



CATHOLIC EDUCATION WEEK 2021

Celebrating and Worshipping



October 2021

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Each year at this time, we celebrate Catholic Education Week. During this week we:

- celebrate the God-given talents and achievements of our young people;
- acknowledge the hard work and faith witness of the staff in our schools;
- mark the unique contribution that Catholic Education makes to our families, our parishes and to wider Scottish society; and reflect on the mission of the Catholic school for the future.

This year, the theme of Catholic Education Week is *Celebrating and Worshipping*. This theme reflects the vision and aim of Catholic education that Catholic schools, as believing communities which celebrate faith in Jesus through prayer and liturgy, invite all to participate and to develop their spiritual capacities. In doing this, they strengthen the bonds with their local diocese and parish communities, which can enhance the school's own efforts with pastoral support and sacramental ministry provided by local clergy.

Our Catholic schools are communities where Jesus is the 'driving force' behind the school's planning and actions. Pope Francis has said that "you cannot speak of Catholic education without speaking about humanity, because the Catholic identity is precisely that God became man". Catholic schools in Scotland are inclusive communities which welcome, value, affirm and support *all* pupils, parents and staff to fulfil the potential of their God-given talents, with Jesus Christ as our model, and his teachings as our sure foundation. As such, they naturally become communities of celebration and worship, as we recognise and offer thanks for the many gifts given to us as members of God's family.

For celebration and worship is such a part of what we do and of who we are. For all of us, some of our happiest, most poignant and most beautiful memories are linked to times when we have joined with others in celebration and worship; no doubt, we hope to make many more such memories.

In the 4th Common Preface for weekday Mass, we find these beautiful words:

*It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation.
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.
For, although you have no need of our praise,
yet our thanksgiving is itself your gift,
since our praises add nothing to your greatness
but profit us for salvation,
through Christ our Lord.*

There is never a wrong time to turn to God in prayer and worship. There is never a wrong time to celebrate his unfailing love for us. Indeed, in so doing, we strengthen our relationship with our Father and with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and we realise our humanity. We are made to know, to love and to serve Him; it is here that we find our purpose, and our schools – pupils and staff - grow and thrive through joining together in celebration and worship.

This is why the prayer and sacramental life of our schools is absolutely central to who we are and to how we grow as a community. In particular, it is in the celebration of the Eucharist, and in Eucharistic Adoration, that we find a special and precious way to pray and worship. Time spent in the true presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament reminds us, in the words of Pope Francis, that “life's greatness does not consist in having, but in loving.” This is a vital message for our young people, and it underlines the importance of home, school and parish working together with a common vision. Learning to pray is at the heart of a Catholic Education.

I encourage you then to give thanks for Catholic Education and to pray for our schools, just as they pray for us. Let us continue to be a people who, united in Christ and moved by the Holy Spirit, turn naturally to the Father in celebration and worship.

Yours devotedly in Christ,

+ Hugh Gilbert OSG

Acting Bishop President for Catholic Education