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Catholic Education Sunday 2008-2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Pope Benedict XVI has declared June 28, 2008 to June 29, 2009 to be a Jubilee Year dedicated to St. Paul. Following last year's Catholic Education Sunday theme and celebration of *The Eucharist, gift of God for the life of the world*, and taking into account the Pauline year, the theme for this year's Catholic Education Sunday is: *Ready to Evangelize - A Life in Faith*.

As we enter into our school faith communities and embark on our journey in faith, we can take many lessons from this early saint and founder of the Church. As educators and students, we are called not only to recognize that our life is directed by faith but also to share with others its empowering role in our lives.

The General Directory for Catechesis states that "religious instruction in schools sows the dynamic seed of the Gospel." As members of the Catholic education community, it is our responsibility to ensure that this seed is sown despite the numerous cultural challenges we face today. Just as in St. Paul's time, evangelization will meet with resistance, but we must gather strength from our faith and continue, like St. Paul, faithfully in our mission.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul writes, "May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light" (Colossians 1: 11-12). The challenges to evangelization may have changed through time, but the faith we experience is still the same as that which propelled St. Paul in his mission.

Ours is a beautiful faith. It roots us in Jesus Christ, who is the world's only true hope for happiness and peace. The students entrusted to our care deserve to receive this faith in its entirety and be taught how to live it fully. Within the Catholic schools of Alberta our most important task is to witness before our students and one another to the joy of knowing and following Jesus Christ.

As we embark on the 2008-2009 school year let us remember the lessons of St. Paul and allow faith to strengthen our will to evangelize. Let us be ready to live a life in faith and *Ready to Evangelize a Life in Faith*

A Special Message for Students on Catholic Education Sunday

Dear Students in Christ,

Pope Benedict XVI has declared June 28, 2008 to June 29, 2009 to be a Jubilee Year celebrating the work of St. Paul. As an early Christian, St. Paul knew the importance of spreading the Word of Christ – evangelizing - and he devoted his life to it. We continue to celebrate Paul's words when we read his letters in the Bible, and we know him as the patron saint of evangelists and authors. We also know St. Paul to be the patron saint of tent-makers.

Today the occupation of tent-maker might seem rather humble. But consider for a moment tents to be houses, and suddenly the idea of a house-maker does not seem as unimportant. Houses, like tents, are a shelter for us in many ways.

We have many houses in our lives. Most obviously, we have our physical house where we live. But we also have our churches as houses of faith and our schools as houses of education. Even our bodies are houses for our hearts and minds and souls. But how does faith, and St. Paul, join with our ideas of houses?

Like any architect we must consider how we build our houses. In order to live to our full capacity as Catholics, we must work to build our houses with faith. Thinking of the tents in St. Paul's time, we could say that when St. Paul spread the Word of Christ he was working to sew a seam of faith into the tent of the Catholic community and to ensure that it would shelter all who chose to be under it.

The same applies today. When we build our lives based on faith, we live our lives in God. Our hearts, minds and spirits reflect his will and his love for us and then we work, like St. Paul, to share this message with others in all of our houses.

This year as we celebrate the Jubilee of St. Paul let us go into our churches, homes and schools and work to be tent-makers stitching threads of faith into the tapestries of our lives strengthening them in Christ.

Most Reverend Richard W. Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton

Most Reverend Frederick Henry
Bishop of Calgary

Most Reverend Gerard Pettipas CSsR
Archbishop Grouard-McLennan

Most Reverend David Motiuk
Bishop of the Ukrainian Eparchy of Edmonton

Most Reverend Murray Chatlain
Bishop of Mackenzie-Fort Smith

Most Reverend Luc Bouchard
Bishop of St. Paul