

CATHOLIC EDUCATION


Good News for All

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*How beautiful are the feet of those
who bring good news!*

Romans 10:15





Mountains are intriguing wonders of nature. They come in all shapes and sizes, from the towering magnificence of Mount Everest, the stately grandeur of the Canadian Rockies or the gentler green clad mountains that undulate across our globe. Mountains are important geographical locations, in the ongoing story of God's intervention in human affairs. Moses receives the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai; in Matthew's account, Jesus proclaims the Beatitudes, our Gospel values, on a mountain; Calvary was a mountain, although a small one; and in the words of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:11-12), the apostles returned "from the mount called Olivet" after they "saw him go into heaven." Mountains, big or small, are a scriptural platform for important announcements, announcements of peace, announcements of good news.

In a symbolic way, we who are involved in the adventure of publicly-funded Catholic education are standing on a mountain. Supported by our faith in the Gospel values, which Jesus left us, we proclaim that we are messengers who announce peace, who bring good news. "Lovely appear over the mountains the feet of them that preach and bring good news of peace," sings the refrain of the Missionary Hymn of the Spiritans, capturing the essence of both Isaiah and St. Paul. We are the bringers of good news not only to our students, but also to the wider Catholic community and indeed to the community of Ontario as a whole. We are the feet that tell a hurried and harried world that all is not gloom and doom. Into the darkness of confusion, contradiction and conflict, we in Catholic education bring to bear a light that transcends purely temporal considerations.

That the good news is not always heard, that the good news is not always received, that the good news is often disparaged and dismissed is a reality, but not a deterrent. It is good news that speaks of peace. "My peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives." (John 14:27) We are hardly surprised if our overtures of peace are often rejected.

What of those feet, those beautiful feet? They are our feet. We are the messengers. Our Baptism and Confirmation are our credentials as messengers of the good news. The beauty of our feet is not in their shapeliness or comeliness. The beauty of our feet is in the message we carry. That those feet are betimes weary and sore, and tired, bruised or broken, small or large, in no way inhibits the power of the message or the messenger. Feet are not static organs. Feet move and move us. The beautiful feet of the bearer of the good news are not stuck in one place. The beautiful feet are in motion to bring the good news. Jesus spoke about not hiding our lamp under a bushel basket. (Mt 5:15) The good news of our publicly-funded Catholic education is not just for ourselves in Catholic education. It is intended to be shared. It is good news for all! The message of the beautiful feet of the bearer of the good news is not constricted or confined. Our Catholic education has

a message of good news for all the citizens of Ontario. As is stated in the Ontario Bishops' document *This Moment of Promise*, whose twentieth anniversary of publication we celebrate this year, "We can make a significant contribution towards the building up of the life of this province and this country." (Page 5)

This year the Sisters of Loreto celebrate the 400th anniversary of the founding of their institute by a truly remarkable woman, Mary Ward. The beautiful tired feet of this valiant woman of post-reformation England walked the roads of Europe to bring the good news to young women that Catholic education was now available to them. Over the past 170 years in Ontario, the same Loreto Sisters and countless others have been the beautiful feet that have come and proclaimed the good news of Catholic education to the people of the province.

This is the Year of Saint Paul. This fiercely determined Apostle, who chastised the Galatians for their stupidity, was also the poet who penned the paean to love in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. If ever a mountain was traversed by beautiful feet bearing good news that mountain was Paul, who was unafraid to withstand Peter to his face "because he was wrong" (Galatians 2:11), but could passionately plead with Philemon for the slave Onesimus. "I am appealing to you for my child Onesimus whose father I have become during my imprisonment." (Philemon 8) The feet of Paul, as the Apostle to the Gentiles, brought the good news to all of us.

And you, the principals and vice-principals of our Catholic schools, *as no one else* you stand upon the mountain, visible and vulnerable, and bring the beautiful message of the good news to your community. There may be many days when your feet are weary and sore from the demands and responsibilities of your office. There will be days when the indifference or outright hostility of others may tempt you to stop and wonder, "Is anyone listening to the good news?" But Isaiah and St. Paul describe the feet of the messenger as beautiful, and do not equate the beauty of those feet with the reception of the good news by the listeners.

You plant the seeds. God gives the increase. Your leadership in Catholic education is critical. Your labours are often under-appreciated, misunderstood and challenged. Take heart from these words of gratitude in the letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, which can truly be said to apply to all of you:

We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

1Thessalonians 1:2-3

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of our Catholic principals and vice-principals who bring good news!