

| Edmonton Catholic Schools |

# FAITH FORMATION IN STUDENTS AND STAFF 2025-2026

| January 2026 |



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. Our Approach to Faith Formation .....</b>	<b>3</b>
○ Comprehensive Approach to Faith Development	
○ Evangelization, Catechesis, and Community	
○ Key Faith Formation Events and Initiatives	
▪ Opening School Mass	
▪ The Five Marks of Catholic School Identity	
▪ Communities of Belonging	
▪ Faith Development Day	
▪ Father Michael “Catfish” Mireau Youth Faith Day	
▪ School, Home, Parish Partnership	
▪ External Partners	
<b>3. Faith Formation Through Curriculum Support.....</b>	<b>9</b>
○ Religious Education Programs	
○ Formation Through Consultant Support	
<b>4. Faith Formation Through Chaplaincy .....</b>	<b>11</b>
○ The Role of Division Chaplains: Father Glenn and Father Julian	
○ Formation In The Digital Age	
○ Lay Chaplain Formation Through The Five Marks of Catholic School Identity	
○ The Lay Chaplain	
<b>5. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>15</b>
○ Religious Education and Faith Formation	
○ The Ongoing Commitment to Faith Formation and Catholic Education	

# INTRODUCTION

Religious Education remains central to the mission of Catholic schooling because it directly shapes the spiritual, moral, and intellectual vitality of a Catholic School Division. Its strength depends not only on curriculum and programming but also on the commitment and witness of the people who lead and participate in the work. The mission of the Division is to provide a Catholic education that inspires students to learn and prepares them to live fully and to serve God in one another with integrity and purpose. With the support of proper faith formation, students and staff help us actively live out this mission. Their growth, leadership, and daily example continually strengthen the Catholic identity of the Division and renew our shared capacity to live that mission in meaningful ways. Through the work of faith-formed staff, students engage with the teachings of the Catholic Church and are guided to express these values through their daily actions. This ongoing formation is also shaped by our vision of calling students to learn together, work together, and pray together in answering the call to a faith-filled life of service, which promotes a spirit of community, compassion, and justice, enabling students to recognize their place within God's plan and their responsibility to the broader community.

Anchored in the Five Marks of Catholic Identity, faith formation is offered through a balanced and inclusive approach that combines structured academic learning with liturgical life, communal prayer, and opportunities for service. Formed teachers and leaders serve as vital partners in this work because their example models what it means to live a life shaped by the Gospel. Their ability to teach, witness, and form relationships strengthens The Division's overall faith culture. Students are also encouraged to engage in inquiry and dialogue that lead to deeper understanding, reinforced in their participation in Masses, liturgies, retreats, and acts of service that help them recognize the significance of living their faith through concrete action.

A key element of faith formation is a personal encounter with God. Through prayer, guided reflection, and quiet contemplation, students are invited to develop a deeper awareness of God's presence in their lives. By emphasizing respect for human dignity, empathy, and solidarity with those who are most vulnerable, students and staff are encouraged to become compassionate contributors to society. This also reinforces the essential role that faith formation programs play in the overall health of a Catholic School Division, since they ensure that Catholic identity is not merely preserved but actively strengthened.

Through the work of Division Chaplains, Lay Chaplains, Religious Education Consultants, other faith-formed staff, and supported by documents like the Five Marks of Catholic School Identity Faith Formation Plan, the Division supports the formation of learners who are academically capable, spiritually grounded, and confident in their Catholic identity. The overarching aim is to form young people who participate meaningfully in the life of the Church and contribute generously to the wider world. Faith formation of students and staff are at the heart of this work, since their formation,

leadership, and daily commitment allow The Division to live its mission with clarity, authenticity, and hope. Through their efforts, The Division continues to form graduates who understand what it means to live a faith that is transformative, deeply rooted in Catholic tradition, and responsive to the needs of society.

## OUR APPROACH TO FAITH FORMATION

Faith formation includes a comprehensive and integrated approach to nurturing individuals' spiritual growth and development within the framework of Catholic teachings and practices. Rooted in the belief in God's revelation through Scripture and Tradition, faith formation emphasizes the importance of meeting Christ and deepening one's relationship with Him.

At the same time, faith formation involves evangelization and catechesis, which provides systematic instruction in the teachings of the Church, including doctrine, morality, prayer, and social justice. While this instruction is reflected through the religious education programs, parish-based ministries, and spiritual retreats, faith formation can also be expressed in the community via fellowship, service, and mutual support within the Church and the broader community. It is through these communal experiences that Catholics are invited to live out their faith in concrete ways, embodying the values of love, compassion, and solidarity in the world.

---

### OPENING SCHOOL MASS

---

The Eucharist stands at the center of faith formation, shaping the spiritual life of a Catholic school division and grounding all formation in an encounter with Christ. When staff gather to celebrate the Eucharist, they participate in the source and summit of the Church's life, renewing their own spiritual journeys.

All staff, both baptized Catholics and those of alternate faith backgrounds, attend Opening School Mass. The attendance at Mass itself supports the faith formation of all staff, as everyone is invited to participate in the Mass to the extent to which they are comfortable. Everyone in attendance benefits from spiritual nourishment through participation in the liturgy and grows in appreciation for Catholic sacramental worship. Members of alternate faiths are invited to participate in a spiritual communion or receive a blessing during the Communion rite, since this participation nourishes the soul and draws attendees into deeper union with God and with one another, regardless of sacramental reception.

This shared celebration strengthens the foundation upon which all faith formation rests, reminding staff that their work flows from the grace, unity, and mission they receive from Christ in the Eucharist. Together, the following elements form a compelling narrative on the importance of the Eucharist. The Celebration of Mass:



- Reaffirms the vocation of Catholic educators
- Spiritually renews for mission
- Builds a faith-based professional community
- Models faith leadership
- Aligns with Catholic values
- Prayerfully reflects solidarity
- Strengthens Christ-centered leadership

The Eucharist reaffirms the vocation of Catholic educators, reminds staff that their work extends far beyond instruction, and invites staff to remember the sacred responsibility they carry in forming young people. It also provides a vital moment of spiritual renewal for mission. In the busyness of school life, the Eucharist offers staff an opportunity to pause, reflect, and reconnect with Christ as their source of strength, wisdom, and inspiration. This renewal equips them to return to their roles with clarity, purpose, and a deeper sense of commitment.

Celebrating the Eucharist as a division strengthens a faith-based professional community. When staff from diverse schools come together in worship, they are united in their shared mission and identity as Catholic educators. This gathering fosters a sense of belonging and reinforces the communal dimension of Catholic education, reminding staff that they do not carry their mission alone.

In addition, the celebration models faith leadership. By gathering in worship, staff demonstrate that faith is not only taught but lived, which is essential for those called to witness Christ's teachings to students and the broader school community. Their participation communicates that faith remains central to both personal and professional life.

The Eucharist also grounds staff in core Catholic values. Sharing in this central act of worship calls educators to embody love, service, compassion, and community in their daily work. It deepens their understanding that these values are not abstract concepts but practical guides for their interactions, decisions, and responsibilities.

Coming together in prayer further expresses solidarity. The Eucharist allows staff to pray collectively for students, families, colleagues, and communities, especially during challenging times. This shared prayer reinforces their unity of purpose and their collective hope rooted in Christ.

Finally, the celebration of the Eucharist strengthens Christ-centered leadership across The Division. It is a moment to intentionally place Christ at the center of decision-making, relationships, and educational practices. Staff are reminded that their work is not solely a profession but a vocation grounded in faith, service, and the example of Christ. Through the Eucharist, the spiritual foundation of the Edmonton Catholic School Division is renewed, and staff are equipped to fulfill their roles with integrity, compassion, and a deep sense of mission.



## THE FIVE MARKS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOL IDENTITY

The Five Marks of Catholic School Identity continue to serve as the guiding post for any Professional Development and faith formation in The Division. The Department of Religious Education Services delivers three sessions on the Five Marks of Catholic School Identity every year to New Principals, New Assistant Principals, and Leadership.

Here, the Marks of an Excellent Catholic Leader begin with the premise that superb Catholic school leaders are also master Catholic teachers. The presentations discuss the essence of teaching excellence, address the roles and responsibilities of both Catholic school and Catholic division leaders, and share concrete and measurable ways in which the Marks can be realized in a typical school setting. The focus of these sessions include:

Mark One: An Excellent Catholic Leader Embraces the Dignity of All as Created in the Image of God - Emphasis on the supernatural destiny of students brings with it a profound appreciation of the need to perfect children in all their dimensions as images of God.

Mark Two: An Excellent Catholic Leader Advocates for Catholic Education Within and Beyond the School Community and Makes Decisions Rooted in Gospel Teachings - The Church sees education as a process that, considering our transcendent destiny, forms the whole child and seeks to fix their eyes on heaven.

Mark Three: An Excellent Catholic Leader Intentionally Directs and Fosters the Development of Catholic Education through Faith Permeation - A third distinctive characteristic of Catholic schools is that the spirit of Catholicism should permeate the entire curriculum. Catholic education is intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person.

Mark Four: An Excellent Catholic Leader is Called to be a Witness and an Agent of Hope, Proclaiming the Gospel Message to all People, everywhere and at All Times - A fourth indicator of a

school's authentic Catholicity is the vital witness of its teachers and administrators. With them lies the primary responsibility for creating a Christian school climate, as individuals and as a community.

Mark Five: An Excellent Catholic Leader Ensures a Communal Vision; Recognizing that God will be Found with and in Each Other - A final mark of Catholicity is the emphasis on the school as a community of persons and, even more to the point, a genuine community of faith.

On Thursday, January the 8th, the Department of Religious Education together with the Board of Trustees participated in a morning retreat and presentation from Archbishop Michael Miller, recognized as the Founding Father of the Five Marks of Catholic Identity. Archbishop Michael Miller is a Canadian Basilian priest who has served the Church as a pastor, theologian, and educator, including his work at the Vatican in the Congregation for Catholic Education.

---

### FAITH DEVELOPMENT DAY

---

Faith Development Day is an important component of staff faith formation because it provides intentional time for educators to deepen their understanding of Catholic teaching, strengthen their personal relationship with Christ, and reconnect with the mission that guides their work. By gathering as a community for prayer, learning, and celebration of the Eucharist, staff experience renewal that supports their vocation as witnesses of faith and equips them to better accompany students on their own faith journeys.

Each February, Edmonton Catholic Schools supports a full day of faith formation for all staff. This activity sees staff gathering in select locations across the city to listen to Catholic speakers or theologians and to celebrate the Eucharist as a larger community.

- This year, the planning and implementation of the day returned to a broader committee format to include a principal from each level, as well as the Department of Religious Education, allowing for the voices of many colleagues.
- Faith Development Day, scheduled for Wednesday, February 25th, will be celebrated in eight churches: St. Thomas More, Annunciation, Corpus Christi, St. Charles, St. John Bosco, Santa Maria Goretti, Resurrection, and St. Josaphat's Cathedral.
- The Eucharistic Mass and Liturgy at each parish will be followed by staff returning to their own schools and sites for coffee and fellowship, and participation in two virtual presentations and table discussions facilitated by David Wells and Terry Hershey.

The theme for this school year is Hope, as it is rooted both in the Division Theme of "People of Hope" and the Jubilee Theme of "Pilgrims of Hope". The theme of Faith Development Day will reflect this same theme of Hope. From a faith perspective, hope anchors people in God's promises and

faithfulness. It invites us to look beyond present circumstances, to trust in God's presence, and to live with confidence that love, compassion, and goodness can prevail, even in times of hardship.

---

### FATHER MICHAEL "CATFISH" MIREAU YOUTH FAITH DAY

---

Youth Faith Day plays a vital role in the faith formation of students by offering them a meaningful encounter with Christ through the Eucharist and the dynamic, engaging proclamation of the Gospel. By gathering grade eight students from across The Division, the event creates a shared experience that strengthens Catholic identity, builds community, and invites young people to see themselves as active participants in the life of the Church. This dedicated time for worship, learning, and joyful celebration helps students grow in faith.

From March 18-25, 2026, the school division will host its annual Father Michael Mireau Youth Faith Day.

- Gathering at St. Charles Church, every Grade Eight student in the school division will attend a morning session during the six-day period.
- Over three hours, students will participate in a Eucharistic Celebration as well as engage in a lively and enthusiastic presentation by internationally acclaimed Catholic youth speaker Jesse Manibusan.

Father Michael Mireau Youth Faith Day Theme this year is "Serve Like A Superhero", a focus which was created originally by Father Michael Mireau himself. Serve like a Superhero encourages Grade Eight students to identify their own gifts and talents as their "superpowers" and to use them in the service of others. It helps them understand that everyday acts, standing up for someone who is excluded, helping a peer, showing kindness, or working for justice, are meaningful expressions of leadership and faith.

---

### SCHOOL-HOME-PARISH PARTNERSHIP

---

A strong partnership between school, home, and parish is foundational to faith formation because it ensures that students experience the Catholic faith as a consistent and living reality across all areas of their lives. When families, educators, and parish communities work together, students receive unified support that strengthens their Catholic identity and helps them integrate faith into decisions, relationships, and daily experiences.

The relationship between the school, home, and parish, as described in Mark Five: Shaped By A Spirituality Of Communion, forms a vital foundation of Catholic education. This relationship creates a supportive and unified environment that nurtures the spiritual, moral, and academic growth of students. When educators, families, and parish leaders work together, they help ensure that faith is not only taught in the classroom but also lived and experienced within the home and the parish community. This shared commitment strengthens students' Catholic identity and helps them carry their learning into daily life through meaningful faith experiences.



The connection between school, home, and parish continues to be an important part of our school division. Last year, we hosted a gathering with parish priests, principals, and division leaders to deepen this partnership. Because the Archdiocese was without an Archbishop, we postponed this year's gathering.

As for the relationship between schools and their parish communities, the St. Theresa Family of Schools continues to be a strong example. St. Theresa's Church hosts two faith formation sessions each year for staff, giving them an opportunity to deepen their understanding of Catholicism. The parish priests in that family also make regular visits to the schools and support students in their preparation for the sacraments. Participation in parish Masses, engagement in sacramental preparation, and involvement in ministries and activities provide students with meaningful opportunities to encounter God, celebrate their faith, practice Catholic values in real-world contexts, nurtures a sense of belonging to the local and global Church, deepens student engagement in faith formation, and supports the ongoing mission of Catholic education to develop compassionate, faith-filled individuals.

---

## EXTERNAL PARTNERS

---

Collaboration with external partners enriches faith formation by providing students and staff with broader access to spiritual guidance, theological expertise, and experiences that connect them to the wider Church. These partnerships strengthen The Division's capacity to offer authentic Catholic education, deepen understanding of the faith, and support the cultural and spiritual diversity present within the local Church.

Partnerships with organizations such as the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton, the Ukrainian Eparchy, the Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta, and GrACE continue to play an essential role in supporting the mission of Edmonton Catholic Schools. Like Mark Five: Shaped By A Spirituality Of Communion, these collaborative relationships strengthen connections to the wider faith community and contribute meaningfully to the holistic formation of students and staff. Through access to spiritual leadership, theological expertise, and opportunities for cultural engagement, these partners support the integration of Catholic teachings within educational practice, enabling students and staff to grow academically, spiritually, and morally while developing a strong sense of identity and belonging within the Catholic tradition and the global Church.

One meaningful example of how our partnerships strengthen the formation of students and staff is the work currently underway with the Ukrainian Eparchy. The Ukrainian Eparchy and Edmonton Catholic Schools have been dedicated partners for many years. Under the leadership of Bishop David, our division has supported the development of new Ukrainian Religious Education curricular resources for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve. This work has involved the commitment of many of our Ukrainian teachers who have piloted the new lessons in their classrooms and offered thoughtful consultation throughout the development process.

A second example is the ongoing Bishop's Assurance work with the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton. In collaboration with Catholic education partners, the Bishops have developed a guidance document that outlines ways for the Church to engage with Catholic education across each diocese. The Bishop's Assurance provides suggested actions and flexible approaches that are adapted to the ECSD context.

This process invites participation from school communities, incorporates direction from the local Bishop, integrates the Five Marks, and highlights the vital contributions of our Division Chaplains, Fr. Glenn and Fr. Julian. It also reinforces the central relationship among home, school, and parish in the life of Catholic education.

To support the implementation of this joint work over the next three years, the Religious Education department will provide guidance through the leadership of our Catholicity Consultant and with the support of the Division Chaplains. Their work will help schools interpret and reflect the Bishop's Assurance in meaningful and practical ways. This support will also inform our faith formation processes as we move forward.

## FAITH FORMATION THROUGH CURRICULUM SUPPORT

A strong foundation in faith formation depends not only on the witness and leadership in our schools but also on the quality of the curriculum and resources that support teachers in their daily practice. Ensuring that staff have access to well-designed, theologically sound, and pedagogically applicable Education programs is essential in helping students grow in their understanding of the Catholic faith in ways that are meaningful, coherent, and developmentally appropriate. It is within this context that Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ, the Religious Education program approved by The Catholic Bishops of Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the Northwest Territories and developed in collaboration with Catholic educators from across Canada, actively promotes education in a Catholic setting.

The program, based on the Catholic Elementary Curriculum Policy Document for Religious Education for Kindergarten to Grade 8, exemplifies discipline and rigor, reflects the content of faith expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and follows the rationale and method of the General Directory for Catechesis. Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ presents the Catholic faith as a distinctive discipline with a unique set of beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes that informs and influences all other learning. The program, rooted in Scripture, relies on explicit teaching of the basic beliefs of the Catholic faith and explores the traditions of the Catholic faith, connecting prayer and a personal relationship with God to all learning. An example from the Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ religion program that shows how teachers are formed in their faith, can be seen in the teacher background sections and faith reflections that accompany each unit. For instance, many units in the program begins with "Teacher Faith

Formation” or “Theological Background” notes. These sections invite teachers to engage personally with Scripture, Church teaching, and the central theme of the unit before teaching it to students.

While the current Grade Nine Religious Education Program, *Be With Me*, complements the *Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ* resources, we look forward to introducing the new Grade 9 Pearson Program in the fall of 2026 and remain committed to the High School Religion Programs of Studies - RS 15, 25, 35, and Religions of the World 35, which were revised in 2023; with each course studied from a thematic perspective.

To complement the *Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ* Religion Program, *Blessed and Beloved*, a new Family Life Education resource supported by both the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta, will be introduced to Edmonton Catholic Schools’ audiences in Grade One beginning the fall of 2026.

---

### FORMATION THROUGH CONSULTANT SUPPORT

---

The Elementary and Secondary Religious Education Consultants continue to offer regularly scheduled Professional Development sessions in-person and on TEAMS to support teachers with the implementation of the Religious Education Programs of Studies for all grades.

By its explicit alignment with Mark Three: “Animated by a Faith-Infused Curriculum,” the Religious Education (RE) Curriculum ensures that faith is not treated as an isolated subject, but as a lens through which students engage with knowledge, meaning, and life. Through intentional design, delivery, and reflection, the Religious Education Curriculum integrates Catholic faith, Scripture, and tradition with contemporary student experiences, promoting deep understanding and lived discipleship.

Teaching and learning in Religious Education are shaped by pedagogies that promote engagement, dialogue, and reflection, creating opportunities for students to explore faith in ways that are thoughtful and personally meaningful. Teachers receive ongoing support from the Religious Education Consultants to incorporate strategies that invite students to encounter faith with curiosity, critical thinking, and personal insight. This approach includes the use of reflective practices such as journaling, prayerful silence, and guided discussion that help students integrate faith with learning. It also encourages inquiry-based learning, where students ask questions about belief, purpose, and morality in a safe and respectful environment. The RE Department and Learning Services developed a permeated lesson for Religion and Math, which was shared with many elementary teachers last year. We created a Secondary Religion and Science lesson that was posted on SharePoint as a video and shared with teachers during Thursday afternoon staff meetings last year. Currently, RE and PEW are working together to create a presentation that will be shared with Elementary teachers during the next Learning Services Teacher session. In addition to this, differentiated learning experiences are also developed to help recognize the diverse faith backgrounds and stages of belief present within the classroom while remaining faithful to Catholic teaching.

While a faith-infused curriculum extends beyond the classroom, the RE Curriculum Consultants help staff understand the theological and ethical foundations that inform interdisciplinary learning and whole-school practices by:

- Collaborating between Religious Education teachers and Lay Chaplains to align curriculum themes with liturgical seasons, social justice initiatives, and pastoral programs.
- Providing cross-curricular links where Catholic values and ethical perspectives are explored in Humanities, Science, and Health and Wellness, reinforcing the Catholic worldview.
- Integrating whole-school learning experiences, such as liturgies, retreats, and Christian service, to RE curriculum outcomes.

The effectiveness of a faith-infused curriculum is strengthened through the formation and support of educators, ensuring that teachers feel confident and capable in delivering Religious Education with both theological depth and strong pedagogical practice. Ongoing professional learning plays an essential role in this work, offering opportunities focused on theological understanding and curriculum interpretation. Teachers also benefit from collaborative planning of RE units that promote consistency, quality, and fidelity to Catholic teaching across classrooms. In addition, reflective review processes help educators evaluate how well the curriculum supports student faith development and engagement, contributing to continuous improvement in both teaching and learning.

## FAITH FORMATION THROUGH CHAPLAINCY

Father Glenn McDonald and Father Julian Bilyj, our Division Chaplains, offer staff a strong foundation in the theological teachings of the Catholic Church and an inspiring spiritual presence throughout our school communities. They continue to serve as trusted and accessible resources, helping to strengthen the relationship between our schools and local parishes. Their presence contributes meaningfully to evangelization within The Division and in the broader community.

Both chaplains provide clear guidance and faith formation for students and staff in areas that shape the Catholic life of our schools, including liturgy, prayer, moral development, Catholic identity, and missionary outreach. Their work reflects a spirit of partnership that honors the varied gifts and expertise of staff, and they collaborate closely with school teams to support a vibrant and authentic Catholic culture.



---

## FORMATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

---

Along with their regular visits to schools, classroom involvement, and support of Eucharistic celebrations and Liturgies of the Word, Father Glenn and Father Julian continue to create digital resources for The Division. These include virtual liturgies, short prayer experiences, mini homilies, reflections, and faith-based videos that offer ongoing formation and encouragement for students and staff. All digital offerings align with both the Liturgical Calendar and the Religious Education curriculum, strengthen faith learning across all grade levels, and ensure that spiritual formation remains accessible and engaging for the entire Edmonton Catholic Schools community.

The Division also supports this work through the Faith Alive page on its public website. This page provides families and students with a collection of digital faith resources that invite users to explore the beauty of the Catholic faith through prayer, worship, and study. The page features resources such as Little Liturgies with Father Glenn, which offer short online liturgies that follow the liturgical year and other key feasts and celebrations, and as most viewed videos from Edmonton Catholic Schools, are widely used by staff and families to support classroom learning and at-home conversations about faith. The Faith Alive page also connects users to Reflections with Father Julian, social justice resources, the Division Prayer, the Five Marks of Catholic Identity, and Parent Newsletters that guide families through the liturgical seasons. It is also important to note that in addition to this work, the Division celebrates the recent achievement of The Take and Eat video series, created by Father Glenn and filmed and edited by Patrick Kelly, which received the Coup de Coeur Award at the 2025 BRAVO! Awards, presented by the Canadian Association of Communicators in Education (CACE). This recognition highlights the important role digital platforms can play in supporting the shared work of home and school in nurturing faith formation, offering tools that encourage families to grow as active witnesses to the love of Christ.

---

## LAY CHAPLAIN FORMATION THROUGH THE FIVE MARKS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOL IDENTITY

---

Father Glenn and Father Julian also remain committed to supporting the formation and ongoing development of Lay Chaplains for ministry within The Division. Through regular Chaplain Meetings, Lay Chaplains from each school site are equipped with the guidance, shared resources, and collaborative support needed to respond effectively to the spiritual and pastoral needs of their students. These gatherings, reflected by the Five Marks of Catholic School Identity, provide a valuable forum for sharing best practices, reflecting on student experiences, and developing consistent yet flexible approaches to ministry that respect the unique context of each school community.

Beginning with “Grounded In A Christian Anthropology,” this Mark reflects the intentional Christ-centered emphasis of chaplaincy formation and ministry. Each Chaplain Meeting begins with a Eucharistic celebration, Scripture, and theological reflection, modeling a prayerful approach that Lay Chaplains replicate within their school communities. Father Glenn and Father Julian guide the Lay

Chaplains in reflecting on Jesus' ministry of accompaniment, compassion, and healing, supporting chaplains to build authentic, trusting relationships with students and inviting them to intentionally prioritize presence and listening, particularly with students experiencing grief, anxiety, or disconnection.

Building on this foundation, the second mark, "Imbued With A Catholic Worldview," equips Lay Chaplains to witness to faith in ways that are invitational, age-appropriate, and grounded in lived experience. Shared resources support Lay Chaplains in planning and leading Masses, liturgies, prayer, and retreats that engage students meaningfully and encourage participation. They create opportunities for students to explore faith through service, reflection, and dialogue, rather than instruction alone. Student leadership in liturgy, social justice initiatives, and prayer is encouraged, enabling students to experience faith as active and relevant.

Continuing through the framework, the third mark, "Animated By A Faith-Infused Curriculum," considers the high standards of formation, reflection, and professional practice within chaplaincy ministry. Regular Chaplain Meetings provide structured professional learning in the RE Curriculum, pastoral care, adolescent development, and faith formation. Here, Lay Chaplains engage in reflective practice by sharing case studies, discussing challenges, and evaluating the effectiveness of pastoral responses. Consistent expectations and shared approaches across The Division ensure quality and coherence, while still allowing flexibility for individual school contexts.

Deepening this work, the fourth mark, "Sustained By Gospel Witness," expresses the dignity, wellbeing, and inclusion of every student. Chaplains are supported to respond to issues such as mental health, social isolation, family hardship, and grief with compassion and pastoral care. Discussions during Chaplain Meetings focus on promoting inclusive practices and advocating for vulnerable students. Chaplains collaborate with school leadership and Health and Wellness teams to support initiatives that promote respect, empathy, and social responsibility.

Finally, the fifth mark, "Shaped By A Spirituality Of Communion," articulates the integration of faith into the everyday experiences of students and school life. Lay Chaplains help students make connections between faith, life experiences, and decision-making through guided reflection and prayer. Liturgical seasons and celebrations are intentionally integrated into the rhythm of school life and pastoral programming, ensuring Catholic identity is lived authentically rather than presented as abstract or disconnected.

---

## THE LAY CHAPLAIN

---

For us at Edmonton Catholic Schools, the Lay Chaplains are designated to provide leadership in promoting the spiritual needs of the school under the supervision of its Principal and in alignment with The Division Plan for Continuous Growth and the Five Marks Faith Formation Plan. In collaboration with the Department of Religious Education, Father Glenn and Father Julian meet with the Lay

Chaplains, four afternoons a year. The agenda is constructed to consider the needs of the schools, the liturgical seasons, and the life of the Church, and each year, one field experience is selected to provide the Chaplains with an opportunity to integrate their learning in more concrete and meaningful ways.

Over the years, the Lay Chaplains have visited:

- Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples to consider ways in which Catholicity and Indigenous spirituality intersect in their shared emphasis on the sacredness of creation, the communal nature of faith, and the presence of the divine in everyday life.
- St. George's Ukrainian Catholic Church, where Lay Chaplains celebrated Divine Liturgy and reflected how one faith – Latin and Byzantine - can be authentically lived through different rites, languages, and cultural expressions, particularly highlighting the significance of the iconography in the church.
- Mount Carmel Spirituality Centre in Parkland County, where Lay Chaplains were offered the opportunity for prayer and personal renewal.

The Lay Chaplains in our schools play a vital role in sustaining the faith life of their communities. Their work supports students, staff, and families by ensuring that Catholic identity is lived meaningfully and consistently throughout the school year. Their primary responsibilities include:

- Nurturing and cultivating a Catholic culture that fully permeates faith and learning.
- Ensuring that the Catholic display at the front of the school is changed following the liturgical seasons and providing guidance and support to teachers regarding their own classroom prayer tables and displays.
- Coordinating and enhancing the school-home-parish partnership by meeting with the local parish priest, once in the fall and once in the spring, to discuss concrete ways of enhancing the school-home-parish partnership.
- Connecting students from the school with the Sacramental preparation classes offered by the local Catholic church.
- Guiding the prayer life of the school community.
- Facilitating the liturgical life of the school by supporting the staff and students in the development of liturgically correct celebrations.
- Supporting the school social justice initiatives.
- Providing leadership in the development and implementation of the Catholic Identity Goal, explicitly in relation to the Five Marks of Catholic School Identity.
- Providing direction on theological/moral issues according to Church teaching.
- Attending the mandatory division Chaplain meetings.

Through their daily presence, guidance, and collaboration with school communities, the Lay Chaplains play an important role in nurturing the faith formation of both students and staff. Their leadership in prayer, liturgy, Catholic identity, and spiritual development ensures that each school remains a place where the Gospel is lived, learned, and deepened in meaningful and lasting ways.

## CONCLUSION

Religious Education is central to the mission of Catholic schools, supporting the spiritual and intellectual formation of students within a distinctly Catholic context. Through the intentional integration of faith and learning, school leaders and educators actively promote Catholic education, inviting students to encounter God, deepen their understanding of belief, and live out the values of compassion, justice, and service. This shared commitment is expressed through meaningful religious celebrations and social justice initiatives organized across schools and departments, nurturing vibrant, faith-filled communities that reflect the teachings of Christ and serve as living witnesses to Catholic faith in action.

A sustained commitment to faith formation continues to guide the work of Religious Education Services. Ongoing curriculum development, coupled with programs that support both personal faith growth and professional learning for staff, ensures high-quality fully permeated instruction. These efforts are strengthened through cooperative partnerships between school, home, and parish, as well as opportunities for students and staff to engage in Catholic social teaching and service. Together, these initiatives support the formation of learners who are academically capable, spiritually grounded, and confident in their Catholic identity.

Looking ahead, The Division remains committed to strengthening faith formation and advancing Catholic education through intentional leadership development and capacity building. By investing in the formation of current and future leaders, we ensure the continued vitality of our schools and the sustainability of our Catholic mission. With hope and purpose, we will continue to grow together in faith, support one another, and witness to the transformative power of Catholic education for the benefit of students, families, and the wider community for generations to come.







EDMONTON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

**LUMEN CHRISTI CATHOLIC EDUCATION CENTRE**

9405 50 Street NW | Edmonton AB T6B 2T4 | T:780-441-6000 | E: [info@ecsd.net](mailto:info@ecsd.net) | [ecsd.net](http://ecsd.net)