



The **Catholic Bishops**
of **Alberta** and the
Northwest Territories

Les évêques catholiques
de l'**Alberta** et des
Territoires du Nord-Ouest

8401 - 101 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, T6A 0L1 Tel. (780) 469-1010 Fax. (780) 465-3030

2012 Catholic Education Sunday - Year of Faith: Embracing Evangelization

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Pope Benedict XVI has declared 2012-2013 to be the Year of Faith. On this 2012 Catholic Education Sunday we embrace this grace-filled initiative as an opportunity to be renewed in faith and sent forth in joy to evangelize our school communities with the truth and beauty of the Gospel.

Our Catholic schools offer a daily opportunity for staff and students to encounter Jesus Christ and respond to him with faith. This response is an assent of both the heart and mind to the person and message of our Lord, and gives rise to a real and abiding hope. Fostering this personal and life-giving relationship with Christ is the heart of Catholic education.

The love of Christ impels us to share our joy with others. To Catholic trustees, administrators and, especially, teachers, has been entrusted the particular responsibility of evangelizing our students. This means walking with our students on their journey of faith, and encouraging them at all times to turn to the Lord, especially as he is present in the celebration of the Eucharist. Indispensable is our own witness. Our students must recognize from the way we live that we ourselves have come to know and believe in Jesus Christ.

Since faith must be the air we breathe in our Catholic schools, let us enter into the Year of Faith with enthusiasm. May our hearts be open to a new conversion to Christ. May our minds be ready to receive his teachings as handed on in the Church. May our schools thus become communities of living faith, in which Jesus Christ, the world's only hope, is encountered, loved and followed.

A special message for Students on Catholic Education Sunday

Dear Students,

When you hear the word “faith” what does it bring to mind? The dictionary defines “faith” as complete trust, unquestioning confidence. This might seem hard to do. It is especially challenging when we are asked to stand firm in our beliefs before others who do not share them. In reality, though, faith is not difficult if we understand it properly. It means placing our total

confidence in Jesus, who loves us more than we can imagine and is always near. By the gift to us of the Holy Spirit, he enables us to believe, and draw life, courage and joy from our faith in him.

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, has declared a special Year of Faith. In this time he is asking us to grow in our knowledge of the faith, especially through study of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. In particular, he invites us to grow in our friendship with Jesus and to find new ways to tell others about our relationship with him.

How do we let others know about our friendship with Jesus? Both words and actions are necessary. It could happen simply by reaching out to someone in the hallway you have never spoken to before. It might mean sharing your lunch. Maybe it means putting away your cellphone and iPod and having a technology-free, honest conversation with your friends. It might mean choosing not to post a comment or a photo on Facebook. Or it might mean offering help to someone who was not expecting it. Doing such things will help to show others the wonderful blessings of Christ. At the same time we should also be prepared to talk to our friends and family about Jesus and to spread his message in the lives of others. Yes, this takes courage, but Jesus makes us strong in both faith and courage when we accept his plans for us and choose to walk with him.

We encourage you to enter fully into the Year of Faith. Ask Jesus to deepen your friendship with him and strengthen your faith. Our Catholic schools exist to help you know, love and follow Jesus. Do not hesitate to call upon your priests and teachers for help in your journey of faith. Life with Jesus is beautiful and we are happy to share that with you.



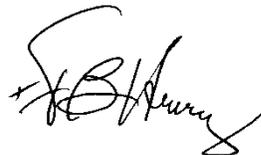
Most Reverend Richard W. Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton



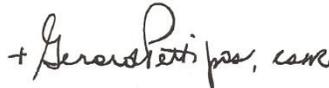
Most Reverend Gregory J. Bittman
Auxiliary Bishop of Edmonton



Most Reverend David Motiuk
Bishop of the Ukrainian Eparchy of Edmonton



Most Reverend Frederick Henry
Bishop of Calgary



Most Reverend Gerard Pettipas CSsR
Archbishop Grouard-McLennan



Most Reverend Murray Chatlain
Bishop of Mackenzie-Fort Smith