



Dear Parents and Students,

March is here and with that, our school tradition of our Lenten project is being undertaken by our faith community. Traditionally, our school has supported an initiative overseas with this project. This year, we are focussing our attention on a need that is closer to home. We will be supporting one of our STA families with the purchase of some essential equipment for their home. The equipment will help with the daily life challenges faced by one of our students with dystonic cerebral palsy.



All students in Grades 8 to 11 will participate in our annual Course Fair on Thursday, March 1st. The Course Fair will familiarize students with course options and facilitate the course selection process. Students in grades 9 to 11 will complete course selections on-line through My Blueprint. We are targeting a full submission of course selections by all students by the end of March so that we can begin timetabling and the staffing process.

High School students will be bringing home second semester progress reports on Wednesday, March 21st. We will be hosting interviews on Wednesday, March 28th from 3pm-7pm. Again, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact your child's teacher.

We are continuing our efforts in preparing grade 10 students for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test which will be written on Tuesday, April 10th. Grade 10 students will be writing a mock OSSLT on March 21st. Please continue to reinforce the importance of this test with your children at home.

Wishing everyone a wonderful month of March and a well-deserved break from March 10-18.

Yours in Catholic Education,
Danny Palumbo

March Dates to Remember:

- Mar 01, Grade 8, 9, 10 & 11 Course Fair
- Mar 01, Grade 7 & 8 Informal Parent / Teacher Interviews, 3 to 5:30 PM
- Mar 02, Grade 8 Course Selection Sheets go home
- Mar 06, Grade 9 to 12 Confessions
- Mar 08, YouthNET presentation for ABLE/TP
- Mar 09, Dress Down Day - Good Samaritan Trust Fund
- Mar 10 to 18, MARCH BREAK
- Mar 21, Mock Literacy Test
- Mar 21, Grade 9 to 12 Progress Reports go home
- Mar 22, BRAVO Breakfast
- Mar 23, Spirit Wear Day - Ravens Landing project
- Mar 26, SHSM (Health & Wellness) Certification
- Mar 28, SEAC meeting at Kemptville Board Office at 6 PM
- Mar 29, Holy Thursday prayer service
- Mar 30, Good Friday, no school



The Chaplain's Corner

The Ashes of Lent – A reflection by Ron Rolheiser O.M.I.

We begin the season of lent with ashes on our foreheads. What is symbolized by this smudging? Perhaps the heart understands better than the head because more people go to church on Ash Wednesday than on any other day of the year, including Christmas. The queues to receive the ashes in many churches are endless. Why? Why are the ashes so popular?

Their popularity, I suspect, comes from the fact that, as a symbol, they are blunt, primal, archetypal, and speak the language of the soul. Something inside each of us knows exactly why we take the ashes: "Dust thou art and into dust thou shalt return!" No doctor of metaphysics need explain this. Ashes are dust and dust is soil, humus; humanity and humility come from there. It is no accident that ashes have always been a major symbol within all religions. To put on ashes, to sit in ashes, is to say publicly and to yourself that you are reflective, in a penitential mode, that this is not "ordinary time" for you, that you are not in a season of celebration, that you are grieving some of the things you have done and lost, that some important work is going on silently inside you, and that you are, metaphorically and really, in the cinders of a dead fire, waiting for a fuller day in your life.

Native American traditions too have always had an important place for ashes. In some Aboriginal communities there was the concept that occasionally someone would have to spend time in the ashes. Nobody knew why a specific person was called at a particular moment to sit in the ashes, but everyone knew that this was a natural thing, that ashes do an important work in the soul, and that sooner or later that person would return to his or her regular life and be better for having spent time in the ashes. To offer one such example: Certain native communities used to live in what they called long-houses. A long-house was the communal building; in effect, the house for the whole community. A long-house was long, rectangular, with large sloping sides, and with the centre of the roof open so that this could function as a natural chimney. Fires were kept burning, both for cooking and for warmth, all along the centre of the long-house. People gathered there, near the fires, to cook, eat, and socialize, but they slept away from the fires, under the roofs that sloped down either side of the open centre. Now, every so often, someone, a man or a woman, for reasons they didn't have to explain, would cease adhering to the normal routine. Instead he or she would, become silent, sit just off the fire in the ashes, eat very sparingly, not socialize, not go outside, not wash, not go to bed with the others, but simply sit in the cinders, like Cinderella. Today we would probably diagnose this as clinical depression and rush that person off for professional help. They, for their part, didn't panic. They saw this as perfectly normal, something everyone was called upon to do at one time or another. They simply let the person sit there, in the ashes, until one day he or she got up, washed the ashes off, and began again to live a regular life. The belief was that the ashes, that period of silent sitting, had done some important, unseen work inside of the person. You sat in the ashes for healing.

The church taps into this deep well of wisdom when it puts ashes on our foreheads at the beginning of lent. Lent is a season for each of us to sit in the ashes, to spend our time, like Cinderella, working and sitting among the cinders of the fire – grieving what we've done wrong, renouncing the dance, refraining from the banquet, refusing to do business as usual, waiting while some silent growth takes place within us, and simply being still so that the ashes can do their work in us.

Chris Vonesch

March it on Out

Saturday, March 24, 2018

Mark that day on your calendar for great deals not to be missed. Each year St. Thomas Aquinas partners with the Russell and District Horticultural Society for this special swap meet.

On Friday between 5:00 and 8:00 pm, you are welcome to drop off things that you don't need or want anymore but that still have lots of life in them. These items - (books, toys, clothing, accessories, kitchenware, seasonal décor, small appliances...) are grouped and sorted on cafeteria tables by STA students and staff and members of the Horticultural Society. We will even help to carry things into the school!

Then – come back at 8:00am on Saturday morning, pay a \$10 entry fee, browse through all the stuff and take away anything and everything you want. Some people get rid of their gently used stuff, others find treasures!

Contact lindley_mcphail@xplornet.com or 613-445-0754 for more information.

Dates for SEAC – 2017-2018

Wednesday, March 28th, 2018
Wednesday, April 18th, 2018
Wednesday, May 23rd, 2018
Monday, June 4th, 2018

SAFE SCHOOLS PROCEDURES

With the safety of all our students at the forefront, we remind all parents of the importance of communicating with the school when your child will be late or absent.

Parent / Guardian Responsibility:

- **Communicate planned pupil absences or lateness to the school on a timely basis.**
- **Provide complete and current emergency information to enable the school to make any necessary follow-up contacts.**
- **Report to the Office when dropping off or picking up a child during school hours.**

Student Responsibility:

- **Students must report to the Office when arriving at school after the beginning of morning or afternoon classes.**

Free online math tutoring

Are you in grades 7-10? Do you need math help?

Free online math tutoring is available for students in grades 7-10.

Teachers are standing by every Sunday to Thursday 5:30-9:30pm.

Ontario.ca/HomeworkHelp

School Evacuation / Emergency

In case of a school evacuation or school emergency, updates will be posted on the front page of our school website at www.sta-russell.com.



Take the EOHU's *Healthy Made Easy!* Quiz for a Chance to Win!

Take the Eastern Ontario Health Unit's (EOHU) *Healthy Made Easy!* quiz and you could win a **\$200 grocery store gift card!**

The EOHU is holding the quiz to celebrate **Nutrition Month**, which takes place every year during the month of March. So go ahead and test your knowledge about how to keep healthy eating simple. All you have to do for a chance to win the prize is visit www.eohu.ca and answer 5 nutrition-related questions.

The quiz is a fun way to learn a few tips and ideas to help you prepare healthy meals, and covers topics like how to reduce salt and sugar in your meals, how to increase your vegetable and fruit intake, and how a slow cooker can help you save time in the kitchen.

The *Healthy Made Easy!* contest starts March 1 and runs through March 31. To participate or to get more information about simple changes that will lead to better eating, visit www.eohu.ca.

The Green Food Box is a non-profit program that brings neighbouring communities together to buy a variety of quality fresh fruits and vegetables at a wholesale price.

<http://www.greenfoodbox.ca/>

If you've ever taken a plane, you've heard the attendant say that it's important to put on your own oxygen mask before helping your child put on theirs. There's an important lesson in that statement - parents need to take care of themselves in order



to best take care of their children or youth. By taking care of yourself you're not being selfish or greedy - you're ensuring that you're the best parent for your child. Taking time to do things that you enjoy - reading a book, going for a walk, joining a sports team - can refresh and revitalize you so that you're better able to parent. This month try to do something at least once a week for yourself - your kids will thank you for it!