

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

We celebrate the women principals who lead our Catholic schools and help prepare the next generation of history-making Catholic leaders.



2021 Year of Renewal
STRENGTHENING THE BONDS BETWEEN SCHOOLS, PARISHES, AND OUR COMMUNITY

Dear Leaders in the Ministry of Catholic Education,

Entering *Women's History Month*, I am reminded of the influential women that have become cornerstones of our Catholic Academies and Parish Schools. Throughout the Diocese, we are blessed with sixty female leaders within our schools. Women's History Month was organized to celebrate the vital role that women have played and the impact they have had on history. Women have played a vital role, not only in developing our society, but in founding and developing Catholic Education.

The first parochial school was founded in 1809 by Elizabeth Ann Seton and schools flourished with rigorous education provided by religious sisters. The religious sisters proved to be the foundation that parochial schools across the country needed to be successful. Their conviction and passion are truly representative of the qualities of women lauded during Women's History Month. As I think about these early pioneers in Catholic education, it is impossible to miss the connection that exists in the strong, female Catholic school leaders in our Diocese. As a Catholic school principal, you are entrusted not only with maintaining quality education for students but also ensuring that Catholic identity is at the forefront of all that you do. Principals throughout the Diocese work tirelessly to grow as leaders and are constantly searching for opportunities to enrich their school communities. This has been evident throughout my time as Superintendent but was especially true during this year.

Throughout the summer, you were given a seemingly impossible scenario of reopening schools to in-person learning. Each one of you said yes to this task. You spent weeks preparing and in September, stood outside to welcome the students back to a piece of normalcy. You became COVID specialists, cleaners, counselors, family support, and so much more. You made this year possible and helped give back to your students some of the hope that COVID had taken away. Throughout this pandemic, the term "unprecedented times" has been a frequently used catchphrase, but this experience has been something that no one could have imagined, let alone prepare for. There were ample opportunities to voice that it was not possible or there were too many obstacles but the sentiments that I consistently heard were "we need to do this for the kids," and "we need to help these families." Catholic education is centered upon sharing of the Catholic faith as well as the principles of service to others. This year principals have consistently prioritized the students and families that they serve knowing how vital it is for students to receive quality education. You have stepped forward to continue the mission of Catholic education like the sisters and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton before you. Looking back on the history of our Catholic schools, we will remember you as the heroines in 2020-2021 who provided for their students in the face of tremendous adversity.

Through your faith, service, and love for students and families, you are creating a larger impact than I can convey. The school community that you serve today will shape the future. Your work serves as a model for your students, especially the girls that see the strength of your leadership. By sharing your faith, you are leading your students to be faithful themselves. Your daily actions are not only influencing students and families today but are creating a brighter future with adults who are more likely to practice and share the Catholic faith. You are truly exemplars of influential women who are to be celebrated during Women's History Month. Thank you for the impact you make in our Catholic Academies, Parish Schools, and communities throughout the Diocese.

In Gratitude,
Tom Chadzutko



Dear Principals,

Women's History Month shines a spotlight on the countless women, in all walks of life, who have impacted the world around them. As we celebrate these incredible stories, I would like to offer my gratitude to the leaders within our Diocese who are impacting the lives of students and families each day. Female principals in sixty of our Catholic Academies and Parish Schools have worked tirelessly to ensure that the mission of Catholic education continues to thrive in the Diocese. Your service and dedication to the Catholic faith is a tremendous example for all students, teachers, and families in the school communities.

Catholic education strives to serve the most vulnerable in our communities. Your dedication to seeking funding for scholarships and working with families to place their children in Catholic Academies and Parish Schools calls to mind Jesus' teaching "just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Unlike other school administrations, you are tasked not only with the day-to-day operations of a school but the finances of a non-profit, the desire to include all in the community, and most importantly the promulgation of our faith. God's grace is at work in our principals who continue to commit themselves each day to bring Catholic education to all.

Mother Teresa is quoted "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." This quote struck me as incredibly meaningful in light of this past year. When schools closed in spring 2020, we could never imagine that the conversation throughout the summer would be "how are we going to reopen?" In the beginning of the pandemic, it was not a question of "if" it was a question of "when." The strain of children and families learning at home was palpable throughout the spring but because of the strong leadership from our principals, we were able to provide rigorous online options our families. As September approached, the task of reopening became more daunting, yet you continued forward through the reopening plans, revisions, task force meetings, and policy changes. It became evident as our schools reopened or provided consistent remote learning that the education in our Catholic Academies and Parish Schools that the priority was the children and families. For the children and families in the Diocese, the "ripples" from your actions this past year have been incredible. Your work has allowed friends to spend time together again, for students to interact with their teachers in a meaningful way, for structure to resume, for parents to return to work, and for families to have the relief of knowing that their children are cared for. Above all, you are continuing "the ripple" of sharing our faith. The evangelization through our schools never skipped a beat and this a ripple that impacts our whole faith community. You work undoubtedly has had a tremendous impact on our school communities but is also setting up future generations to impact the world.

As we celebrate Women's History Month, I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of you for your vital work in the mission of Catholic education. It is through your leadership that our Catholic Academies and Parish Schools can continue their work of sharing the love and knowledge of Christ. Like the early nuns and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, you are called to serve others through Catholic education. There is no greater gift than faith and a faith-filled education. You are truly the epitome of the women that need to be celebrated during Women's History Month.

In Gratitude,
Rev. Msgr. Dave Cassato



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS of BROOKLYN and QUEENS
FOUNDATION for LIFE