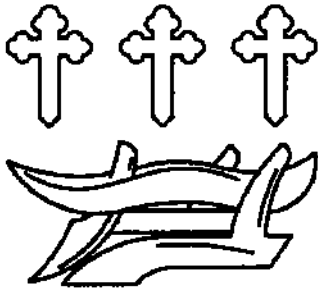


Archdiocese of Cincinnati



**Department of
Educational Services
100 East Eighth Street
Cincinnati, OH 45202**

**513/421-3131
513/421-6271 FAX**

Dear Friends of Catholic Education,

Last fall, New York Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan published an article in the journal "America" entitled *The Catholic Schools We Need*. In this article, Archbishop Dolan acknowledged the many challenges facing Catholic schools in today's world. He described the incalculable value of our Catholic schools, and stated that we must re-evaluate the ways in which our schools are funded and structured. Archbishop Dolan advocated for a new level of support for our schools, asserting that: "It is time to recover our nerve and promote our schools for the 21st century."

Such words strike home in our Archdiocese. As in dioceses across the country, our schools are facing an intensifying array of challenges. These challenges vary in degree, and are tied to larger economic, cultural, and theological forces. Although our schools remain vibrant places for learning, we still face declines in enrollment in some schools. Some schools have closed or consolidated. Families are turned away because they cannot afford to attend our schools. Yet our schools continue to receive national acclaim for their superior test scores and stunningly high levels of parent satisfaction.

The Catholic schools in the Archdiocese are treasures beyond value. As with New York, the time has come to re-examine how our schools will operate in the future. Specifically, with the encouragement and guidance of our Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr, we have begun the process of constructing a new vision for Catholic schools in the Archdiocese. Such a vision will allow us to define Catholic education in the 21st century. Implicit in such a vision is the concept that we must look beyond the borders of our parishes and schools. We must transcend the pervasive sense of parochialism that forces us to always look inward. We must accept and promote the concept that we are all contributors to Catholic education, we are all parts of the Body of Christ. We are unified in our mission to instruct our youth and nurture them in the Light of God.

As we begin Catholic Schools Week this year, I am pleased to inform you that we are making excellent progress in constructing this new vision. Over the past several weeks, I have met with a steering committee of representative stakeholders. With this committee, we have put in place the structures we will need to construct and realize this vision and accompanying strategic plan. In the coming months, we will engage in our individual schools, parishes, families, and communities to gather data about the current state of Catholic education. We will ask all people to identify the strengths and challenges facing our schools. In the end, we hope to create a snapshot of the current state of Catholic school education and provide a clear path to the future for our indispensable schools.

Our vision will encompass the unique strengths, challenges, and histories of our individual schools. We will closely scrutinize our

mission and remain committed to providing an affordable Catholic education to all families, regardless of their economic background. Our ultimate vision and plan will, I hope, address seven key areas. These areas include academic quality, spiritual development/Catholic identity, funding, governance, marketing/enrollment, leadership, and strategic planning. Overall, we hope to promote the concept that our schools *are* precious, that our schools *can* thrive, and that our schools will be stronger if we come together, pool our resources, and provide a unified plan for our future.

The potential for Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati is enormous. From the cities of Cincinnati and Dayton to the rural communities, I have been struck by the tremendous pride people possess for their parishes and schools. Within our Archdiocese, we have wonderfully dedicated teachers and administrators, as well as parents, alumni, and benefactors who are genuinely committed to the future of our Catholic schools. The Archdiocese of Cincinnati is a great place for Catholic education. Our schools sit on fertile ground. I am unshakably optimistic that, if we proceed deliberately and strategically, we can realize a vision that will lead our schools into a bright future. Our schools, and our children, deserve nothing less.

May God bless our precious Catholic schools during this week of joyous celebration.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Rigg".

Dr. Jim Rigg
Director of Educational Services
Superintendent of Catholic Schools
Archdiocese of Cincinnati