



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

August 2026

Dear parents and families,

As a new school year begins, I offer my prayers and good wishes to all the students, families, teachers and staff of our Catholic schools. A new school year brings new opportunities, and reminds us of an essential truth: that education and formation of our children is a shared mission.

The Home

The *Catechism* describes the Christian family as the domestic Church and identifies parents as the first heralds of the faith to their children. The Catholic Church recognizes the family as the first setting in which children encounter God's love and learn, through word and example, how to pray, forgive, serve and live with gratitude. The Code of Canon Law therefore affirms schools as "the principal assistance to parents in fulfilling the function of education," while calling parents and teachers to work in close collaboration.

The distinctive character of a Catholic school lies in its integration of faith, culture and life, with Jesus Christ at the heart of its educational mission. The Gospel animates its entire life through which faith illuminates our understanding of the world, human life and the dignity of every human person. As the Second Vatican Council teaches, the Catholic school creates "a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity" and helps students understand human culture and life in the light of faith.

The whole school community—students, parents, teachers, trustees, staff and administrators—shares responsibility for carrying out the Catholic educational mission. Each person contributes according to his or her charism, and all are called to authentically give witness to the school's Catholic identity.

One Mission

The home, school, parish and diocese each has a distinct vocation and responsibility, yet all participate in the one mission entrusted by Jesus Christ to his Church.

Parents have the first responsibility for their children's education. Schools support families through teaching, formation and accompaniment. Parishes provide a community in which the

Word of God is proclaimed, the Eucharist is celebrated and Christian life is nourished. The diocesan Church, under the care of the bishop, serves the unity and Catholic identity of this mission.

The Church has a particular duty and right to educate because Christ has entrusted her with the mission of assisting people to reach the fullness of Christian life. This mission is carried out through many relationships. As Pope Leo XIV has emphasized, Catholic education is not merely the transfer of information; it is a form of evangelization expressed through relationships, culture and the life of the educational community.

For this reason, this co-responsibility among families, schools, parishes, and the diocese is essential. The Church's teaching on Catholic education calls the Catholic school to practice the "grammar of dialogue" as a way of relating to others that combines fidelity to Catholic identity with respect for the dignity and uniqueness of each person. This spirit of dialogue strengthens the Catholic identity of our schools. It invites us to listen carefully, speak truthfully and charitably, and work together for the good of every student while remaining firmly rooted in Jesus Christ and the teaching of his Church.

As Archbishop, I have a responsibility within this shared ecclesial mission. I am grateful for the opportunity to accompany families, students, educators, pastors and parish communities as we seek to strengthen the bonds between home, school and parish and to safeguard the Catholic identity of our schools.

The work we are doing with the Bishop's Assurance provides an important opportunity to deepen this shared responsibility through authentic engagement, ongoing dialogue and a commitment to continuous improvement. Together, we seek to deepen the relationship between our Catholic schools and the life and mission of the Church, fostering a shared commitment to forming disciples of Jesus Christ and bearing faithful witness to the Gospel. At the heart of this work is a desire to strengthen the bond between our Catholic schools and the life and mission of the Church, so that together we may more fully form disciples of Jesus Christ and bear faithful witness to the Gospel.

Together in Mission

This desire for greater unity and shared purpose finds a natural expression in synodality—the Church's call to walk together in communion, participation and mission. The Synod reminds us that the formation of missionary disciples involves many people whom God places along

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the journey of a young person. This is a beautiful image for Catholic education. We have different vocations and responsibilities. Together we share in the one mission of Jesus Christ.

This is what the Synod means by “walking together”: listening to one another, recognizing the gifts God has given each person, and accompanying our young people so that they may encounter Jesus Christ, grow in relationship with him, discover their gifts and place them at the service of others.

A Word of Gratitude

To parents and guardians: thank you for forming your children each day through prayer, patience, sacrifice and love. As the Catechism reminds us, your example remains one of the most powerful ways in which children learn to know and follow Christ.

To teachers, administrators, trustees and school staff: thank you for your generous service. Your witness and dedication are essential to the mission of Catholic education. The Second Vatican Council reminds teachers that the goals of the Catholic school depend greatly upon them. They are called to unite sound knowledge and effective pedagogy with charity, an apostolic spirit and a living witness to Christ.

To Clergy and parish communities: thank you for welcoming families and helping young people encounter Christ in the life of the Church.

To our students: know that you are deeply loved, that your lives have God-given purpose, and that the gifts you have received are meant to be shared generously in service of others and for the good of the world.

As this school year begins, may our homes become places of prayer and mercy, our schools communities of truth and charity, and our parishes homes where every young person knows that they belong.

May the Lord bless our students, families, educators and parish communities throughout the school year ahead.

Sincerely in Christ,



✠ Most Rev. Stephen A. Hero
Archbishop of Edmonton