



Renewing The Promise

**A Pastoral Letter
for Catholic Education**

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our Catholic schools offer an extraordinary contribution to the social and environmental fabric of our society and world. In partnership with parents, who bear the primary responsibility for the education of their children, all those who work in Catholic education are called upon to reflect, in a faithful and discerning fashion, God’s presence in this world.

As we seek to renew the great promise of Catholic education, we are reminded that we bring particular gifts and charisms that are responsive to the signs of our times. Those who worked tirelessly to establish Catholic education in Ontario nearly two hundred years ago could not have imagined our current context, with both its challenges and opportunities: accessibility to a fully funded Catholic system; the presence of well-educated Catholic laity in Catholic schools; the complexity of strengths and needs presented by a rich diversity of students; the presence of well-developed Catholic curriculum; the passionate commitment to social justice and stewardship of the environment of so many students and educators; the pressures of a culture that does not celebrate life the way we do; the omnipresence of social media; a culture that distrusts religion and religious insight; the serious ethical challenges of our time; and the social and economic pressures on families, parishes and school communities.

Your Catholic Bishops have joined with members of the Catholic community from across Ontario in reflection and discernment on the past, present, and future of Catholic education. We are grateful to and rely on all the Catholic partners who are an integral part of the Catholic education community of Ontario, and appreciative of those who offered their perspectives, experiences and insights as part of the province-wide consultation. Your prayerful reflection and valuable input have assisted us in writing this pastoral letter ***“Renewing the Promise.”***



Young people today are buffeted in every direction by loud and competing claims upon their attention and allegiance. From around the world, they hear daily messages of conflict and hostility, of greed and injustice, of poverty and despair. Amidst this social turmoil, young people are eager to find solid and enduring values which can give meaning and purpose to their lives. They are searching for a firm place – a high ground – on which to stand. They seek a sense of direction, a goal which will give meaning and purpose to their lives.”
– Pope Saint John Paul II (St. John’s Basilica, Newfoundland)

Catholic schools have a unique opportunity to show young people the way to that high ground; to accompany students in the search for truth; to foster in them a thirst for justice and an appreciation of the goodness of God, leading them patiently and lovingly in their journey of faith. Young people are hungry today for truth and justice because they are hungry for God. To respond to that hunger is the highest calling of the Christian educator.

We must seek to listen with faith and humility as we ask the questions: How is the Spirit calling us to respond individually and communally to our present context? Drawing from our Catholic faith and tradition, how can we respond creatively to the challenges and opportunities we face today?

It seems natural to ask the question, what is the promise that we are called to renew? In the Old Testament, we are given the promise of God’s enduring and unconditional love. In the New Testament we are reminded of God’s love for us, and Jesus’ promise that he will be with us always, to the end of the age. Pope Benedict explains it in this way. “There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by an encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know Him and to speak to others of our friendship with Him.”¹ Within the context of Catholic education, the promise is that this true encounter with Jesus can and does take place, each and every day, within our Catholic schools. Together, we commit to renew that promise as we work together to strengthen our Catholic schools as communities that exemplify, in word and in deed, the Good News of Jesus Christ.

We find a memorable example of this encounter in the Gospel account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24,13-35).

The Road to Emmaus

On the day of our Lord's Resurrection, two disciples are leaving Jerusalem travelling to Emmaus. How are they to interpret what they have experienced over the previous three days? Along the road, they encounter Jesus; however, they do not recognize him. He initiates a conversation by asking them what they were talking about. This allows them to share their sadness and confusion. Jesus is quite direct in his response to these disciples, "Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe..." Jesus offers to accompany them on their journey. They invite Jesus to stay with them for a meal. As they gather together around the table, it is in the "breaking of the bread" that their eyes are opened and they recognize him. After he vanishes from their sight, they say to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us on the road, when he was opening the scriptures to us?" On fire with the love of God, they return to Jerusalem to share the Good News with the other disciples.²

Jesus encounters and accompanies the disciples in this Gospel story. We are reminded that He is always present in our lives. Walking alongside the disciples, Jesus engages them in dialogue and in teaching, and in doing so, nurtures their relationship. Jesus restores the joy of believing in the hearts of these disciples by revealing himself in the breaking of the bread and through his enduring presence, friendship, and unconditional love. Our Christ-centred Catholic schools have the ability to offer the same experience of inviting joyful discipleship for staff, students, and families.

A Community That Accompanies

While walking with the disciples on the road, Jesus is able to share the story of our faith with them. Hearing the truth was a transformational experience. As Jesus journeys with the disciples, he “interprets to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.”³ He helps them to understand the meaning of salvation as revealed in the paschal mystery — the Passion, Death and Resurrection.

This is what Pope Francis means when he speaks about the *art of accompaniment*. It is about taking

the time to walk alongside one another, to listen and to teach, and in so doing, to transform. Our Catholic schools do this on a daily basis as they model the Emmaus experience. Staff practise the *art of accompaniment* by helping students realize that their own unique story is given greater meaning and purpose in knowing and living the story we share in Christ.

Our Christian faith is about an encounter with God; it is an incredible love story that inspires hope and joy.



God loved us into existence and never stops loving; even though we may sometimes reject that love, God never gives up on us. We see this in our salvation history as people encountered the love and mercy of God. It reached a decisive moment when God, who so loved the world, gave us his only Son so that we might have eternal life.⁴

In a profound act of selfless love Jesus suffered and died on the cross for our salvation. Three days later he rose from the dead as he promised. When Jesus ascended to the Father, he did not abandon us. Instead, he reminded us of the promise that he will be with us always, to the end of the age. Just prior to his ascension to the Father, the Risen Lord commissioned his disciples to share the Good News to all the corners of the earth, ensuring that the relationship would endure until he comes again.

Like every good teacher Jesus gave us a task and then ensured that we would have the needed support to complete it. This divine assistance was given to us at Pentecost when the Church received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus established the Church to be missionary and we share in that mission through the gift of baptism. In this sacrament, we are given the great commission to go forth, infused with the divine virtues of faith, hope and love, and make disciples by witnessing to Christ and his Gospel.

This missionary spirit is awakened in the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Once they experience their journey with the Lord, they return to Jerusalem in haste. Just as they share their joyous experience with all those whom they encounter, we are called to do the same.

Catholic schools are communities of accompaniment where the story of our salvation is known and shared, offering the encouragement that comes from knowing that Jesus walks with us. In addition to being places of teaching and learning, Catholic schools live the Emmaus experience as they witness to the Risen Lord. It is important to recognize that people are at different stages on that journey. Jesus provides the model for how our schools and parish communities need to accompany students and families with great respect, patience and love, inviting all to deepen their understanding of Christ and his Church.

A Community That Builds Relationships

For over two thousand years the Church has faithfully followed the command of Jesus to make disciples of all nations by baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Over the years this has also included strengthening the faith of those who are already baptized. Pope St. John Paul II was the first to use the term, 'New Evangelization' to describe the pastoral efforts to strengthen those who have lost a sense of faith or no longer consider themselves to be members of the Church. In these situations, what is needed is a new evangelization or a re-evangelization.⁵

For centuries the Church's evangelization efforts focused primarily on those who did not know Christ; the 'New Evangelization' focuses on those who have heard the Gospel and think they know it but it has not taken much effect in their lives. The 'New Evangelization' calls each one of us to deepen our own faith, believe in the Gospel message, and go forth to proclaim the Gospel, in what we say, and in what we do.

Catholic schools are places where the 'New Evangelization' can take root by inviting students and their families into a deeper relationship with Christ. The experience of community within the school can gently fan the embers until they burst into a flame of faith.

Catholic school communities provide many opportunities for students and staff to know, love and serve the Lord. People often comment that when they enter a Catholic school they feel a special presence. This does not come from the building or even the religious symbols that are an important witness to our faith. The presence comes from Christ who is proclaimed by word and example, and is evidenced in the way people care for one another — “see how they love one another.” Catholic schools witness to Christ and by doing so help to reveal Him to others.

The cooperation that exists between the home, parish, and school is an integral part of Catholic education. The school can play a significant role in facilitating a meaningful relationship between the parish and home. This is an important partnership because it helps parishes to connect with families, not only for sacramental preparation, but more importantly, for Sunday worship. Through the school, there are also other opportunities to draw parents and families into the life of the parish.

The work of Catholic schools involves initiating, facilitating and maintaining trusting relationships with and among the Catholic educational partners. A sense of respect for the unique expertise and strengths of each and generous cooperation that acknowledges and celebrates the accomplishments of all is essential to develop the mutual trust that nurtures effective working relationships. The analogy of St. Paul is helpful; there is one body, but many parts. They need one another and must work together in harmony, “that there be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another.”⁶ Just as all the parts must work together to ensure a healthy body, so too must all the educational partners collaborate and rely upon one another in order to ensure that Catholic education remains healthy and strong.

A Community That Encourages Engagement and Instils Hope

The disciples on the road to Emmaus are overwhelmed by grief. Their expectations for the future have been dashed and in the face of uncertainty and danger they are withdrawing from their community and its challenges. In his encounter with them on the road, Jesus provides them with hope for the future where none seemed possible. In breaking open the story of salvation history, and his own role within it, Jesus gives them understanding where there only seemed to be meaningless suffering. Ultimately, through this loving encounter, Jesus evokes within them a strength and courage not to run away, but to go back into difficult circumstances with a passion to share with others the Good News they have received. The result is a deep re-engagement with their community and with the world, with all of its challenges and opportunities.

The story of Emmaus recounts a very human experience. The disappointment and despair experienced by the two disciples on the road is not unlike the challenges frequently faced by young people today. The message is clear;

hope, courage and resolve can be found through a loving encounter with Jesus.

Catholic education forms communities of faith that help students experience the love of God. The more our students see and understand themselves as the beloved children of God, the more they will want to love God with all their hearts, minds, and souls. This in turn moves them to love of neighbour which bears witness to justice and charity. Jesus says, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”⁷ The more we love God, the more we love our neighbour and the more we engage in the community.

The Christ-centred mission of each school, by its very nature, contains a call to service in the greater community. Catholic schools form disciples with a social conscience who put their faith into action. Students and staff help to promote engagement with the local and global community through their many acts of charity and by their witness to social justice and environmental stewardship.

Pope Francis challenges us to live the Gospel by caring for the poor, working to end injustice and by promoting peace and stewarding the environment. In a world mesmerized by materialism, with a declining respect for life, Pope Francis calls us to the transcendence of divine love. In speaking about the poor, he tells us “the seriousness with which the ‘beloved disciples’ hand down Jesus’ command (to love) to our own day is made even more clear by the contrast between empty words so frequently on our lips and the concrete deeds against which we are called to measure ourselves. Love has no alibi. Whenever we set out to love as Jesus loved, we have to look to the Lord as our example; especially when it comes to loving the poor.”⁸

Pope Francis also reminds us that to be formed in the faith is not simply to be able to profess it on our lips, we must also live it with love; faith works through love.⁹

This calls us to avoid the false dichotomy between those who think that the primary focus of Catholic education is faith formation and those who think it is to witness to justice. The truth is that we cannot say one is more important than the other because we need both in order to be faithful to Christ and his teaching. To know the faith means living the faith: “to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”¹⁰ Catholic schools are places where staff and students are encouraged both to enter into scripture, doctrine and worship, and are invited to actively express their faith through acts of love toward their neighbours.

Catholic schools also help to engage the world by promoting a dialogue between faith and reason. They promote what is good, true and beautiful while at the same time demonstrating that it is rational to believe. This, too, is part of Catholic identity. The more we foster and nurture Catholic identity, the more we promote the expression of that identity in service and witness to the world. Our faith calls us to be engaged with the world around us, to have hope, and to inspire it in others.



A Community That Forms Joyful Disciples

As faithful disciples of Jesus, we celebrate God's joy which longs to break into the world. After the disciples encounter the Risen Lord, they are filled with great joy and they are excited to share it with others. In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis speaks about the joy that comes from Christ, "The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ, joy is constantly born anew."¹¹ The joy of believing is manifest in the hearts and lives of those who faithfully follow the Lord. Catholic schools play

an important role in proclaiming the joy of believing. Pope Francis states, "Catholic schools, which always strive to join their work of education with the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, are a most valuable resource for the evangelization of culture."¹²

Our Catholic schools help to form joyful disciples as hearts and minds are opened to the transforming love of God and to the flame of faith in action. On a daily basis, Catholic schools demonstrate the joy of believing and witness the Good News to the communities that they serve.

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The first pastoral letter on Catholic education in Ontario, “This Moment of Promise”(1989), established a clear and compelling mission and vision for Catholic schools following the historical legislative decision that resulted in the extension of funding for Ontario’s Catholic school systems. A second pastoral letter, “Fulfilling the Promise” (1993) focused on the importance of leadership in our shared mission to nurture and sustain Catholic schools. Originally, the moment of promise emerged from the completion of funding and full recognition of the system, which presented us with the possibility that the efforts and hopes of generations of Catholic educators, parents and students would finally be realized.

Three decades later, our context may have changed profoundly, but our mission has not; Catholic schools are places where children and young people may find solid and enduring values to give hope, meaning and purpose to life through an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship, and the certain knowledge of God’s unwavering love for us, provides a firm place to stand in shifting times. The promise is that this true encounter with Jesus can and does take place, each and every day, within our Catholic schools. Together, we renew that promise by continuing to strengthen our Catholic schools as communities that exemplify the Good News of Jesus in word and in deed.

As your bishops, we are leaders entrusted to teach so that all will grow in holiness, and shepherds called to accompany our flock on the journey. In that spirit, we offer the following reflections and encouragement to our partners in Catholic education. May we work together to form joyful disciples ready and eager to renew the promise as we respond to the challenges and opportunities of this present moment.

Students:

As young people growing to maturity in a complex world, you are faced with many difficult and confusing choices on a daily basis. The demands of our consumer driven society and the noise of social media may sometimes lead you to think you are alone. Know that you are never alone. You are the beloved child of God, and he is with you always.

If you ask, Jesus, your saviour, will come to you as a dear friend who will always be with you and who will never abandon you. While the world may sometimes make you feel like you are not good enough, not wealthy enough, not attractive enough, or not special enough, Jesus knows you perfectly, and loves you without limits. He is always at your side, encouraging you and helping you to be the best that you can be as you offer your service to the world as an instrument of peace and justice.

Recognizing the presence of Jesus in your life, and learning to pray, can provide a sure support and guide, helping you to say “yes” to all of the wonderful possibilities of life. You can find him in the prayers and the liturgical celebrations of your school community, and within the community itself, where you will find that you are loved and accepted, just as you are. Ask Jesus to help you to become a good student, a

true friend, and a loving son or daughter. Both your local parish and your Catholic school community are places to encounter Jesus, and to know him more deeply. He is a kind and wise teacher and a wonderful healer of all your hurts, who will bring you peace and joy. Never forget to love him and worship him.

Parents:

God has gifted you with children and you are their first and most important educators. Yours is the task to immerse them in the unconditional love of God found in Christ Jesus. Just as Jesus heard the words of his Heavenly Father at his Baptism, share these words with your sons or daughters: “You are my beloved child in whom I delight!” Your parish community and your Catholic school are there to support you in caring for and nurturing your children. Work with the school community to help your child realize the gifts they have been given by our Creator God. School councils are opportunities for faith formation and collaboration, where parents and school staff learn from each other, pray together, and work alongside each other to ensure all children have opportunities to grow in faith and in their learning.

While children are definitely a particular gift for parents, they are also God’s

gift for our world. They form the next generation of God's people, tasked to respond to the enormous challenges and opportunities they are inheriting. The task of preparing them for the future can seem overwhelming at times given the complexities of life, yet Jesus is there to support you and help you in many ways. Teach your children to pray, and pray with them. Find strength in knowing that Jesus is always at your side, accompanying you, just as he walks alongside your children. In a world that is sometimes beset with negativity and acrimony, remember your example of life, grounded in faith, is a powerful witness for your children, and an antidote to the hopelessness that often permeates our times. Take the time to pray, and ask the Lord to help you to be a good parent.

Teachers and Education Workers:

You are powerful witnesses to the presence of Jesus in the lives of our students, and you provide the good soil each school day for the roots of faith to grow in our students. Remember that Jesus was a great teacher. In prayer, allow him to inspire you by his example of loving service, and ask him to support you in your chosen vocation.

Allow the pattern of the Eucharist to guide you as you serve children and families. Each day provide a welcoming environment as students arrive to school. Listen to their stories, and help them discover the connection between the larger biblical story that forms us as Christians, and their own lived experience. Create inclusive places of learning that invite and enable each child and young person in your care to grow fully to be all that God knows and hopes them to be. Model for them the gratitude we have for all that has been gifted to us through God's bountiful goodness: the meals we share, the friendships we value, the quality of education we experience in the province of Ontario. At the close of the day send them home to their families with enthusiasm for the opportunities that are present in their lives, and with confidence in their own abilities to make this world more loving, and more just, through their good works and witness. Recognize that they return to their families and their communities each day reflecting the kindness, love and attention they experienced in your care. Strive to keep Jesus at the center of your school community and the centre of your lives.



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Support Staff:

The important role you play in the Catholic school community is too often taken for granted. Each day you offer loving service to those who depend upon you. Yours is the voice of welcome to our parent community. You are the stewards of our physical space and facilities; without your diligence, hard work and attention to detail, our offices and classrooms would be less welcoming. Each of you bring unique expertise, skill and talents that contribute to the creation of learning communities that are places of warmth and welcome. From the scriptures we know that Jesus welcomed children, and your work, alongside educators, to care for children, helps our Catholic schools to fulfill their mission. Your model of service, and generosity of spirit offers important witness to the values of the Gospel message.

Principals, Vice Principals:

As school leaders you carry responsibility for all aspects of your school. In addition to your role managing a safe and efficient learning environment and leading the instructional efforts of your staff, your attention to the spiritual and cultural dimension of a Catholic school is an essential part of your mission, and provides inspiration and support for all

members of the school community. As leaders of schools, cultivate a Eucharistic sensibility. Let the pattern of the Eucharist guide you as you help to shape and animate a Catholic school culture where the love of God is found in an encounter with Christ Jesus: gather your school community, tell the story, break the bread, and help to bring hope to the world. Together with staff, ensure that it is an environment of welcome and hospitality. Model for your staff how best to minister to children and young people. Listen to the stories they tell and witness to them the stories of our faith and of your own faith journey.

The experience of Christian community empowers staff to build community with their students, and to be prayerful with children; bring staff together, in prayer, in fellowship and in community celebration; plan with them joyful liturgical celebrations that include opportunities for Mass. Welcome and include the local parish priest and pastoral team in the life of the school community. Guide staff and students to the sacramental life of the parish, with whom we partner, to assist parents in the ongoing faith formation of their children. Finally, serve with joy in such a way that those you encounter are empowered and encouraged in the work of going forth to proclaim the Gospel with their lives.

Trustees:

You are entrusted with the profound responsibility of stewardship of the mission of Catholic education. Let the Gospel of Jesus guide your policies and your governance of our Catholic school districts, for in his Gospel the Church discovers truth, goodness and beauty. As the world has already been saved by the love of God found in Jesus Christ, allow your work to reflect this truth. Encourage one another in faith. Let your public discourse be guided by the respect and commitment to the truth Jesus modelled for his disciples. You share responsibility with the other partners in the Catholic education community. Parents, clergy, pastoral teams, teachers, and staff all work in the service of the same mission, and all voices need to be heard, and all persons need to be recognized and respected for their inherent dignity and goodness. In your decision making, in the setting of policy, in the nurturing of leaders, seek goodness that models compassion, wisdom and care.

Your effectiveness is best determined by the extent to which you allow your faith, your love of God and your compassion and respect for one another, to inform your decisions. Pray together; work closely with your local bishop and diocesan staff who can offer support and guidance as you seek to grow in your faith, and deepen your knowledge and understanding of Church teaching.

Allow the Holy Spirit to emerge from the creative tension that exists in balancing budgets and providing rich educational programs for the children, their families and the community you serve. Let your public actions be a visible sign of what we profess as a Catholic community, and an expression of God's love and mercy in this world.

Directors and Supervisory Officers:

As leaders of school systems, you are tasked to manage and provide direction to large and highly complex organizations. You are called to model a life centred in the person of Jesus, and privileged to give witness, personally and professionally, to the teachings of Christ as you offer your leadership in the service of others. Both the opportunity and the responsibility to create communities of faith in our schools and in our administrative offices are in your hands. Your words and your actions inspire and influence the efforts of all those who work in our Catholic schools. Your words describe the vision, set the tone, and inspire the actions of all those who share this work. Let your voice speak with love and respect, and reflect compassion and understanding.

You are instrumental in the recognition, support, and coordination of the unique contributions and perspectives of all

partners within the Catholic educational community. As you build relationships among parents, students, clergy, pastoral teams, teachers, staff, and community members, the atmosphere of trust, respect, and honesty you establish is critical in creating a community able to engage and to accompany. These partnerships are essential to the Catholic school system, and while all share the responsibility for our common mission, you play a particular role in nurturing the working relationships.

Let your actions match your words, guiding and animating communities, rooted in our Catholic faith, that invite students, staff, and families to encounter Jesus each day, as we accompany one another.

Clergy and Pastoral Teams:

Catholic schools are an integral part of the Catholic Church's mission. The relationship that exists between home, school and parish is of vital importance to Catholic education today. Our Catholic schools present a tremendous opportunity for the 'new evangelization,' and can be a powerful tool in helping you to connect with students and families. In this regard, your words of encouragement and support, your ministry of presence whenever possible, your invitation for all to engage in the life

of the parish community — these are an important and necessary part of the ministry of the local parish. The Catholic school community, like the Church itself, is ever in need of evangelization and conversion. Your partnership with our schools and your ministry to them has long been a foundation for the success of Catholic education in the province of Ontario, and continues to be critical to the success of our shared mission.

The goal of Catholic education is to prepare hearts using the language of love, dialogue and service.¹³ The Holy Father reminds us that the essence of our vocation is to love. This means that as partners in Catholic education it is not about the great things we do; it is about doing little things with great love. This is the heart of joyful discipleship; it is the foundation of Catholic education.

The Breaking of the Bread



© Road to Emmaus by Robyn Sand Anderson



As Jesus accompanied the disciples on the road to Emmaus, it was at the moment of the breaking of the bread that their eyes were opened and they realized that their hearts were burning within them. They received the gift of discernment and this helped them to understand what had happened to them on the road. One of the earliest titles given to the Eucharist was 'the breaking of the bread' and this speaks directly to the Emmaus experience.

It has been said that the Eucharist is the most beautiful thing this side of heaven because we encounter Jesus Christ the Risen Lord just as those disciples did so many years ago; Jesus comes to 'walk with us.' The liturgy is the primary way the Church teaches. It is in the Eucharist where we find the most perfect 'faith formation program,' and we are evangelized, catechized, and made holy as we are drawn into the mystery of our salvation. It is transformational as we become one with our God at the moment of Holy Communion. As we are fed with God's Word and Body and Blood, we are strengthened and with joy in our hearts, we are sent forth to live the mystery that we have just celebrated.

The Good News is that this Emmaus experience is so easily accessible to us. Every Sunday we can gather as part of a worshipping community to experience this beautiful encounter. As we are united with Christ we become more like him and grow in holiness.

In addition to parishes, the Eucharist is also celebrated at times in our Catholic schools. Although some may not be able to share fully in the celebration, Jesus can still touch the hearts and minds of staff and students as they listen to him and accompany him on the road, and his presence in the liturgy nourishes all who gather. The Eucharist has the power to heal, to unify, and to inspire our diverse school communities.

From St. Augustine we know that the human heart is restless until it finds God. It is our faith in Jesus Christ and our Catholic culture that will help us to creatively respond to this longing and to the challenges and opportunities that we face today. All who serve in Catholic schools are called to ongoing discernment — how is God calling us to respond within the context of these times.

We look to the future of Catholic education with great hope because we are blessed to have so many committed and faith-filled educators and leaders whose witness to faith provides a compelling example to our young people. The Catholic education community is encouraged to support opportunities for faith formation for all members of the community in ways that are inviting, engaging, and purposeful.

Catholic education must remain committed to the essential work of forming leaders in our faith tradition for the future. Our apostolic faith is built on the witness of those who have experienced the Risen Christ in their lives and who have shared that truth in the way they live: close to Jesus, receiving the Eucharist, engaged in parish life, serving their families and those most in need. We need such leaders if we are to ensure that our Catholic schools are genuinely to be communities that build and nurture relationships, capable of accompanying and engaging with those within the community, and ultimately giving witness to the joy of the Gospel. Careful attention must be given to support the formation of such leaders.

Our new leaders desire open dialogue in an adult learning model with trained theological and pastoral staff, both lay and religious. Catholic school boards are encouraged to support processes for faith formation for emerging leaders, and to approach this important task in ways that are comprehensive, systematic, thoughtful, intentional, and well-resourced.

Catholic schools are places where children and young people encounter Jesus, and where they are encouraged to enter more deeply into a personal relationship with Him. They are privileged places, together with the family and the parish community, where our faith is handed on, and this can only succeed with the cooperation of all concerned. In a rapidly changing world our Catholic schools provide students with firm ground upon which to stand because they are founded on Christ who is the sure foundation. It is in Christ that we will find the wisdom, the courage, the creativity and the integrity to work together in realizing the great promise of Catholic education. May everything we do be for the greater glory of God!

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario
Easter, 2018

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Artworks*

- Cover Road to Emmaus (Daniel Bonnell at www.fineartamerica.com)
- Page 2 Emmaus 2 (www.carolynnthomasjones.com)
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