

## ***Divine Love, Human Generosity***

*By Nathan Polakoff*

***Early February: a fire ravages the home of a family from St. Joseph the Worker School in Transcona. Thanks to the generosity of students, staff and the parish of the same name, the family has been able to recover. Nathan Polakoff, the school's principal, recounts how his community rallied to help the parents and their two children.***

Interview by Daniel Bahuaud, Communications Coordinator for the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface

**Daniel Bahuaud: The St. Joseph the Worker community suddenly found itself in a state of shock...**

**Nathan Polakoff:** The school has not experienced this kind of event in a very long time, thank God! In early February, I got a call from the mother. She had just dropped her two children off at school and had come home. When she arrived, the kitchen was in flames. The family lost everything. She had been renting the house and didn't have much renters' insurance. I immediately sent an email to our families to encourage them to help. That was February 6. The next day, we started receiving donations.



**D. B.: Over \$4,000 was raised...**

**N. P.:** As upset as I was about the fire, I am amazed at the generous and quick action of our families, staff and parish. One staff member, Nikki Phaneuf, went knocking on the doors of local businesses for shoes and gift cards. Sister Charlotte Leake, the Parish life

Director at St. Joseph the Worker, contacted several religious organizations for support. Parents and parishioners have been very generous. In 2023, we're all struggling, what with inflation, so when you see many people putting the needs of others ahead of their own needs, it's inspiring. We even had one family from the school donate the entire contents of their apartment. They were leaving Transcona to move to the United States, so the dishes, furniture, appliances, etc. were packed up, put in a rental van, and on March 11, I transported everything to the family's new home.

**D. B.: What about the students?**

**N. P.:** They're the ones who really amazed me. To support their classmates, they gave money they had gotten at Christmas or on their birthdays to buy toys and other things young people like. What a great way to live the words they hear in catechesis and at Mass! They acted out of empathy for their friends, prayed for them and supported them in their time of need. This is Jesus' message of love expressed in the clearest and most direct way possible. Divine love is manifested in human action.

Today, the family is settling in their new home, getting out of boxes, so to speak. Normal everyday life is starting to resume. And the kids, despite the crisis, are happy. I see them every day. They are smiling and giggling in the hallways with their friends. They may have had a big shock, but they know they're loved.