

GOOD NEWS is happening in our Catholic Schools

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK JANUARY 28-FEBRUARY 3, 2007



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

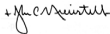
I am very pleased that this issue of *The Prairie Catholic* is devoting so much space to our Catholic grade and high schools as we celebrate Catholic Schools Week from January 28 through February 3, 2007. The theme for this year's celebration is "Catholic Schools: The Good News in Education." This title helps us to acknowledge with deep appreciation the significant contribution that our Catholic schools have had both on our Church and on our culture. I have said many times that these schools are more important now than ever before. Thus, I look forward with anticipation and hope to the continuing impact that they will have as "good news" for the future of our Church and country.

Our Catholic schools carry on the important mission of evangelizing our youth. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops recently made a statement in 2005 called, *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium*. In that document, we, as bishops, said, "We must respond to challenging times with faith, vision, and the will to succeed because the Catholic schools' mission is vital to the future of our young people, our nation, and most especially our Church."

The University of Notre Dame's Task Force on Catholic Education recently published a document, *Making God Known, Loved and Served: The Future of Catholic*

Primary and Secondary Schools in the United States. One of their concluding statements is the following: "The rise of evangelical Christian schools shows that other Christian communities have learned what many Catholics have forgotten or are willing to ignore – that there is no substitute for spending 35 hours each week in an educational environment permeated by faith and Gospel values. To those who wonder how we can afford to make the investment necessary to sustain, strengthen, and expand Catholic schools, we respond by turning the question on its head. How can we afford not to make this investment? Our future depends on it more than we may suspect."

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the parents and other family members who have entered a partnership with their Catholic school, entrusting their children to those who teach from the perspective of our Catholic faith and who labor in our Catholic schools as a way of fulfilling their calling to this evangelizing mission in the name of the Church. Each of us in the Church plays an important role in the future of our Catholic schools since, as Catholics, each of us is responsible for passing our Catholic faith onto the next generation.



The Most Rev. John C. Nienstedt
Bishop of New Ulm



GOOD NEWS AT JOHN IRELAND SCHOOL IN ST. PETER!
On October 4, 2006, 4th graders had the opportunity to take part in the annual "Holy Field Trip" in New Ulm, sponsored by the diocesan Office of Schools. Students visited the Way of the Cross and toured the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity where they attended a special prayer service with Bishop Nienstedt.

Read more, pages 6-7