



BISHOP OF HAMILTON

Message for Catholic Education Week *Living as Joyful Disciples*

The theme of this year's Catholic Education Week *Living as Joyful Disciples* is both a challenge to us as well as an acknowledgment of the good things already happening in our lives as individuals and as Catholic school communities.

Over the course of this week of celebration of publicly funded Catholic Education in Ontario, we can look back on another year of sharing the Good News, another year of action for justice and peace, and another year of working together as a community of faith. While we reflect on the great gifts and achievements of the past year, we must always remember that nothing is accomplished on our own. We love knowing God first loved us. We love one another, as Christ loved us. That is why in this week we are reminded that we must remain rooted in prayer; prayer that first and foremost gives thanks to God for his great goodness. Prayer helps us to listen so that we may know and do his will. Think of the ways you pray. Little prayers as you wake up in the morning. Prayers at home with your family. The prayers that begin the school day and prayers before meals. Prayers together in our classrooms and meeting rooms. The Mass, the 'great prayer of the Church', where we gather together as the body of Christ. Quiet prayers at the end of the day as we go to sleep. If we are rooted in prayer, it means prayer is where we begin and end. It is where our life and our growth comes from. It keeps us steady and focused.

As we strive to remain rooted in prayer, we see that this becomes the source of our energy to do the will of God – to bring justice, to relieve suffering, to be bearers of hope, to spread the Good News.

Young people, this is your calling and your great strength. You have so much good energy to share. Remember that your energy is the energy of God's Spirit, drawing you and guiding you. Continue to use your gifts for the good of the Church and the good of the world.

To every adult who is committed to supporting these young people, parents, teachers, staff, administrators, and trustees, I urge you to be witnesses by living your lives as joyful disciples. Find strength and energy in a renewed life of prayer. Dive deep into God's word and rediscover your love for the Gospel so that you may share the Good News with enthusiasm. Continue to encourage acts of justice and mercy to the needy and vulnerable in our neighbourhoods and around the world. Continue to promote community so that everyone in our Catholic schools can understand that their growth in faith is a shared journey.

I encourage the priests of the Diocese of Hamilton, particularly those involved in ministry to and with our Catholic schools, to help these communities experience a true encounter with Christ through his Church. Share with them your joyful discipleship so that they may learn from your example.

This year, students from two of our Catholic schools took on a remarkable project of creating a Virtual Tour of the Cathedral Basilica of Christ the King. They wanted to make a gift to all the young people of our diocese to get to know this beautiful Cathedral – the mother Church of our diocese. It is a gift of joyful disciples! This is creativity and energy and generosity that I know exists in every one of our over 200 schools in this diocese - trips abroad, walks with Christ, defense of the unborn, feeding the hungry, kind words and great deeds in our own cities and towns. I encourage you to celebrate our achievements and to recall whose goodness we see reflected in these good works. Always Christ. It is the light of Christ illuminating our imaginations and our works. Because we want to follow him, we do everything we can, as individuals and as communities, to stay rooted in prayer, to share the Good News and to live generously as joyful disciples.

May our publicly funded Catholic Schools remain under the protection of the most perfect and most joy-filled disciple, Mary, Mother of God, Mother of Jesus, and our Mother.

+Douglas Crosby, OMI

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Bishop of Hamilton

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