



February 1, 2021

Dear Families,

For the Diocese of Brooklyn, Catholic Schools Week begins February 8<sup>th</sup>. This is a joyous celebration in Catholic education, when we take time out of the busy day-to-day schedules, to pause and think about the blessings our Catholic Academies and Parish Schools provide to our families. The celebration this year centers on the theme of “Faith. Excellence. Service.” These are the very tenets our Catholic Academies and Parish Schools are built upon. Our celebration this year will certainly be different, but we still seek to share the qualities that set Catholic education apart. While this year has been exceedingly challenging, it has also highlighted the strength of our Catholic Academies and Parish Schools. Their response to the trials of the past year has set us apart from public, charter, and even other private schools. This year especially, we have so much to be grateful for in our schools, and to the families that form our Catholic Academy and Parish School communities.

It is fitting that faith is the first focus in the theme of Catholic Schools Week, as this is the first focus in the mission of Catholic education, with all areas stemming from the belief in and love of Christ. Families are the first teachers in the faith; not only in their religious practices, but in raising their children with love, respect, and a strong sense of morals. We are fortunate to have classrooms filled with students who have already been shown how to walk-in Jesus’ footsteps. It is through these beginnings that teachers can continue to help students grow in their faith. The strong foundation you have provided for your child will carry them into their adult lives. Students in Catholic schools are more likely to be faithful adults, practicing Catholics, and display strong moral fiber, through involvement and volunteerism. A Catholic school foundation is one that allows the faith to carry into future generations.

Excellence is demonstrated in our schools in ways that extend beyond the traditional scope of academics. Academic excellence shines in our Catholic Academies and Parish Schools, but this is only a piece of the puzzle. Catholic education supports the education of the whole child, with the understanding that academics are strong with music, art, athletics, technology, and STEM initiatives. Through our incredible teachers, Catholic Academies and Parish Schools can offer a variety of programs, which allow students to have unique learning experiences.

We are immeasurably thankful for the teachers, who have demonstrated their excellence over this past year, through their flexibility in their delivery of instruction. We have been through remote, hybrid, and in-person learning and with each change, our faculty and staff have responded to meet the needs of students and families. The very opening of Catholic Academies and Parish Schools to in-person learning, during this school year speaks volumes to the excellence of our schools and the commitment to providing quality education to all students. I would be remiss not to thank our families for the excellence they have shown in their support of teachers and our schools. Parents and guardians have been tasked with many additional jobs this year, in supporting their child’s education. Without this partnership, academic excellence would be impossible. Our students grow not only through the academic excellence provided by teachers, but also through the support which comes from their homes and families.



It is a unique privilege to serve students and families through Catholic education. Service within Catholic Academies and Parish Schools can be viewed in many ways. It is the service of our teachers to the school community, the service of our families in providing for their children, and it is the way students learn to serve others. Acts 20:35 shares with us **...remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive...** This spirit of giving is alive in our Catholic Academy and Parish School communities, as students learn, not only to give through material items, during events such as food drives, they also learn the importance of the love they give to others. This is once again a reflection of the foundation provided by their families; for a student to understand that the love they give can change the world. Students who are a part of Catholic education are more likely to demonstrate service through volunteering and community engagement and are also more likely to show their love of others, with an increased openness to differences and embracing of others.

Our schools are blessed with families within their communities who make the sacrifice to send their children to Catholic Academies and Parish Schools. This is not always an easy decision, especially during this school year. The gift of sending a child to a Catholic Academy or Parish School is providing them with a foundation for life through faith, excellence, and service; qualities we see reflected not only in our schools but in the families that comprise our school communities.

Thank you for your continued faith in the mission of Catholic education and for entrusting the most precious gift into our school communities, your children.

Yours in Faith,

***Thomas Chadzutko***

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