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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Catholic Church in England and Wales has celebrated Education Sunday for many years. Falling at the start of the academic year, Education Sunday is a time when we can reflect upon the year past, as well as look forwards with anticipation to the year ahead. This year Education Sunday falls on the 8<sup>th</sup> September.

The theme of this year's Education Sunday is 'Form and Flourish'. The formation and education of a young person into adulthood enables them to reach their potential, to live a fulfilling life and ultimately flourish.

In John's Gospel Jesus says, "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full". Catholic schools place the Lord Jesus Christ at the centre of their educational enterprise; his life and teaching provides them with the model and pattern for life in all its fullness. Catholic education aims to inspire a lifelong love of learning and form pupils who will know the good, love the beautiful, and seek the truth. Catholic schools are distinctive, and this is a cause for celebration.

Similarly, the Church teaches that we reach our full potential when we respond to the Lord's call and the vocation he has for each one of us. The Lord is the potter and we are the clay. When we are open to our lives being formed by his grace, we flourish as a people of joy, peace and love.

I hope that Education Sunday will be an opportunity for thanksgiving and celebration for you. It is a time to be grateful for the hard work of all those past and present who work tirelessly to make Catholic schools places of transformation and hope. So too is it a moment to see afresh the workings of grace that make the Church's mission in education fruitful.

I remain yours in the Lord Jesus Christ,

**Most Reverend Marcus Stock**

Chair of the Catholic Education Service