

Education Sunday is a significant occasion in the calendar of the Church in England and Wales. This year, it falls on 11 September. Taking place at the start of the academic year, this day offers an opportunity for us to pray to Almighty God for all people involved in Catholic education, to celebrate the achievements of the past and to ask Our Lord to bless the work of the year ahead.

The theme of this year's Education Sunday is 'Enlightening the Mind' and is based on the Gospel acclamation for that day: "May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our mind, so that we can see what hope his call holds for us" (Ephesians 1:17,18).

In St John's Gospel, Our Lord teaches us: "If you make my word your home you will indeed be my disciples, you will learn the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31,32). Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the revelation of his word, is 'the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school. His revelation gives new meaning to life and helps man to direct his thought, action and will according to the Gospel, making the beatitudes his norm of life' (Cf. The Catholic School, Dicastery for Catholic Education, §34).

The enterprise of Catholic education, whether in the home, school, college or university, is built on the belief that it is God our Father who enlightens the eyes of our minds. Through his gift of grace, he enables us to discover him and come into a relationship with him in Christ, the one source of all truth and freedom. For truth enlightens our intelligence and shapes our freedom, leading us to know and love God. A Catholic education facilitates truth and freedom above all when it places the Eternal Word of God, Jesus Christ, at its centre.

When blessed with enlightened minds, not only are students able to learn to grow and walk in the light of truth but they can share, too, the freedom and hope it brings with their family, their communities and, as they pursue their vocation, with the world in which they live and work.

The Church teaches that we begin to reach our full human potential when we respond with open hearts to the Lord's call and to the vocation which he desires for each one of us. As the Gospel acclamation affirms, with enlightened minds we can see the great hope that his call holds for us.

I wish to thank all those past and present who have worked, and continue to work, faithfully to place the person of Jesus Christ at the heart of their work in educational institutions, and to make them centres of enlightenment, hope, and virtue. On this Education Sunday, let us give thanks in prayer for all the staff in our Catholic schools, colleges and universities, and pray that our lives will be enlightened always by the truth which comes from the Eternal Word of God.

Rt Rev Marcus Stock

Bishop of Leeds

Chair of the Catholic Education Service