

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF SASKATCHEWAN



Most Rev. Donald Bolen
Archdiocese of Regina



Most Rev. Bryan Bayda, CSsR
Eparchy of Saskatoon



Most Rev. Murray Chatlain
Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas



Most Rev. Mark Hagemoen
Diocese of Saskatoon



Most Rev. Albert Thévenot
Diocese of Prince Albert

Catholic Education Week May 17-24, 2020

Greetings sisters and brothers in Christ,

As the Catholic Bishops of Saskatchewan, we invite you to join us in joy and thanksgiving as we recognize the gift and the impact of Catholic education, marking World Catholic Education Day May 21, 2020 and celebrating Catholic Education Week in our province from May 17 to May 24.

This year's celebration of World Catholic Education Day will happen in most unusual circumstances, as educators and students around the globe are affected by the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has obliged our school systems to take steps in closing schools and in giving online formation to our students. This is certainly not the normal environment for our children, their families, and our educators. Our schools and families have had to be creative in finding new ways in educating children and youth, often utilizing an online approach. Even during this new way of teaching, it is important that the focus of teaching the Catholic faith is not neglected, but continues along with other subjects of the curriculum.

In conjunction with this, our homes have become the Catholic school environment. Since the home is also the first place where Catholic education is found, our families are challenged to permeate the teaching of the faith in all they do, in life and in lessons, both during this time while schools are closed, and beyond.

We know how disappointed many high school students must have been to have learned that no official graduation will be happening this year to celebrate their time and accomplishments of secondary education. Our congratulations and prayers go out to these students. Our prayer and our hope is that their education has sown in their hearts the spark and gift of the Good News.

We give thanks for the recent unanimous decision of the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal in the "Theodore case." The decision accepts the role and place of the Catholic education system in our province, and affirms the right of parents to choose Catholic education no matter what the reason. Although it is still possible the Supreme Court of Canada will consider an appeal of the decision, the recent provincial court ruling is a great sign of hope for all families who choose the Catholic education system, which we believe is the best faith environment for children, for our province, and for our world. Hope is on the horizon.

It is both fitting and profound that the theme of Catholic Education Week this year is **"Igniting Hope!"** In every time and season, the hope perennially ignited by Catholic education is grounded in the **"reason for the hope in us"** (1 Peter 3:15) – the Good News of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is a hope needed more than ever in our lives and in our world during these times of COVID-19 challenge, suffering and difficulty.

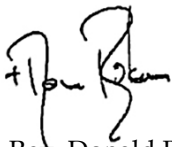
Catholic education has always focused on the needs of students as they face our world of today. We are to be for them a beacon of this Light of Christ that they need as they journey through their life, accompanying and transcending lectures and bookwork. When negative forces and attitudes are found in our schools and students, they must be dealt with in a way that will offer tools and new avenues to overcome them, promoting the dignity of all. We must help our students understand that violence is never the answer, that our faith wants us to change our weapons into instruments of peace, bringing a Christian outlook to our world. We must respect the dignity and creed of all nations and promote in our schools that we are called to be one together in Christ.

As we celebrate Catholic Education Week, we are reminded that our faith opens horizons that are beyond us. Because we carry a beacon of hope in our hearts, we share that hope with the world around us, striving to ignite hope in the hearts of all. Our youth have much to offer and we must give them the supportive and loving forum on which they may present their gifts for the world.

Please join us in giving thanks to God for the gift of Catholic education and its unique contribution in our province and our communities. We pray as well for the continuing existence and protection of publicly-funded Catholic education in Saskatchewan, and for hope and perseverance for educators, students and families who are navigating the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

May Catholic education continue to model Christ as the center of the way of life, and may it continue so we can reach out to all those in need.

Yours in Christ,



Most Rev. Donald Bolen
Archbishop of Regina



Most Rev. Bryan Bayda
Ukrainian Eparchial Bishop of Saskatoon



Most Rev. Murray Chatlain
Archbishop of Keewatin-Le Pas



Most Rev. Mark Hagemoen
Bishop of Saskatoon



Most Rev. Albert Thevenot
Bishop of Prince Albert