



**8421 - 101 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta Canada T6A 0L1
Tel. (780) 469-1010 Fax (780) 465-3003**

October 15, 2004

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

On November 7, we invite all parents, educators and members of the parish communities in Alberta and the Northwest Territories to celebrate Catholic Education Sunday. This annual event is a time when we can observe the joys and successes of Catholic education and reflect on ways that we can be part of enhancing this gift of a faith-based education to our children. This year, we applaud the strong contributions and collaborative partnerships between the parents and guardians of children in our faith communities, educators and staff in our schools, and the religious and lay men and women in our parish communities.

Catholic education is a unique and valuable dimension of the education system because it encompasses the whole person—academic, aesthetic, physical and most significantly, spiritual. Catholic education exists in a publicly funded capacity because our society recognizes the added value of a multi-dimensional education system where parents have the freedom to choose a faith-based education for their children.

Catholic schools anticipate that their graduates will continue their life journey as compassionate human beings, responsible and contributing members of society, and as evangelizers of the teachings of Jesus Christ. Therefore, our continued focus for Catholic education, as reflected in this year's theme, must constantly be "*Permeating Faith: Forming Children.*"

We all have a responsibility in the faith formation of the children in our communities. As bishops, we work to ensure that the Catholic schools in our dioceses are faithful to the teachings of Jesus Christ. We want children to come to know, love and serve God throughout their lives. It is equally our responsibility, as it is those in the school, parish and home, to nourish and preserve the faith of our students.

Parents are the first and lifelong educators of their children. They are the strongest and most vocal advocates in the formation of their children. As the primary educators of their children, it is essential that parents take their own faith formation as seriously as they take that of their children. We encourage parents to become involved in programs hosted by their schools and parishes to develop their understanding of their faith so that they can better assist their children on this spiritual journey.

We encourage every staff member in Catholic education to be mentors of faith in their schools. Educators and school staff must build a school environment where Christ walks the hallways and greets each child with compassion and understanding. Faith must be a fundamental part of the curriculum, incorporated in every thing a student hears and reads, whether that be in a fine arts or science class. Through this permeation of faith in our schools, our hope is that each child will gain a deep and reverent understanding of the principles of the Catholic faith, and thereby practicing this faith simply becomes second nature.

Many of our Catholic schools were built and taught by religious men and women. We are grateful for the continuing support and guidance of the clergy and religious in Catholic education. It is through their encouragement and presence that our schools receive a first-hand look at the work and love of Christ. The religious and lay men and women in our parishes are living examples of the teachings of Christ. Through their actions and words, children are able to recognize the faith that is lived everyday.

Faith is incorporated in every niche of our lives, whether we are parents, educators, community members or clergy. Together, we must provide opportunities for our children to live this faith as we do. These values must be presented to our children in their schools and parishes so that they can become an extension of the home.

It is the responsibility of each and every one of us to ensure that our children receive the best possible Catholic education, enabling them to become contributing members of the Church and society in accordance with God's will. We must continue to support each other in the spiritual development of our children, so that faith is not an "add-on" in life, but an intrinsic part of their daily lives. Our children are an integral part of our future. Faith must be an integral part of their lives and Catholic education is the tool by which we are examples of Christ's hands and feet in our schools, parishes and homes.

+ Thomas Collins

Thomas Collins
Archbishop of Edmonton



Frederick Henry
Bishop of Calgary

+ Arthé Guimond


Arthé Guimond
Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan



Lawrence Huculak, OSBM
Eparch of Edmonton

Denis Croteau OMI

Denis Croteau, OMI
Bishop of Mackenzie-Fort Smith



Luc Bouchard
Bishop of St. Paul