



Saint Thomas More Collegiate Campus/Youth Ministry

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

Did you know that Blessed Edmund Rice was a successful businessman, caring husband, and loving father before founding the Congregation of Christian Brothers? Blessed Edmund Rice studied book keeping and other business skills before becoming an apprentice for his uncles shipping company. After inheriting the business he met and married Mary Elliot, the two were deeply in love. Edmund and Mary would soon be blessed with news that Mary was expecting a child, however Edmund's world was shattered when Mary died as a result of an accident. The baby was born and Edmund would raise her until she reached the age of 12. In 1802 the Congregation of Christian Brothers was born with Edmund as the founder and a small, but dedicated, group of like-minded men as his companions. The Congregation has grown from a two-room schoolhouse to an international religious order serving Catholics on each continent.



ADVENT

Life at St. Thomas More Collegiate during the month of December is a busy time, however, we must not forget that **Jesus** is the reason for the season. Christmas does not officially begin until the eve of his birthday, which we celebrate on December 25. We celebrate advent to

prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ and the Christmas season. During this time we *quiet* our busy lives; we spend more time in prayer; we give to those in need with a hope for Christ's coming. With each new Sunday, we light candles in an advent wreath to remind our-

selves of this truth. Let us take time this Advent to pray *with* our families and our loved ones, and to put perspective on the commercial frenzy that can secularize this time.



December 2008 Update

At St. Thomas More we have taken steps to help foster the spirituality and faith life of our community by offering and supporting a variety of opportunities. This year there has been an increase in the prayer life of our students which will continue to grow. Student involvement in leadership, service, outreach and social justice has also increased since the beginning of this school year. In addition, there has been a wide enthusiasm

for missions led by Brother Cassidy. Individual classes have been competing to raise money and have taken on projects such as bake sales etc. We are on a record pace to raise the most money ever to assist our wide variety of programs. Also, in September we have welcomed our new school Chaplin, Father Mariano Baretto from St. Francis de Sales. He has made an immediate impact as he is at the school on a regu-

lar basis and interacts with students in the classroom, retreats and through prayer services. Furthermore, students can always find access to campus ministry activities on the information board and through our moodle site located in student services on our website.

Yours in Blessed Edmund Rice
David Mattiazzo

Liturgy

The celebration of the Eucharist is a key component at St. Thomas More Collegiate. Throughout this year students have had the opportunity to attend a variety of masses and prayer services. We have recently upgraded our chapel located on the third floor and this has enabled us to use it a regular basis. Each week we have class masses and prayer services led by Father Baretto.

We would like to also take this time to thank all the pastors from our community who have celebrated masses with our school.

- Opening Mass- Father Bileski (St. Francis de Sales)
- Staff Commissioning Mass-Father David Hughes (Holy Spirit)
- Grade Level Retreats Father Baretto (St. Francis de Sales)
- Thanksgiving Prayer Service –Father Baretto (St. Francis de Sales)
- Remembrance Day Mass-Msgr. Rossi (St. Michaels)
- Sacrament of Reconciliation—Many Priests from our Deanery.
- Advent Mass- Father Gary Frankin (IC Delta)



Father Baretto leading Mass in the STMC Chapel

“Students have raised almost \$10,000 to assist our international and local programs!!!”

STMC Students presenting Brother Peters with money for African Missions

Student Missions

Mission collections this year have been on a record pace. In the beginning of December our students have raised almost \$10,000 to assist our international and local programs. Not only do we support missions in Africa, Peru and Dominica, we have made a committed effort to donate to local programs that assist the needy in the lower mainland. Religion classes have been competing

with each other to raise money through simple donations and even bake sales. Students have also taken on individual projects. For instance, in Mr. Spanjers Religion 10 classes organized two hampers for the PURPOSE Society of New Westminster. The students brought in food items as well as money to purchase presents for the two families. All in all the students

raised over \$500 for these families. Great job Knights



Brother Russell Peters visits Saint Thomas More Collegiate



Our STMC Knights continue to support our East African Christian Brothers. In early November we had a visit from Br. Russell Peters to thank us for our financial support. To the right is a picture of Br. Peters presenting a donated cheque to Br. Cornel Mwiru for the Yambia Brothers to purchase science equip-

ment. In addition, some of our religion classes have decided to sponsor individual students from this school.



Student Service



STMC students and Staff helping at a Community Breakfast at Holy Trinity Cathedral in New Westminster.

Service of others, especially the needy, is not optional for Christians. It is a mandate found in scripture and in Church teachings. We were each created out of love; thus we are called to respond to all we meet with a return of love. The STMC SERVICE PROGRAM is designed to give students an opportunity to put into practice the values of Christian charity, compassion and understanding we are presenting in Religion classes. On the right please see the list of some of our programs that students have been involved with this year:

*Holy Trinity Cathedral Breakfast Program

*St. Barnabas Lunch Program

*Salvation Army Sunday Lunch Program assisting St Peters Parish Social Justice Group

*Burnaby Progressive Housing Committee preparing over 80 bag lunches for a Community Lunch

*Union Gospel Mission provide donations of food.

*St Vincent de Pauls Society at St Francis de Sales - Food Hamper Program
STMC students collected food items and helped to create over 300 hampers.

*Bonsor Community Center
30 students helped with running a Halloween event for over 1100 children called the Big Boo.

Mr. Adams and the Art Classes create a mural for St. Barnabas

For the past year our Knights have been volunteering and donating food items to St. Barnabas in New Westminster. Mr. Adams and his

senior art classes decided to create a mural for their hall. The mural is a series of panels that depicts the stained glass windows from the 1895

church. Currently, the main panel can be seen inside the church next to the altar.

Reverence For Life

In the light and power of the Gospel, St. Thomas More students have been involved in a series of events for pro life. In October a number of students with Mr. Mattiazzo and Father Mariano attended a life chain on Oak Street. Students were

also involved in a conference that focused on the respect for all human life from conception to natural death and in working to promote, enrich and protect family life.



BIENVENIDO AL PERÚ

When I signed up for my school's Christian mission trip, I had no idea what I was headed for. I had no expectations, and no idea what Lima, Peru was going to be like even as I boarded the plane on June 29, 2008.

I was only clear on the itinerary. I knew that we were doing two weeks full of mission work and touring to gain a perception of what Lima was like. We were to visit two catholic schools. One of them was in the wealthier part of the city and the other was found in Canto Grande, the slums of Lima. We were also going to visit a maternity ward, orphanages, a free clinic for ill children and build two houses for the poorest families in Canto Grande.

Our first day there began with a visit to "Santa Rosa," the wealthier of the two schools we were to visit. It was a beautiful school, better than some of the school we have in Canada. It was built entirely of red brick around a renewed sports courtyard, attaching to the parish church. It consisted of three storeys of classrooms in the finest conditions and supplied with computers and science equipment. The students were dressed in neat uniforms and all of them had school supplies and backpacks. I began to wonder if this city needed our help at all.

The next day we visited "Fey Alegria," the poorer school. Even on our way there, I realized that not all of Lima was in such great condition as Santa Rosa. As the streets turned from cement into dirt, the buildings shrunk in size and quality. The dust and smoke in the air caked on the walls of stores, creating a thin covering over the graffiti. The roads and paths were loitered with garbage, unlike the loitered-free streets of downtown Lima. Dogs roamed in packs, finding protection in the group since their malnourished bodies could offer them none. The people of this area were so different from those in the city that it seemed like we had entered another country. These people were dressed in long skirts, ragged pants and dirty shirts rather than the clean and casual look of the people a kilometre or two away.

The school was in better condition than any other building for miles, yet there was no comparison with Santa Rosa. The students weren't able to speak English and although dressed in uniforms, were obviously from the slums that surrounded the school. Physically it was a fall, but there was something that perplexed me. In personality, they were no different than the wealthier students. In fact, they seemed even happier. They had bigger smiles and you could see the light in each of their eyes.

The houses we built could be found very close to Fey Alegria. Our mission group split up for the projects. Part of the group ventured up the hill and expanded a single roomed house,

which provided shelter for seven people within the 3 meter by 4 meter walls. My group rebuilt the roof and added walls for a home at the bottom of the hill which was falling apart. The roof was made of straw and much of it was missing in chunks. We realized what living below the poverty line really meant. In Peru, 14,337,378 people are living below it. 20% of the population lives in absolute poverty. They survive on less than US\$1 a day.

Although it was hard work, I could honestly say that the day we built those houses was the best day of my life thus far. The feeling you receive in helping those in need outweighs the physical burden and strife and any material goods

existing. Providing that family, gave me more than we ever gave them. We gave them something material, a suitable home to live in, but they gave us the experience of the great love one receives in helping a neighbour. In some ways, they are luckier than we are. They live in this love and compassion everyday, bathing in the riches only another human can give, while we lose ourselves in the false joy of material possessions and luxuries.

Visiting the orphanage, maternity ward and free clinic really took a toll on my heart. Seeing humans in such a weak and fragile state, with little or no hope for a better life because of the conditions of the poverty they live in makes you question the morality of those of us who spend money on unnecessary luxuries. It's sad that although more than half the world suffering, a select few have most the money in the world. They refuse to live simply even though that could mean that others would simply live.

During our visit to the free clinic, I cared for a baby with autism. A characteristic of this illness is that the patient shows signs of distrust, distress and anxiety when in situations of human connections and interaction. The baby struggled when I held her. I was afraid I was doing some-

thing wrong, but the doctor told me to continue to hold her and soothe her. I followed his instruction. I continued to play with her for another hour. She slowly

began to push me away less and less. I experienced a miracle that day when she fell asleep in my arms. It brought tears to my eyes because with such a terrible disease, it was highly improbable that the baby would gain enough trust in order to stop resisting my touch, even if she wanted to. I felt such a strong connection with the little girl. I had never experienced such a deep and profound love as I did that day.

When it was time to leave, I slowly carried her up to the nursery. I placed her in her crib and stroked her head which displayed a few thin locks of hair. She opened her eyes and stared at me but didn't move an inch. At that moment, one of the nurses came to me and told me something that broke my heart. Struggling with Autism wasn't her only problem; she was actually five years old but

terribly malnourished which made her appear like a baby. She is one of four children in Peru who is malnourished. 1,200 children die weekly, primarily because they lack the nutrients they need. She had been fed only milk for the first four years of her life. This had caused serious liver malfunctions and many other problems to other organs in her body. She needed surgery immediately, which the wealthy American doctor and founder on the clinic was willing to pay for. Unfortunately, her parents lived much too far away to be able to afford to come and sign the papers to admit the operation. Finally, she sighed and told me she didn't know how much longer she would live for. I was devastated. I was so deeply humbled in spirit that I couldn't hold my tears back. And although it was the hardest moment I can remember, it was the one that taught me the most.

Relationships are the basis of the reason for our creation and the meaning of our lives. We are meant to live life to the fullest by sharing it with those who need it most and make ourselves available to those who hope for support and compassion. Mother Theresa said "When a poor person dies of hunger, it has not happened because God did not take care of him or her. It has happened because neither you nor I wanted to give that person what he or she needed." Let us not be the people who cause others to perish while we feast in false pleasures.

Caroline Czekajlo
Grade 11

