



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

MESSAGE FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION WEEK 2022

The theme for this year's Catholic Education Week is "***Rebuild, Restore, Renew Together***". In the book of Revelation, we hear the voice of God: "See, I am making all things new." (Revelation 21:5) Even after a long and arduous two years, a loving God consoles us with the promise that there are better and brighter days ahead.

The weight of the pandemic has taken a toll. With continued care and protection of one another, the days of "normal" seem to be right around the corner. It is time to focus our attention on the work of restoration, learning how to "be" in a way that is new, building a strong and sturdy foundation for a post-COVID world. Our schools are fertile ground for such work.

The Catholic Education community in the Diocese of Hamilton is an architect, working to lay a strong foundation for the promise of tomorrow. From the kindergarten classrooms to our university lecture halls, we have witnessed throughout the pandemic the resiliency of our school communities in adapting and cultivating joy despite countless obstacles. We have surmounted challenge after challenge even in the darkest of days, and now we look forward to reclaiming that which we have lost, while renewing our experience of Catholic Education to do better, be better and serve better than ever before.

This work is well on its way through the incredible creativity of our educators and all those who serve and care for young people in our Catholic Schools. Teachers, educational assistants and all resource personnel have truly worked magic within the limitations of pandemic classrooms. I am heartened by the lengths our educators will go to inspire a love for God and a love for learning. Educators, I know this past year has been difficult, and certainly not what you signed up for when you committed to a vocation to teach, but know that you are seen, heard and valued for your dedication and I profoundly thank you for your ongoing commitment to Catholic Education.

As our educational leaders have worked to build, our young people who learn within our Catholic Schools have found places to call home, rest, and refuge from the outside world. Dear young people, in this celebration of Catholic Education Week, take time to reflect and to give thanks for all that you have accomplished over the past year. Take time to rejoice! I know it can be hard to imagine that celebration is possible, but now, certainly, is the time to rejoice! You have done great things over the past year, certainly with God's help. Reflect on those blessings, thank those who have been your helpers along the way and then claim your identity as a beacon of hope for the world by sharing that spirit of celebration with others! You are setting the tone for future generations of learners who will learn from your resiliency and strength. You are living flames, be generous, and share that goodness with all you meet.

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The restoration of our Catholic Schools is fortified through the focused priority of personal and spiritual well-being for all students, educators and staff. The importance of a kind word and a friendly face has become benchmarks of affective education over the past year. If the pandemic has taught us one thing, it is that ***mental health matters***. May our schools continue to advocate for those who require resource, strengthen our resolve to be a place of support and encouragement for one another, and may we fiercely protect one another's inherent dignity through good self-care and practices of wellness.

In his encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis invites us to re-envision our world as a whole human family so as to learn from one another, be receptive of each other's gifts and to shape a future of interdependence. Our Catholic Schools are beautiful examples of what it means to live for and with one another. If we are to support the rebuilding of our world from this pandemic, it will be through our love and selfless charity towards our brothers and sisters in Christ. This does not stop at just our Catholic Christian family, but extends outwards to all races and nations, to all persons and living things, and emboldens us to look for ways to learn from our unique differences and lead with gentleness and mercy. We are called to be "one body in Christ" (1 Cor.12:12) and so it is with careful consideration that we must renew our commitment to stand in prayerful solidarity with the human family near and far.

I am thankful for all labourers in education, working tirelessly in the service of students and families. Priests of our diocese, pastoral workers, chaplaincy leaders, trustees, administrators, teachers, and parents have truly given their all to advocate for this great gift and nurture the goodness that is fostered within our classrooms each day.

May this celebration of Catholic Education Week be one of great joy where the laughter of young people, the witness of our Educators, and the prayerful support of the Diocesan family reminds us that God is rewriting all of our tomorrows – see, he is making all things new.

+Douglas Crosby, OMI

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