

Catholic School Council Faith Committee Handbook



York Catholic District School Board

Third Draft: September 16, 2003

Elementary Religious Education Advisory Committee



Catholic School Council
Faith Committee Handbook

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The success of dynamic Catholic School Council Faith Committees in various school communities has shown that it has a place in all Catholic School Councils.

Over last few years Catholic School Councils have been working with schools, parishes and families to enhance the education of students. Each Catholic School Council has been asked to have at least one person who acts as liaison between parish and school. Many Catholic School Councils have committees, most often called Faith Committees that not only act as means of communication between parish home and school but also have created and sustained vibrant programs that have supported the faith life of the school.

The success of dynamic Catholic School Council Faith Committees in various school communities has shown that there is a place for this committee in all Catholic School Councils. This handbook serves as a resource that helps such committees get established and sustains committees already in existence.

At the Institute for Catholic Education's Symposium in November 2002, Bishop Grecco stated that Catholic Schools offer a unique vehicle for re-evangelization of parents. Many of our Catholic families are unchurched. There are many people through whom the school community can provide a forum for conveying the healing touch of Jesus. A Catholic School Council Faith Committee through its plans and actions can help provide this touch.

As part of the Y.C.D.S.B.'s Elementary Religious Education Advisory Committee's (EREAC) work, a survey of schools took place early in 2003. The thirty-three schools that responded to the survey informed us of the many excellent faith development activities that were taking place among our school communities. We also found that while many schools have the required faith representative in place, less than half of the surveys reported having school faith committees. It was also noted that those schools having the most active faith development programs tended to have faith development committees. In talking to faith representatives from schools about the reasons for not having faith committees, some reasons given were:

- ❖ "I don't know why we need a committee"
- ❖ "The parish and the teachers look after the faith needs of the community: why do we need to get involved?"
- ❖ "I'm not sure what we could do to serve the school"

To sustain the faith life of the child, the faith life of the parents and guardians must also be nurtured.

EREAC decided that a faith handbook for school councils could address these questions by explaining the rationale for School Council Faith Committees as well as compiling a list of useful suggestions and resources. Furthermore, this handbook would give a step by step guide to setting up a faith committee.

Guiding Principles

1. To sustain the faith life of the child, the faith life of the parents and guardians must also be nurtured. Parents are the first teachers of faith to their children. The need for support for parents in these challenging times is becoming increasingly clear. The Catholic School Council Faith Committee's role is to help in this process.
2. Catholic School Council Faith Committees are sub-committees of the Catholic School Councils and are subject to the role descriptions given to this parent group. This Committee has a specific mandate to speak and act to the spiritual dimension of its role.
3. Catholic School Council Faith Committees are not primarily responsible for curriculum delivery but rather augment the school's spiritual atmosphere by facilitating family faith development.
4. The Regional Catholic School Council has been pro-active in faith initiatives. Support and cooperation with these initiatives also will sustain family faith life.



Getting Support for a Faith Committee

Let's say you think it's a good idea to start a Faith Committee. What can you do to enlist support for the plan?

Five typical start-up projects for Faith Committees:

1. Lead Prayers at CSC meetings.

2. Pray for students

3. Put up visible signs of faith around the school.

4. Post the weekly Parish bulletin.

5. Invite a guest speaker

- ❖ Organize an evening of reflection with a guest speaker on the importance of Catholic School Council Faith Committees;
- ❖ Meet with other Catholic School Councils within the town or city to see how they organize their faith committees;
- ❖ Encourage a group of parents to attend one of the Regional School Council meetings on faith development and meet following the gathering to plan a follow up which can take the form of setting up a Catholic School Council Faith Committee;
- ❖ Talk with the staff faith Committee and the Principal to see how a Catholic School Council Faith Committee can help with the school faith development.

A Checklist for Starting a Faith Committee

- ❑ 1. Now that you have a group of interested people, meet with other interested people either in the Catholic School Council or in the larger parent community.
- ❑ 2. Select a small number (2-4) of possible projects from the list given in the *Catholic School Council Faith Committee Handbook* for the current year.
- ❑ 3. Consult with the following people/groups to determine the feasibility of the projects
 - Catholic School Council Chair
 - Principal
 - Staff Faith Committee
 - Parish priest or delegate
- ❑ 4. Go to Catholic School Council to formalize the committee. Ask that the committee be put in place for the duration of the school year in order to accomplish the projects. Upon review, after the school year, it can be made a standing committee of Catholic School Council.

Role of the Chair/Co-Chair of the Faith Committee

A Chair or Co-Chair of the Faith Committee

- ❖ Calls meetings;
- ❖ Sets the agenda;
- ❖ Determines clear roles and responsibilities resulting from the meeting

Selecting the Chair/Co-Chair

Chairs and Co-Chairs should have the following strengths:

- ❖ Organization;
- ❖ Communication;
- ❖ Hospitality
- ❖ Vision of Catholic School Council Faith Committee



Running a Faith Committee Meeting

1. Set the date, time and place for the subsequent meetings at the first gathering.
2. Send a reminder of the meeting before the meeting date.
3. Try to create a sacred space in the meeting room by use of liturgical symbols either on or beside the meeting table.
4. Remember that meetings should have a significant element of Spiritual nurture. Start with a prayer or better still, a prayer service. Invite people to bring and share various inspirations they have received since the last gathering. (Prayers, ideas)
5. Consider using icebreakers to help form community. This is particularly appropriate early in the school year. See these websites for ideas:
 - ❖ www.susan-boyd.com/tenways.htm
 - ❖ www.work911.com/cgi-bin/links/jump.cgi?ID=2694
6. Set an agenda and copy it for all.

7. Arrange for someone to take minutes or at least a set of actions resulting including responsibility and timeline. These should be distributed as soon as possible after the meeting.

8. Words or expressions of gratitude should be extended to those attending for coming and the host school for their hospitality.

9. Food and drink (non-alcoholic!) help with the sense of welcome and comfort.

Role of the Faith Committee Member

The Faith Committee member is an implicit example to other parents of a person seeking to live out their calling as a Catholic Parent.

1. The Faith Committee member is part of the spiritual leadership of the school. The committee's task is to provide a more spiritual atmosphere in the school by creating environment, occasions and support that facilitate parent faith development. See "Faith Development Activities" for a description of a number of specific ways in which faith development can occur.
2. The Faith Committee member may also work with other school Catholic School Council Faith Committees to nurture their own spirituality and to plan spiritual development opportunities that are only feasible when several schools get together. Also schools can learn from each other about the type of project that can be successful.
3. The essence of being a Faith Committee member is not so much in the doing, but in the being. By being a person of faith and searching for God's love in our communities, the Faith Committee member is an implicit example to other parents of a person seeking to live out their calling as a Catholic Parent. The Faith Committee member demonstrates the importance of nurturing their souls by pursuing the nurture of their own souls.

Faith Development Activities within the School

Our faith urges us to translate belief into action. What can we do as a Faith Committee member to help nurture faith within our schools? The following activities do not refer to the wonderful shared activities that Families of Schools put together; rather, these are actions that can occur within a school community.

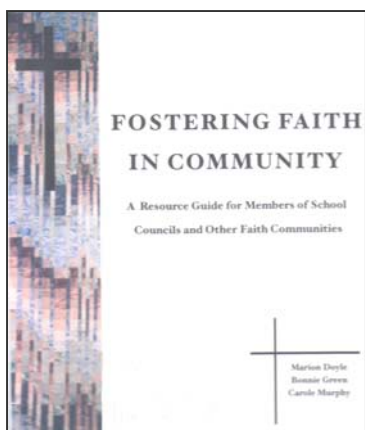
These are not 'must do's.' Each community is unique and the Faith Committee can adapt these possibilities to their circumstances.

One of the main purposes of Faith Committees is to strengthen family faith life. Through community-building activities, we can become authentic witnesses of the Catholic faith. The following is a list of activities that you can do with your faith committee to foster the spirit of community. By forming deep connections, families feel as though they belong to the greater work of the Church. This list is only a sample of activities that can be adapted to the needs and interests of your survey.

1. Prayer Services

Within your school community, the Faith Committee can conduct a spiritual reflection before a meeting. Become responsible for the prayer service from *Gifts of Love*, or a prayer pertinent to the season or family needs. You could also arrange for different teachers to lead the prayer. *Gifts of Love* is available online at www.ycdsb.edu.on.ca. Click on Educator Resources, then Religious Education, then Adult Faith, then *Gifts of Love*.

2. Fostering Faith in Community



The *Fostering Faith in Community* program is contained in a binder that all Catholic School Councils should have. It is a very prescriptive program designed specifically for catholic School Councils. It consists of three 45 to 60 minute sessions to be held in the first year (church, belief & community) and three sessions in the second year (shared excellence, life challenges and celebration).

3. Bulletin Board

Each week post the Parish Bulletin. Each month, prepare a bulletin board with several inspirational quotations.

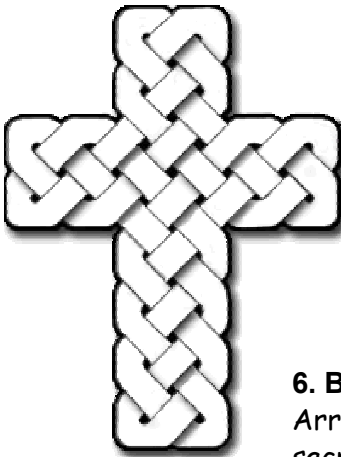
4. Entrance

Help to create a spiritual atmosphere in the entrance of the school and in the hallways. Visitors to the school should be in no doubt that they are in a Catholic School. Consider placing the school altar, cross, a statue or picture of your school's patron saint, and student's religious art work in prominent positions. Liturgical seasons can be recognized with a Jesse Tree, Advent Wreath, Creche, Stations of the Cross, or Easter displays.

5. Symbols of Faith

Create and/or maintain symbols of faith for the school. These might include:

- ❖ Altar cloths (see Appendix)
- ❖ Banners
- ❖ Posters
- ❖ Murals
- ❖ Symbols for the Religious Education program. (Each Elementary Grade level has a distinct symbol)
- ❖ Peace Garden
- ❖ Marian Garden



6. Banners

Arrange for the construction of liturgical banners for sacramental preparation and the liturgical seasons.

7. Create and/or maintain a chapel or designated sacred space in the school.

Some schools have a chapel, while others have some form of designated sacred space often around an altar. Help with the regular maintenance of the chapel by putting up seasonal appointments and suitable decorations.



8. Report to Council

Ask the Chair to be a regular on the Agenda to report on ongoing Faith Development activities.

9. Advocacy

On Catholic School Councils, be particularly conscious of the Catholic perspective when decisions are being made. When priorities are set, is there a spiritual dimension to the activities? What can a Faith Committee do to support these priorities? When important decisions are being made about the future of Catholic education, make your voice known to those making the decisions.

10. Guest Speakers

Invite a guest speaker for parents. You may want your local priest to come in to share with parents. See also the list of speakers in the Appendix. Or you can contact Les Miller at the board (713-2711 ext. 3616) He will be glad to conduct a reflection after school ranging from 15 to 75 minutes. He is open to leading reflections on a number of topics related to spirituality. He has presentations on God Speaking in Creation; Finding Sacred Space in Our Lives; Advent; Lent; Easter; The Prodigal Son; The Spirituality of Parenting and Love and Teaching prepared or in preparation.



11. Contribute to the School Newspaper/Website

Entries could include prayers, reflections, information items book and web site reviews.

12. Faith Plan

Work with Parish, Administration, Faith Ambassadors and other Staff to produce a school yearly or longer faith development plan that proposes strategic actions to further spiritual development. This might also be termed a pastoral plan.

13. Work with Other Groups

Consider working with other faith groups in the community (Faith Ambassadors, Parish Council, Catholic Women's League, Knight's of Columbus) on projects. Also consider joining with other school faith committees.

14. Promote Regional Catholic School Council Faith Initiatives

Keep informed as the spiritual activities of the Regional School Council Executive and pass on and promote these events to other members of the community.

15. Plan a retreat

Organize a weekend retreat for parents at a retreat house or at the school. See the appendix for a list of retreat houses. See also the retreat program for parents offered by the Ontario Association for Parents in Catholic Education. (www.oapce.on.ca)

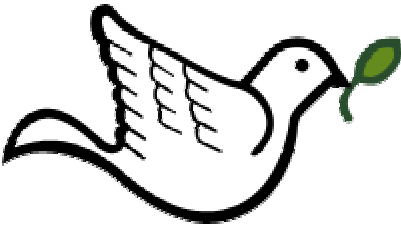
16. Library Books

Donate books to the school library to create a section that parents and staff can use that will help them develop their spirituality of Catholic parenting.

17. Support Social Justice Activities

Support the activities of your school's social justice activities:

- ❖ Hands of Hope - Helping the poor in Guatemala
- ❖ Luke 4:18 - Elementary inter-school justice group
- ❖ Celebrate Life - Secondary inter-school justice group
- ❖ Individual school projects
- ❖ Holy Childhood Association
- ❖ Development & Peace
- ❖ ShareLife
- ❖ Gently Used Shoe Drive



18. Flowers

Bring in flowers from your garden to brighten up the altar or other designated sacred space in the school. Invite other parents to do the same.

19. Peace Garden/Tranquil Garden / Marian Garden

Find parents with "green thumbs" and help organize a small garden at the school to create a sacred place, a peace garden.

20. School Quilt

Each parent designs one square. Once it is assembled, the quilt can be hung in the school foyer.

21. Celebrate the Eucharist

Celebrate Mass together, as a parent community. Host a social after a regular parish mass or one of the sacramental celebrations.



22. Pray the Rosary

October 2002 to October 2003 is the Year of the Rosary. Consider praying the Rosary. Parents can also organize a "Rosary Bee" where rosaries are made for students. See www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Feb2003/Feature1.asp for more information on the new Mysteries of Light. Some schools have a "Living Rosary" You can help the Principal and staff organize and run this event.

23. Season Celebration

Celebrate the beginning of each season, focusing on the beauty of each season. For example, in the spring, read the parable of the mustard seed. After the passage is read, give each family a package of seeds for their garden.

24. Pilgrim's Journey

Plan a pilgrimage to places such as Martyr's Shrine. This may be done in conjunction with the Parish.

25. Seder

Using the YCDSB document on the Seder and consultation with the Religious Education and Family Life Education team, host a Seder. This is a traditional Passover meal from the Jewish tradition. It is also that meal that Jesus celebrated at the Last Supper.

26. Acts of Social Ministry

Organize food drives, money collections as part of your social ministry. Visit seniors' homes or volunteer together at a community organization. Support a local group such as Rose of Sharon or Rosalie Hall.

27. Social Justice

Form a parent based social justice organization such as Amnesty International.



28. Parent Choir

Organize a parent, parent/staff/student, or staff/parent choir to sing at nursing homes during Christmas or another time of the year.

29. What's Your Type?

Use the Myers Briggs or David Keirsey (Please Understand Me II) to find your temperament type. Explore implications for parenting, spirituality and relationships. Similar type sorters include True Colours and the Enneagram.

30. Pottery

Go to a Pottery studio to make or paint pottery that can be used in classroom Prayer Centres or family altars

31. Craft Night

Gather families together to complete an art activity. Projects do not have to be elaborate, just fun. Make a rosary, decorate a cross for your prayer table, or paint a ceramic object.



32. Book Club

Parents can read a book at the same time, and, at a later date, discuss its significance to their lives, or bring in a favourite book and discuss one aspect of the book that has touched their lives.

33. Movie Night

Get together for an inspirational movie night. See www.hollywoodjesus.com for suggestions on how movies can be used in a spiritual context.

34. School Prayer Book

Ask families to collect their favourite prayers/poems/quotations. Put them together in a school prayer book.

35. Praying for Students

Individually or collectively, pray for students in the school community. This could take place in the school or at home.

36. Hospitality

Welcome new families to the school by personally greeting them, and giving them letters of welcome, prayer cards, community, parish and school information.

37. Advent Adopt A Family

During Advent, facilitate the twinning of a class with a needy family. This activity is often done in conjunction with staff faith committees.

38. Keep Christ in Christmas

Sell pins with messages such as "Keep Christ in Christmas" and give proceeds to an appropriate charity.

39. Sacramental Preparation

Host a reception or lunch to celebrate First Communion, Reconciliation or Confirmation.

40. Character Education

Work with board and Regional Municipality of York to raise consciousness regarding different aspects of Character education. Hold a presentation regarding the Character Education Poster to focus on distinctively Catholic aspects of this initiative.

41. Saint Day Celebration

Support school efforts to celebrate the school's saint day. This support can take the form of displays, hospitality, getting prayer cards for students, running a prayer service for students, staff and/or parents.

42. Blessing of the Children

Help with a blessing of all the students in the school. Work with the Principal, staff and board Religious Education staff to prepare and lead the blessing. Committee members can go from class to class to bless each child.

43. Stations of the Cross

Arrange for the construction of school Stations of the Cross. You can also prepare a prayer service for the parents using the Stations.

44. Catholic Education Week

Arrange to get the Catholic Education Week package produced by the Ontario Catholic School Trustees Association. It is usually available in February. Catholic Education Week is celebrated in the first week in May. Use some of the ideas from this package in your school. Alternatively use this week to launch some of the activities found in this handbook.

Retreat and Workshop Facilitators and Speakers

Sr. Joan Atkinson, C.S.J.
Phone: 416-926-1300 x3439
Interest: facilitator for parish groups,
retreats for teachers

Noel Cooper
Phone: 905 884- 5209
Interest: Scripture, Faith Development

Rev. John F. Duggan, S.J.
Phone: 416-972-6194
Interest: retreats, works, theological
reflection

Sr. Judith Engel, O.P.
Phone: 416-762-1026
Interest: fine arts, spiritual direction,
multicultural issues, integration of arts
and spirituality, integration of social
justice and spirituality

Anna Gormley
Phone: 416-222-5420
Interest: yoga, dance, body movement

Fr. Paul Hansen
426 St. Germain Avenue,
Toronto, Ontario M5M 1W7
Tel: 416 789-3217
Interest: social justice

Brenda Holtkamp-Welbes
Phone: 519-941-5720
Interest: sacramental preparation,
chaplancy, high school retreats

Rev. Bob Holmes, C.S.B.
Phone: 416-516-1046
Interest: social justice workshops

Margaret Keogh
Phone: 416-424-3354
Interest: workshops on wellness
spirituality and on ministry and
spirituality

Rev. George LaPierre, C.S.B.
Phone: 416-926-1300
Interest: spirituality, liturgy

Rev. John Lee C.P.
Phone: 416-755-2131
Interest: leadership development, group
facilitation, workshops

Bertha Madott
Phone: 416-488-1538
Interest: prayer, spirituality. Slide and
music presentations for Lent and Advent

Mary Marrocco
Phone: 416-406-3597
Interest: spirituality, prayer, scripture

Rev. Gary McCarthy, C.S.Sp.
Phone: 416-698-2003
Interest: spirituality, inner sacredness
and worth, hope, Jesus, prayer

Kitty McGilly
97 Wesley St. Toronto, ON M8Y 2W8
Phone: 416 201-7375
Interest: Teacher spirituality, pilgrimage

Colleen O'Leary, C.N.D.,
Irene Wilson, S.P.
Phone: 416-323-0704/416-968-0482
Interest: Spiritual Direction, retreat
direction, group facilitation, workshops,
reflection days

Sr. Elizabeth Losinski, N.D.S.
Phone: 416-762-1026
Interest: scripture, spiritual direction,
twilight retreats

Fr Vito Marzilliano
Phone: (416)244-3066
Interest: Spirituality, Liturgy, Taizé
prayer

Marilyn Melville
Phone: 416-653-0563
Interest: adult education, counseling,
Meyers Briggs, Jungian psychology, mid-
life workshops, personal and spiritual
growth, the unemployed

Fr. Eugene O'Reilly
426 St. Germain Avenue,
Toronto, Ontario M5M 1W7
Tel: 416 789-3217
Interest: Spirituality

Sr. Anne Schenck, C.S.J.
Phone: 416-861-9100
Interest: intercultural issues, refugee
families, retreats

Mary Ann Takacs
Phone: 905 832-4636
Interest: teacher's prayer life, personal
faith journeys.

Rev. David Whalen, O.S.F.S.
Phone: 416-926-1300
Interest: ministry, theological reflection,
spirituality

Sr. Marge Zdunich, N.D.S.
Phone: 905-279-6472
Interest: women's spirituality, biblical
women, women's groups

Retreat Facilities

The Carter Centre
1335 St. John's Sideroad E.
Aurora, Ontario L4G 3G8
905 727 4215

Dayspring
11339 Yonge Street,
Richmond Hill, ON L4S 1L1 (905) 884-
3454 ext. 226

Ignatius Jesuit Centre
of Guelph
P.O Box 1238, Station Main
Guelph, Ont. N1H 6N6
519-824-1250, ext. 238

King View Farm
Dufferin St., Snowball.
905 727-9171

Loretto Christian Life Centre
6881 Stanley Ave., Niagara Falls, ON
L2G 7B6
Phone: 905 354-2775
Contact: Sr. Marianna Gignac

Manresa Jesuit Retreat House
2325 Liverpool Road
Pickering, Ont. L1X 1V4
Phone: 905-839-2864
Contact: Mrs. Alice Quigley

Maryholme
379-A Bouchier St.
Roches Point, Ont. LOE 1P0
905-476-1140
Contact: Sr. Jane McDonell

Mount Carmel Spiritual Centre
7021 Stanley Ave.
Niagara Falls, Ont. L2G 7B7
Phone: 905-356-4113
Contact: Mrs. Jean Yazaroglu

Mount Mary Immaculate Retreat
Centre, 437 Wilson St. East
Ancaster, Ont. L9G 3K4
Phone: 905-648-4485
Contact: Sr. Florentine Smisniuk

Nazareth House of Mary - Regina Mundi
19309 Warden Ave. (5th Conc. Rd)
Queensville, Ont. L0G 1R0
Phone: 905-478-4264
Contact: Johnny & Nanette Cruz

Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre
1617 Blythe Road, Mississauga, Ont. L5H
2C3 Phone: 905-278-5229
Contact: Bruna Gumieniak

St. Bernard's Retreat/Guest House
685 Finch Ave. West
Willowdale, Ont. M2R 1P2
Phone: 416-635-8422 x263
Contact: Sr. John Marie

St. Francis Centre for Religious Studies
(Retreat Centre)
208501 Hwy. #9, Mono Mills, RR#8,
Orangeville, Ont. L9W 3T5
Phone: 519-941-1747

St. Joseph's Centre of Spirituality
Box 155, L.C.D. 1
Hamilton, Ont. L8L 7V7
Phone: 905-528-0138
Contact: Patti Melanson

Books and Religious Articles

ABC

(inspirational books, religious greeting cards,
church supplies, education resources)
600 Jarvis St. Toronto
416-924-9192

Agape Christian Bookshop
1280 Finch Ave. W. Unit 102
416-661-7623

Broughton's
(Books, videos, religious articles)
2105 Danforth Ave. (east of Woodbine),
Toronto, ON M4C 1K1
(416) 690-4777

Canadian Bible Society
10 Carnforth Rd.
416-701-1761
Victoria Park & Lawrence

Claude Le Gros Sales Inc.
(church supplies, furnishings, wine,
candles, vestments, statues, nativity sets)
36 Colville (south of Lawrence, off Keele)
Toronto 416-242-2712

Joseph's Inspirational Services
(bibles, crucifixes, cards, books, music,
candles, statues, altarware)
2721 Markham Road Unit 39
(north of Finch) 416-291-1772

L'Arche Community
(book store carries writings of Father
Henri J.M. Nouwen and Jean Vanier)
11339 Yonge St
Richmond Hill 905-884-3454

Lion's Den Christian Book Shoppe
(books, gifts, cards, music)
115 Main St.
Markham 905-472-8412

Liturgical Apostolate Centre

1672 Jane St. (south of Lawrence),
Toronto 416 247-5221

Mitchell's Family Books
565 Gordon Baker Rd.
416-499-2029
Steeles & Victoria Park
&
120 West Beaver Creek Road, Unit 1&2
905-707-9815
(Leslie & Hwy 7)

Pauline Books and Media
(gifts, excellent collection of books,
music, statues, cards rosaries),
3022 Dufferin Street, Toronto
South of Lawrence Ave. W
416-781-9131

Religious Gift Shop (books, gifts, statues,
rosaries, candles, bomboniere)
Yonge & Oxford, Richmond Hill
905-737-0691

Sisters of the Good Shepherd
25 Good Shepherd Court
Toronto, Ontario
416-787-6588

Speelman's Christian Bookstore
5010 Steeles Ave. W.
416-741-6563
Kipling & Steeles

The Treasure House
Christian Supplies Ltd.
1110 Stellar Dr., Unit 104
Newmarket 905-898-3582

Thanks to Gina Creta and Martha Baglieri of the Br
André family of Ambassadors for this list. See also
www.ca-catholics.net/toronto/sv-bk.htm

