OVERVIEW

March

Virtue: FORGIVENESS

Overview of the Virtue of Forgiveness

- When someone you care about hurts you, you can hold on to anger, resentment and thoughts of revenge — or embrace forgiveness and move forward.
- Forgiveness is letting go of grudges and bitterness
- By embracing forgiveness, you can also embrace peace, hope, gratitude and joy.

Catholic Graduate Expectation -- I HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES

A Responsible Citizen Who:

- Acts morally and legally as a person formed in Catholic traditions. OCSGE 7(a)
- Accepts accountability for one's own actions. OCSGE 7(b)
- Seeks and grants forgiveness. OCSGE 7(c)
- Promotes the sacredness of life. OCSGE 7(d)
- Witnesses Catholic social teaching by promoting equality, democracy, and solidarity for a just, peaceful and compassionate society. OCSGE 7(e)
- Respects and affirms the diversity and interdependence of the world's peoples and cultures. OCSGE 7(f)
- Respects and understands the history, cultural heritage and pluralism of today's contemporary society. OCSGE 7(g)
- Exercises the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship. OCSGE 7(h)
- Respects the environment and uses resources wisely. OCSGE 7(i)
- Contributes to the common good. OCSGE 7(j)

Principles of Catholic Social Teaching -- ROLE OF GOVERNMENT:

The state has a positive moral function as an instrument to promote human dignity, protect human rights, and build the common good. Its purpose is to assist citizens in fulfilling their responsibility to others in society. In today's complex society these responsibilities cannot adequately be carried out on a one-to-one basis. Citizens need the help of government to fulfill these responsibilities and promote the common good.
**SCRIPTURE PASSAGES AND DISCUSSION STARTERS**

**FORGIVENESS**

**I HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES**

“A responsible citizen who seeks and grants forgiveness.” OCSGE 7(c)

**ROLE OF GOVERNMENT**

**Faith – Scripture Passages:**

- "Whoever is forgiven much, loves much." (Luke 7:47)
- Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. (Luke 6:37)
- Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. (NIV) (Luke 23:34)
- Turn to me with your whole heart (Joel 2.12-19)
- Go and sin no more. (John 8.1-11)

**Discussion Starters:**

- Do you feel you are able to truly “forgive those who trespass against us?” What makes it easier to forgive and what makes it harder?
- Think of a time when you felt that you sought forgiveness but it was not given? How did this make you feel?
- Think of a time when you forgave someone for a “wrong doing”. Why did you choose forgiveness and how did this affect your relationship with the person in question?
- In the sacrament of reconciliation we are reminded that God’s love is all encompassing. It calls us to re-enter the community from which we have felt alienated through sinful actions. Think of time when you were initially reluctant to forgive but later did. What was that like for you?
FAITH IN ACTION – ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

FORGIVENESS

I HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES

“A responsible citizen who seeks and grants forgiveness.” CGE7c

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

The following Catholic Schools are among some which have received Speak Up Grants from the Ministry of Education. These Catholic Schools from around the province illustrated “Faith in Action” in their schools through various clubs and activities. May they serve to spark inspiration and innovation in your school, as your Catholic Community lives out the call “work for justice and peace”. (This Moment of Promise)

- **Title:** 7 Steps of Highly Successful Teens and Peer Mediation

**Reflection on Activity:** Forgiveness leads to healthy relationships as well as spiritual and physical health. It also influences our attitude which opens the heart to God’s kindness, beauty, and love. Teaching students the skills involved in peer mediation enables them to become more effective ambassadors of faith and forgiveness.

**Description:** Student leaders invited well-known speaker Jeff Hilchey to conduct a one-day workshop entitled “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens”. This workshop empowered students, teaching them to take responsibility for their actions and acknowledge their strengths. Of the 50 students who attended, 25 were from the at-risk group attending alternative classes. Secondly, student leaders developed a Peer Mediation workshop designed to help students deal with peer conflict. In total, over 113 students interacted, communicated and worked together to improve themselves and their school community. It was particularly inspiring for students to hear a variety of personal experiences and perspectives from a group of students who would not normally work together or who felt vulnerable to being picked on because of their differences. The combined project was so successful that some students asked to attend the next workshop to continue building their skills, while others volunteered to be part of the debriefing and to continue working on peer mediation and conflict resolution at the school. One student also volunteered to work on the Ontario Council for Student Voice.

**Project Type:** Student-Led Teacher-Facilitated

**Grade(s) Impacted:** 9-11

**School Name:** Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic HS

**School Board:** Durham CDSB
Case Study on Forgiveness

**REFLECTION ON ACTIVITY:** The Sacrament of Reconciliation is grounded not only in Catholic Tradition but also in sound psychological knowledge. The sacrament makes it possible for us to receive the grace that allows the unfolding of the many steps required for authentic forgiveness to take place. It is within the process of reconciliation that God’s power of forgiveness is felt and we are internally renewed and outwardly reconciled. In forgiving others, we allow ourselves to be freed from the troubles of resentment and bitterness.

Within the Toronto Catholic District School Board, the process of Restorative Justice is a common practice in schools in order for the students in conflict to reconcile and feel the welcoming and healing power of Christ’s love.

**Reflect on the following story...**

Katy, 45, Victoria, Canada

I believe when bad things happen we have a moral responsibility, simply because we walk this earth together, to roll up our sleeves and clean up. Sometimes we may find ourselves working alongside the very person that caused the harm. When this occurs, there is a powerful opportunity for transformation.

My life was ripped apart on New Year's Eve in 1997. Bob McIntosh, my husband of nine years, left our dinner table to check on the home of vacationing neighbours after we became aware their teenage son was having a party. Bob never came home. He walked into a mob of 200 drunk and out-of-control young people. A punch from an angry youth put Bob on the floor unconscious. Kicks to his head delivered by a 20-year-old named Ryan caused a fatal brain haemorrhage. I was left widowed with 4-year-old twins.

Through a restorative justice reconciliation process, I met again with Ryan. My fear was gut-wrenching but humanity surfaced on so many levels. Ryan was someone’s son, bullied as a child. He had fallen into a spiral of substance use and violence in a twisted effort to find identity. Our lives were entwined whether we liked it or not—we connected through our brokenness.

I listened to the whispers of my heart and was able to forgive Ryan. Forgiveness was not a cop-out, not soft and most definitely not about forgetting. Forgiveness gave me a voice, an opportunity to choose a legacy of healing and hope. I began speaking to youth and their parents about bullying, social responsibility around alcohol and other drugs, about violence and about moving forward after unspeakable loss.

Ryan and I now stand together speaking to audiences in schools, community halls and prisons. Forgiveness has been transformational—it ended the downward spiral of Ryan’s life and set me free. Forgiveness gave me a life filled with grace and possibility, and for that I am deeply grateful.

- How do you think the sacrament of reconciliation helped Katy deal with this indescribable loss?
- How is Katy’s story similar to the story of the Prodigal Son? How is the Prodigal Son story lived out in your circle of friends and family?
- What graces did Katy receive from God in order to be open to forgiveness?
**Title: Examination of Conscience**

**REFLECTION ON ACTIVITY:** The Examination of Conscience is a strongly grounded Catholic practice. This practice allows us to promote our own human dignity and build the common good. The practice of reconciliation is both personal and deeply communal.

**EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE**

Do I centre my life on God, on fidelity to the Gospel and the Commandments?
Do I set aside time for personal prayer?

Do I keep Sunday by participating in the Eucharist? Is Sunday a day of prayer and rest?
Do I observe the penitential practices of the Church? Do I keep Lent as a time of prayer?

Do I behave as a Christian in daily and public life? Is my faith reflected in my employment?
Have I taken property of others – including my employer? Am I envious of what others have?
Do I share my goods with those in need?
Do I respect the reputation of others?
Do I care for my family?

Do I model Christian life for my family: parents, wife, husband, children?
Do I exercise authority with genuine concern and responsibility? Do I give others the same respect that I expect for myself?

Have I dishonoured my body by thoughts or actions incompatible with Christian life?
Am I faithful to my commitments?
Do I live out my commitments to my family members to the best of my ability and reflect God’s love and faithfulness?
How do I deal with the difficulties, failures and disappointments of life?

Do I tend to the spiritual, physical and medical needs of my body?
Can others see the grace of Baptism at work in my life?
FAITH BASED MEDIA LINKS

FORGIVENESS

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“A responsible citizen who seeks and grants forgiveness.” OCSGE 7©

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Family life is about on-going forgiveness, love and compassion. The vocation of motherhood is one of the most challenging but rewarding, difficult but wonderful jobs in the whole world. Being a mom is a call to care, to fix, to teach, to encourage, to provide, to support... to love. It means being a light to your family and seeing them shine because of it.

But because it’s a vocation, motherhood also means having the graces of the faith and the example of Mary. Within the Catholic family, moms are never alone.

In support of the Catholic family, Salt + Light Television is proud to present Mothering, Full of Grace. Hosted by Rhea Johner and featuring real moms and real families, this 13-episode series aims to encourage and nourish women in their vocations of wife and mom. With honesty, spunk, and (of course) grace, Rhea Johner shares with viewers ideas on how to bring faith topics into the every day of family life. It’s something she’s had a bit of practice with – she’s mom to five boys, Lucas, Jesse, Quinn, Matthew and Aidan, and wife to husband Brad.

http://saltandlighttv.org/mothering/
FAITH PRAYERS AND AFFIRMATIONS

FORGIVENESS

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ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Prayers:

- **Faith, Hope and Charity Prayer**
  Loving God, we pray that the Toronto Catholic District School Board community continue to witness to the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity.

  May we be people of FAITH, always willing to follow the example of Jesus in all that we do.

  May we be people of HOPE, always trusting in your loving presence in our lives.

  May we be people of CHARITY, always willing to give of ourselves to better the lives of others.

- **The Lord’s Prayer** uses the familiar words from the prayer Jesus taught his disciples.

  Breathing in: Forgive us our errors/sins/trespasses . . .
  Breathing out: As we forgive those who error/sin/trespass against us.

- **The Act of Contrition**

  My God,
  I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
  In choosing to do wrong
  and failing to do good,
  I have sinned against you
  whom I should love above all things.
  I firmly intend, with your help,
  to do penance,
  to sin no more,
  and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.
  Our Saviour Jesus Christ
  suffered and died for us.
  In his name, my God, have mercy.
Affirmations:

- I am a peace-maker
- I am fair
- I am forgiving
- I follow rules and do my share
- I help the poor and care for people in need
- I stand up for what is right
- I know that all life is precious
- I respect and protect the world and all that is in it
REFERENCES

- ICE- Institute for Catholic Education  [www.iceont.ca](http://www.iceont.ca)
- CCC- Catholic Curriculum Corporation  [www.catholiccurriculumcorp.org](http://www.catholiccurriculumcorp.org)
- CARFLEO  [www.carfleo.org](http://www.carfleo.org)
- TCDSB- Nurturing Our Catholic Community website  [www.tcdsb.org](http://www.tcdsb.org)
- Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board  [www.dpcdsb.org](http://www.dpcdsb.org)
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- York Catholic District School Board  [www.ycdsb.ca](http://www.ycdsb.ca)
- Actions
  
  Speak Up Student Engagement –Ontario Ministry of Education
  
  [http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/students/speakup/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/students/speakup/index.html)
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