



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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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Catholic Education Sunday is an annual event that celebrates the important and critical role which our Catholic schools play in the province of Alberta. Publicly funded Catholic education is a gift, which provides faith-based education to more than 180,000 students in Alberta. The Alberta Bishops' commitment to Catholic education is steadfast and we continue actively to work 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 Sunday is from the Book of Isaiah. In the context of our current pandemic, it offers us the prophet's words of solicitude, prophetic fulfillment, and hope in the face of challenge.

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 society, including the Catholic Education of our young people. During the shut-down of schools in the spring, 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 to ensure student safety. In the midst of these challenges, Catholic Education has been embracing the call for renewal and inviting students and their families to look to the future with hope.

On the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the Alberta Bishops released the *Pastoral Statement on the Impact of COVID-19 and the Call to Christian Renewal*. The Pastoral Statement

describes this as a “*time for bold creativity and life-giving transformation for all.*” Some significant societal issues, which were hidden by the distractions of pre-pandemic life, are now very evident. This calls people of Faith, and especially our Catholic educators, to chart a prophetic path in addressing these issues now and in the future.

“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*)

This call for renewal will be embraced by our young people through the role that Catholic education must play in strengthening authentic human development, which is essential for true social, cultural and spiritual renewal for the future of our society.

Pope Francis, in his encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, proposes such a 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)

Another example of this spirit of renewal can be found in recently beatified Carlos Acutis, a young man of our era. He lived the faith by devoting himself to the Eucharist and responding to this Grace in his life by caring for the poor, advocating for those living with physical or mental challenges, and using technology to further evangelization. Blessed Carlos Acutis has been called “a millennial saint.” His example can guide young people in our Catholic schools to learn about him and to be inspired by his active witness to the Catholic Social Teachings of our faith!

Catholic Education fosters high academic achievement and provides students with personal and communal spiritual formation. Catholic Education invites students to see each other and, indeed, the peoples of the world as their sisters and brothers. This fraternity calls the students to respond to those in need locally and globally. These good works help young people to seek the common good and to bring Christ’s love and hope to others.

May the efforts of everyone bring hope and renewed strength to all those committed to Catholic Education. In this time of pandemic, we extend to our Catholic school communities our prayers and blessing for the celebration of Catholic Education Sunday.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Catholic Bishops of Alberta and NWT



Most Reverend Richard W. Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton



Most Reverend William T. McGrattan
Bishop of Calgary



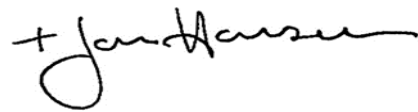
Most Reverend David Motiuk
Bishop of the Ukrainian Eparchy of Edmonton



Most Reverend Gerard Pettipas CSsR
Archbishop Grouard-McLennan



Most Reverend Paul Terrio
Bishop of St. Paul



Most Reverend Jon Hansen CSsR
Bishop of Mackenzie-Fort Smith