

# Walking the Path Together

By **Mary Lynn Hamzo**, Principal  
St. Thomas More Catholic School  
London District Catholic School Board



I cannot believe it is the middle of July and I am planning for a new school year. As I look ahead, I also reflect on the past and the many blessings that I have been bestowed. I am what may be referred to as a late bloomer, having entered administration much later in my teaching career. I do not know why I did not consider this ministry earlier. Perhaps my perception of this vocation was skewed, having focused on the challenges and not the many blessings. For the past while, I have made a conscious effort of inviting colleagues to consider the ministry of leadership. The most common response I receive is, “Are you kidding me?”

This response is indeed disconcerting. We all know the challenges that face Catholic education and the need for strong and faith-filled leadership. However, who is responding to the leadership call? I remember hearing a presenter state that leadership is not for those who are faint-of-heart. I could not agree more. Leadership requires a commitment to living a faith-filled life and recognizing the centrality of Christ’s mission in our daily encounters.

I think that the greatest misconception when considering a leadership role is that you lead alone. If an individual believes that he/she is leading in isolation, the calling is overwhelming. We lead together, many voices, many backgrounds and many skills. I remember my first day as principal thinking, “I have fooled everyone into thinking that I can do this, but now the gig is up.” My first official duty as principal that day was to host a re-entry meeting for a young girl who was coming back from a three-day suspension. The mother came into my office, her eyes visibly red and swollen. This family had just arrived from Sudan. Her young daughter had experienced many difficulties and witnessed many atrocities. The mother did not speak English but her face spoke openly of her anguish. I sat beside her and took her

hand and she cried out in Arabic, “My God why have You forgotten me?” I could not believe my ears. I replied in Arabic, “He has not left you. He is here and He loves you very much.” I knew at that moment that I was where I needed to be.

Every day I am reminded of Christ’s unending love through the individuals whom I am privileged to serve. Last year my morning ritual generally started with a very *special* young student in our school named Shelby. Even though she was not supposed to be there, Shelby would come into my office every morning, before the bell, to tell me about the past evening’s events. If she interpreted my responses to be somewhat witty, she would quip, “Hamzo you crack me up.” We would share a laugh and a hug, and she would be ready to take on the day. This morning ritual would end with Shelby telling me that I was her angel and that

she loved me, to which I would reply, I love you too-God bless! What ministry can afford you the opportunity to witness Christ’s unconditional love in such a tangible form?

For me as a Catholic principal, I have gone from having four children of my own to having over two hundred. My family has grown not only in children but also in adults. I am blessed to work with incredibly devoted and faith-filled adults who lead with me. I hope that my actions demonstrate to them that they are indeed irreplaceable and that God’s unconditional love surrounds us. Their personal and professional story is important to me. It is a story to which I commit myself. My new year’s goal is to try to demonstrate more visibly the many blessings of this calling and perhaps encourage colleagues to consider walking on this path too.

*We lead together,  
many voices,  
many backgrounds  
and many skills.*

---

Contact Mary Lynn Hamzo at [m.hamzo@ldcsb.on.ca](mailto:m.hamzo@ldcsb.on.ca).