



PRESS RELEASE

The Joy of Beginning Again!

An estimated 1,800 Catholic primary and secondary school students gathered to celebrate mass Sept. 10 at St. Joseph's Oratory, marking not only the beginning of another school year, but a first for four Montreal Catholic schools.

Montreal, September 11, 2019 – Children, grades Kindergarten to 11, from Augustin Roscelli and Marie-Clarac schools, together with youth from Loyola High School and The Sacred Heart School of Montreal, attended yesterday the special mass celebrated by Most Reverend Christian Lépine, Archbishop of Montreal. Organized by the principals representing each school, the one-hour inaugural gathering was an encounter of fellowship and faith for the schools and reinforced the shared mission of Catholic education.

Students actively participated in the bilingual liturgy, through contributions of their artwork, music, song and dance. Others volunteered through hospitality, as ushers and greeters, and during the mass as lectors and altar servers. Representatives of the various religious institutions which founded these schools were present as well, including the Jesuits of Loyola, the Sisters of Charity of Saint Mary and the Sœurs de l'Immaculée.

The event is the result of a partnership between the diocese and Catholic schools, which began in 2016. Some Catholic schools are searching for mutual support and ways to build a network to reinforce their common mission of Catholic education, and the diocese organizes a round table in response. Since then, the network has grown, and Catholic school principals and educators representing up to a dozen local institutions, both French and English, have been meeting regularly with the

collaboration of the Diocesan Centre for Marriage, Life and Family and the Office for Faith Education.

Areas of concern discussed to date include the integral spiritual formation of their students, professional development, recruitment of both teachers and students, and the transition towards lay-led schools following the waning presence of religious communities who founded and served these schools from their inception.

It is the team's hope that the inaugural mass will be followed by many others and that interest from more schools to take part will grow in the coming year.

The theme chosen for this special mass, "Called by your Name", focused on the unique call and God-given talents of each student. The theme was drawn from the Gospel reading that recounts Christ's invitation to his first disciples. In his homily, the Archbishop stressed the personal love of God for each student and their call to follow Him, echoing Pope Francis' message to young people everywhere in his recent exhortation, "Christus Vivit! Christ is Alive!", published in March 2019 following the October Synod of Bishops on young people, faith and vocational discernment.

"Dear students, I am extremely happy to be here among you today and to see this sacred space completely filled with young people!...The world needs you, and what you will be tomorrow begins today!", Archbishop Lépine told the attentive students. "Your Catholic schools exist to train you in the truth of faith, beauty, sincerity, kindness and peace so that you will grow up knowing Jesus Christ. In this sense, your families, your schools and the faith work together for your own growth", he said.

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