

Do I believe in what I'm saying? Then SHARE IT!

The beginning of a school year is always a thrilling moment! Typically, we re-start and re-focus on the classic '3Rs' of "reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic" which are so much of our formal education. Another component we should also review and renew is that of our *conscience*. A conscience is often described as the inner feeling or 'voice' which acts as a guide to the rightness or wrongness of our chosen behavior. Indeed, with and through a conscience we define who and what we are to become in our life and for this world. Consequently, the proper formation of a conscience is absolutely critical for a person to learn how to make the best decisions for a healthy self-awareness and self-esteem.

This type of focus and effort is not selfish; it is, rather, something *self/less*. This is because it involves a critical self-reflection to develop a proper understanding of our neighbour. And such reflection is always to occur in light of the Truth in conjunction with the common good. Why so? It is because we understand how a conscience which is immature can be easily lead astray by the voice of the crowd - especially when that voice is loud or proud. We know that there exist right and wrong choices, just as there are good and evil acts within our world. We need to know how to choose that which is good, for the good of everyone. It is for this reason we teach children how to tell the difference between vice and virtue.

Vice - aka bad behaviour, quickly shows us why it should be avoided: we realize how dishonesty produces reprimand, how disobedience brings disgrace, and why mischief brings woe. Whereas with virtue, we learn how industriousness breeds success, how courage brings reward, and why generosity generates gratitude. These are simple yet incredibly profound connections - lessons that are taught and learned from the time of early childhood. It is these which will help in the formation of a good conscience which will develop a solid character for adulthood. Children who practice and understand this will become the best of future citizens who are educated, mature, and above all, wise in their moral choices.

*This* is why Catholic Education exists: to form our students in how to evaluate situations, how to feel compassion, and therefore, how to respond with actions that are forever and always befitting of a child of God. In turn, they will learn to live and give a witness to our society. Consequently, I am most humbled so many parents have entrusted God's children to our excellent teachers, administrators, and support staff within Edmonton Catholic Schools. Together we will cooperate to provide the sure direction of a moral compass calibrated to the Cross of Christ.

Indeed, if the beginning of the school year is a time to review the '3Rs' of what we are to learn, then it is also an excellent moment to renew our '3Cs' of who we are to become as a family of Faith: Catholics with a Conscience gathered together in Christ. The connection of through the Family, with our Schools and in our Church is the essence of what we believe: yes, through Him, with Him, and in Him - everything we profess in Mass each Sunday in the Eucharist.

May the Lord sincerely bless you all,  
Fr. Dean Dowle  
ECSD Chaplain