

DIOCESE OF BUFFALO

Office of the Bishop

September 2, 2025

Dear Friends, Brothers & Sisters in our Lord —

I wish to share with you some thoughts as we come together once again as a family to embrace, guide, and support our young people at the start of a new school year. Indeed, the education of our youth, and in the context of a faith community, remains among the most essential ministries of the Church, and the responsibility that each of us also accepts in our baptismal commitment to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to nurture the faith of others.

We cannot help but be mindful of the unconscionable tragedy that the parish community of the Annunciation in Minneapolis experienced last week. It is beyond comprehension how anyone, however disturbed, could commit such an act of pure evil toward innocent children gathered in prayer and in celebration of the Holy Eucharist. We must hold them and their families, who have been left terrified and heartbroken, constantly in our hearts as we plead with our God in his infinite grace and mercy to comfort them and bring healing, as only He can. The causes of such persistent violence in our nation's schools must be honestly considered by all who have the capacity and bear ultimate responsibility to enact meaningful remedies. A nation that professes to be the freest among nations cannot be content when so many of its citizens are denied the freedom from fear in conducting the routine aspects of everyday life, which include sending children off to school, lest they become victims of gun violence. We must not—we cannot—accept this reality of American life a moment longer.

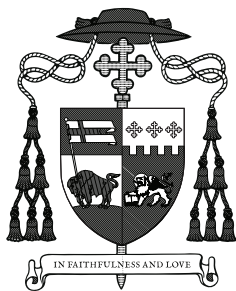
From the earliest days of our Christian faith, the role of teacher has been regarded as among the most revered charisms of the Church. St. Paul, in defining the hierarchy of roles in his first letter to the Corinthians wrote: *"And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues."*

It's for this reason that we must honor and provide every support to those educators among us who give so much of themselves—sharing generously their talents, devoting so much energy and time—to nourish the minds of our young people, to cultivate their emerging talents and abilities, and guide them as they mature and discern their life's direction. In fulfilling their vocations daily in the classroom, in evenings at home preparing for the next day's classes (often after putting their own children to bed),

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participating in so many meetings and extra-curricular activities, our teachers and school administrators demonstrate the selfless devotion and service to others that is the hallmark of true Christian discipleship. Our beloved late Pope Francis stated it beautifully in his address to a delegation from the Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education (G.R.A.C.E.): *"As educators, you are called to nurture the desire for truth, goodness and beauty that lies in the heart of each individual, so that all may learn how to love life and be open to the fullness of life."*

Let us do all that we can to ease their days and to lessen the burdens of our teachers. As parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents and caretakers—and, yes as parish families—we must do our part, never relinquishing or transferring to teachers those responsibilities that are ours to fulfill in caring for, mentoring and guiding our children. The future we hope for is determined by our commitment to the daily well-being of the young souls entrusted to us and by the countless small acts, words and gestures that convey to them our unconditional love and constant concern.

In these early days and in all those to come in this new school year, please know of my fervent prayers for you, our educators, school administrators, support staff, volunteers and parents, and most especially for our children. I wish and pray for a year that brings to fulfillment all of the potential we see in them, and one that allows us to revel in the joy of their personal and collective accomplishments as they continue on their journey as young girls and boys, and eventually as women and men of faith, conviction and purpose.

Together, let us give thanks to Jesus our Lord who, as a loving Teacher, guides our path and enlightens our minds and hearts to his ultimate truth. I look forward to visiting often with you in the classroom and in the shared celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Sincerely in Christ,

The Most Reverend Michael W. Fisher
Bishop of Buffalo