

# Good News Release

## Faith, Fitness, and Community: Arnprior and Calabogie Catholic Schools Celebrate a Vibrant March

March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2026

As the snow begins to melt across the Ottawa Valley, the students and staff of St. Joseph's Catholic School (Arnprior), St. Joseph's Catholic School (Calabogie), and St. John XXIII (Arnprior) are reflecting on a month defined by outdoor adventure, spiritual growth, and community spirit. From the ski hills of Mount Pakenham to the quiet reflection of Lenten traditions, these three schools have spent the month of March fostering a holistic environment where faith and well-being intersect.

### St. Joseph's, Arnprior

Students at St. Joseph's in Arnprior have had a whirlwind of a season, trading traditional classrooms for snow-covered groves, volleyball courts, and local ice rinks. From physical education to spiritual reflection, the recent weeks have highlighted a vibrant "it takes a village" approach to student development and community engagement.

The winter air didn't slow anyone down as students took to the outdoors for a series of high-energy activities. Grade 8 students enjoyed an immersive outdoor learning experience, snowshoeing through the grove and even hand-feeding local birds. This spirit of partnership extended to "Learning Buddies," where students teamed up to master their snowshoeing gear.

On the ice, students took advantage of the Nick Smith Centre for skating sessions and hit the slopes at Mount Pakenham for two successful ski days. Back in the gym, the curling kits delivered by Mr. Solar have been a daily fixture, kept running smoothly by the diligent work of the caretaking staff. The Sitting Volleyball tournament, held at the St. John Chrysostom Parish Hall, marked an exciting high point of the athletic season. The Grade 7 and 8 teams, all wearing their Sitting Volleyball t-shirts and sharing their team spirit, showcased exceptional preparation and sportsmanship in this inclusive sport.

Beyond the field of play, Grade 7 and 8 students have been engaging in a meaningful journey through Lent. Weekly visits to the church allow students to participate in the Stations of the Cross. Using a specialized guide titled "By Your Side: Stations of the Cross for Teens," teachers and students walk the length of the church together, reflecting on each statue and the story it tells. Educators have noted that this has been a wonderful, grounding experience for the students.

Additionally, student health remains a top priority thanks to the Healthy Lunch Program. Facilitated by Ms. Pecoskie and Ms. Herrick, the program ensures that every classroom receives a fresh snack bowl each morning, keeping students fueled and focused throughout the day.



Snowshoeing at the Grove



Skiing at Mount Pakenham



Sitting Volleyball

To cap off a busy month, the school community is turning its focus toward their furry friends. Students surpassed expectations during a recent donation drive for the Arnprior Humane Society, contributing a wide variety of items, including litter, wet pet food, and pet toys. These contributions will go directly to supporting local animals in need, proving that these students are as dedicated to their community as they are to their studies.

### St. Joseph's, Calabogie

At St. Joseph's, nestled in the vibrant and beautiful community of Calabogie, the staff and students have been enjoying the many wonders of the natural playground that exists in their backyard.

In line with the Ontario Physical Education Curriculum and to help foster healthy, active living, winter activities and adventures have been strongly encouraged. Students in grades JK through grade 6 have enjoyed three ski dates at Calabogie Peaks, with their last one concluding before the March Break. Additionally, easy access to the Dan O'Neil Arena has allowed all classes to spend time skating at this beautiful outdoor facility. Finally, with the assistance of members of the Greater Madawaska Fire Department, students enjoyed a day of ice fishing on Calabogie Lake. This event not only allowed students to enjoy the great outdoors but also focused on science education, as students learned about fish species, ice conditions, and basic physics and chemistry principles, such as how salt melts.

In March, students at St. Joseph's continued their Lenten journey, which began with an Ash Wednesday prayer Service in our school gym. Daily Lenten reflections and visual signs, including class bulletin boards, have reminded students of the importance of almsgiving and prayer. In addition, a catechist from the Most Precious Blood Parish has been using space within the school to offer sacramental preparation for those students and families wishing for active participation in the parish.

The monthly Super Student awards ceremonies provide a wonderful chance to celebrate the outstanding achievements of many students. St. Joseph's Calabogie continues to highlight the Board Theme, which focuses on building relationships with Indigenous communities based on profound respect for their identities, beliefs, and traditions. This work supports healing and moves towards reconciliation, aligning with both the Catholic Graduate Expectations and the 7 Grandfather Teachings.

Math and literacy initiatives remain at the forefront of instruction within the classrooms of St. Joseph's Calabogie. Daily number talks, classroom read-alouds and the use of mentor texts to encourage rich class discussions, develop thinking processes and uncover deeper meaning in what is being read, are all strategies being utilized to foster a love of learning and raise literacy and numeracy levels for students.

### St. John XXIII, Arnprior

From the sizzle of pancake griddles to the quiet reflection of the Lenten season, it has been a whirlwind of activity and community spirit at St. John XXIII Catholic School. As the "St. John Jets" soar to new heights on the basketball court and students embrace the great Canadian outdoors, the school remains anchored in its mission of academic excellence and spiritual growth.

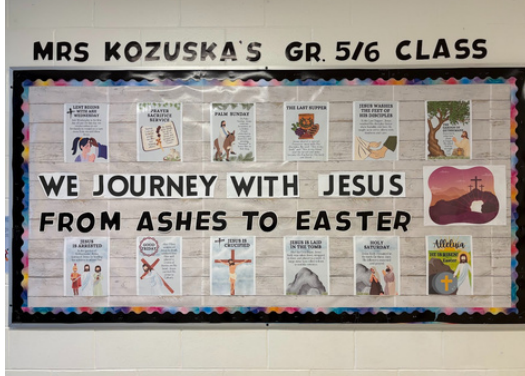
The transition into the Lenten season was marked by both celebration and solemnity. The school community kicked things off with a delicious Shrove Tuesday treat, courtesy of the dedicated School Council, before entering a period of reflection with a beautiful Ash Wednesday liturgy.



Stations of the Cross at St. John Chrysostom Parish



Skating at Dan O'Neil Arena



Lenten Journey Bulletin



Ice Fishing on Calabogie Lake!

As the school prepares for the upcoming Holy Week, the focus remains on Lenten preparation. Following March Break, the community will gather once more for a full school Mass on March 26th and again for a special prayer service for Holy Thursday, ensuring that the heart of the season—sacrifice, prayer, and renewal—remains at the forefront.

On March 4th, the school celebrated Bright Colours Day, and the hallways were filled with colourful decorations. Students and staff dressed up to honour the Holy Festival, celebrating alongside community members who observe this vibrant tradition marking the beginning of spring.

The energy continued to climb as the Student Council organized eight consecutive spirit days leading up to the break. The festivities concluded with an early "St. Patrick's Day at SJ23" celebration on Friday the 13th, sending students off for their holidays with a sense of joy and belonging.

The SJ23 Destination Imagination Team will also be featured at an assembly to showcase their efforts from the recent RCCDSB showcase at Bishop Smith High School.

Education at St. John XXIII continues to move beyond the four walls of the classroom:

- Junior Students: Hit the slopes at Mount Pakenham for two days of skiing and snowboarding, fostering teamwork and physical literacy.
- Primary Students: Explored the Mill of Kintail Conservation Area, engaging in outdoor learning and connecting with the local environment.
- Parents: The school's Book Club remains active, with parents meeting to discuss Hannah Beach's work on student behaviour and emotional regulation.

On the court, the St. John Jets basketball team proved to be an unstoppable force. The team recently secured the championship at the SJHS tournament, finishing the competition with a perfect, undefeated record. "Watching our students excel both in the classroom and on the court has been a highlight of the term," says Vice Principal Jane O'Gorman. "The undefeated run by our Jets is a testament to their dedication, but more importantly, to the sportsmanship they showed toward their peers."

While the "fun factor" is high, the school's commitment to its academic goals remains steadfast. As the spring weather arrives, providing more favourable conditions for outdoor play and physical activity, the administration is looking forward to a strong finish to the school year. Our goal is to create a holistic environment where faith, academics, and well-being intersect," notes Principal T.J. O'Grady. "Whether it's through our Lenten preparations or our outdoor learning initiatives, we are seeing our students grow into compassionate, well-rounded leaders."



Basketball Champions



Shrove Tuesday



Destination Imagination Team



Ash Wednesday

