



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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For Immediate Release**

BISHOPS CHAMPION CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND URGE CONTINUED SUPPORT

The bishops of Wisconsin have published a letter to Catholics affirming the vital role Catholic schools play in their communities and urging a renewed commitment to their success. The letter, entitled “Catholic Schools and Our Church: Faith Moving Forward,” will be distributed throughout the state in conjunction with this year’s annual celebration of Catholic Schools Week, January 30 through February 5, 2011.

In the letter, the bishops emphasize the unique approach of Catholic education. “A Catholic school is not a building, but an experience dedicated to the formation of the whole person in mind, body, and spirit. Our Catholic schools cultivate strong communities, joining parishioners, families, staff, and neighbors behind the indispensable task of teaching children to draw from their God-given gifts and share those treasures with others.”

The bishops note that the “strength of our Catholic identity, our parishes, our religious education programs, and our community are closely aligned with our Catholic schools.” They continue by cautioning that the “community suffers when these schools close” and urge “the entire Catholic community to commit its time, talent, and treasure to support them.”

The bishops also observe that Catholic schools serve the wider Wisconsin community, stating that those in Catholic schools today are only part of the story.

“Many thousands more in Wisconsin are themselves a product of Catholic schools, and they have enriched our state with their contributions as parents, citizens, and community leaders,” state the bishops. “Their lives affirm that Catholic schools nurture spiritual strength as well as intellect, impart values as well as knowledge, and foster a human excellence that bears fruit through service to others.”

With 325 Catholic schools serving nearly 60,000 Wisconsin students, Catholic schools are a significant part of the state’s education system, especially in inner city and rural areas where serving families of limited means remains a focus of the Church. Catholic schools in Wisconsin and across the nation have long been credited with helping children of immigrants integrate into the nation’s social and economic mainstream. Their success with children of all economic backgrounds has fueled support for parental choice in Wisconsin and elsewhere.

In the letter, the bishops give special recognition to the staff and faculty of the schools. “To our pastors, principals, and all those who serve in our Catholic schools, we offer our continuing gratitude and remain dedicated to making certain they are equipped with the tools necessary to guarantee an exceptional educational experience.”

The letter also praises the faithful who have supported Catholic schools, but stresses the need for continued contribution. “We also thank all our state’s Catholics for all they have done to sustain our schools and urge their continued commitment. We invite those parishes or individuals who do not currently have ties to a Catholic school, to become engaged in the support of a nearby Catholic school community. We encourage parents and students to enroll in Catholic schools and experience the unique integration of spiritual and academic development they provide.”

The letter concludes, “Teaching is an act of faith. Ultimately we hope and trust that after we are gone, the seeds of faith we sow will bear fruit in the lives of those we teach. We urge all who read this letter to renew their personal commitment to the teaching ministry of Jesus Christ by supporting our Catholic schools.”

A copy of the letter is attached.

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For more information, contact Kim Wadas at 608/257-0004.