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Catholic Education Week 2023: *We are Many, We are One*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The theme this year of Catholic Education Week, 30 April to 5 May, is *We are Many, We are One*. It emphasizes that though we are many with a variety of gifts, we are connected to one another, and our gifts are best used in service of others. This theme derives from our Christian faith. Saint Paul explains that we are one body with many members, that there is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit, and that we are to use our gifts to build up the community. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together (1 Cor. 12). It is in relationship and in union with Christ that we understand our own identity and how we are closely connected with others.

According to Catholic social teaching, we must uphold the dignity of each person, promote solidarity, and work for the common good. In other words, we must always balance the *many* and the *one*, *diversity and unity*: "We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members, one of another" (Rom. 12:5).

Pope Francis makes the following point: "Differences between persons and communities can sometimes prove uncomfortable, but the Holy Spirit, who is the source of that diversity, can bring forth something good from all things and turn it into an attractive means of evangelization. Diversity must always be reconciled by the help of the Holy Spirit; he alone can raise up diversity, plurality, and multiplicity while at the same time bringing about unity" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 131).

It is in our families that we first learn how to balance unity and diversity. There, we learn words, values, habits, and attitudes that enable us to appreciate our own gifts and the gifts of others; we learn to give thanks to God for each member. In our Catholic schools, educators help our students to refine those gifts and to use them in service of others. In our Families of Parishes, we gather as a community to thank God for our unity in Christ and the nourishment and strength he gives us in the Eucharist.

At the invitation of Pope Francis, we are learning to 'walk together', to be a synodal Church. This means, like all families, we are learning to listen to each other and to the Holy Spirit. To be a listening Church we must practice the habits of respecting, welcoming, and celebrating the other person. We must reach out to those in need and seek to be reconciled and understand the other person, not as a stranger, but as a sister or brother. As the Catholic Bishops of Ontario highlighted in *Renewing the Promise*, "It is about taking the time to walk alongside one another, to listen and to teach, and in doing so, to transform."

Catholic Education Week calls all of us to work together, home, school and parish, and to cultivate those habits that allow us to welcome, celebrate, serve, and listen to each other, especially those in our communities who are most in need. With the help of the Holy Spirit, may we recognize God's abundant gifts that unite us to Christ and enable us to give our lives in service of others.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *Ronald Fabbro, CSB*

Most Rev. Ronald Fabbro, CSB
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