



DIOCESE OF PAISLEY

The Right Reverend John Keenan
Bishop of Paisley
Diocesan Centre Cathedral Precincts
Incle Street, Paisley
PA1 1HR
Tel: 0141 847 6130

Dear teachers in our Catholic schools,

I am writing to you on the Feast of St John Bosco, patron of young people and of teachers. In 19th century Turin, St John established homes and schools for boys and girls, many of whom had been abandoned or were living on the streets. He founded the Salesians, who to this day are heavily involved in education throughout the world. I entrust your work to the intercession of St John Bosco, and ask God to bless you and your families anew in 2025.

Jubilee of Hope

We are now celebrating a Jubilee, or Holy Year, in which Pope Francis is asking us to put a renewed emphasis on the virtue of hope. In his letter explaining his hopes for the Jubilee, the Holy Father wrote: "We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision."¹ This could easily be applied to your work as teachers!

Hope, first and foremost, is the confidence that we have in God. It is not simple "optimism." It is our trust that He will be faithful to us. It is what allows us to look to the future, which is full of promise but also full of uncertainty, with confident expectation that God will lead us to Himself, if we allow Him. In this life, hope is our conviction that our work, exertions and struggles will pay off, that they are not for nothing. Each time you enter your classroom, it is an act of hope. You "sow the seeds" that will bear fruit in the achievements of your pupils, but only after time and with much effort. It is the particular privilege of teachers to witness this process; and yet, you may never even see the good results of your labours. Your whole job, your vocation, is based on the practice of hope.

Teachers - examples of hope

St John Bosco is a great example of this. He worked tirelessly for the improvement of the lives and the education of the young people in his care. He trusted and hoped in God, and the material resources necessary for his work became available. He did this for children in whom no one else had any hope.

¹ <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2022/documents/20220211-fisichella-giubileo2025.html>



St Thomas Aquinas was a great teacher in our Church. He is frequently cited in almost all the most important teaching documents of the Church, including those of the Second Vatican Council, and the Catechism. There was a time, however, when he himself had the benefit of a great teacher. This happened to be another saint, St Albert, known as “Albert the Great.” Thomas was, apparently, quietly spoken and, despite coming from a very prestigious family, was from a region that was not known for producing great scholars. At first, his fellow students didn’t think much of St Thomas’s intellectual abilities. They called him “the dumb Sicilian ox.” At this time, only St Albert, a truly wise teacher, recognised the potential in his apparently unpromising pupil. He is reputed to have silenced his students by telling them that, “one day this ox will make a noise to be heard throughout the world.”² The influence of St Thomas Aquinas’s teaching on the Church and the wider world for the last eight hundred years has proven him right. Saints Albert and Thomas show that the wisdom of a teacher, full of hope for his or her student, can see beyond appearances, doubts, fears and expectations, to the great promise that lies in each one of us.

Plans for the future

This Lent, we are planning to offer an afternoon retreat for teachers. This is the first project of what we hope will become an association of Catholic teachers in the diocese. This association will provide opportunities to grow and be formed in your faith and to spend time fraternally, supporting one-another with prayer. Please look out for the details of this retreat and go along, if you are able.

In his letter to the Church in Rome, St Paul encouraged the Christian community there never to give up hope in Jesus, even when they were suffering for their faith in him. He wrote that this “hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” Our hope in Jesus is what leads us on and gives us courage in all circumstances of life. You, teachers in our Catholic schools of the Diocese of Paisley, are shining examples of hope, and we thank God for you and pray for you.

May God fill you with the hope, joy and peace that comes from knowing and loving His Son, Jesus Christ!

With prayers and blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "+ John Keenan".

Bishop John

² <https://www3.nd.edu/~maritain/jmc/etext/sta07.htm>