



The **Catholic Bishops**
of **Alberta** and the
Northwest Territories

Les **évêques catholiques**
de l'**Alberta** et des
Territoires du Nord-Ouest

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Catholic Education Week 2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In May each year we mark Catholic Education Week, which celebrates the important and vital role our publicly funded Catholic schools play in the province of Alberta by providing a faith-based education to more than 180,000 students. The Alberta Bishops' commitment to Catholic education remains steadfast. We engage actively with the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association (ACSTA), the Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta (CCSSA) and Grateful Advocates for Catholic Education (GrACE) to ensure the future of Catholic education in our province.

The theme for this year's Catholic Education Week is drawn from the Book of Isaiah. We offer it to our educators, students and families as the sure source of encouragement and strength as we respond to the challenges facing us all at this time in history.

Those who hope in the LORD shall renew their strength.
(Isaiah 40:31, NRSV.)

The pandemic continues to have a deep impact on every facet of our communal life and society, including the Catholic Education of our young people. During the shut-down of schools in the spring of last year, Catholic Education faced this challenge by providing virtual classrooms, which continued to engage students in their academic learning and religious faith instruction. When the schools reopened in the fall, many new practices were put in place to adhere to the health precautions and ensure student safety. In the midst of these current challenges, Catholic Education continues to accompany students and their families, always encouraging them to see that our strength for both the present and future springs from our hope in the Lord.

The *Pastoral Statement on the Impact of COVID-19 and the Call to Christian Renewal* we released last year identified the present moment as a “*time for bold creativity and life-giving transformation for all*” as we address the significant societal issues brought to light by the pandemic. It calls people of faith to chart a prophetic path of hope toward a more just society for the children of future generations.

“Specifically, we seek new ways to promote authentic human development and flourishing in the very way that we live, care for others, work, organize society and interact with one another. Moved by our faith in Christ and inspired by the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, we invite the Catholic community to join us in looking afresh at certain aspects of our life together in society, to discern and decide a course for true social, cultural and spiritual renewal.” - *Pastoral Statement on the Impact of COVID-19 and the Call to Christian Renewal*.

Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, proposes a similar renewal by rediscovering the value of human fraternity and recognizing ourselves as sisters and brothers, who are responsible for one another and called to stand by those who suffer.

“Education and upbringing, concern for others, a well-integrated view of life and spiritual growth: all these are essential for quality human relationships and for enabling society itself to react against injustices, aberrations and abuses of economic, technological, political and media power.” (*Fratelli Tutti*, No. 167)

Catholic Education endeavours to foster high academic achievement and provide students with personal and communal spiritual formation. It invites our young people to see each other and, indeed, all peoples of the world, as their sisters and brothers. This solidarity calls the students to respond to those in need both locally and globally. These good works help young people to seek the common good and to bring Christ’s love and hope to others, especially during this pandemic.

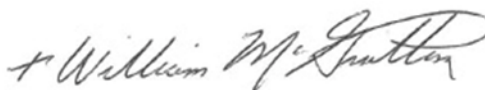
This year Catholic Education Week once again unites us virtually as one “educational family” and as a “single family of faith” through liturgical celebrations, Scripture reading, and prayer. Each day of the week will focus on one of the “Five Marks of Catholic Education”, while also drawing upon themes for the Year of St. Joseph announced by Pope Francis. Thursday, May 13th is World Catholic Education Day, on which the contemplative and consecrated religious women and men of our Dioceses will offer special prayers for the teachers, staff, students and their families facing the ongoing challenges of the pandemic. We invite all clergy and parishioners to unite their own prayers to this initiative.

May all of our efforts bring hope and renewed strength to everyone engaged in Catholic Education in this province. We gladly extend to our Catholic school communities our prayers and blessing for Catholic Education Week 2021. Yours in Christ,

Catholic Bishops of Alberta and NWT



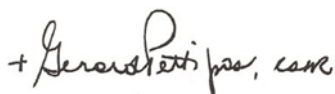
Most Reverend Richard W. Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton



Most Reverend William McGrattan
Bishop of Calgary



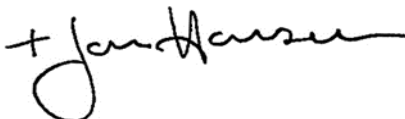
Most Reverend Paul Terrio
Bishop of St. Paul



Most Reverend Gerard Pettipas CSsR
Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan



Most Reverend David Motiuk
Bishop of the Ukrainian Eparchy of
Edmonton



Most Reverend Jon Hansen, CSsR
Bishop of Mackenzie-Fort Smith