

Good Evening your Worship Bishop Bergie, fellow trustees and all supporters of Catholic Education

As we embark on this year, we are thankful for the many gifts we have been afforded in the past year. Past Chair Frank Fera has guided us forward, thank you for your leadership and unwavering commitment to Catholic Education. Our new Director, Camillo Cipriano has taken the helm at a difficult period however the legacy of our former Director John Crocco has left us ready to face the challenges ahead. Covid has changed the landscape and created new stressors that we will all need to be mindful of. More than ever we need to look out for one another and be the support system for each other, especially our students, who we are entrusted to help them actualize all the potential God has given them..

As Trustees for the Niagara Catholic District School Board we have walked many paths, some met at the same place, some did not. The purpose of our different paths is as varied as the unique skills and attributes we each have. Our role as Trustees is not to be the same but to be unique and be willing to share the gift of our experience and commitment to Catholic education. Through open, honest dialogue our differences become the strength of the Board. We are witness to this when we look at the diversity of each table we support, be it students, staff, clergy or community. All of us that make up Niagara Catholic have an opportunity and obligation to continue to respect diversity, to support all our students, their families, all staff and the church community. Together this is the essence of Niagara Catholic.

There is a call to action that all of us who support Catholic Education must recognize. These are complex and difficult times. Supporting the staff of Niagara Catholic has never been more critical for a strong, effective Catholic Education system in Ontario. Allowing staff to do the work their vocation has called them to do is paramount for our students to succeed. We will all be tested in the upcoming year. Our collective response will be guided by our faith. The knowledge that by finding a louder voice on our shared needs and values we will be able to offer an exceptional educational experience for all those that we have

the blessings of engaging with. There is also the opportunity that gaining knowledge on our differences and making those differences strengths not weaknesses will ensure that we are being receptive to the whole of the Niagara Catholic community.

We must all commit to supporting one another and while we may not always agree, we will use the teachings of Christ as our compass to navigate the waters ahead.

I ask for all your prayers, support and guidance as we move forward for the 2021 year.