



January 19, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

**National Catholic Schools Week is almost here**, a special time to reflect on the blessing that our Catholic schools are! This year's theme, "Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service," reminds us that our schools provide a unique environment for faith, friendship and personal growth — a student can learn advanced mathematics, celebrate the Sacraments, and compete in athletics all in the same day. Catholic education seeks to form the mind, the body, and *the heart and soul*. What a beautiful intersection!

Catholic Schools Week is a wonderful time to express how grateful we are for this opportunity for our young people, and for all those who have brought us to where we are today. Heroic sacrifices are made for the success of our schools, particularly so in 2020. To our pastors, school principals, teachers, staff, coaches and volunteers — you are champions for the next generation, who needs you now more than ever. You continue to do an extraordinary job in providing a safe and profound educational environment for our students. "Thank you" hardly seems adequate for all that you do.

To our students and families in our Catholic schools — you are investing in your relationship with Christ in a special way, as well as investing in your future. I am grateful that you have chosen a Catholic education and for your sacrifices to give this opportunity to your children. I pray that we continue to serve your families well and in a way that brings glory to God.

And for all those who may be considering a Catholic school — I invite you to learn more. Catholic education has much to offer and makes a lifelong impact. I have often heard families raise concern about the cost of Catholic education or other factor; please reach out to your local Catholic school, as we try to offer financial assistance so that anyone who is interested can receive a Catholic education. To find more information about our Catholic schools and their locations, visit [www.dioceseofgaylord.org](http://www.dioceseofgaylord.org).

Further information about the special activities of Catholic Schools Week (Jan. 31- Feb. 6) is enclosed, provided by our Office of Catholic Schools. Please join by praying for our Catholic schools in a special way that week, and consider how you can support your local Catholic parish and school. I also invite you to join me in celebrating a *Mass for Students* on Wednesday, February 3, 2021 at 8:30 a.m. The Mass will be celebrated from St. Mary Cathedral, and all are welcome to participate via livestream at [www.stmarycathedral.org](http://www.stmarycathedral.org) and [www.dioceseofgaylord.org](http://www.dioceseofgaylord.org).

I am inspired by the faith of our young people, who can teach us much about resilience, goodness and kindness, and joy in the face of difficult circumstances. Our Catholic schools are truly a reason to celebrate, and I look forward to celebrating this year's National Catholic Schools Week together!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley  
Apostolic Administrator

## What is National Catholic Schools Week?

National Catholic Schools Week is the annual celebration of Catholic education in the United States. It starts the last Sunday in January and runs all week, which in 2021 is January 31 - February 6.

The theme for the National Catholic Schools Week 2021 celebration is **“Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service.”** Schools typically observe the annual celebration week with Masses, open houses and other activities for students, families, parishioners and community members. Through these events, schools focus on the value Catholic education provides to young people and its contributions to our church, our communities and our nation.

## What Are the Week’s Daily Themes?

- Sunday: Celebrating Your Parish
- Monday: Celebrating Your Community
- Tuesday: Celebrating Your Students
- Wednesday: Celebrating the Nation
- Thursday: Celebrating Vocations
- Friday: Celebrating our Staff and Volunteers
- Saturday: Celebrating Families



**Good News for the Nation:** Catholic schools offer academic excellence and faith-filled education for students nationwide. National test scores, high school graduation rates, college attendance and other data show that Catholic schools frequently outperform schools in both the public and private sectors. While some Catholic schools are challenged by declining enrollments and school closures, the good news is that there continues to be a strong demand and enthusiasm for Catholic schools. Below are some facts and figures about the ongoing excellence and promise of growth represented in our country's Catholic schools.

- There are over 6,500 Catholic Schools in our country today (17 in our diocese).
- 99% of our students graduate from high school.
- Based on the average public school per pupil cost of \$12,756, Catholic schools provide \$22 billion in savings each year for the nation.
- The average classroom in our diocese has about 11 students in for every one teacher.
- Nationwide, over 85% of our graduates go on to attend a 4-year college/university.
- Almost 100% of students at our schools participate in some kind of service learning opportunity while in school.
- Catholic School graduates are more likely to attend Mass, be married in the church, and have their children baptized.

# a dozen reasons to choose Catholic Schools

**12** We provide a safe and welcoming environment for all.

**11** We cultivate a faculty and staff of people who are dedicated, caring and effective.

**10** We have a 99 percent high school graduation rate. 85 percent of our graduates go to college.

**9** We prepare students to be productive citizens and future leaders.

**8** We emphasize moral development and self-discipline.

**7** We teach children respect of self and others.

**6** We instill in students the value of service to others.

**5** We use technology effectively to enhance education.

**4** We provide a balanced academic curriculum that integrates faith, culture and life.

**3** We set high standards for student achievement and help them succeed.

**2** We partner with parents in the faith formation of their children.

**1** We offer an education that combines Catholic faith and teachings with academic excellence.

**Catholic Schools**  
Faith. Excellence. Service.

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
[NCEA.org/csw](http://NCEA.org/csw)