



# DIOCESE OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Office of Communications

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Catholic Schools are Committed to Children and the Community**

*Catholic Schools Week is Jan. 31-Feb. 6 in the Diocese of St. Augustine*

Jacksonville, Fla. – Since 1974, Catholic Schools Week has been celebrated across the nation to highlight the excellent curriculum, religious education, and important traditions Catholic schools offer. This year, Catholic Schools Week, sponsored by the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA), begins Sunday, Jan. 31, and ends Saturday, Feb. 6. This year’s theme is Catholic Schools: Faith. Excellence. Service.

Catholic Schools Week provides schools with an opportunity to thank parents and family, parishes and the community for the gift of Catholic education. “Not all people are aware of the significant difference Catholic education can make in the future of their children,” said Bishop Felipe Estévez. Schools typically celebrate the week with Masses, assemblies, open houses, and other activities. Due to the pandemic, many activities will be modified or celebrated virtually. Local schools are offering virtual career and book fairs, grandparents' day, and other virtual opportunities to safely engage families in the week’s festivities. Local Catholic schools will also serve the community by collecting food items for Catholic Charities and making cards for JSO officers, firefighters, and parishioners who are homebound. To ensure everyone's safety, some local schools are hosting their open houses virtually or by appointment only. Call the school offices to find out what options they are providing.

Catholic schools stand apart from others in their emphasis on moral development and self-discipline, the safe and welcoming environments they provide, their effective use of 1:1 technology, their focus on serving the community and their balanced curriculum. The Diocese of St. Augustine has a 97 percent high school graduation rate, while four of the five high schools have a 99 percent college acceptance rate. In addition to this, Morningstar High School, a school for children with special needs, has had several of its students go on to attend college as well.

Terry Lee is an alumnus from St. Francis Catholic Academy’s first graduating class in 2008. Today he is a regional recruiter and diversity coordinator for the Georgia Department of Transportation, as well as an adjunct professor at Atlanta Technical College. Although he wasn’t raised Catholic, he said he appreciates the faith-based education he received.

“Saint Francis was probably one of the best schooling experiences that I have had both academically and socially,” he said.

The Diocese of St. Augustine has about 45,000 teachers, staff, students and families in 30 Catholic Schools throughout seven counties in Northeast Florida. They offer an array of

scholarships including a new Catholic Student Assistance Fund that was recently launched to help families with the costs of tuition and fees at local Catholic schools. They've already raised \$100,000. This is in addition to state scholarships available to Catholic school students through the Step Up for Students organization.

“We are so fortunate that so much support is available for parents to send their sons and daughters to our Catholics schools in Florida,” said Bishop Felipe Estévez. To learn more about Catholic schools, their history and contributions, visit [www.ncea.org/csw](http://www.ncea.org/csw).

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