

DIOCESE OF SAN BERNARDINO



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In this Jubilee Year of Mercy, our Holy Father calls us to witness to mercy and to follow the example of God as merciful, forgiving and loving followers.

An important vehicle for learning and living God's mercy is the Catholic school. As we enter Catholic Schools Week I want to be clear in my enthusiastic support for Catholic education and alert you to a new a document from my brother bishops of California and me, *"Our Catholic Schools in California: A Stellar Past, a Robust Future."*

The document comes at a time when we must acknowledge that the landscape of Catholic education has changed greatly from the days when our schools existed and prospered largely through the dedicated ministry of religious women. Cultural and economic factors have changed. Catholic school is not the preferred option for most Catholic families as it once was.

This is a challenge that is worth our effort, because Catholic education remains a powerful tool of spiritual formation and a highway to success for our young people. I am calling on the priests and religious who lead our parishes and on Catholic families, themselves, to look at Catholic education with new eyes, to participate in its health and its very survival.

It begins with reflecting on actions that we bishops of California are recommending:

1. Pastors and school leaders will focus on recruiting more Catholic children.
2. Children and families with strong participation in parish life and religious education will be invited to enroll in Catholic schools and helped financially, when possible.
3. Diocesan school superintendents, school principals and parish pastors will work together to make Catholic schools more desirable, accessible and affordable for Latino families (which is 74 % of the Catholics in our Diocese).

4. New forms of school governance will be studied to determine the best operative model for the advancement of each school.

With the publication of our new document, the bishops of all 12 dioceses in California have pledged to ensure that Catholic Schools continue to educate students to become leaders who impact our church and all of society. I invite you to read the document in its entirety at www.cacatholic.org.

I am committed, as your Bishop, to filling every desk in every Catholic school, and to making our schools as accessible and affordable for the diverse and multi-lingual communities we serve. I want to see this valuable resource supported, nurtured and embraced by every Catholic adult.

Let us celebrate Catholic Schools this week and commit ourselves to support them as a true blessing of our faith as we move forward in 2016.

In Christ,

Most Reverend Gerald R. Barnes
