



BISHOP OF HAMILTON

MESSAGE FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION WEEK

The theme of this year's Catholic Education Week is ***"Nurturing Hope"***. We hear from the prophet Isaiah that *"those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will run and not grow weary."* (Isaiah 40:31) As Christian people, we are called to embody and share the virtue of hope.

Hope has been essential as we continue to grapple with the effects of pandemic life. It can be difficult to express hopefulness in the face of continued restrictions and isolation from all that we know as normal. Our world is making history each day as we learn new ways of being and doing that protect one another and encourage solidarity even while apart. We have sacrificed so much in the past year, and yet, we still choose to give more to one another and to God in joyful praise, looking towards a hopeful tomorrow.

In the Catholic Education community in the Diocese of Hamilton, hope is nurtured and grown. From kindergarten to university, our Catholic Schools not only prioritize the academic vitality of students, but they also foster real and transformative relationships with Christ who is the source of our hope.

Students have been emboldened by hope and have offered strength and consolation to others in these dark days. Educators have gone above and beyond cultivating vibrant learning environments in times where we often felt limited. Students have encountered God in outdoor classrooms, and felt accompanied in both virtual and in-person classroom settings. Our schools have nurtured families and the domestic Church, finding new and creative ways to foster encounters with the living Lord. In spite of the limits, we have soared above despair, giving thanks in all things, celebrating our triumphs and outreach.

Throughout the pandemic, the Catholic Schools gave back to the community by producing and donating thousands of 3D printed face shields to front line workers. They raised funds for under-stocked social service agencies, and made countless sacrifices out of love for the vulnerable, even without knowing their names or faces.

Students in our Catholic Schools have discovered ways to dialogue about what it means to bring hope to other people and to pursue hope for our environment. Through our Catholic Social Teaching, young people acknowledge the priority of sustainable living, and care for the Earth. Our schools are environments where young people can learn, understand and examine the impact they and their communities have on our common home.

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Our schools have prioritized the compassionate care for one another during challenging times by offering mental health supports and resources for students and staff. They have advocated for the importance of mental health and reminded us that no one is alone no matter how much they may be struggling.

The Catholic Education Community has sustained the weary, comforted the fearful and shared with our world the bounty of God's love.

These moments have been transformative. The challenges we have faced this past year have afforded us the opportunity to learn how to creatively "lean in" and live the Gospel of hope. I am grateful to the priests of the diocese, pastoral workers, chaplaincy leaders, trustees, administrators, teachers, parents and all involved in the work of Catholic Education and for their leadership in our common mission.

Our hope gives us the strength we need to rise to the occasion, to shine the heart of Christ upon the world and to bring about a brighter tomorrow. Our efforts commit us to live for one another and now, more than ever, to put the needs of our brothers and sisters before our own. May we never return to the old "normal", but rather, rewrite the ways and means that we embody hope in our Catholic Learning Communities, and may this commitment strengthen our play, our learning and our prayer.

God bless you all!

(Most Rev.) Douglas Crosby, O.M.I.
Bishop of Hamilton
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