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LETHBRIDGE HERALD

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HIGH HOPES

NEW SCHOOL CELEBRATED



HERALD PHOTO BY IAN MARTENS

Students release balloons at the close of ceremonies Friday for the official opening of St. Patrick's Fine Arts Elementary School. **See related story on Page A3.**

Newly opened St. Patrick's school is a work of fine art

School an architectural triumph for designer, trustees, teachers

By **SHERRI GALLANT**

Lethbridge Herald

The official opening of St. Patrick's Fine Arts Elementary School Friday was graced by the talents of happy children, enhanced by the hard work of teachers and blessed by a bevy of clergy.

The ceremony, attended by rows of dignitaries and beaming parents, was held in the school gymnasium where, just the day before, the last boards of the hardwood floor had finally been put into place.

The school, in upscale westside Riverstone, is an architectural triumph, not only for Art Ferrari and Dan Westwood but for the trustees and teachers who put parts of themselves into guiding their design. With a colour scheme based on Hans Hofmann's 1961 abstract painting *The Golden Wall*, St. Patrick's is bright, inviting, open and surprising — all the things one might hope a fine arts-focused school should be.

"Today we ask God's blessing on this centre of seeking, learning and teaching what is true," said Bishop Frederick Henry of the Calgary Diocese. "We ask that those entrusted with the education of children or young people in this institution may teach their students how to join the discoveries of human wisdom with the truth of the gospel, so that they will be able to keep the true faith and to live up to it in their lives."

Bishop Henry told the students it could be hard work to develop their God-given gifts and talents, saying they might well expect to be knocked down by others along the way.

"But you can never, ever quit," he said. "St. Patrick, your patron saint, had that kind of spirit. Nothing could stop him."

Students carried symbols through the centre of the crowd to the stage, including a time capsule to be opened in 2009, the blueprints for the school, a wooden cross (each classroom will

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have one), the school banner and a basket filled with materials to help students express their creative gifts of music, art, drama and dance.

Principal Lee Koran heaped praise on parent volunteers, telling how they've managed to get into place dozens of trees, sod and a new playground soon after the first day of school. The building was not finished when September dawned but the core classrooms were finished and staff somehow managed.

Koran provided a slide show beginning with groundbreaking ceremonies under snow flurries in September 2003 and ending with interior shots of the finished product a few days ago. He talked of how much has been accomplished since the school first declared itself a fine arts institution 12 years ago and what vision the Holy Spirit board had in supporting the concept from the start.

The school is excited about its partnership with the University of Lethbridge's education faculty. Several initiatives will provide student teachers with valuable experience and students with opportunities to excel in fine arts. Operating as a satellite school for the University Conservatory of Music, students will be able to receive lessons in Suzuki violin, choral and Kindermusik. Other features of the partnership include an artist-in-residency program and collaboration in pilot fine-arts productions.



HERALD PHOTO BY IAN MARTENS

Bishop Frederick Henry leads the official opening ceremonies Friday at St. Patrick's Fine Arts Elementary School.