



January 30, 2022

Dear Catholic School Community,

This week we kick off Celebrate Catholic Schools Week! The January/February issue of *Catholic Herald* magazine highlights the important work of our Catholic schools. I invite you to check out the [digital edition here](#).

In our one hundred and sixty second year of Catholic education in the Diocese of Sacramento, our 44 schools continue to serve over 13,000 students. The common thread has been our witness to our Lord Jesus Christ, our dedication to educating the whole child in a loving community, and our commitment to moral and academic excellence. Catholic schools remain unique because of every stakeholder's passionate belief in our mission, and although faced with unprecedented challenges over the past two years, our Catholic school communities continue to provide opportunities for students to practice and master a virtuous life. All of these blessings equip each child with the tools to become the saints of tomorrow.

Throughout the pandemic, we have recognized and are grateful for the heroic partnership between our teachers and parents. As a united front, they worked tirelessly to ensure their students continued to grow in both faith and academics. New ways of communication, learning, and support continue to be essential aspects of the school to home connection. Our teachers reflect on instructional practice frequently and alter their approach to teaching, as needed, to ensure the success of every student.

The result? Improved student learning. While national news stories continued to circulate about the "learning loss" of students during the pandemic, our student academic scores showed otherwise! Our diocesan students demonstrated growth in both reading and math across all grades, kindergarten through eighth grade, during the 2020-21 school year! We are proud to say that the Diocese of Sacramento out-performed all of the other dioceses in California and across the United States.

As a system, our schools have positively pushed forward exceeding goals and living out our mission; serving our students and families and creating disciples of Jesus. Our dedicated principals continue to lead our Catholic schools fearlessly. The implementation of creative and innovative programs at schools across our diocese continue to assist with the formation of our students as service-leaders in Christ, as well as prepare our students for a global world.

The generosity of our communities and donors continue to provide the necessary resources for continual improvements to our Catholic schools. Renovations, new buildings, expanded campuses and upgraded technology have enabled schools to adequately support student learning in new ways.

As the new Executive Director of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Sacramento, it is a privilege to visit so many of our school sites throughout our various regions. While each school is unique in their charism and community, I have

personally witnessed three similarities in every one of our Catholic schools; unwavering Catholicity, tangible joy, and welcoming community. It is evident that Jesus Christ permeates our school campuses.

Our Catholic schools have created sacred and reverent places for students to pray and play amid their school grounds. Student-created virtue themes for the year are displayed loud and proud on school walls, each day begins with scripture and prayer, and school mission statements are visible in all spaces.

Most importantly, the mission of each school is reflected in the actions of each student and staff member. Students are eager to pray for one another and naturally volunteer to serve their surrounding communities without reward. Staff members are role models of faith and service for social justice and continually offer opportunities for students to learn about the importance of prayer, the Eucharist, and liturgy.

Our schools are places of joy. Laughter and learning fills the classrooms and seeps out into the hallways and onto the playground. Students are welcoming, eager to introduce themselves and share what they are working on, what they are looking forward to, and what they love most about their school. They are vocal with gratitude and thankful for a safe place; a second home where they know they are cared for and loved.

We started this school year with a focus on community, getting back to the basics of fellowship in our schools and parishes. We have been able to safely host community events, hold student sporting events, and add previously held activities, which we were not able to do at the beginning of the pandemic. Outdoor BBQs, fall festivals, outdoor dances, and sports were creatively planned and safely executed. We held our annual diocesan Speech Contest in-person in early November and we are looking forward to providing many of our other traditional student events and competitions where students from all schools have an opportunity to gather together.

As we forge ahead, we are focused on cultivating a system based on transparency, trust, collaboration, accountability, and shared leadership. In inclusive environments, we will strive to continue to form service-leaders in Christ while providing exemplary educational programs that support all learners. It is my goal to secure and develop resources that support and promote our overall mission as we demonstrate our commitment to serving our schools, students and families.

We are deeply dedicated to the moral development of our students to ensure they are productive, contributing members of society and disciples of Jesus. Our Catholic schools are sanctuaries of faith and learning where all students illuminate their paths to salvation.

Together with our parishes, our parents, principals, and teachers continue to form exceptional generations of faithful Catholic leaders. Every student is Valued. Learning is Celebrated. Faith is Strengthened.

Wishing you all a blessed Catholic Schools Week!

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "K. Perata".

Katie Perata, Ed.D.
Executive Director of Catholic Schools
Diocese of Sacramento