

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Each year around 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 *Jesus Christ: the Way, the Truth and the Life*. This theme reflects the vision and aim of Catholic education that Catholic schools, centred on the person of Jesus Christ, help and accompany young people to discover and to follow the Christian vocation to live responsibly with and for others in accordance with the message of Christ and so to build up and transform society for the better.

This is a message to which our young people readily respond, as can be seen by the high levels of participation in the Pope Francis Faith award and the Caritas programme.

This has been a strange year for our schools. Few of us will remember in our lifetimes a period so characterised by uncertainty, disruption and even fear. Everything that formed the fabric and pattern of our lives has felt the impact of the restrictions caused by the pandemic. Families have been unable to meet and support one another at the time when that support was most needed. People have been unable to share the joy of family celebrations, and have been denied the opportunity to come together to mourn. Our young people were separated from their friends and teachers, and their learning and exams were interrupted. Our churches have also suffered, with parish communities unable to gather for many weeks. Even now, our numbers are limited, and we long to see

a time when everyone will be able to join together again and sing our hymns of praise.

It is precisely in times such as these that we search for direction and certainty, and the theme of this year's Catholic Education Week reminds us where it can be found. In recognising Jesus as the Way, we need no longer worry about which direction we take, and where that will lead; in following Jesus' teaching and example, we will inevitably come to the Father. At a time where it can be difficult to discern what is genuine, we find in Jesus a Truth to which we can hold firm. It is in living in relationship with God that we find the fullness of life for which God created us, and the promise of eternal life.

The Charter for Catholic Schools, which outlines ten characteristics of a Catholic school, proposes a rich vision of Catholic education that emphasises the Church's mission to transform society through the love, service and justice we find in the life of Jesus, and reminds our pupils and teachers that they are a part of the Church in action. These characteristics do not happen by accident. Acknowledging Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life is intrinsic to Catholic education and, along with liturgy, prayer and learning, is a central and defining mark of the Catholic school as an educational community of faith.

I encourage you then to give thanks for Catholic Education and to pray for its ongoing success. I ask you to support the work of the Scottish Catholic Education Service and all that it does on behalf of our Church, our young people and our families to promote the positive contribution of Catholic schools in Scotland. I encourage you all to speak out positively on behalf Catholic Education, sharing the good news that Catholic schools remain good for Scotland.

Yours devotedly in Christ,

✠ *Philip Tartaglia*,
Archbishop of Glasgow