



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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Catholic Education Sunday 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

"Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." (*Phil 4:8*). This teaching from St. Paul captures well the heart of Catholic education. Woven throughout, and uniting, the rich variety of activities that unfold daily in our schools is the mission to "think about these things." Therefore, it is incumbent upon everyone involved in the ministry of Catholic education to ensure that by means of our curriculum content, extra-curricular activity, and Christian witness, our students are immersed in the true, the good, and the beautiful and helped to ponder them deeply in the light of our Catholic faith.

Truth

In his message for World Communications Day earlier this year, Pope Francis observed: "The early Christians compared the human mind to a constantly grinding millstone; it is up to the miller to determine what it will grind: good wheat or worthless weeds. Our minds are always "grinding", but it is up to us to choose what to feed them (cf. SAINT JOHN CASSIAN, *Epistle to Leontius*)." The human mind seeks naturally to know what is true. Truth is a person, Jesus Christ, who reveals Himself as "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (*John 14:6*). In Catholic education we feed the minds of our beloved students with truth by facilitating their encounter with the Truth, who is Jesus.

Goodness

"God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good." (*Genesis 1:31*) Catholic education seeks to help our students be aware of their own inherent goodness as children made in the image and likeness of God. Modern communications media, with its many illusory messages about what is "good," can distract our students away from this awareness. By placing before them the Word of God, traditional devotionals and the celebration of the sacraments,

Catholic education offers our students the opportunity to be silent and hear the voice of God summoning them to holiness and assuring them they are His beloved.

Beauty

By helping our students look upon reality through the lens of divine revelation, we lead them to see the beautiful in what a purely human gaze often perceives as unattractive, namely, in the faces of persons who are poor, sick, suffering and alone. Catholic education strives to make a difference in the lives of individuals and in the wider community by challenging students to recognize the inherent beauty and worth of every person, and to serve others, especially the poor, with compassion and justice. By embracing the call to serve, the active response of our students to anyone in need holds strong transformative potential for a world seeking justice, peace and unity.

On Catholic Education Sunday, we give thanks to God for this beautiful ministry of the Church. By the help of His grace, may we enable our students to ponder the true, good and beautiful, and thus come to realize how God is present and at work in the world and in every moment of their lives, leading them to salvation.

Catholic Bishops of Alberta and NWT

Most Reverend Richard W. Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton

Most Reverend Gregory J. Bittman
Auxiliary Bishop of Edmonton

Most Reverend David Motiuk
Bishop of the Ukrainian Eparchy of Edmonton

Most Reverend Paul Terrio
Bishop of St. Paul

Most Reverend William McGrattan
Bishop of Calgary

Most Reverend Gerard Pettipas CSsR
Archbishop Grouard-McLennan

Most Reverend Mark Hagemoen
Bishop of Mackenzie-Fort Smith

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