



DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

January 31, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Beginning Sunday, January 31, 2021 and continuing through February 6, 2021, the 35 Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Rockville Centre will participate in the annual national celebration of Catholic education: Catholic Schools Week.

The theme for National Catholic Schools Week 2021 is “Catholic Schools: Faith. Excellence. Service.” Schools typically observe the week with Masses, open houses and other activities for students, families, parishioners, and community members. Through these events, schools focus on the value Catholic education provides young people and its contributions to our church, our communities, and our nation.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Catholic Schools Week will look a bit different. In lieu of the traditional open houses our schools have held in the past to meet with prospective families, the schools will be offering virtual open houses and one-to-one meetings with principals that will allow prospective families to ‘visit’ the Catholic school(s) of their choice from the safety and comfort of their homes.

This year, in spite of the pandemic, we have made significant progress transforming our schools through the Morning Star Initiative (MSI). Many elements of the Morning Star Initiative are already in place, like key academic improvements in mathematics, reading, and religious studies, which are helping students reach new potential. I am so grateful for the tireless dedication of the MSI team.

Working with the MSI team, Long Island’s Catholic elementary school faculty and staff continue to put the needs of the 11,626 students (nursery-8th grade) and their families first. From maintaining the continuity of instruction during remote learning when the Covid-19 pandemic hit back in March, to taking all of the necessary precautions to welcome students back into a safe school environment this fall, I am extremely grateful for the grit and determination demonstrated by our school community to address the academic, spiritual and social needs of our students.

Earlier this month, on January 4, 2021, we celebrated the 200th anniversary of the death of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton (1774-1821), one of the great native-born American Evangelizers and champions of Catholic Education. Please join me in praying that Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton and Mary, Star of Evangelization continue to intercede for each of us, for our Morning Star and Department of Education teams, and for our principals, teachers, and staff. With prayers and gratitude for your efforts, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend John O. Barres
Bishop of Rockville Centre