

Catholic Schools Week, 2021



“Catholic Schools, Communities of Faith and Resilience” **Message from Bishop Paul Dempsey**

It was one year ago, on the 27th of January 2020, that Pope Francis appointed me as Bishop of Achonry. One of the very special aspects of the day was to have so many of the school communities from around the diocese present in the Cathedral on the morning the announcement was made. Principals, teachers, members of staff and, of course, many boys and girls were present as Archbishop Jude, the Papal Nuncio, made the announcement. It was lovely to have the large gathering in the Cathedral, a gathering full of vibrancy and hope! We did not realise it at the time, but it was probably one of the last large gatherings we would attend in the diocese before the full onset of the COVID 19 situation.

Since becoming bishop on the 30th of August, I have been very fortunate, despite the lockdowns, to visit all the parishes in the diocese. Due to the situation, these were limited visits, and I could not visit the local schools, but I received a very warm and hearty welcome from the people in the parishes. I thank you most sincerely for that.

As we approach February, I have noticed the stretch in the evenings, the snowdrops are starting to peep through the earth, the rollout of the vaccine is progressing, and thankfully the numbers contracting COVID seems to be decreasing. Even though we may be feeling a bit fed up with lockdown, these are great signs of hope for us all. If we continue to put the “shoulder to the wheel” in the coming months we will come out of this and we can look forward to connecting with each other and our loved ones in a real sense, not just virtually!

Please God, when it is safe to do so, I look forward to getting around the diocese and visiting our great schools which really are communities of faith and resilience. The boys and girls came to visit me last January in the Cathedral, so I am looking forward to going out and visiting them in their schools as soon as I can. As we celebrate *Catholic Schools Week*, I thank our Boards of Management, our principals, our teachers, SNAs, and members of staff who continue to work very hard to teach our children online. It is not easy, but you are doing a great job which is very much appreciated. I also thank Fr. Martin Henry, Marian Maloney, Sr. Mary Richardson, and our priests for all the work they do in supporting our teachers and pupils in the area of faith formation in our schools.

The 27th of January 2020 was a moment of great hope and vibrancy in the Cathedral, that message is very much alive in our diocese today! To all of you in our school communities this Catholic Schools Week, I send my best wishes and pray God’s blessing upon you all. Keep safe and remember keep washing those hands!

With warm wishes,

+Paul.