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President
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Shall We Dance?

On November 24 and 25, 2006, the Institute for Catholic Education will host the Ontario Catholic Education Symposium. The title of the symposium, *Navigating in Turbulent Waters, Together in Faith*, provides a good indicator of the theme of the symposium along with the current state of Catholic education in Ontario today. If the theme provides any hope at all, it is to be found in togetherness. The organizing committee is in the planning stages for the event and has drafted several statements to capture the purpose of the symposium. These statements focus on discerning the common ground of Catholic identity that keep us together in faith along with exploring the issues that threaten to bring an end to Catholic education in the province of Ontario. The symposium will provide insights from all stakeholders in Catholic education including parents, students, teachers, administrators, board members and the clergy. Together we will set the course for the future of Catholic education in the province of Ontario. The music is playing; the question is, "Shall we dance?"

Recently, the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario had the privilege of making a presentation at the annual Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association seminar for school board chairs, vice-chairs and directors of education. The purpose of the presentation was threefold:

- To demonstrate that we are advocates for kids and Catholic education
- To indicate our willingness to be management partners in Catholic education, and
- To demonstrate the outstanding Catholic professional development we provide for our members.

At the end of the day, the trustees and directors were left with a clear understanding of our commitment to Catholic education along with our willingness to engage in a partnership to further the goals of Catholic education in the province of Ontario. The music is playing, and once again the question remains, "Shall we dance?"

On November 24, 2005, the executive of the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario met with the executive of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association. This was a historic meeting as it marked the first time the executives had met jointly since principals and vice-principals were removed from the union in 1998. The purpose of the meeting was to begin to renew our relationship with OECTA and to look for ways in which we can support one another as we work together for the good of our students and Catholic education. We were somewhat disappointed to discover that, in the view of the union, principals and vice-principals were not meeting the needs of many of its teachers. This had not been our percep-

tion, as relationships between administration and teachers at the school level are viewed by principals and vice-principals to be both positive and productive as we work together to implement many new initiatives. We remain committed to work together to advance a common vision of Catholic education in the province of Ontario. We look forward to future meetings with the executive of OECTA, where we can begin to establish common goals and create opportunities to improve learning in the school communities we serve. The music continues to play, "Shall we dance?"

On April 27 through 29, we will come together to celebrate at our Annual Conference and General Meeting in Markham, Ontario. This year's conference will be hosted by the principals and vice-principals of the York Catholic District School Board.

The theme of the conference, *One in the Spirit*, is most appropriate, if not serendipitous. It speaks not only of who we are, but also of what we must become if Catholic education is to continue in the province of Ontario. We are all well aware of the issues that challenge Catholic education and many have proposed solutions.

If we are to resolve the issues and challenges we face, we must focus on the root of the problem. This may require a good deal of personal and collective soul-searching on the part of all stakeholders as we will truly need to become "One in Spirit". The issue at the end of the day will not be what to do, but rather, do we have the collective will to do it?

To paraphrase the words of noted lyricist Leanne Womack, when the music plays, "I hope we dance."

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