May Submission for SCSBA Communications 2021



Live Mercy ... Be Holy



In the gospel of Luke (6:36), we hear Jesus addressing his followers stating, 'be merciful just as your father is merciful.' This same Jesus had just called and chosen his apostles. He had just spent another night in prayer to God. He was continuously followed by large crowds of people each wanting to engage with him. It is just a little bit amazing that his message was not something more like, 'what next?'

To say that one has a better understanding of the continuous energy that our Lord Jesus must have expended each and every day to keep his followers safe, content and fulfilled is no stretch for those managing our school systems during these pandemic-challenged times. The many measures put in place in our schools and workplaces due to the transmission of the Covid-19 virus across the world and the effort needed to maintain them could have been a serious disruption or distraction to the accomplishment of the mission we were already on: 'To prepare our students to be successful in the economies of the 21st century guided by Catholic values and principles.' Instead, we were able to leverage the pandemic to richly develop our theme.

Holy Family RCSSD #140 Director of Education, Gwen Keith, recently shared a reflection:

"In the true fashion of Holy Family, our people were able to LIVE MERCY this year by experiencing what it looked like, sounded like and felt like. OUR family is held strong because we made this theme such a reality during these challenging times. We have the faith and grit to keep our pathways solid as we move forward."

Through the system incorporation of the pandemic measures established here in our home province of Saskatchewan, we were able to acknowledge the efforts of those who worked hard to keep us safe, content and fulfilled as modeling of the theme in action. It was the best way we could possibly have to demonstrate for our students, staff and communities that we could live as our Lord Jesus even in the face of adversity.

Whether it was the pivoting to remote learning for a couple of weeks due to a positive case of Covid-19 in a classroom or re-working a celebration plan because we were still unable to host an event within our building, our people demonstrated merciful and holy efforts in their actions. We never lost a beat.

The students and staff worked tirelessly to be 'best prepared' for any remote work by learning new digital platforms, by establishing relationship norms and by creating well-understood guidelines for a successful learning experience.

The Central Office staff increased personnel just to be able to:

- carefully clean and sanitize our facilities
- support the well-being of all mentally, socially, spiritually and physically
- facilitate the pivoting from in person to remote leaning

Our students demonstrated both mercifulness and holiness by recognizing the need for mask wearing, physical distancing and adjusted timetables and cohorts. They showed us daily what it means to think of others before themselves. Because of their faith-filled presence, our staff was encouraged to seek ways to continue many of our most appreciated activities in Covid-safe ways. Examples include fundraising for local food banks, recognizing those who were initiated into the sacraments of our faith and participating in gospel assemblies and masses. We may have had more parents able to attend weekly assemblies as they were offered through Google Meet than we would have if they had been required to make a trip into the local school gym for the event.

In his homily enjoyed by some of our folks during the opening mass of Religious Education Congress 2020, Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles said, 'holiness means loving God and loving our neighbour, right where we are.' Holy Family students and staff definitely had the opportunity to express that love right where we are in this time and place. By living the theme, *Live Mercy ... Be Holy*, each and every day, we were able to grow in our faith and help to grow that of our communities.

May the dedicated efforts of the 2020-21 school year create in each of us a passion for living mercifully and a desire to be holy in all that we do.