

Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board

INITIAL ADDRESS

by

PATRICK J. DALY  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD

Initial Meeting of the Board  
Tuesday, December 5, 2017

*“In the end, the promise of this moment for Catholic Education in Ontario will be realized in the degree to which we recall to each other the promise of our Baptism. In some mysterious way, we have been promised to God to one another. Our young Catholics are promises of God and we and they are called to share this promise with our world.”*

Your Excellency Bishop Crosby, Special Guests, Fellow Trustees, Ladies and Gentlemen: as we begin the final year of this term of office and pledge throughout it to *“Renew the Promise”* of the treasured gift of publicly funded Catholic Education, I find it helpful to reflect (pray) upon the words of the Ontario Catholic Bishops as written in their outstanding Pastoral Letter, *“This Moment of Promise”* (first Pastoral letter on Education). The words are for me an important reminder

that although the reality (challenges and opportunities) of Catholic Education has changed, the mission remains the same.

As throughout its 160+ year history, the purpose of Catholic Education is one of “Communicating Christ to others.” Bishop Robert Barron in his book *To Light a Fire on the Earth*, states this clearly when he writes:

*“Evangelization isn’t about a concept or an idea but about a friendship with Christ that you have, and that you want someone else to have.”*

It is this “Priority of Christ” that we are ultimately called to Renew. We saw commitment to this cause fully alive last Friday at our System Faith Day.

I would like to thank those who made this most memorable day possible: Bishop Crosby for celebrating the Eucharist (inspiring homily) and for his significant financial contribution

and to our other local F.A.C.E. partners; the OECTA Secondary and Elementary Unit Presidents for their support; Special words of appreciation to Corrado Ciapanna and Paul Beaudette for their leadership; and all of the planning committee members and other volunteers whose tireless work made the day a complete success.

For me the gathering/day was above else one of hope and a most appropriate way to renew the individual (each of us) and collective (communal) promise we have made to Catholic Education.

I was inspired to reflect on the current state and future of Catholic Education through a book I read recently. The book entitled "*Catholic Education Parishes of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*" was the result of an extensive research project conducted in the U.S. and intended to assist with Parish and Diocesan planning. I

remain struck by the following statement which I believe has relevance with regard to Catholic Education in Hamilton-Wentworth:

*“The Church of the 1980’s still holds a nostalgic place in our religious imaginations and shows up in discussions about how to move forward. But if we hope to maintain vitality in today’s world, we must study these emerging trends and prepare for a different future.”*

Once I got beyond the reference to the 1980’s as that “nostalgic place,” I took some time thinking about the emerging trends in Catholic Education and considered my own thoughts as to how to prepare for what for certain will be a much different future.

I would like to suggest four significant current trends/realities which impact publicly funded Catholic

Education and should be considered through-out our journey of “*Renewing the Promise*”. I do not raise these trends to suggest that they are to the most important or the only ones. I do not do so either to suggest that in any way I am pessimistic about the future of publicly funded Catholic Education. I am filled with joy and much hope every time I visit one of our schools or attend a system event. On each occasion I witness people at all levels deeply committed to the cause of high quality faith based education and the choice (within the publicly funded system) our schools provide to parents. Like you I see high quality Religious Education programs and a commitment to academic and co-curricular excellence. I marvel at the high number (more than even) of students and staff actively involved in Culture of Life, Stewardship of creation and many other Christian service experiences. All of this is to be celebrated

and continuously promoted.

I identify (raise) these “Emerging Trends” so as to contribute to the dialogue of “*Renewing the Promise*” and to help to ensure Catholic Schools “maintain vitality” and are well prepared for a “different future.” I do so as well to encourage conversation, and action at both the system and school level. I do so finally out of my understanding of the critical importance of Christian witness in the realization of our mission and appreciation for the distinct vocations and outstanding service of teachers and other staff (other adults – parents). It is in this context that I suggest we must study the impact of:

- (i) increased centralization
- (ii) increased decline in social structures
- (iii) increased reliance on technology; and
- (iv) increased secularization.

Time will not permit me to comment in detail or on each. However, in my view the first two can serve to diminish: local autonomy/flexibility (subsidiarity/risk taking) and community, both of which are crucial to the realization of *the* mission of Catholic Education.

Increased centralization has occurred over the last number of years as a result of policies at the Provincial level and unfortunately at the Board and ultimately school level. This together with other forces has increased the decline in participation in many important social structures (Catholic School Councils – Parental involvement).

I say this to suggest that at all levels of our school system we need to more fully engage trustees, administrative system and school leaders, teachers, other staff and parents in

promoting opportunities for Adult Faith Formation. In some ways I suggest we need to turn around the partnership of home, school and parish so as to harness the unique opportunity Catholic Schools have to engage staff, parents and trustees with parishes so as to better facilitate Adult Faith Formation. In light of the influence of the trends I raised earlier, Adult Faith Formation is for me the most significant opportunity for “Renewal.”

As those entrusted to govern our Catholic School System we as trustees play an important role in identifying significant trends and establishing policies so as to ensure the future vitality of Catholic Education. Through our own personal example and our commitment to provide sufficient and additional resources, we can make a real difference with regard to Adult Faith Formation.

The review of our permanent committees and upcoming development (2018-2021) of our Multi-Year Strategic Plan serve as real opportunities to put in place the necessary vision, structures and identification of appropriate resources to support Faith Formation and other priorities.

The sub-themes to be celebrated in Catholic Education week – 2018 highlight the tremendous things happening in our schools and inspire the priority of renewed Adult Faith Formation. As you know the sub-themes flow from the overarching theme of “*Renewing the Promise.*” The sub-themes are:

- “Remembering the Promise”;
- “The Promise is within you”;
- “Praying the Promise”;
- “Living the Promise”; and

- “Proclaiming the Promise”.

The first sub-theme, “*Remembering the Promise*” invites us to give thanks for and maintain support for those programs/initiatives which distinguish our Catholic School System and to seek new initiatives which foster that distinctiveness.

As we know academic excellence is one of the pillars upon which Catholic Education has been built. As a result of the outstanding service of our teachers and other staff, our students and schools continue to achieve at very high levels. Our support for Math Special Assignment teachers, commitment to gap closing courses at all 7 of our secondary schools and continuation of discretionary (non-provincial funded) programs such as reading recovery are but a few examples of our efforts to assist all students in realizing their fullness of humanity.

Excellence in Catholic Education of course includes commitment to high quality Arts Program. We see on a regular basis evidence of excellence in the arts in our schools. We witness this both in high quality academic arts programs and an ever increasing wide range of co-curricular activities: to name only a few. Improvaganza and 7-5-1 Visual Arts Display, Vocal Fest, Super Bands, Junior Expression and other Feeder school choirs and Déjà vu Theatre.

Our students benefit greatly from outstanding co-curricular sports programs. Over and over again we see our student athletes and school teams performing and succeeding at the highest levels. To the teacher and other volunteer coaches and club advisors who make these very important opportunities possible, we thank you for your generosity of time and self. As a result of their outstanding service, the quality (and range of

opportunity) of our C.Y.O. supported Crusader Athletic and Secondary Varsity Programs are second to none in the Province.

Throughout its history, a hallmark of Catholic Education in Hamilton-Wentworth has been a commitment to (absolute importance) the preferential option for the disadvantaged and hurting. In recent years this promise has been evident through our support of the Equal Opportunities Initiative. Regular establishment of appropriated surpluses in support of this crucially important program. I was given witness to that commitment.

More than ever the promise to level the playing field requires equity in opportunity. As we know as a result of particular circumstances some students and some school communities require additional resources so as to ensure equality in opportunity (purpose of Equal Opportunities

Initiative).

Programs such as Wilma's Place, St. Martin's Manor, St. Charles Adult Education, Notre Dame House, SOAR to name only a few are more important than ever and rely on our continued support. We are called in a very particular way to give priority to the programs provided to the students in our Equal Opportunity School Communities.

We see at the system and school level a real recognition of the importance of the Mental Wellness of our students. We continue to expand the number of staff across the system provided with safe talk training and allocate additional resources in support of student well-being. I commend our Mental Health Lead, Social Workers and other staff who serve in this important Ministry.

For over 40 years our system's philosophy of "Each

Belongs” has held out the promise of a high quality Catholic Education to our special needs students (and parents). Through the implementation of the Central Extension Agreements, we renewed our commitment to “Each Belongs” through the allocation of additional Special Education Staff. In recent presentations we have seen how programs at Central locations, [such as Junior Academic Success Program – (JASP)] System level, Speech and Language Centre (PSCE), Lexia Core 5 and Technology Learning Centre (TLC), benefit special needs students. It will continue to be important to study our Special Education Service Delivery Model and advocate at the Provincial level for improvements to special education funding.

Like me, I am sure you recognize a consistency in the remaining Catholic Education Week sub-themes. The “*Promise Within You*”, “*Praying Promise*”, “*Living the Promise*” and

*“Proclaiming the Promise”* all speak to that which is at the core of Catholic Education (Christ and Community).

Given the reality of many families today, our schools have an ever increasing responsibility with regard to the faith formation of our students. The on-going roll-out of the new Elementary Religious Education Textbook/Learning materials and release of the Secondary Religious Education Curriculum Policy Document (by the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario) are occasions filled with much hope and renewal.

We as well are encouraged to continue to offer every support possible to our Christian Service Programs (D.R.E.A.M.S., Notre Dame Vision, Haiti, etc.). At this time each year I am reminded of Father Kennedy’s commitment to the importance of providing a component of authentic reflection as a part of their Christian service experience. Research is very

clear with regard to the importance of understanding the “why” of Christian service. No better example of this than the De Mazenod Room partnership between our Board and St. Patrick school and parish.

The importance of communal and individual prayer cannot be overstated in the process of Renewing the Promise of Catholic Education. To quote St. Teresa of Calcutta:

*“I used to believe that prayer changes things, but now I believe that prayer changes us and we change things.”*

We have seen a great example of this in the goodness of Sr. Ann Marshall (and Leanne Thompson) through their sharing of Christian meditation.

Earlier I included increased use of technology as an important emerging trend. In terms of faith formation, I see technology and social media as a real opportunity. We have seen

in the example of Pope Francis, Bishop Robert Barron and others the significant impact the use of social media can have in promoting our faith. In a recent survey I read, 72% of respondents indicated social media has either been positive or had mixed results in their faith life and 70% said it has helped them grow closer to God. Think about the tremendous opportunity we have particularly with older students and adults (staff, trustees and parents). Pope Francis has said, “text message and social media are a gift from God.”

In terms of our collective commitment of “Renewing the Promise”, I return to my belief in the importance of a renewed vision (strategy) in support of adult faith formation. In support of the outstanding service and significant contribution of our Adult Faith Animator, Jerry Creedon and in recognition of the distinct vocation and tireless service of Catholic teachers and

other staff (other adults), I strongly recommend:

- through the Budget Steering Committee, we provide additional resources in support of adult faith formation;
- in partnership with the Diocese/Parishes and Catholic School Councils we form a task force to develop strategies in support of faith formation for parents;
- faith formation and spiritual renewal form an essential component of our vision of trustee professional development.

One of my favourite writers Parker Palmer stated it well when he wrote:

*“To educate is to guide students on an inner journey toward more truthful ways of being and seeing in the world. How can schools perform their mission without encouraging the guides to scout their inner terrain?”*

We owe our students and staff nothing less.

The commitment to the well-being of our staff extends beyond spiritual well-being. In this regard it is crucial we continue to support and expand programs and services that promote the physical, mental and pastoral care of our staff.

In a special way I want to recognize and express deep gratitude to Kelly Lazure-Valcone (EAP) and Meg Petkoff (Respectful Workplace) for their exemplary service.

The promise of the well-being of staff includes as well a commitment to stability and fairness in compensation. With the support of the Provincial Government and the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, we were pleased to provide two year extensions to our Collective Agreements with our teachers and other unionized staff. The approval to post our Local Executive Compensation Framework is an effort on our part to

recognize the faith-filled leadership (and exemplary service) of those who serve in Executive positions in our Board.

Recently the process has begun to invest in and recognize our outstanding (PASS) administrative staff through the introduction of a new career framework and compensation plan. This compensation vision will be built on the core principles of vocation, fairness, stewardship and collaborative/transparency. Their invaluable service gives witness to the fact that, *“there is no such thing as just a job in Catholic Education.”*

The hope of “Renewing the Promise” of Catholic Education of course requires a commitment to good stewardship of resources and effective planning. In this regard we have seen and benefitted from the tremendous vision of our Corporate Services and Human Resources officials. As a result of their leadership we are creating seamless integration across our

financial, payroll and HR systems with finance conversion as step 1. Focusing on energy management and reducing our system's carbon foot print remains a priority. The recruitment of an Energy Management Officer funded through an Alectra Incentives Program (grant) will help to advance this important priority.

We have much to celebrate in terms of the condition and renewal of our school facilities. The soon to be completed new Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Elementary School and additions at St. Jean de Brebeuf Catholic Secondary School and Child Care Centre at St. Gabriel Catholic Elementary School are cause for celebration. The funding for the new Catholic Elementary School in Binbrook and the installation of artificial turf playing fields at the remaining two Secondary Schools Cathedral and St. Mary are significant accomplishments.

These improvements are the result of the wise counsel of our administrative leaders and good decision making on the part of our Board. The effective and efficient use of school facilities will continue to require good planning and at times courageous decisions. One important priority is the need for us to approve policies which mitigate against enrolment discrepancies between our 7 Secondary Schools. This will require an openness to a differentiated Secondary School Admissions Policy.

As we know Catholic Christian Community is central to the realization of the mission of our School System and Renewing of the Promise cannot and will not occur without the active engagement of all partners.

In this regard I would like to thank all those who contribute to the strengthening of community within our system.

**Bishop**

Thank the wonderful teacher of the faith in our Diocese, His Excellency Bishop Crosby. My favourite quote regarding evangelization comes from St. Thomas Aquinas when he wrote:

*“Someone we trust has told us it is so and we believe them.”*

Bishop Crosby is such a person for our Diocese and for our Catholic School System. His goodness and generosity serves as tremendous Christian Witness for students, staff and trustees.

For his presence at so many events and constant support I thank you Bishop Crosby.

### **Parents and Catholic School Councils**

The Chairs and members of Catholic School Councils and CPIC provide important leadership and support at the school and system level. We know the significant difference parental engagement makes with regard to student achievement. From a Catholic vision, parental engagement is essential (primary

educators of the faith). We thank those parents who serve on Catholic School Councils (and CPIC) and those who volunteer in any way. We owe it to Catholic education to work with you and find renewed ways to engage and harness the energy of parents. Particularly with regard to faith formation.

### **Student Council Presidents**

I want to recognize and thank student trustee Mikayla D'Agostino and all of our Catholic Student Council Presidents for the real difference they make to the spirit of their school communities and for their commitment to Catholic Education. Their support for and engagement in the OCSTA, "*Together in Faith Campaign*" was amazing (they are not only future leaders but are current Catholic leaders). They serve as tremendous ambassadors for our system and represent well the goodness we see in our students.

## **Parishes**

We want to thank Pastors and parish communities for the ministry they provide to students and staff in our schools. The importance of the relationship between the parish and Catholic School cannot be overstated. The opportunity to promote the new evangelization through the parish/school can as well not be overstated. We commit to work with parishes to promote renewal in adult faith formation.

## **Employee Groups**

We saw in our recent historic System Faith Day the deep commitment our Employee Groups have to the mission of Catholic Education. Their financial support and active involvement was instrumental in making this important day such a great success. We pledge to continue to work with all Employee Groups representatives in a spirit of co-operation and

harmony.

We are grateful for the dedicated service and commitment of staff through-out our school system. They are central to Renewing the Promise of Catholic Education. On behalf of the Board of Trustees I thank:

- Principals, Vice-Principals, Senior Managers and Managers for their faith filled leadership and service. (This moment of Promise: *“You more than anyone have the opportunity to nurture the Catholic Christian character of your school community.”*)
- Teachers, Chaplaincy leaders, Custodians, Assistant Custodians, Maintenance staff, Educational Assistants, Clerical staff, Early Childhood Educators, Professional Support staff (Speech Pathologists, Social workers,

Respectful Workplace Coordinator, Pastoral Care/EAP Coordinator) and all school support staff for their outstanding service and crucially important Christian Witness.

- I want to recognize and thank all of the wonderful men and women who serve in administrative support positions – Planning, Printing, Payroll, Purchasing, Accounts, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Plant, etc. Their service is critical to our schools and the realization of our mission.
- As a Board we are extremely well served and most importantly our students benefit greatly from the professionalism and goodness of our Senior staff.
- Assistant Superintendents: Julie Angiolillo, Gregory Tabone, Sandra Scime and Domenica Leone.

- Executive Officer of Human Resources, Angelo Romano
- Superintendents of Education: Corrado Ciapanna, Ivana Fortino, Toni Kovach, Morris Hucal and Sandie Pizzuti.
- We see through the exemplary service of Associate Director of Corporate Services, Paola Pace-Gubekjian the significant contribution those in business leadership make to the cause of Catholic Education. Her goodness, tireless work and total conviction to the mission of our school system is a tremendous example to all and makes a real positive difference in the quality of education our students receive.
- I want to recognize and express our deep gratitude to Director of Education, Dave Hansen. His tremendous Christian witness and faith-filled leadership inspires others to serve with similar faithfulness. Beyond his significant

contribution to our Catholic School System, he is truly a Catholic Christian gentleman.

- On behalf of the Board and personally I would like to express appreciation to those who serve us and the system so well in the Director's Office: Sandra Giacinti, Stephanie Santi and Emilia Rastelli.

I personally would like to thank those who have been of invaluable support to me and who I have been blessed to journey with:

- To my fellow Trustees for your continued confidence and support.
- Marnie Jadon for her many kindnesses, assistance and wise counsel.
- Jerry Creedon for his very much appreciated spiritual guidance and for serving as a constant source of hope and

light.

- Lorena Madalena for her invaluable assistance. I know that my many, many requests both in this role and as President of the OCSTA has added greatly to her other important responsibilities. Her willingness to work extra hours and graciousness at all times has been of great support and I am very appreciative.
- I want to thank my four wonderful children: Mike, Kyle, Colleen and Monica and special daughter-in-law Robyn. If I can single out one I would like to congratulate (and thank) Monica - her example of the value of setting a goal and working (sacrificing) to achieve it has been inspiring to me (serenity); and
- Most especially and I know incompletely I would like to express appreciation to Carol for her love, consistent

support and loyalty. At a conference I was at recently a speaker said, *“Marriage is not about happiness but about having someone in the boat with you rowing in the same direction.”* From experience I know the presenter was dead wrong on the first part and absolutely right in the second.

Thank you Carol for 31 years of happiness and for taking on more than your share of the joy of rowing the boat in the same direction.

I close with the words of Pope Francis:

*“We cannot live without hope and education generates hope. In fact, education gives birth, it helps grow, it’s part of the dynamic of giving life.”*

It is my prayer that our decisions this year and commitment to faith formation serve to inspire hope and contribute to the crucially important cause of *“Renewing the Promise”* of the

precious gift of publicly funded Catholic Education.