



ST. JOHN JAGUAR NEWS



December 2024



NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD 

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As we enter into the Advent Season as a Catholic School Community we work together to let go of our past sin and hurt and ask Jesus to enter into our hearts. This means that we turn to Him for a fresh start and have hope in all that He wants us to accomplish in our lives.

Advent is a time of preparation and anticipation. Christmas is the fulfillment of the hope given in Advent and is the realization of God's promise. God humbled Himself, being born into poverty and becoming a helpless child entrusted to the care of Blessed Mary of Nazareth. In this moment, she not only became the mother of God, she also became our Mother of Grace.

As a Catholic family, it is important for us to consider how we can grow in spiritual wholeness during what has become such a busy commercial season. Let us take time for silence and reflection each day with Scripture and the Advent calendar. Let us dwell with the Nativity Scene and consider the journey of Mary and Joseph as the baby Jesus comes into the world.

As we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ during Advent, we wait in anticipation for the wonderful and joyous event we are about to experience - the feast of Christmas and the coming of Christ into our lives in unique ways.

As we gather as one family together in Christ, our students will be actively engaged in the preparation of weekly Advent celebrations, demonstrating their faithful journey as they prepare for Jesus' birth.

We would also like to express our appreciation to all staff members for their hard work, dedication and commitment to our students and daily Catholic teachings. A special thank you is also extended to our parent community for entrusting their children in our care and sharing with us their special gift(s) from God.

Christmas brings family and friends together. It helps us appreciate the love in our lives we can often take for granted. May the true meaning of the holiday season fill your hearts and homes with many blessings.

In this season of Advent, may we reflect upon the giving and receiving of Jesus in our lives. Let our heart be filled with gratitude so that we in turn can give the Gift of Jesus to others.

Wishing you a very blessed and Merry Christmas!

Mr. D. Forte
Principal



DECEMBER - A MISSION OF LOVE

*"Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier."
St. Teresa of Calcutta*

Our theme for the month of December focuses on a mission rooted in love. As Christians we are called to love one another as Christ loves us. That is not always an easy task, but when we recognize that God is in each and every person we meet, the love we have for Him ought to shine through. Throughout this month and the season of Advent, may our words and actions be a reflection of God's love, which he sent into our world through the birth of His son, Jesus.

A Christmas Prayer

*Loving Father, Help us remember the birth of Jesus,
That we may share in the song of the angels,
The gladness of the shepherds,
And worship of the wise men.*

*Close the door of hate
And open the door of love all over the world.
Let kindness come with every gift
And good desires with every greeting.
Deliver us from evil by the blessing, which Christ
brings
And teach us to be merry with clear hearts.*

*May the Christmas morning make us
Happy to be thy children
And Christmas evening bring us
To our beds with grateful thoughts
Forgiving and forgiven
For Jesus' sake*

Amen.

- Robert Louis Stevenson

PREPARING THE WAY FOR CHRISTMAS

Advent Celebrations will be held in the gymnasium here at St. John on the following days (please note that we will be celebrating Mass with Father Rico at St. Joseph Parish on *Monday, December 2* to light the first candle symbolizing **HOPE**, in recognition the first week of Advent):

Week 2: PEACE

Monday, December 9 - Hosted by Mme Walsh's Grade 1/2 Class.

Week 3: JOY

Monday, December 16 - Hosted by Ms. McDonald's Grade 1 Class.

Please be advised that dates of celebrations are tentative and subject to change.



We are proud to be a part of the Blessed Trinity Family of Schools



ADVENT FOOD DRIVE

As we prepare for the birth of our saviour, Jesus Christ, we are reminded of the importance of following the example he set by always serving others, especially those in need. At St. John, we are having a non-perishable goods food drive in support of the **Grimsby Benevolent Fund from Monday, December 2 to Friday, December 13**. The GBF is in great need of non-perishable food items and canned goods. Any food items families are able to contribute would greatly benefit many families in need in our community. Your continued generosity in helping those in need, especially during the Advent Season, is greatly appreciated. As always, thank you for being the hands and feet of Christ in our community!

**ST. JOHN CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETING**

Please be advised that the next Catholic School Council Meeting will be held on **Tuesday, February 25 at 6:00 pm** in the school's Library Information Centre. We look forward to seeing our Catholic School Council members there!

INCLEMENT WEATHER PROCEDURE

As the winter months approach, please be advised of the procedures in the event of inclement weather:

- 1) If bus transportation is cancelled in the morning, it means that the children will not be picked up at the end of the day. If you drive your child to school on the day transportation is cancelled, it is then your responsibility to pick your child up at the end of the day.

When transportation services are cancelled, only the school remains open, and it is the responsibility of the parent to determine whether or not it is safe for their child to attend school.

If your child is not coming to school, please report the absence using [Safe Arrival System](#).

- 2) **Procedures Relating to Inclement Weather AFTER the School Day Starts:**
In this case either *transportation is cancelled and school is kept open or transportation is cancelled and the school is closed.*

The safety of our children is our primary concern; the school will attempt to contact you by phone should an emergency closing be necessary after children have arrived at school. This will be done solely for the purpose of informing you that classes have been cancelled. The option you, as a parent, have chosen on the Emergency School Form will apply to all emergency dismissals. If this form has yet to be completed, please be sure to do so and send it to your child's teacher.

For the most up-to-date announcements on inclement weather, please tune in to local radio stations (105.7 FM, 610 AM or 1220 AM) or simply check the Niagara Catholic District School Board website at www.niagaracatholic.ca.

HAVE YOU MOVED OR ARE YOU MOVING?

To any families who have recently moved or will be moving in the near future, please confirm that St. John is your home school at portal.nsts.ca/eligibility. In keeping with Niagara Catholic's home school focus, we encourage all families to ensure that children are enrolled in their home school. This will allow students to establish and maintain meaningful relationships with other students who live in the heart of their community.

ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH

Advent School Mass - Our Advent School Mass is scheduled to take place on **Monday, December 2 at 10:00 am** at St. Joseph Catholic Parish. Families are welcome to attend!

Advent Family Mass - Our Advent Family Mass is scheduled to take place on **Tuesday, December 17 at 5:30 pm** at St. Joseph Catholic Parish. There will be light snacks and refreshments available in the reception room following Mass. We look forward to celebrating as a Catholic community!

Confirmation - Students in Grade 8 who are Roman Catholic will be receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation on **Thursday, February 27 at 7:00 pm** at St. Joseph Catholic Parish.

First Communion - Students in Grade 2 and other grades who are Roman Catholic will be receiving the Sacrament of First Holy Eucharist on **Saturday, April 26 at 11:00 am** at St. Joseph Catholic Parish.

Families are asked to please see our monthly calendar for information and details regarding daily Masses at St. Joseph Catholic Parish. In addition, further information regarding St. Joseph Parish, can be found by visiting the '[St. Joseph Catholic Parish Information Section](#)' of our [St. John Google Website](#).

The school also invites families to visit the [St. Joseph Catholic Parish Website](#) for additional information and details pertaining to the parish.

SAFE ARRIVAL SYSTEM

To report your child absent, please use any one of the methods listed below:

1. **SafeArrival Website:** Visit the website at <https://go.schoolmessenger.ca>. The first time you use the website, select **Sign Up** to create an account using your email address. After logging in, select the **Attendance** tab to report an absence.
2. **Personal Mobile Device:** Download and install the **SchoolMessenger app** from the Apple App Store, the Google Play Store, or from the links at <https://go.schoolmessenger.ca>. Use your new login information to access your account. Select **Attendance** to report an absence. If you would like to receive attendance notifications directly to your mobile device, please enable **Push Notifications** in the **Settings** section of the app. The document titled, [SchoolMessenger App Parent & Student User Guide](#) provides instructions for using the app.
3. **Standard Telephone:** The toll-free number **1-844-287-6287** will allow you to report your child absent without creating an account.

STUDENT ABSENCES & LATE ARRIVALS

It is essential that all student absences and late arrivals are called into the [Safe Arrival Program](#) by **8:30 am** via phone (1-844-287-6287), website or app. These are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You are also able to input future absences in advance if you are aware of an upcoming appointment or vacation. **Board and Ministry policy dictates that we must investigate any unreported absences. This can involve calls to places of employment, the emergency numbers provided to the school and, in some cases, the police.**



VISITORS TO THE SCHOOL

School visitors continue to be restricted out of an abundance of care and consideration for the health, safety, and privacy of students and school staff. Essential items that must be dropped off are to be labelled clearly and can be placed on the cart to be retrieved by a designated staff member. On behalf of school staff, students, and families, thank you everyone for their ongoing cooperation with this very important matter.

INFORMATION FROM PUBLIC HEALTH

Families are encouraged to visit the '[Niagara Region Information](#)' section of the St. John Google Website for the most up-to-date information from Niagara Region Public Health.

STUDENTS DEMONSTRATING SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS

If a student becomes sick while at school, the identified emergency contact(s) on file will be called for immediate pick up. Parents and guardians of ill children are encouraged to contact Niagara Public Health and follow their advice. *Anyone who is sick should stay at home until their symptoms have resolved for 24 hours (48 hours for gastrointestinal symptoms).* We thank everyone for their ongoing cooperation regarding this very important health and safety matter.

NUT ANAPHYLAXIS

The entire school community is working hard to prevent accidental exposure to products that trigger life-threatening reactions. As a result, we continue to maintain a **PEANUT & NUT SAFE environment**. We would appreciate your cooperation in helping us keep St. John Catholic School safe, by making sure your children do not bring foods to school that may contain any traces of **peanuts** or **nuts**.

**MILK ANAPHYLAXIS**

Due to a number of students in our care who have a severe anaphylactic allergy to milk, it is asked that parents kindly refrain from sending milk to school with their child out of an abundance of care and consideration for the health and safety of these individuals. Thank you to everyone for their understanding of this very important health and safety matter.

**PREVALENT MEDICAL CONDITIONS**

If your child has a prevalent medical condition that the school should be aware of and plan for, it is necessary to read the letter to families, and complete and/or update the applicable Plan of Care forms. All documents can be accessed in the '[Prevalent Medical Conditions](#)' section of the [St. John Google Website](#). Please click on the link to access the site and the necessary documents that pertain to your child's prevalent medical condition. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the school.

REMINDERS FOR ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

Kiss n' Ride Drop-Off: In an effort to keep our students and staff members safe, families are reminded that when using the Kiss n' Ride drop-off, *drivers are asked to please remain in their vehicle* and have child(ren) exit the vehicle directly onto the sidewalk when it is safe to do so. Supervising staff will be present in the parking lot at 9:10 am. Parents are kindly asked to please drop their child(ren) off *between 9:10 and 9:20 am*. We thank you for your support as we strive to welcome our students onto school property in an efficient, yet safe manner.

Kiss n' Ride Pick-Up:

To reduce congestion in the Kiss n' Ride line and along King Street, Kiss n' Ride students will be dismissed from their classrooms at *3:25 pm*. Parents are asked to please be at the school in a timely manner so students can be dismissed efficiently and without causing disruption to the flow of traffic on King Street.

Park & Pick-Up/Drop-Off:

Families of children in car seats who need to park their vehicles and walk their children to the school sidewalk are asked to please be mindful of oncoming traffic, which includes busses and Kiss n' Ride vehicles. For their own safety, families are reminded of the importance of utilizing designated walkways to access the sidewalks. To avoid congestion in the parking lot and to prevent a back-up of vehicles onto King Street, Park & Pick-Up students will be dismissed from their classes at *3:25 pm*.

COLD WEATHER

Cold weather is on its way. Please ensure that your child comes to school prepared to participate in all activities, especially outdoor recesses. All children should have hats, scarves, gloves, warm coats and boots, all labeled with their names.

On extremely cold days, we limit the amount of time that students spend outdoors. We obtain our weather information from the Environment Canada Weather Information Line and follow Board and Niagara Public Health guidelines. With the exception of these occasions, it is our expectation that all children will go out for recess.



SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC)

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) of the Niagara Catholic District School Board is made up of Association representatives and Trustees whose role is to support students with diverse needs and their families. The Committee makes recommendations to the Board with regards to matters relating to educational programs and services to be implemented in schools for our students who meet this criteria. All parents are welcome to attend the monthly meetings and learn about different programs and supports that are available in special education.

Meetings are held at the Catholic Education Centre, 427 Rice Road, Welland, at 7:00 p.m. on the first Wednesday of the month. If you are unable to attend the meetings and you wish further information, please visit our website at www.niagaracatholic.ca under Special Education, Special Education Advisory Committee or contact your school Principal who will provide you with a list of representatives and their contact information.

SEAC continuously strives to ensure that the rights of students with diverse learning needs are being met both at the elementary and the secondary level as well as serving as a resource for parents of these children. Further information can be found at the following links:

- The Special Education Advisory Committee website: www.seac-learning.ca; and
- the Ministry of Education Special Education website: www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/speced.html.

LAST DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS BREAK

All students and staff are invited to come to school on the last day of classes prior to the Christmas Break (**Friday, December 20**) dressed in Christmas and/or Advent colours (**red, green, white, purple, & pink**). Students will participate in Christmas activities in their respective classrooms. Teachers will also be encouraged to have joint celebrations with other classes where possible and practical.

ST. JOHN CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCIL (CSC) CORNER

Welcome back to the CSC Corner! A special thank-you to all families who participated in our Krispy Kreme fundraiser. The fundraiser was a great success and we hope everyone enjoyed their delicious treats.

We are excited to share our new fundraiser with **Niagara Fresh Market** starting December 1. Niagara Fresh is a Niagara based grower, wholesaler and retailer of the finest produce Niagara has to offer. They have many pre-made boxes for ordering including a fruit and veggie box, a mystery box, a meat box, fully-prepared meals, and so much more. Ordering can be done to suit your needs, there is no monthly commitment. Delivery is available Tuesday-Saturday across the entire Niagara region. If you are interested in learning more about this, please visit niagarafresh.ca and keep an eye out for our upcoming flyer with more details.

In the spirit of this holiday season and actions toward Truth and Reconciliation, our school will be supporting the **Niagara Regional Native Centre** by collecting filled stockings for children and teenagers whose parents don't have the means to provide. A school wide email will be sent shortly with a list of items needed and dates that items will be collected. The St. John CSC appreciates your support!

Our **Advent Family Mass** is quickly approaching. The mass is held on Tuesday, December 17 at St. Joseph Parish starting at 5:30pm. Following the mass led by Fr. Rico, students in grades K-3 will be performing Christmas songs. All families are welcome to attend and be sure to stay for refreshments and treats following the performance. The Catholic School Council collects donations for this event so if you would like to donate, please contact the CSC members listed below.

We value your input. Any ideas for the Catholic School Council? Please email Lynn Dudok at lynn.a.dudok@gmail.com or Breeann Staibano at breeann19@hotmail.com.

'SchoolCash' ONLINE

The school encourages online payment for all fees and activities for students. It is our goal to be cashless.

As part of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, we are committed to providing a safe and efficient online environment in order to reduce the amount of cash and cheques coming into our school. Online payment users benefit from knowing students are not carrying cash to school which can be easily forgotten, misplaced or not handed in on time for important school activities and events. 'SchoolCash' Online is a secure and safe payment portal and is PCI compliant. Please join the many parents who have already registered and are enjoying the convenience of paying online. It takes less than five minutes to register. Please follow the online step-by-step instructions at <https://ncdsb.schoolcashionline.com> to begin receiving email notifications for events involving your child(ren).

Some of the added benefits enjoyed by using 'SchoolCash' Online include:

- Having online access to digital receipts and a complete list of paid and unpaid items;
- The ability to pay by credit cards, including Visa, Mastercard, Visa Debit, and Mastercard Debit;
- The ability to preload funds into the School Cash Online wallet for future use;
- Receiving reminder emails, so payment due dates are not missed;
- One-time registration - students will automatically be moved between schools within our Board;
- Use of Google Translate in over 100 languages;
- Make an online donation and receive your tax receipt by email for donations \$20 or more;
- Parent Help Desk Support is available 24/7.

DECEMBER IS ONLINE SAFETY MONTH

As our students continue to grow in an ever-evolving technological world, we are reminded of the importance of online safety. Parents and guardians are invited to visit [Canadian Red Cross - Kids' Safety Online](http://CanadianRedCross-KidsSafetyOnline) for information regarding online dangers for children and how to keep their children safe while using online platforms.

HAND WASHING GUIDELINES

1. Clean your hands to prevent the spread of germs and reduce your risk of getting sick. Wash your hands after:
 - coughing or sneezing
 - blowing your nose
 - using the washroom
 - playing with pets
 - playing outdoors
 - before preparing meals and eating
2. Use warm water and soap; lather and scrub for at least 20 seconds. Have children sing the ABC song, so they scrub for long enough. Alcohol-based sanitizers are safe for children and can be used when no dirt is present on their hands.



GOVERNANCE POLICY VETTING AND TRACKING

In keeping with Niagara Catholic's commitment to openness and transparency, the Board has established an extensive vetting process for its Governance Policies.

As part of the vetting process, Niagara Catholic students, parents, guardians, staff, Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (NCPIC), Diocese of St. Catharines, and members of the Niagara Catholic community are invited to submit their feedback.

Please visit the [Policies, Administrative Operational Procedures, Protocols, and Bylaws section of the Niagara Catholic website](#) for specific information on how to submit feedback for policies that are currently being vetted.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR PARENTS

Parents and students requiring technical assistance are encouraged to access the following support portal: <https://help.niagaracatholic.ca>. Niagara Catholic launched this platform for students and parents in an effort to provide technical support for issues relating to the Niagara Catholic Virtual Learning Environment (NCVLE), Niagara Catholic Parent Portal, Safe Arrival System, and more.

NIAGARA CATHOLIC RESPECTFUL INTERACTION FRAMEWORK

St. John is rooted in Catholic and Christian values. Our goal is to create a safe, kind and loving environment for all who work, learn, and assist with our school community. Aggressive or hostile behaviour or language toward, staff, students, or our community helpers will not be tolerated. While we welcome feedback, concerns, and opinions it is the expectation that all staff, students, parents, guardians and community helpers communicate their needs and concerns with one another in a respectful and peaceful manner whether through email, on the phone or face-to-face. Adherence to this expectation is vital in order to create a cohesive and cooperative community that helps one another achieve success.

ST. JOHN GOOGLE WEBSITE

Families are invited to visit the St. John Google Website for daily information items. Please know that the school will send out a SchoolMessenger notification any time there are pertinent updates made to the site. Monthly newsletters and calendars will be embedded into the website as well, once finalized. The links will be shared in the SchoolMessenger notification that goes out to inform families.

Link to St. John Google site:
[St. John Catholic School Google Website.](#)



FRENCH IMMERSION: ONLINE PRE-REGISTRATION

All designated French Immersion Catholic Elementary Schools will accept registrations for Grade 1 along with Kindergarten.

The open online pre-registration window for students **new** to French Immersion in September is **Monday, January 13 at 7:30 am** through to **Friday, January 31, at 4:00 pm**.

There are a limited number of spots available for students wishing to enter the French Immersion Program. Pre-registrations are on a first come, first serve basis. Pre-registrations outside of this window will **not** be considered.

An account must be created first through **Edsembli** to access the pre-registration forms.

Please visit the [Niagara Catholic French Immersion Registration Webpage](#) for information about the program and to register your child.

Additional pre-registration details will be posted on this site as they become available. Please check the site daily before the pre-registration window opens.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (DECEMBER 3)

Since its inception in 1945, the United Nations (UN) continues to hone its focus on promoting the well-being and welfare of people living with disabilities. In 1992, the UN called for an international day of celebration for people living with disabilities to be held on **December 3** each year. The **International Day of People with Disabilities** is used to recognize that people who live with disabilities continue to be among the most affected populations by the COVID pandemic. Where marginalisation, discrimination, vulnerability and exploitation are every day factors for many people, the increased risk of poor outcomes have been magnified with the reduced access to routine health care and rehabilitation services, more pronounced social isolation, poorly tailored public health messaging, inadequately constructed mental health services, and a lack of emergency preparedness for people with special needs. St. John families are invited to visit dpwd.org for additional information.

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE & ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (DECEMBER 6)

The *National Day of Remembrance & Action on Violence Against Women* is about remembering those who have experienced gender-based violence and those who we have lost to it; it is also a time to take action. Working together, we can help prevent and address gender-based violence by remembering and learning from our past, listening to survivors, and speaking up against harmful behaviour. St. John families are invited to visit the [National Day of Remembrance & Action on Violence Against Women Ontario Website](#) for further information on this cause and how they can take action to help end gender-based violence in our world.

ST. JOHN 'EcoSchools' INITIATIVE

At St. John Catholic School, we continue to remain active in our efforts to continue to fulfill our goals to serve as “Stewards of God’s Earth”. We continue to maintain our environmental efforts, nurture our students as both current and future environmental leaders, and reduce the ecological impact of our school. In the [‘EcoSchools Information’ section of the St. John Google Website](#), families will find any and all information pertaining to our ‘EcoSchools’ initiative, including monthly newsletters to promote ecological awareness in our school, homes, and community.

Families are advised of the following 'EcoSchools' events recognized throughout this month...

Waste-Free Lunch Wednesdays:

To continue with our ECO initiatives, we will promote Waste-Free Wednesday lunches. A waste-free lunch is one that contains reusable containers to pack your child’s lunch and snacks. Although participation is optional, when we pack a waste-free lunch, we are helping the earth by reducing the use of plastic bags, wrappers and minimizing the amount of garbage.

World Soil Day:

World Soil Day ([#WorldSoilDay](#)) takes place on **December 5**, and its campaign **‘Soils: Where Food Begins’** aims to raise awareness of the importance of maintaining healthy ecosystems and human well-being by addressing the growing challenges in soil management, increasing soil awareness and encouraging societies to improve soil health. Please visit the [World Soil Day website](#) for more information.

International Mountain Day:

International Mountain Day (IMD) is celebrated on **December 11**. The theme of this year’s International Mountain Day is **‘Women Move Mountains’**. Women play a key role in mountains’ environmental protection and social and economic development. International Mountain Day is an opportunity to promote gender equality and therefore contribute to improving social justice, livelihoods, and resilience. For more information, please visit the [International Mountain Day website](#).

Thank you for your continued support of our ECO initiatives!

St. John Catholic School ECO Team

NEW TREES PLANTED IN BACK YARD FIELD

The school is happy to share that it has fulfilled its goal of having trees planted along the sides of the field where the soccer nets are located. Over time, these trees will provide students with shade on hot weather days, while also reducing our school’s ecological footprint and contributing to our ‘EcoSchools’ campaign. A special thank you is extended to [Rodsan Landscaping](#) for planting the trees and to everyone for their ongoing support of this school initiative as we strive to serve as good stewards of God’s earth.



BLESSED TRINITY CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL

The month of November has flown by and has given us another very busy month at Blessed Trinity. Our fall sports came to an end with many great performances and memories from all of our teams. Many of our teams qualified for NCAA championship games and events, highlighted by our Senior Boys Volleyball and Junior Boys Football team winning NCAA Championships and our Novice Girls Cross Country team qualifying for OFSAA. Many of our winter clubs and co-curricular activities are now in full swing and each day is busier than the next here at BT. Some other highlights from November included our AP Night on November 12th, parent -teacher interviews and Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week. Our Safe Schools team put on a number of fun activities to remind us to be kind to each other. December will be upon us shortly and a representative from our Student Services will be visiting our grade 8 classrooms to give a presentation on the courses students will be selecting for high school next year. This begins the process of course selection and the registration of our grade 8 students into Blessed Trinity – a very exciting time for us as we look forward to our newest class at BT.

