UPCOMING DATES:

January 8th – First day back after Holidays

January 15th – After school Skating at Henderson Rink 3:30-4:15pm

January 18th – Tinfoil Accessory Dress up Day

January 24th – National Compliment day

January 24th – Div. Board Meeting

January 25th – School Council Meeting

January 29th - After school Skating at Henderson Rink 3:30-4:15pm

January 31st – Animal Print OR Camo Day.

February 2nd – NO SCHOOL - PD Day

A Message from Mme Bouchard January

Reflecting on December fills my heart with a profound sense of joy and gratitude. The month exuded an atmosphere of hope, joy, peace, and love that embraced our school in a tapestry of beauty. The festive decorations adorned our surroundings, creating a harmonious ambiance of shared joy. We sincerely hope that your Christmas was filled with warmth and delight. As we usher in the new year, we extend a heartfelt welcome to 2024, anticipating the opportunities and moments it holds for all of us.

December was full of all that a Catholic school and the Advent season brings! From grade 6 Christmas plant fundraising and cookie decorating, to liturgies and Advent celebrations, culminating with mass on Dec. 20th. We had a wonderful Kindergarten Christmas concert and then our inaugural Christmas Ball. Our students were out in the community singing and spreading Christmas cheer, while others were at the school preparing amazing Christmas plays to share. We continued the tradition of Turkey Dinner for all staff, students and volunteers. Thanks to those that purchased a plate, thank you to those that donated a plate. School Council also supports this financially. Thank you! We could not do the many things without our most amazing volunteers. Thank you for supporting students at ESM. The Christmas season is such a special time at Ecole St. Mary. We are so blessed.

There is much to celebrate and to look forward to. Every year I think of January as a special time in schools. It is a long month, with few interruptions and a lot of time to settle back into routines after a nice break. It is a great time to witness students' growth as they often hit their groove.

Please join us for Family After School Skating on January 15th and 29th. Please do not forget to check your child's Spaces account. Teachers work hard to share your child's learning and students are so proud when you look at their journey and celebrate their learning. If you have any questions, please reach out to your child's teacher.

I hope this message finds you well. We wish you all the very best in 2024! We will continue to pray for you and your family. We pray for a year filled with joy, health, good family times, faith and love. As always, we are so blessed that you have chosen to partner with us for your child's education. It is going to be a great year!

God Bless,

Kiera Bouchard

January Message from Mr. Harper 2023

Welcome to the start of 2024! We hope your holidays were a mix of joy and rest, filled with warmth and good company.

December at Ecole St. Mary was a whirlwind of festive spirit! Our students spread Christmas cheer far and wide, visiting seniors' and healthcare facilities. We had not one, but two Advent celebrations led by our lively 1RE and Kindergarten classes. Mass with Father Kevin and the 4NE class added a special touch to the season. And, of course, our school transformed into a festive haven, thanks to the creativity of our amazing staff.

We can't forget the grand turkey dinner shared by all our fantastic staff and students. A huge shout-out to those who pitched in to make it happen – you're the unsung heroes!

As we step into January, we'll be guided by the wisdom of St. Martin de Porres. His teachings will lead us to explore the Corporal Works of Mercy and Catholic Social Teachings, showing us practical ways to live out our faith and build strong communities. We'll also delve into prayers of petition, where we turn to God for forgiveness and seek His help, praying as a school community for the sick, the poor, and hope for our world.

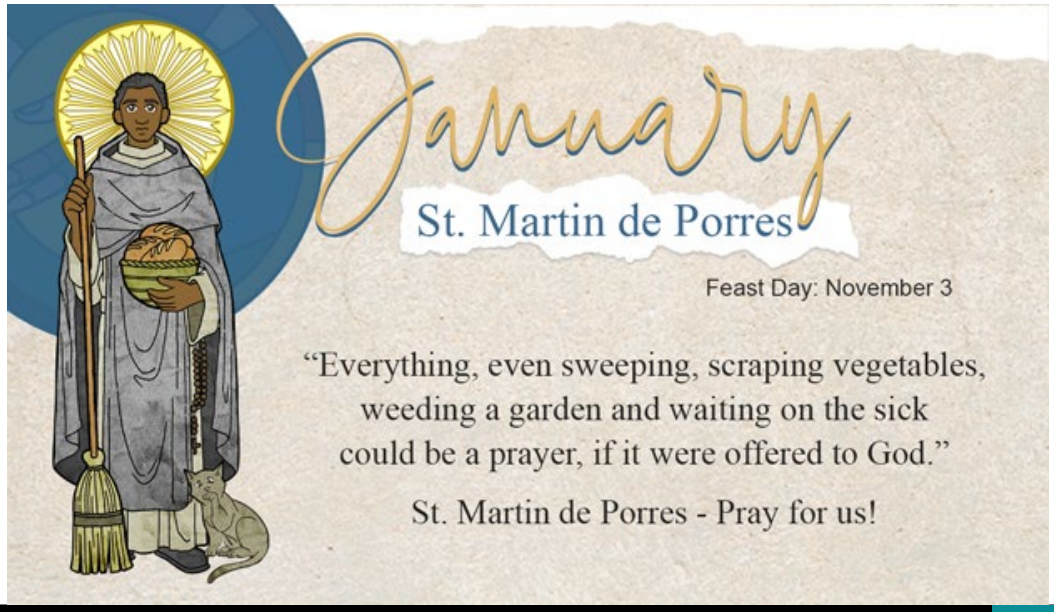
Our 1DI class is taking the reins for a virtual liturgy celebrating the Baptism of the Lord, a beautiful way to kick off the new year in our classrooms.

May 2024 be a year of countless blessings for everyone at Ecole St. Mary! May your days be filled with laughter, growth, and a deep sense of community. As we journey through the year, let's remember to uplift each other and continue building bridges of understanding and kindness. Here's to a year brimming with faith, hope, and the warmth of shared moments.

Blessings to you all in this new year!

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."* - Jeremiah 29:11

Mr. Harper



Ribbon Skirts

On January 4, we proudly wear our ribbon skirts to represent our own personal reclamation as FNMI people of Treaty 7 Territory. Ribbon skirts are a symbol of history, Identity, resilience, strength, bravery, and female empowerment. It represents values and traditions as a unique culture, as well as maturity into womanhood, and independence. Wearing a ribbon skirt gives meaning which is very significant for each individual who decides to adorn one. It represents reclaiming identity, and wearing that identity proudly.

HOUSE TEAMS

The students are assigned a house team (colour team) so be a part of for the year. This encourages the kids to interact with kids in other grades. Our leadership team comes up with special days and activities for students to earn points to go towards their house team.
For the Month of November, the winning house team is: *The Silver Dolphins*

SAMARITAN STARS

As the students do good deeds and display exemplary actions/attitudes, their fellow classmates can nominate them and put their name in the "Samaritan Stars" jar. From here we draw names to win a cheque for $25.00 which is graciously donated by Ward Bros. Construction. Thank you, Ward Bros., for your continued generosity to our school!
For the month of November our winners were: Emmanuel 5/6BI and Zoe 4/5GI

STUDENT DROP OFF/ PICK UP

Students can be dropped off no earlier than 7:45am. There will be no supervision before 7:45am if you choose to leave your child unattended at the school this is your parent responsibility.

Parking lot is for <u>STAFF ONLY.</u> You may park on the east side of the street. The west side, by the field, is for school buses only. In the morning the sidewalk between the flag pole and the parking lot is a drop off zone. Hug and Go. Please do not park there for long periods of time.

WATER BOTTLES

We have water bottle fill stations and have not re-installed the drinking fountains for students. Please be sure to send water bottles with your child(ren) every day.

SICK KIDS

If your child(ren) is sick – KEEP THEM HOME. Help stop the spread of germs. Call or email the office to excuse their absence.

ATTENDANCE

Children thrive and succeed when they attend school regularly. We understand things come up, appointments made during school hours, emergencies, sickness etc. Please call the office to let us know if your child(ren) will not be at school on any given day. You can call 403-327-3098 or email esmoffice@holyspirit.ab.ca

SCHOOL BUS

Drivers will be checking for passes. Please download the MyBusStop app for the most up to date information and for route changes and updates. You can also visit the Southland website https://www.southland.ca/lethbridge/

BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PROGRAM

We are blessed to have a Nutrition grant this year to provide breakfast for those who need it. We also welcome back Mindful Munchies from the Lethbridge food bank who provide us with lunches for our students who forget or would otherwise go without.

**We ask that as parents you have the conversations with your child about those who might not have enough food. Also that if they eat their whole lunch they are welcome to an extra afternoon snack.*

PARENT VOLUNTEERS WELCOME!!

Parents and community members are welcome at the school. You are still required to check in at the office and sign in if you are coming into the school for any school event. We will keep the distractions in the class to a minimum. If you are dropping something off for your child the office staff will deliver it for you. We are happy to accept volunteers this year! You can call the office and let them know if you are available with and what you would like to help with. Volunteers are asked to fill out the volunteer form found on our website: https://esm.holyspirit.ab.ca/

This form is good for the school year.

January 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6 Epiphany
7	8 First Day back after holidays	9	10	11	12	13
14	15 Skating 3:30-4:15pm	16	17	18 Tinfoil Accessory dress up day	19	20
21	22	23	24 Div. Board Meeting	25 School Council Meeting	26	27
28	29 Skating 3:30-4:15pm	30	31 Student Retreat Animal print Or Camo dress up day			

Christmas Holidays

FEBRUARY 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2 NO SCHOOL PD Day	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13 Shrove Tuesday	14 Ash Wednesday	15	16	17
18	19 Family Day	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28 Pink Shirt Day Div. Board Meeting	29		

NO SCHOOL – Reading week

Ecole St. Mary School

CAN & BOTTLE DRIVE

Ongoing FUNDRAISER

Save your empties all year long and help support the Ecole St. Mary's Grade 6 Camp

NO SORTING NECESSARY! JUST DROP 'N GO
BRING ALL YOUR CANS & BOTTLES TO RECYCLE

DROP OFF TIMES & LOCATIONS

Ability Bottle Depot North
1610 29 St North
Lethbridge, Alberta
9am-5pm Mon-Sat

Ability Bottle Depot South
2915 32 St South
Lethbridge, Alberta
9am-5pm Mon-Sat

Contact Chantele 403-393-3303 with any questions or to arrange a pickup for your donation.

Fundraiser Hosted by Grade 6 Fundraising Committee—Thank you for your support!

January

Build!
Pilgrims of Hope

"If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?"

James 2:15-16

St. Martin de Porres 1579-1639 (Feast Day: November 3)

Martin de Porres was born in Lima, Peru in 1579. His father, a Spanish nobleman, abandoned the family, and so Martin was raised by his mother, a former enslaved person from Panama. Martin grew up in poverty and eventually became an apprentice to a barber-surgeon. During this time, there was prejudice and discrimination against those of mixed racial heritage, which made Martin's life very difficult. This even extended to the religious life, as he was not allowed to become a full member of a religious order and could serve only as a lay volunteer.

Martin, however, was not deterred by this discrimination. He joined the Dominicans as a volunteer, taking on kitchen work, cleaning, and laundry in addition to his barbering so that he could live in the religious community. He considered all of this work to be holy, and during this time many miracles occurred. At the age of 34, Martin was placed in charge of the infirmary, where he cared for both the sick of the Dominicans as well as the larger community of Lima. He was known for his patience and compassion in this role. During his life he also was well known for the collection of funds to serve the poor and hungry, and he also founded a residence for orphans in Lima. He was also well known for his care for animals, and is often shown with them in his imagery. When he was canonized in 1962, he became the first black saint of the Americas.

"Building" In Our Schools

This past month, our Holy Spirit Catholic School Division joined together to celebrate the season of Advent through our Advent Blessing videos. For each week of Advent, a video was created that included a Gospel reading, reflection, artwork, and music, all provided by students within the Holy Spirit Catholic School Division. The videos were a shining representation of staff and students joining together in remembrance and celebration of the arrival of Jesus, and in the hope of his return.

Corporal Works of Mercy
– Give Drink to the Thirsty –

While often connected to Feed the Hungry, the Corporal Work of Giving Drink to the Thirsty is actually a separate work. If we think about the context of Christ's time, we recognize the scarcity and importance of water in the arid land He inhabited (something we know about in our area as well!). Water is often referred to in scripture, both in concrete and spiritual ways. If we think about the concrete action of giving drink to another, we can see in it a gracious act of hospitality, a thoughtful expression of love, and a desire to seek the good of the other. We all know the importance of water to our bodies, how clean water impacts health, and how access to water is limited, not just in far away places but also very close to home.

Consider one of the following practical suggestions from the USCCB:

- We take it for granted that we have access to clean water. Donate to help build wells for water for those in need.
- Organize a group to collect bottled water to distribute at a shelter for families.
- Make an effort not to waste water. Remembering to turn off the water faucet when you are brushing your teeth or washing dishes can help, especially in regions suffering from drought.

Pope's Prayer Intentions - For the Gift of Diversity in the Church
Let us pray that the Spirit help us recognize the gift of different charisms within the Christian community, and to discover the richness of different ritual traditions in the heart of the Catholic Church.

Catholic Social Teaching
– Preferential Option for the Poor –

Through the course of this year, we will look each month at one of the Catholic Social Teachings. The aim of Catholic Social Teaching is to shine the light of the Gospel on our contemporary world, allowing us as disciples of Christ to look at the world around us with new eyes, and to take action.

Last month, we looked at participation - the belief that each person is entitled to participate in making decisions that affect their lives. This supports subsidiarity, the dignity of the human person, and the pursuit of the common good.

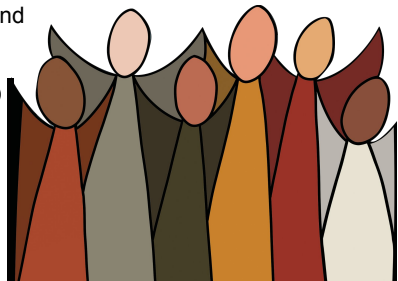
This month, we are considering the Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, also known as the Preferential Option for the Poor. As Development and Peace Canada suggests,

The moral test of any society is based on how the most vulnerable people are treated. God loves all people, but prioritizes and calls us to a unique concern for the poor.

Throughout scripture, we see constantly that God is keenly interested in those at the margins, and He calls us to live in solidarity with them, prioritizing their needs so that they can fully participate in society and have hope for a better future. Each of our recent Popes, St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis, have written extensively about this - and we see it constantly lived out by the saints, including St. Martin de Porres.

Learn more about the Option for the Poor and Vulnerable with one of these resources:

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable (YouTube)
Preferential Option for the Poor
Option for the Poor and Vulnerable (USCBC)



"Always consider others as more holy and more worthy than you, at the same time strive to be as holy as you can be." (St. Martin de Porres)

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Gospel Readings

January 7, 2024 — Epiphany of the Lord

Gospel Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

"They were overjoyed at seeing the star..." — Matthew 2:10

The Magi were called to find the child that had come into the world as a king. They knew that he was the chosen one. They made many sacrifices in order to find him, and most likely encountered hardships on their journey. They didn't quit. They didn't give up. They persevered. Can you imagine their joy in finally arriving at their destination, the place where the child lay in his mother's arms? It must have been the greatest blessing they'd ever known. We can have that same joy when we seek out Jesus in our lives and find him.

How do you seek Jesus in your life? When you find him, how does it make you feel?

Prayer:
Lord, teach us to look and search for you in our lives with the same desire that the Magi had when they set out on their journey.

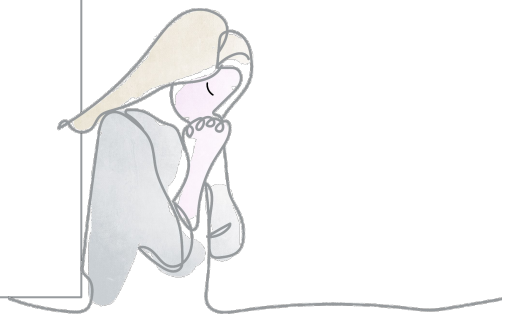
January 14, 2024 — 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel Reading: John 1:35-42

"Speak Lord, for your servant is listening." — 1 Samuel 3:10

Many times we enter into prayer with a long list of requests—things we think God should do for us because we know what's best. But in today's scripture, God is the one calling out to Samuel. When Samuel realizes that it is the Lord speaking to him, he doesn't say what he wants. Instead, he says that he is ready to hear what God wants of him. As usual, the Bible is setting an example for how we should live our own lives to grow closer to God. The next time you feel like sitting down with your list for God in prayer, try something new. Sit and listen to what God wants to say to you.

What are some places where you like to pray? Do they help you quiet yourself enough for you to hear God speaking to you?



Prayer:
Dear Lord, help me to quiet myself in prayer to hear what you want to say to me.

Download this month's Saint Prayer Card - St. Martin de Porres

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Gospel Readings

January 21, 2024 — 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel Reading: Mark 1:14-20

"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." — Mark 1:17

This is a little confusing, isn't it? The men that Jesus called to follow him were fishers of fish. What did he mean when he said he would make them fishers of men? Jesus hoped that these men he chose would set such a beautiful example of their faith in God that it would attract other people to also want to follow Jesus. This is something that we are all called to do. If we love Jesus and try to live our lives reflecting his light, then we too will become "fishers of men."

What is one thing Jesus' disciples did then that we can still do today to help people know and follow Jesus?

Prayer:
Lord, help us to love you so much that all we do, say, think, and feel will radiate the love we have for you. Please allow that light to touch those we meet each day, so that they too will want to follow you.

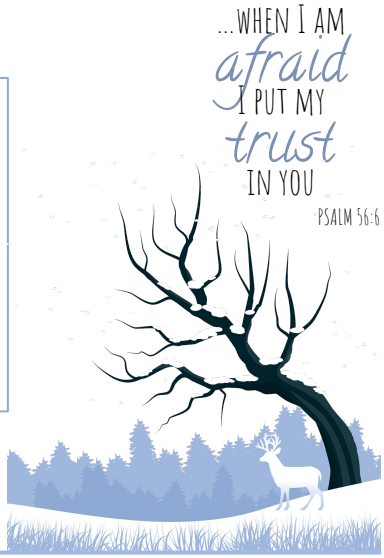
January 28, 2024 — 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel Reading: Mark 1:21-28

"A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him." — Mark 1:27

Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt the presence of evil? Maybe a TV show scared you, or you met someone who was really mean. In today's Gospel, Jesus shows us that if we ask anything in Jesus' name, especially against evil, that he can make that evil go away. What an awesome God! All we have to do is ask! So the next time you are feeling afraid or hurt, call on the name of Jesus and see what happens.

When do you feel most fearful? Remember to call on Jesus and he will help you!



Prayer:
Dear Lord, your name is above all names. You are Lord, Prince of Peace, King of Kings, Lamb of God. We love you and praise you for your powerful presence in our lives.

Sources:
St. Martin de Porres Quotes
Story of Saint Martin de Porres
Saint Martin de Porres
7 fascinating facts about St. Martin de Porres, the first black saint of the Americas
Martin de Porres

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Holy Spirit
CATHOLIC SCHOOL DIVISION

TAKE THE NEXT STEP AND REGISTER SOON!

2024/2025 REGISTRATION

- Re-registration for **CURRENT** students starts **January 15, 2024**
- Registration for **NEW** students starts **February 1, 2024**

We invite you to come and take your next step in education with the Holy Spirit Catholic School Division where children are cherished and achieve their potential.

EARLY LEARNING

FRENCH IMMERSION

FINE ARTS

www.holyspirit.ab.ca

Holy Spirit Catholic Division
Presents:

Resiliency & Self-Care

January 16th, 5:30 pm

Essie's Ballroom

Sandman Signature, 320
Scenic Drive S, Lethbridge Ab

Join us as Lethbridge Family Services will present for a night of learning and good (free) food!

Please RSVP at

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7R9L8CC

Billy Woitte

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Indigenous Student Wellness Access Guide
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Emily Williston

SWAG
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Lethbridge Family Services

Lethbridge Family Services provides highly-accredited health and social services to over 9,000 individuals and families in more than 30 communities in southwestern Alberta. The Outreach and Education team works with individuals, caregivers and professional to facilitate insight, awareness and enhance skills.

This is a **FREE event.**

Intended audience: parents, guardians, caregivers, aunts, uncles, grandparents, childcare provides, all school staff, bus drivers, parishioner's

Please RSVP at

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7R9L8CC