reviewing tables of contents from back issues of the journal, I was struck by how many of the names are connected with my life’s story beyond the confines of RMEC. They are a reflection of the ebb and flow of religious and moral education, particularly Catholic education, in the province of Alberta over the past decade and more.

Many have moved on or are now retired: Kathy Inglis (Red Deer Catholic), Linda Ellefson (Holy Spirit, Lethbridge), Dan Kingdon (Newman Theological College), Michael Marien (STAR Catholic) and Louis Kloster (Greater St Albert). Dawn Kirvan (who died on March 4, 2010) was a great mentor and contributed on many occasions to the journal. Her legacy is remembered through the council’s Award of Merit for Collaboration, named in her honour. Others are still in the trenches in school boards and

dioceses around the province: Sean Kelly (Medicine Hat), Russ Snoble (Grande Prairie), Chris Brochu (Calgary Catholic), Michael Soentgerath (Diocese of Calgary), Charles Weckend (Fort McMurray), Karen Koester (Evergreen Catholic), Sandra Talarico (Edmonton Catholic and Newman Theological College) and Janice Stefancik (Edmonton Catholic).

One of the things that made life easier as an editor was to have knowledgeable and thoughtful writers willing to become columnists. I have been blessed to have

- Tim Cusack (Edmonton Catholic): “The Narrow Way: Issues at the Heart of Spiritual Leadership,” fall 2007–spring 2012;
- Michael Marien (STAR Catholic): “Embrace LIFE (Learning Instruments for Engagement),” fall 2007–spring 2012;
- Brenda Hamilton (Edmonton Catholic): “Couched Discoveries,” spring 2008–spring 2010;
- Tim Cusack and Sandra Talarico: “Salt of the Earth: Perspectives from Catholic Educators,” spring 2009–winter 2011; and

¹ http://ronrolheiser.com/guidelines-for-the-long-haul-revisited/#.VsvNdT_2bIU (accessed February 22, 2016) or <http://tinyurl.com/htq4rqc> (accessed March 30, 2016)

- Tomás Rochford (Christ the Redeemer Catholic): “Fides et Ratio,” winter 2012–present.

One of my most favourite features to work on was “Kaleidoscope,” a compilation of stories about projects and events from a particular school district. To date we have showcased STAR Catholic (spring 2010), Grande Prairie (spring 2011), Lakeland Catholic (spring 2012), Holy Family Catholic (winter 2013), Elk Island Catholic (spring 2014), Christ the Redeemer Catholic (winter 2015), Greater St Albert (spring 2015) and Living Waters (spring 2016). There are lots of great teachers doing interesting and life-changing work with students whose stories have not yet been told. I hope you will support the new editor, Dean

Schneider, by coming forward to share them.

We have heard from many teachers and students as well as contributions from our post-secondary institutions and speakers from our conferences. The most recent collaboration, with Jim Parsons from the University of Alberta, resulted in our special edition last spring (2015).

Reviewing names also revealed what a small world this is. Matt Hoven, at St Joseph’s College, Edmonton, wrote for the journal (spring 2004) as a school chaplain in Fort Saskatchewan. He has nieces in Okotoks (where I live), who became classmates and good friends with my two daughters—so much so that we even cat sit for them.

I pulled two short articles from the archives as my parting gift to you. First is “Who Do You Say That I Am?” (“Students’ Corner,” fall 2006) because it brings a smile to my face—attending the annual RMEC conference as a family was a wonderful experience for us, something that my two (now grown up) girls really looked forward to. Second, I chose “Forgiveness and Reconciliation” (spring 2012) because we are in Jubilee Year of Mercy. It is a sampling of the voices of educators, dear colleagues, who have contributed over the years.

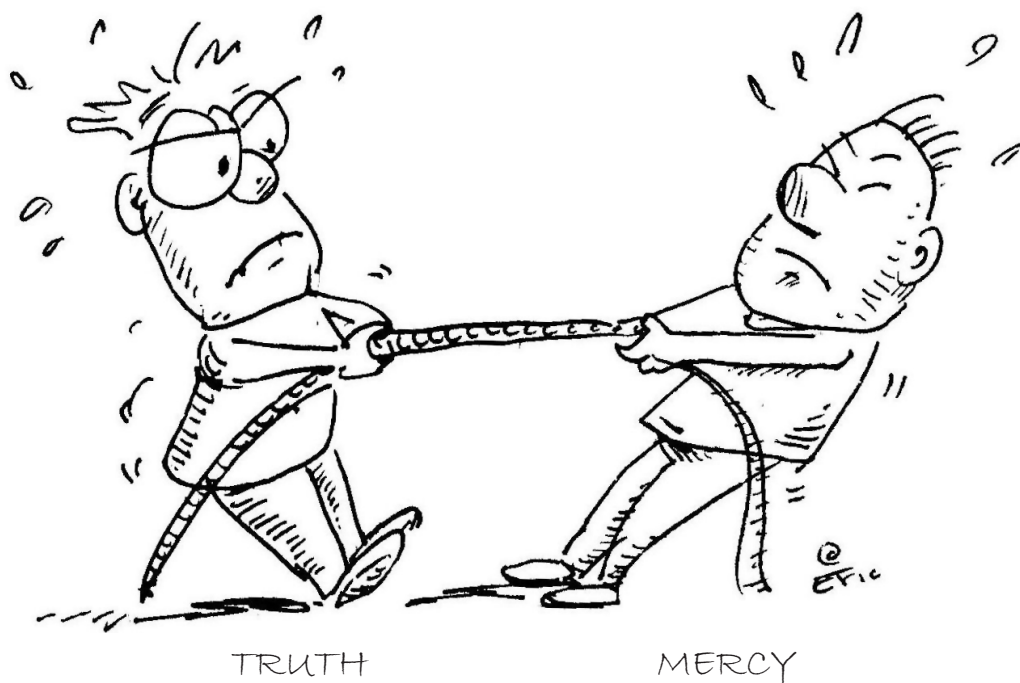
With a heart full of gratitude, I am letting go.

Dorothy Burns served as editor of Embrace the Spirit from fall 2003 through spring 2016.



Can Truth and Mercy Get Along?

Dean Schneider



I remember the first time I was fired up over something that I felt all people needed to know about. I had recently experienced a spiritual awakening, if you will—one that changed the way I saw God and the world—and I wanted everyone I knew to see the light. After all, the freedom I now felt was exhilarating, and of course the people I loved would want to be free of their burdens too! Suffice it to say that things didn't go too

well with that venture. The funny thing about truth is that, no matter how true something is, the way you share it really makes a difference.¹ Enter humility.

In the years that passed I would make many other attempts to share what I felt was the truth in love, only to find out that I had simply joined the skirmish; the social media slaughter claimed another victim.² Unwittingly, I had simply become another combatant

launching “truth grenades”³ into the mist of the moral quagmire. All sides continue to do this, of course (sadly, I might even catch myself still winding up from time to time), but it's safe to say that the approach is not moving anyone forward except by the blunt edge of a shovel (and provoking the ire of many in the process).

How do you share the truths you have? As a faith educator, I began my journey being thrown into the

¹ See 1 Corinthians 13:1–8.

² I should probably mention, for the sake of the uninitiated, that Facebook is probably the last place to effectively debate articles of moral controversy. The scores of the wounded pile up daily from such fruitless ventures.

³ The phrase “truth grenades” has been used by many a person, and I'm not sure where it originated. I first heard it used by Julie Rogers in her Q Ideas talk “Freedom Through Constraint” (<http://qideas.org/videos/freedom-through-constraint>) (accessed April 27, 2016).

deep end. Teaching religion classes for Grades 7–12, at times I was chewing on bites that were a bit too big for my face, and I was working with a savvy crowd of teenagers who, like so many, felt they had things already figured out. Enter confusion.

I could see the struggles of my students as they navigated their world, so obviously hungry for truth. The popular rhetoric they witnessed in that world was (and remains) quite polarizing—a fact that increased their struggles as they found their faith more and more at odds with the culture that beckoned them. Wanting to lead them to truth, I felt a confusion of my own, though, as I didn’t want to join the ranks of poor Christian witnesses I had seen wreak havoc upon so many. I wasn’t much for force feeding, and yet I had much to learn about my own approach. Thankfully, someone came into my scope that would change my outlook forever. Enter Pope Francis.

My classes and I had watched the white smoke rise from the Vatican, and as we saw this new Pope kneel before the whole world to receive its prayers, I knew history was being made before me. No surprise, his humility and love quickly enamoured the world, and he continues to influence and inspire the hearts of many. It

struck me how little he focused on hot-button issues (despite the mountains of truth the church had to offer on them) and how willing he was to stray from “safe” and structured pathways to touch those whom so many had deemed untouchable. I thought I was familiar with forgiveness—that was something you showed to someone who felt sorry for what they’d done, right?

As I studied his words and actions, though, I came to discover something I had never truly known. Enter mercy.

What is mercy, anyway? Do we really have it straight? Clearly, Pope Francis shows it time and again, reaching out to the broken rather than preaching for their conversion first. What so many don’t notice, though, is that in his mercy, Pope Francis adheres all the while to the timeless truths of the Gospel. Amidst his timeless example, however, I see something else happening. So often, in the classroom and beyond, I witness the Pope’s sound bites being used to justify a kind of “mercy” that pales in comparison to his own. That “mercy” preaches that the only way to be truly merciful is to embrace moral relativism with abandon.

Clearly the hypocritical Pharisee is not to be our model; both Jesus and the modern-day student have

choice words for such an approach. The heavy-handed voice of self-righteous indignation falls on deaf ears today (as it should) but, as Pope Francis has shown by his example, the alternative is not to embrace all action as good. Mercy and truth are one. In fact, mercy without truth is not mercy at all.⁴

To bring it close to my own home, my youngest child (almost two years old now) is continually trying to play with the toilet. Mercy demands I help clean him up every time he does, but it would be cruel to both him and my household if at some point I didn’t try to teach him about the gross dangers of toilet play. How merciful would it be for me to continually watch him harm himself and others and put nothing more than a Band-Aid’s worth of help upon the problem? So often we’re expected as people of faith to help people in their pain and yet remain silent when it comes to addressing the causes of it. “Preach the Gospel and if necessary, use words”⁵ often gets watered down to mean nothing more than “Shut up and be nice to me.”

A story told by the inspiring Catholic evangelist, Jim Murphy,⁶ brought this point to clarity for me. (He tells it so much better than I can!) While working bussing tables in a hotel restaurant, he became

4 Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, DD, the president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops in an interview for the *National Catholic Register*, October 21, 2014 (www.ncregister.com/daily-news/archbishop-kurtz-on-the-synod-mercy-without-truth-is-not-mercy) (accessed April 1, 2016).

Also, “Where [mercy] enters in, evil effectively gives way. Where evil does not give way, mercy is not there—but we also add, where there is no mercy, evil does not yield. Mercy does not accept sin nor looks upon it as if peeking between one’s fingers, but only and exclusively helps in conversion from sin ... Divine mercy goes strictly in tandem with justice.” Cardinal Wojtyła, “The Problem of Truth and Mercy” 1957.

5 Though often attributed to St Francis of Assisi, this is a problematic statement not only because it’s often over-simplified, but because St Francis didn’t actually say it. See www.ncregister.com/blog/gstanton/what-st.-francis-of-assisi-didnt-actually-say (accessed April 4, 2016) and www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Oct2001/Wiseman.asp (accessed April 4, 2016).

6 This story is retold with Jim’s permission. More about Jim Murphy is available at <http://www.veracruzcm.com> (accessed April 4, 2016).

aware that many of the waitresses were being rather promiscuous with some of the male customers. As a faithful Catholic, he wanted to do something about it but didn't want to offend anyone. So, he decided, for one particular girl who seemed the worst off, to do three things: be really nice to her, always bus her tables first and quietly pray for her. Years later, he ran into her at a faith conference; after hitting absolute rock bottom, she had now become a follower of Christ. After sharing her story, she asked him, "So, when did you find Jesus?" When he told her that he had been a Catholic all of his life, her jaw dropped. "You mean you had Jesus the whole time? When I was completely lost, involved with so many different men ... so lost I was contemplating ending it all—you had Jesus ... the whole time ... and said nothing?" With disappointment in her face, she looked at him. "What kind of a friend are you?" Turning, she walked away.

It's simple, really. Truth and mercy are inextricably linked. Our actions must show the gospel of mercy, but fact is, words are

needed too—words of truth, spoken in authentic love. As Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said, speaking of technological advance: "If God and moral values, the difference between good and evil, remain in darkness, then all other 'lights' ... are not only progress, but also dangers that put us and the world at risk."⁷ The same is true with "lights" that advance mercy without truth. As merciful as Jesus was to the adulterous woman, he was sure to be clear that she should "go and sin no more."⁸ Only then was his act of mercy complete. Are we merely interested in making our students feel good, or are we willing to be truly merciful and help them, in love, to make their lives better?

It's so hard to deal with moral controversy in this world of Twitter tweets and five-second sound bites. So much of the dialogue needs to unfold over time within trusting relationships,⁹ and no matter how "smart" your phone is, that doesn't happen well when dialogue is limited to 140 characters at a time. And yet, like it or not, this is the world we are thrust

into as faith educators. As the battle lines are drawn in one arena after another, will the enduring truth of our faith find an open heart to reside in? That depends on whether we can become a people who possess enough love and mercy to be granted the right in the first place to someone's openness. The battle for truth is waging fiercely in Canada, now more than ever. It's a battle we cannot sit out on but we can no longer afford to join the bludgeoning either. The strength of those who would silence us has grown to the point where it is only the strength of authentic truth and mercy that will break down the lines of battle and allow true peace to begin. The cost to us as faith educators may be high, but do we love our students enough to pay it? If we do, we may yet have to join the saints before us who were sacrificed on the altar of social correctness. Keep something in mind, though: it was not that the martyrs died but how they died that left others changed by it. Will we be found with the same courage? Whose lives will be changed by our authentic mercy?

7 Easter Vigil Homily, April 7, 2012. Available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20120407_veglia-pasquale.html (accessed April 4, 2016).

8 John 8:11

9 "People won't care how much you know until they know how much you care." This saying is widely attributed to Theodore Roosevelt (no source available).



Living Waters Catholic Schools Regional Division No 42



Living Waters Catholic Schools Regional Division No 42 is located in west central northern Alberta and borders the Athabasca River. The jurisdiction encompasses the geographic areas served by the towns of Edson, Whitecourt and Slave Lake. The town of Fox Creek and the community of Blue Ridge are now part of the Whitecourt ward, but do not have schools. The division's students are housed in six schools and one outreach school:

- Edson: Vanier Community Catholic School (K–6) and Holy Redeemer High (7–12)
- Whitecourt: École St Mary School (K–3) and École St Joseph's School (4–12)
- Slave Lake: St Mary of the Lake (K–6), St Francis of Assisi Catholic Academy (7–12) and St Mary Outreach School (7–12)

Stations of the Cross Project

Shauna Despina

With Easter just around the corner, we really wanted to create a project for the students that would deepen their understanding of the passion of Jesus, and at the same time make a connection with him to their own life. I was tired of using the same old booklet for the students to colour and felt it didn't have much meaning for the students. They needed something tangible, with more kinesthetic activities, for each station. Every day the students did a new activity to represent the next station. There was a booklet as

well, but it was more about reflective prayers for their own personal life than simple colouring. The activities for each station are described below.

1. Pilate condemns Jesus—Students traced around their hands and then cut out the silhouettes and glued them onto black paper with a string hole-punched through them as if the hands were bound. They wrote “Jesus Is Condemned to Die.” They were also given a small piece of string to keep in their pocket to remember Jesus.

2. Jesus takes up his cross—Students made a cross using popsicle sticks bound in the middle with string. They wrote a personal message to Jesus on the cross. At this time a large wooden cross, approximately 75 cm high, was introduced and placed on the large prayer table. From this point on, the students' items were kept on the table.

3. Jesus falls the first time—On a Band-Aid, students wrote the name of someone whom they knew was suffering in some



- way, and prayed for that person as they put the Band-Aid directly on the cross.
4. Jesus meets his mother—A small statue of Mary was placed on the prayer table along with small stained-glass pictures of Mary that the students had coloured.
 5. Simon helps Jesus carry his cross—Students glued a red heart shape, on which they had written an example of a way that they could be helpful at home, onto their traced-out “helping hand.”
 6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus—Students drew Jesus’ face on a piece of fabric. They dipped it in a basin of red water to represent the blood she wiped off Jesus.
 7. Jesus falls the second time—Students had to think “What ‘baggage’ is weighing me down?” They wrote it on a slip of paper and placed it in a sealed “Give It to Jesus Jar,” which was put at the foot of the cross on the prayer table. At the end of the year, all the worries they gave to Jesus were burned as part of our year-end party.
 8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem—Students were each given a facial tissue and each picked a student name. They wrote positive affirmations about that student on their tissue and then gave it to that person. Some kids even made one for me! A small package of tissues was then kept on the prayer table to remind them of this station. This was more powerful than I thought it would be—I saw some tissues weeks later in students’ desks or agenda pouches!
 9. Jesus falls the third time—The large wooden cross was set on the floor with tea lights, one for each student, placed on the cross. With the room darkened and soft music playing in the background, the students sat in a circle around the cross and prayed for a loved one.
 10. Jesus’ clothing is stripped away—Each student was given a torn strip of cloth, which they tied around a wrist. They were asked to keep it on as long as they could. Some wore it right up to the Easter break.
 11. Jesus is nailed to the cross—One at a time, students hammered a nail into the wooden cross as they prayed to God to help them deal with anything that they were struggling with in their lives.
 12. Jesus dies on the cross—On the prayer table were small bowls of breadsticks, candy and vinegar. There was also a large sponge. Each student wrote a confession on a stickie and put it in the “Jesus Jar.” They dipped the breadstick in the vinegar to taste the bitterness of the wine that was given to Jesus on the cross. Students then took a candy, which represented God’s forgiveness. I reminded the students of Jesus’ last words, “Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.”
 13. Jesus is taken down from the cross—The students were shown a picture of Michelangelo’s *Pieta* as they worked on a tissue-paper cross.
 14. Jesus is laid in the tomb—Students were each given a stone on which they wrote their name on one side and a word or symbol on the other side, then placed it on the prayer table.

This small unit turned out to be one of the highlights of the year in our classroom. Every morning during this unit the students would enter the class asking what we would be doing for the next station. They were completely engaged in each lesson and came away with a better understanding of the journey to the cross while deepening their own faith in God.

Shauna Despina is a Grade 4 teacher at École St Joseph School, Whitecourt, Alberta.

Honouring Our Patron with Positive Participation

Jenna Borrelli

To demonstrate the bright futures that lay ahead of all of the students at École St Joseph School, regardless of age or grade, a presentation was done at last year's St Joseph Mass. When Gail Prince began her task to help organize our school mass specifically celebrating our school's saint, Saint Joseph, she requested that the students do something as a special tribute to this celebration. In order to continue building the school's faith community, each homeroom teacher selected an energetic student representative, and each homeroom class decorated a puzzle piece. This puzzle piece was given to each class with two simple instructions: first, decorate and colour the piece in any positive way that represented that homeroom class. The second instruction was very straightforward: *do not obstruct the black lines*. Neither students nor staff knew what these black lines would represent, but all followed instructions carefully and submitted their puzzle pieces within the week requested.



To show our unity and potential as an entire student body, the energetic student representatives rehearsed a performance for the mass celebration. Accompanied by the song "Waving Flag," sung by the Young Artists of Canada (for Hope for Haiti), the students presented a choreographed dance as, one by one, their puzzle pieces came together at the front of the gymnasium for all the school to see. Unbeknownst to everyone, even those participating in the

choreography, was that the puzzle pieces would fit together to depict a large picture of the world. As the final chorus of "Waving Flag" began, the staff, students and parents in the audience began clapping to the beat of the song. This was an engaging way to celebrate our patron saint through active participation in our school mass.

Jenna Borrelli is a teacher at École St Joseph School in Whitecourt.





Only a Merciful Lord Desires to Be Known: The Possibility of Revelation

Tomás Rochford

After three years and five articles detailing the traditional preambles of faith, it is now time to discuss the final preamble: the possibility of supernatural revelation. At the beginning of this series, I mentioned that a major impetus for rediscovering the *preambula fidei* was the growing authority of “New Atheists” and their ideas in Alberta’s schools. Since writing the first article, this influence has only grown, partly because of the proliferation of anti-Christian sentiment in mainstream and social media, and partly because of the continued drift of Canadian society away from traditional theism and religious practice. For many of our students who adopt it, the secular, agnostic/atheistic world view is not merely a temporary rebellion against their parents’ faith—something that will be outgrown—but rather, the very air they breathe. Often coming from secularized homes, constantly bombarded by peer pressure,¹

celebrity culture, mass media and even school curricula that are antitheistic in nature, it is not surprising that their minds and lives are clogged by the rocks and weeds that hinder evangelization.

Another motivation for this series of articles was the desire to offer a methodology that, in light of the above-mentioned situation, would help our students become fertile soil for the Gospel. To attain this end, I examined some of the root causes for the intellectual and moral rot ravaging postmodern Canadian society. (Any remedy not addressing foundational errors is a band-aid solution doomed to long-term failure.) Inspired by Pope St John Paul II’s encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, I addressed the failure of reason that is so damaging to contemporary society. For many in the Christian establishment of the past half-century, this starting point might have appeared strange. (Theological Modernism, which denies the

importance of the intellect for knowing and loving God, and replaces objective reasoning and revelation almost exclusively with subjective experience and feelings, is quite deeply entrenched.) However, it [is] only a right (traditional) understanding of human reason that can support Catholic doctrinal and moral claims.

Therefore, the first two articles of the series “Fides et Ratio” directly addressed the current misunderstandings of human reason, while also offering the challenge to Christian teachers and catechists that we might need to rethink many of our assumptions about the human person because of an inadequate philosophical anthropology. A limited, desiccated understanding of reason does not allow us to take even a first step toward creating fertile soil for evangelization. An understanding of human persons as trousered apes or walking calculators grounds a view of reason that is

¹ As a thought experiment to prove the point, consider who would be considered the greater social pariah in a Catholic separate school: the Catholic teenager who lives his faith devoutly and charitably, or the teenager who ascribes to an atheistic worldview and attends to all the trendy secular causes.

closed to the transcendent realities of the universe. Therefore it was argued that a richer understanding of human reason was required—one that did not collapse all non-empirical or nonquantitative truths into the category of irrational opinion, ie, morality and God!

Having laid this groundwork, the next three articles explained certain fundamental truths, knowable by human reason unaided by Divine revelation, that form a firm foundation for Catholic evangelization. These foundational truths have traditionally been called the preambles of faith, as they provide rational credibility for accepting suprarational doctrines of Christian belief such as the Incarnation, the Blessed Trinity and the existence of heaven, hell and purgatory. Put in another way, if one cannot *know* through reason that God exists, how is one to *believe* that he loves us and desires for us to be with him for eternity? If one does not know at least the basics of the natural moral law, how can one understand and appreciate the Beatitudes or evangelical counsels?

The focus of the present article is the fourth and final preamble: the possibility of supernatural revelation. This preamble is slightly different from the other three because (1) it depends directly on the truth of the first two preambles to have any force and (2) it requires the recognition that having a religion is the natural state of human existence regardless of contemporary objections to the contrary. Addressing this final preamble, we will (1) discuss and demonstrate the natural necessity

of religion for all human beings and cultures, (2) examine the deficiencies of natural religion and (3) demonstrate both the possibility and necessity of Divine revelation. A preliminary summary of this preamble in layman's terms might be phrased in the following way: if God exists and is a providential God, he is quite capable of telling humanity about himself by revealing himself via language and relationships, so as to aid human beings in attaining their ultimate end.

In discussing the possibility of supernatural revelation, we must first recognize the necessity of religion—the tie which binds man to God, the creature to the Creator—for all human persons and societies. At first glance, this may appear to be either a faulty premise (ie, an obviously false statement because of the existence of many ancient and modern atheists/agnostics) or a mere tautology stating that all people have some sort of ultimate concern or central purpose in their lives that could be called “religion” in a sociological sense. However, Christian apologetics has traditionally meant something less sociological and more existential or moral in speaking of the necessity of religion. Natural religion arises from the innate desire for happiness that we all share, and from the essential timeless questions of human existence: Where did we come from (origins)? Why are we here and why do we suffer (purpose, meaning and evil)? Where are we going (destiny)? As these questions must be responded to, not only with the intellect, but with one's

whole life, it is the individual's *summum bonum*, or greatest good, that will structure the answers. In effect, there are no nonreligious persons when it comes to natural religion. Assuming God's existence, we can understand why all human persons and societies are naturally religious. All rational creatures must profess some acknowledgment of God as the Creator of the universe. To refrain from this affirmation, either individually or communally, is an injustice because it fails to recognize our absolute dependence on God. By reason alone, as we discussed in the third article, we can be certain of God's existence and, in a limited way, his providence (Schmidt and Perkins 2002, 95–96). Therefore, in the Catholic tradition, the virtue of religion is considered a subvirtue of the cardinal virtue of justice—ie, rendering to another what is owed.² Additionally, as beings made in his image, and with an immortal and spiritual soul, we know that only God, who is perfect truth, beauty, goodness, justice and love, can truly satisfy our intellect and will. Also, as the only earthly creatures capable of interpersonal relationships, we alone are capable of loving communion with God, the very purpose of religion and our hearts' greatest desire.³

Human society demands a recognition of God (religion) in order to ground a reverence for rightful authority and obedience to the law, for the stability of familial and communal relations, for just and efficacious laws and for the maintenance of good morals (Walshe 2013, 147).

² St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q 58, a 1.

³ St Augustine, *Confessions* Book I.

(Societies that do not accept a transcendent being will invariably replace the proper object of the religious impulse—God—with something else such as the party, the state or individual rights, in order to maintain the fruits of natural religion.) While very important for individuals and societies, the demands of this natural religion are traditionally few in number. They include the proper honour and worship of God (as known by reason), the subduing of our passions in order to live according to reason, and moral living according to the golden rule and natural law (Sheehan 2009, 72–73). These obligations are found in every society and world religion in differing degrees of perfection.

To recognize that all people are religious by nature, and that natural religion is the norm for culture, can be understood as another way of stating the cliché that we are all on the road to God in some way, regardless of our culture or faith. Unfortunately, while it is true that we all have an innate desire for ultimate happiness, this inclination is very vague and undirected. People may not necessarily realize that God is the ultimate end of their yearning. Instead, they may take the wrong road, and therefore pursue the wrong end, replacing God with idols such as wealth, power, pleasure, physical perfection or popularity. Although good in themselves, all these things lack the ability to authentically fulfil us. Herein lies the first limitation of natural religion—ie, that it can very easily be misdirected due to our fallen nature and imperfect understanding. The second major limitation of natural religion resides in the fact that its goal, the knowledge and love of God, is

always severely restricted by what can be attained through the use of unaided reason. Thus, any knowledge of God must begin in the senses and be dependent upon whatever we can ascertain through his creations. As God infinitely surpasses creation, our knowledge can never embrace the fullness of his nature, remaining necessarily incomplete and ultimately unsatisfying. A final deficiency of natural religion relates to our wounded nature as human creatures. Although we can grasp the fundamentals of natural law, our knowledge often fails to bear fruit due to our inability to live according to even this basic moral law without the aid of grace.

At this point some may justifiably ask why I have overtaken the reader with five articles discussing the human reason's capacity to know about God's existence, our soul or natural law when, in the end, it is practically impossible for us to live according to the truths revealed in this knowledge. Should we just cease all discourse on natural religion and jump straight to Scripture as a fideistic last resort? The Catholic tradition would say no. Realizing that our reasoning ability and our natural moral uprightness are limited does not mean that endeavouring to reason and to live virtuously are futile enterprises. Rather they are an essential preparation for the good news of the Gospel—tilling the soul's soil, preparing it for the seeds of the Gospel. Secondly, the rational preambles of faith save Christianity from being dismissed as yet one more mythical world view, among the many cast off by modernity, that cannot be taken seriously in a scientific era. Although it may be unattractive to some catechists and teachers who

prefer to emphasize the affective approach (also essential), the preambles are necessary groundwork for the faith, because they offer rational credibility to Christian doctrinal and moral teaching. The evangelization of our students requires an appeal to their minds as well as their hearts.

However, we are still left with the problem of the limitations of natural religion and the consequent insurmountable obstacle to relating intimately to our Creator. As beings gifted with a spiritual nature, we desire perfection in truth, love and happiness that transcends the limits of the physical universe. Yet we find ourselves unable to reach such perfection with relationship to God because (1) our darkened intellect and weakened will prevent our clear knowledge of God, and hinder our easy obedience to the natural law; and (2) God's absolute perfection and transcendence create an infinite distance between him and us, making any comprehension of his nature and will hopeless (St Thomas says that we can know with certainty *that* God is, but not *what* he is). This leaves us in a very problematic state: our whole lives are naturally directed toward a perfect happiness that only God can supply, yet we are unable, by our own strength and merits, to achieve it. We need divine help for our salvation. We need God to unveil himself. Thankfully, in God's compassionate love, this is exactly what he has done. In the very first question of the *Summa Theologiae*, the Angelic Doctor, St Thomas Aquinas, speaks of God's gift of divine revelation:

It was necessary for man's salvation that there should be a knowledge revealed by God besides philosophical science

built up by human reason.⁴ Firstly, indeed, because man is directed to God, as to an end that surpasses the grasp of his reason: “The eye hath not seen, O God, besides Thee, what things Thou hast prepared for them that wait for Thee” (Isaiah 64:4). But the end must first be known by men who are to direct their thoughts and actions to the end. Hence it was necessary for the salvation of man that certain truths which exceed human reason should be made known to him by divine revelation. Even as regards those truths about God which human reason could have discovered, it was necessary that man should be taught by a divine revelation; because the truth about God such as reason could discover, would only be known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors. Whereas man’s whole salvation, which is in God, depends upon the knowledge of this truth. Therefore, in order that the salvation of men might be brought about more fitly and more surely, it was necessary that they should be taught divine truths by divine revelation. It was therefore necessary that besides philosophy [and science] built up by reason, there should be a sacred science learned through revelation.⁵

Note that for St Thomas, and the Christian tradition, the revelation of God is a merciful gift that makes up for the darkness of our wounded nature (Sheehan 2009, 76). God wants us to be with him, and therefore he aids us by offering the very support we require, ie, revelation through Sacred Scripture and sacred tradition. This argument may be summarized as follows: if an all-good and providential God exists, who is the source and destiny of humanity, it is very probable that he would offer human beings the help required for them to know and love him. Thus, divine revelation is both necessary because of our limitations and possible because of God’s providence. God not only reveals the truths of natural religion that are so difficult to attain, he also discloses his very nature as a Trinity of Persons and his deep love (unto death) for us that makes us adopted sons and daughters of the Father. This kind of knowledge could never be discovered by us, nor could natural religion, a subvirtue of justice, ever demand such a high reward from one who owes us nothing. Only God’s self-revelation, most perfectly manifested in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, could bring us to the fullness of truth about God.

At this point, it seems pertinent to offer a rational defence of the authority that both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture hold in the

Christian life. This would answer such questions as: Why should I believe the Bible and not the Koran or Bhagavad Gita? Why these 73 books and not others? Who is to say which interpretation of Scripture is correct? Is not the Church’s interpretation just one among many? Has modern scholarship not shown that public revelation is merely mythical in essence, and therefore only private experiences of God should be trusted?⁶ Unfortunately, space constraints limit a complete discussion of these questions to this brief “scripture apologetic.” In order to understand and appreciate the great gift of divine revelation found in the Bible, readers must be reminded of the importance of reading Sacred Scripture properly and with the mind of the Church. This means that one must attempt to establish the authority of Scripture by first demonstrating that the historical elements of the Bible constitute a reliable account (evidence/data) of actual events. After this has been rationally established, then one can explore how the reliability of Scripture is not totally dependent upon its historical details, but also includes theological realities such as Christ’s divinity and miracles. Also, it is important to be cognizant of the four senses of Scripture (literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical) so that its literary forms and multiple layers of meaning are understood. Readers

⁴ In premodern thought, philosophy was understood to include not only explorations in fields such as ethics, epistemology and metaphysics, but also research in more empirical fields such as biology and physics (thus Aristotle would regard the work he did in his *Physics* as a form of “natural philosophy”). This categorization lasted until the explosion of empirical science in the modern age, when a split occurred between philosophical reasoning (logical and experiential) and empirical/scientific reasoning (mathematical and experimental). However, to this day we still retain a major vestige of the joint categorization of all natural knowledge as “philosophy” in contemporary universities; note that those who achieve terminal degrees in various sciences and other fields still often receive a PhD—a doctorate in philosophy.

⁵ *Summa Theologiae* I, q 1 a 1

⁶ Kreeft and Tacelli 2009 is an excellent source to begin investigating these sorts of questions.

of God's Word must always appreciate the unity of Scripture and tradition, centred as they are on the Person of Jesus Christ, and therefore remain confident that any contradictions or errors are merely apparent rather than actual. Finally, Holy Scripture must be approached with the proper interpretive lens that considers both the scientific discoveries of the historical-critical method and the spiritual depths of patristic-mediaeval exegesis, as well as the doctrinal and moral guidance of the magisterium.⁷

At the conclusion of this series on the rational preambles of faith, I wish to express my hope that the discussion of these essential truths will prove fruitful for teachers and catechists seeking to evangelize teenagers in Alberta schools. While we certainly must not overestimate the efficacy of the preambles, believing that demonstrations of God's existence or the natural law will cause immediate and dramatic conversions, we must also remember that our students are rational

beings whose intellects are in as much need of nourishment as their hearts. Appealing to reason and reintroducing these preambles in our teaching may be just the key to attracting students or colleagues who might be alienated by more charismatic or affective presentations of the faith. This does not mean that the Church should become a staid debating society, but rather that our efforts to evangelize must reach the whole person, body and soul, heart and mind. As St Paul challenges us, may we become all things to all people so that we may be instruments of God's love, bringing them to Christ.⁸

Some Recommended Readings

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⁷ A proposal for such a method has been made by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, what he calls Method C. Ideally it takes into account the very best of patristic-mediaeval exegesis (Method A) and the best of historical-critical research (Method B) while avoiding the limitations of each. An excellent and enlightening text on this matter is Ramage 2013.

⁸ See I Corinthians 9:19–23.



Agents of Hope and Mercy

Marlys Phillips

In Matthew 5:13–16, we are reminded that we are “salt of the earth ... light of the world ... In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” For more than 10 years, the students at Gerard Redmond Community Catholic School (GRCCS) have been reminded of exactly how their good works can affect others. Each year, we put together an event, our Wake-a-thon, to support a social justice

project that we call Project Grace (Gerard Redmond Action for Charity Events). This event has allowed our students to raise between \$4,000 and almost \$20,000 for a local, provincial, national or international charity, including sending local kids to summer camp, helping our local women’s shelter and building a school in Africa. For the past four years, our school has been supporting a division project called GREEN EGGS (God Revealed Everyone Everywhere is our

Neighbour. Evergreen Catholic students and staff, Grateful for our blessings, Give generously to the Seat of Wisdom Poultry Farm) and our school has raised almost \$20,000.

What does Wake-a-thon look like? This past year, 125 Grade 5 to 12 students (out of 315) gathered together to play sports and video games; tie dye shirts; make pizzas, tacos and banana boats; sing karaoke; dance; play capture the flag, hide ‘n’ seek in a dark school, and board games;



Back row, left to right: Marina Batkin, Juliana Manansala, Curtis Wear, Mya Robinson, Erykah Thurlow, Camden Green
Front row, left to right: Brandon Pineau, Seth Bardarson

This photo is from our first energizer of the night—each team picks a member to duct tape to the wall to see who stays up there the longest. Teams are made up of students from Grades 5 to 12.

All the people in this photo are volunteer firefighters, EMTs and RCMP. These local heroes come out at the beginning of the night to do the opening prayer, an information session and the duct tape energizer and to play games with the students.



and many more activities. The event takes place from 7 PM to 7 AM at the school; it starts with prayers and ends with a free breakfast made by school staff. This year, it involved 11 of 25 staff and 1 substitute teacher, who volunteered their time, money and support. We had two priests from opposite ends of the earth, one playing floor hockey with students in Hinton and one connecting on Skype from Nigeria, gather together for this social justice event. There were 15 to 20 firefighters, EMTs, RCMP and GRCCS alumni who came out to play sports with our students; more than 20 parents volunteered their time. It truly is a faith-based community event and it occurs every year.

The students and volunteers are some of the most amazing agents of hope and mercy that I know! Parents not only volunteered their time to help us with this event, but also complimented our staff for the awesome work we do for this event. I saw staff who went the extra mile by walking students home in the morning so that they got home safely. Some staff got up

in the middle of the night to come back to school after a full day of work to make pancakes for our students before they left in the morning; some gave students money of their own so that students could enjoy some of the snacks we provided during the night. Some staff paid a babysitter to look after their own children so they could take part in helping our students have a great event. We had a priest standing in line with all the students so he could play floor hockey with them while they tried to beat the local heroes of our community. Another priest got up at 4 AM so he could personally express his gratitude to our students. Our student council planned and implemented some awesome energizer events throughout the wee hours of the night. Our Grade 9 religion classes presented information to our students to encourage them to attend this event. We had a committee that spent many hours planning an event that students look forward to every year. This is what makes someone an agent of hope and mercy!

In 2016, Pope Francis has asked “the Church in this Jubilee Year to rediscover the richness encompassed by the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. The experience of mercy, indeed, becomes visible in the witness of concrete signs as Jesus himself taught us. Each time that one of the faithful personally performs one or more of these actions, he or she shall surely obtain the Jubilee Indulgence. Hence the commitment to live by mercy so as to obtain the grace of complete and exhaustive forgiveness by the power of the love of the Father who excludes no one. The Jubilee Indulgence is thus full, the fruit of the very event which is to be celebrated and experienced with faith, hope and charity.”¹ I truly believe that the actions of our staff, students, parents and community members, through our Wake-a-thon, have exemplified what it means to be an agent of hope and mercy.

Marlys Phillips is vice-principal and career counsellor at Gerard Redmond Community Catholic School, Evergreen Catholic Schools, Hinton, Alberta.



Our parish priest, Fr Mirosław Kostarzewski, played floor hockey with the students.



Various students playing floor hockey against our local heroes.

¹ Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis According to Which an Indulgence is Granted to the Faithful on the Occasion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. Available at https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150901_lettera-indulgenza-giubileo-misericordia.html or <http://tinyurl.com/ze65r2t> (accessed March 30, 2016).



Healing: Bringing the Gift of God's Mercy to the World

by Mary Healy

Our Sunday Visitor, Huntington, Ind, 2015. ISBN 1612788203

Margaret Smerdely

“Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” Every time I declare these words, before receiving our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, do I internalize the true meaning of so weighty a request? In other words, do I expect that the Lord can and desires to heal me? While and since reading *Healing: Bringing the Gift of God's Mercy to the World*, by Mary Healy, these questions have made me think about healing with a renewed mind and see Jesus' mission to heal with new eyes.

Healy's book is brimming with beautiful stories of Jesus' healing and transformative presence—stories past and present; healings not

only of a physical nature, but of spiritual, emotional and relational healing. Moreover, Healy provides a comprehensive and historical account of healings gifted by his merciful love to deepen the readers' awareness from biblical times through to the present. The topics of redemptive suffering, intercession of the saints, the role of the sacraments and a simple but effective model for healing prayer are all explored in the book. Aptly, Healy addresses the relativistic tendencies that have restricted our understanding of divine healing.

Appreciated most through this rich exploration on the topic of healing was Healy's treatment of how our modern ideas about healing hinge on control, technology

and experts, and so we have discounted Jesus' mission, gift, desire and ability to heal and restore. Furthermore, the disease of indifference has plagued our culture—we are shaken and afraid to take the risk to reach out to others and intercede through prayer for his healing touch, which is so urgently needed. Encouraging believers to reassess their capacity to trust in the Lord, Healy emboldens us in the commission to be “missionary disciples,” especially in this providential Year of Mercy.

Margaret Smerdely is dean of students—girls at Clear Water Academy, in Calgary.



Who Do You Say That I Am?

The following story was created by the children participating at the fall RMEC conference, under the guidance of the youth leaders, in the spirit of Mad Libs—a modern take on a familiar story about Jesus.

Jesus entered the town of Whitecourt with his disciples and decided it was time for a pop quiz. So he gathered his disciples in a circle and put forth to them the following question: “Who do people say that I am?” (Matthew 16:13)

The disciples all took turns responding to Jesus’ question.

“Some say you are as famous as Elvis.”

“Others say you are as powerful as Prince Rupert.”

“A few argue that you remind them of Hercules.”

“Still others claim that you are as mysterious as an African hypew-ing dragon.”

“I’ve heard a few people compare you to Stephen Harper,” said one.

“And St Felix,” added another.

“Mary and Martha think you are wiser than Einstein,” said one in the back.

And another added, “I hear most people refer to you as the second coming of Pastor Randy.”

Then Jesus asked the second and final question of his pop quiz: “Who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15)

Simon jumped up and down, waving his hand. “Ohhh, ohhh, I know, I know what the answer is, O great and wonderful teacher!”

Jesus, knowing a brownnoser when he saw one, called on Simon.

“You are the man! The Messiah! The Son of the awesome God!”

Jesus replied, “Not bad, Simon, son of Cher. I can see you’ve been doing your homework. No mere tutor has revealed this to you. You heard it straight from the top, from Abba himself! And because you scored 100 per cent on this quiz, I will now call you Peter, which means ‘rock’ or sometimes ‘block-head.’ And upon this rock, I intend to build my church, and nothing will be able to overcome it, not even West Edmonton Mall.”

This story was first published in Embrace the Spirit volume 8 number 2, fall 2006.



Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Dorothy Burns

On Ash Wednesday, as people received ashes on their forehead, they heard the words “Repent and believe in the gospel.” The Greek word for *repent* is *metanoeo* or, as a noun, *metanoia*. The word suggests a complete change of thought or behaviour, with an emotional element of regret or sorrow. It is very easy for us to say we are sorry, but are we truly repentant?

I recall a little boy in my Grade 2 class many years ago who was always in trouble. Even at the tender age of seven, he had a stubborn, defiant streak when it came to classroom order and rules. The word *sorry* rolled off his lips. A few months into the school year, after a very trying couple of days with him, I had come to my wits’ end. He was saying sorry for the umpteenth time, and I’d had enough.

I said, “I don’t accept your apology.”

This stopped him in his tracks and he asked, “Why not?”

“Because you are not really sorry. If you were, you would change your behaviour.”

In that moment, I gained new insight into how repentance is not just about saying you are sorry but about demonstrating through your actions that you mean it. The young boy and I were able to make some progress that year, but it was slow going, with numerous relapses. Once we do make a change in our lives, in any area, we still have a lot of work ahead of us.

Forgiveness is the first step in the much larger task of reconciliation.

In the week or so before Lent, the following question was posed online to the community of religious educators of which I am a member (the Religious Education Network, a working committee of the Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta):

If someone has made a mistake and is truly repentant for their sin and asks forgiveness, is it our obligation to forgive?

Various members of the network responded to this question, and their collective wisdom helped to create an insightful, well-nuanced answer with references to several helpful resources. With their permission, I share their responses. Ah, to forgive or not to forgive . . . that is the question. And I think Jesus gave us the answer often in Scripture . . . as difficult as it is to put into practice!

- “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14–15).
- “Then Peter came and said to him, ‘Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times’” (Matthew 18:21–22).
- “Forgive, and you will be forgiven” (Luke 6:37).

- “If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times a day and says, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive” (Luke 17:3–4).
- “Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive” (Colossians 3:13).

*Susan Barylo,
Archdiocese of Edmonton*

Is it our obligation to forgive? There’s the challenge. Forgiveness truly comes from the heart, and that’s what we see in Jesus’s life and modelling. When we use the word *obligation*, it somehow suggests that we forgive because of the strength of our will and concerted effort to do so. I think we truly forgive through the grace of God . . . not by some decision and then a powering through it, so to speak. It is only through our surrender in prayer and openness to God’s healing in our own hearts that forgiveness begins to overpower us and pours out authentically. It is our obligation to pray and to stay open to understanding how to forgive. We need to want to forgive. It is grace that actually allows us to forgive.

*MaryAnne Murphy,
Holy Spirit Catholic Schools*

Forgiveness . . . I believe that forgiveness is one of the hardest things to do. It is hard to forgive someone for the hurt they have caused you, but I believe it is necessary or it will eat away at you and cause other health problems as well.

Yes, Jesus says we should forgive, but we do not have to forget, but learn from it so the hurt or pain may not happen again.

We have many things that happen to us daily in life or people say things that can cause us pain or hurt, but if we do not let go and let God take care of it, then we carry too much baggage.

So we should try to forgive; otherwise, we let other people have control over our lives. Is it an obligation? Yes, that is a challenge. I believe, like MaryAnne, that it has to be a choice of the individual and the timing, and a person has to be ready to do so.

Does the person truly want to carry that hurt around and have it cause you negative energy, or do

we get to a point and say it is not worth wasting that energy on the issue anymore and finally let go? It does take lots of strength, courage and prayers and a lot of faith as well.

*Alene Mutala,
Elk Island Catholic Schools*

Perhaps the distinctions between forgiveness and reconciliation are useful. Perhaps useful too is the psychological dimension of forgiveness and healing. Dennis Linn, Sheila Fabricant Linn and Matthew Linn have an interesting reflection in *Don't Forgive Too Soon: Extending the Two Hands That Heal* (Paulist Press, 1997). Their approach sees forgiveness as an ongoing process rather than one simple act.

*Charlie Weekend,
Fort McMurray Catholic Schools*

We are called to forgive, but that doesn't mean we will necessarily forget, or put up with abusive behaviour. Let's say a woman is being physically abused by her

husband. She should not forgive the abuse until he has stopped the pattern. Her best option may be to leave him so he can get help. Forgiveness is all about wanting what's best for the other.

A good video of this for youth and adults is *Luggage*, by Rob Bell (www.youtube.com/watch?v=_rNnWDWoWnA).

Another great DVD is *The Big Question*. (See <http://bigquestionthemovie.com>.)

Nancy Reeves (www.nancyreeves.com) is a Canadian speaker on the topic. She also speaks on grieving and loss.

*Michael Marien,
St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Schools*

In a broken world, there will always be need for forgiveness and reconciliation. As followers of Jesus, we must do our part to bring that healing to the world.

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Upcoming Events

RMEC Conference 2016

The Rimrock Resort Hotel, Banff

October 14–15

with

Fr Thomas Rosica

Tasting, Feeling, Hearing, Touching Mercy:

**Understanding the Petrine Ministry of
Francis Through the Lenses of Mercy**

Five great reasons to get (or update) your online ATA account now!

Please encourage teachers you know to get or update their ATA account. Here are some reasons to share with them on why they should do this.

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All collective agreements between ATA bargaining units and their respective school jurisdictions expire August 31, 2016. As new negotiations get under way, regular updates and other information critical to keeping you informed of developments regarding bargaining will be posted in the Members Only section of the Association website. To gain access to the Members Only section, you must have an online ATA account.

2. Use ATA library online resources and databases

The ATA library has an extensive collection of books, periodicals, videos and other materials for teachers focusing on educational research and professional development. Library services and materials are available in both French and English. An online ATA account is necessary to log in to our catalogue to reserve books or videos.

3. Vote in ATA elections

Provincial Executive Council conducts the business of the Association and is made up of 20 members, 18 of whom are elected by you. To vote in Association elections, you need an online ATA account.

4. Get no-cost ATA specialist council memberships

As a benefit of ATA membership, active members are entitled to join one specialist council of their choice at no cost. Active members must have an online ATA account to select and join the specialist council of their choice.

5. Print your own ATA member card

The Association is launching online self-serve membership card distribution. With an online ATA account, you will have the convenience of printing your own ATA member card from the Association website when you need it. ATA member cards are useful when your identification as a teacher or member of an association is needed to attend events, receive discounts or be eligible for other offers from retailers and service providers.



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We are there for you!



The Alberta Teachers' Association

www.teachers.ab.ca

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Specialist councils' role in promoting diversity, equity and human rights

Alberta's rapidly changing demographics are creating an exciting cultural diversity that is reflected in the province's urban and rural classrooms. The new landscape of the school provides an ideal context in which to teach students that strength lies in diversity. The challenge that teachers face is to capitalize on the energy of today's intercultural classroom mix to lay the groundwork for all students to succeed. To support teachers in their critical roles as leaders in inclusive education, in 2000 the Alberta Teachers' Association established the Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee (DEHRC).

DEHRC aims to assist educators in their legal, professional and ethical responsibilities to protect all students and to maintain safe, caring and inclusive learning environments. Topics of focus for DEHRC include intercultural education, inclusive learning communities, gender equity, UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network, sexual orientation and gender variance.

Here are some activities the DEHR committee undertakes:

- Studying, advising and making recommendations on policies that reflect respect for diversity, equity and human rights
- Offering annual Inclusive Learning Communities Grants (up to \$2,000) to support activities that support inclusion
- Producing *Just in Time*, an electronic newsletter that can be found at www.teachers.ab.ca; Teaching in Alberta; Diversity, Equity and Human Rights.
- Providing and creating print and web-based teacher resources
- Creating a list of presenters on DEHR topics
- Supporting the Association instructor workshops on diversity

Specialist councils are uniquely situated to learn about diversity issues directly from teachers in the field who see how diversity issues play out in subject areas. Specialist council members are encouraged to share the challenges they may be facing in terms of diversity in their own classrooms and to incorporate these discussions into specialist council activities, publications and conferences.

Diversity, equity and human rights affect the work of all members. What are you doing to make a difference?

Further information about the work of the DEHR committee can be found on the Association's website at www.teachers.ab.ca under Teaching in Alberta, Diversity, Equity and Human Rights. Alternatively, contact Andrea Berg, executive staff officer, Professional Development, at andrea.berg@ata.ab.ca for more information.



Guidelines

The RMEC newsjournal *Embrace the Spirit* is published to

- promote professional development of educators in the areas of religious and moral education and
- provide a forum for contributors to share ideas related to religious and moral education.

Submissions are requested that will provide material for personal reflection, theoretical consideration and practical application. Where appropriate, graphics and photographs are welcome.

The following areas will be addressed in the newsjournal:

- Classroom and school projects
- Upcoming events
- Book reviews
- Reflections
- Feature articles and interviews
- Humour in religion
- Liturgies

Manuscripts should be submitted electronically, in Microsoft Word format. The manuscript should include a title page that states the author's name, professional position, address and phone number(s). Submissions should be typed and double spaced and may be any length to a maximum of 5,000 words. References must appear in full in a list at the end of the article.

Send contributions or enquiries to the editor: Dean Schneider, 3507 49 Street SW, Calgary, AB T3E 6N8 phone 403-992-0905 (res) or 403-217-8448 (bus); e-mail dschneider@clearwateracademy.com.

The editorial board, which reserves the right to edit for clarity and space, reviews all submissions.

