DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

May 4, 2026

Dear Students, Teachers, Parents, and Friends of Catholic Education,

It is a joy for me, as the new Bishop of the Diocese of Hamilton, to greet you during Catholic Education Week. I look forward to meeting many of you in our schools and parishes in the months ahead. This year's theme is **"Pilgrims of Hope: On the Path to Holiness."** These words remind us that life is a journey. Each day we learn, grow, and discover how God calls us to live with faith, courage, and trust in His plan for us.

The month of May is also a special time in the Church, when we turn our hearts to Mary, the Mother of Jesus. I often imagine Mary and Joseph in Nazareth watching Jesus grow. The Gospel tells us that Jesus grew in age and wisdom. In many ways, that is what happens in our Catholic families and schools. We grow not only in knowledge, but also in wisdom and faith.

My own first school was my family home. My parents taught me my first prayers. They taught me about forgiveness, kindness, and trust in God. Families are the first teachers of faith, and our Catholic schools, together with our parishes, support parents in this beautiful mission.

When I was young, I loved playing soccer. Like many young people, I had athletes I admired who inspired me. But soccer also taught me something important: no one grows alone. We need teammates, coaches, and supporters who encourage us along the way. In life, and in faith, we walk together.

Before coming to Hamilton, I served in the Diocese of Charlottetown in Prince Edward Island, where there are no Catholic schools. Children learn about their faith mainly at home and in parish catechism classes. Because of that experience, I see even more clearly what a precious gift Catholic education is in Ontario. In our schools, faith and learning walk together. Students can pray together, celebrate their faith, and discover how Jesus is present in their lives.

This year we also remember in a special way Saint Francis of Assisi, whose life continues to inspire the world. He was a peacemaker. In a prayer often attributed to him, we hear these beautiful words: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace." These words speak deeply to this year's theme. As pilgrims of hope, we are called to bring God's light wherever we are—bringing hope where there is sadness, light where there is darkness, and friendship where there is loneliness.

Each of you—students, teachers, and parents—can be an instrument of God's love. A smile, a word of encouragement, an act of kindness, or a prayer for someone in need can make a real difference.

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Our world needs hope. And you, our young people, are messengers of that hope. Thank you to all who make Catholic education possible—our priests, chaplains, trustees, administrators, educators, staff, parents, and guardians who accompany our young people each day.

To all our students: never forget that God has a beautiful dream for your life. May the Lord bless you, and may Saint Francis of Assisi inspire us all to be instruments of God's love, hope, and peace.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

† Joseph Dabrowski. CSMA

Most Rev. Joseph Dabrowski, CSMA
Bishop of Hamilton

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