**Catholic Schools Week 2019**

**Catholic Schools Week 2019 begins today will run to next Sunday on the theme 'Catholic Schools: Celebrating the Work of Our Local Catholic Schools'.**

**As Irish society changes so much, it is important that we reflect on the unique contribution of Catholic schools to the goal of education in Ireland. We begin, therefore, by acknowledging and thanking the Mercy Sisters, the Marist Brothers, the priests of St Muredach's College and all the lay teachers in all our schools who have been part and parcel of the education given to the children of this area over the past almost two hundred years. Only for them, people here in Ballina and all over the world would not have had the benefits of a good Catholic education.**

**I think it is very important to state that each Catholic school in this diocese shares an ethos that is inclusive, welcoming and vibrant. Each school works towards a vision of every student as made in the likeness and image of God. This means that we work towards helping each child, irrespective of background, ethnicity or creed, reach their full potential academically, spiritually and socially. To be in the likeness and image of God means that we have the capacity to truly care for ourselves, each other and the environment around us.**

**Education, coming from the Latin to lead out, means that every Catholic school in this area dedicates itself completely to supporting and bringing out the best in every student and in this way preparing them for life. And if I may say it, good teachers are the people who can bring this out in their pupils, no matter how great the challenge is. But teaching is more than imparting knowledge and learning is more than just getting exam results. A good teacher fires the imagination and inspires pupils to a sense of wonder and awe; a sense of something more than just what we can see and touch.  And good students open their minds to more than what they can just learn. In an age when we are conditioned by the mobile phone and the internet in all its forms, students in Catholic schools know how to open their minds to the wonder of the world in all its glory.**

**I have a three CD set of Peter Ustinov's autobiography, which he entitled Dear Me. He recalls that at one stage, as a child he was into imitating the sound of motor cars. He remembers when he was five years old; "At the age of five I was a motor car, much to the dismay of my parents. I switched on in the morning and only stopped being a car at night when I reversed into bed and cut the ignition." Then he remembers visiting his grandfather in Estonia and recalls; "My mother had a toothache one day and the engine of my car was in particularly fine fettle. I changed gears on every conceivable occasion. Suddenly my mother could bear it no longer. 'Shut up' she cried from the depths of a yellow hat. Her father held up an admonishing hand. 'Never shout at him' he instructed her quietly. 'It is irritating but don't think of it as the sound of an automobile but rather the sound of his imagination developing.' And he went on to say of his grandfather; 'Now I know why he was considered a great teacher.'**

**'the sound of his imagination developing' While it may not always be or have been the case, I like to think of Catholic schools as places where imaginations can develop, where minds can explore new worlds and where the ability for friendship can grow. Side by side with all of this is the grounding which children and young people get in their connection with their native place, their awareness of their family tradition and their openness to a sense of God in their lives.  And, again, if I may say so, great teachers are the people gifted with the ability make this happen.**

**Young friends, I know that all of you could teach me more about the use of the mobile, the internet and Facebook than I am ever capable of learning. But even if I haven't made it yet, the Pope is fully in you patch. Pope Francis has just launched a new App called Click To Pray (**[**www.clicktopray.org**](http://www.clicktopray.org/)**). It is a platform that invites men and women from around the world, to accompany the Pope in a mission of compassion for the world. It has a website and a mobile app, both for Android and iOS, with its social networks, available in six languages (Spanish, English, Italian, French, Portuguese, and German).
Click To Pray has three main sections: "Pray with the Pope", with the Pope's monthly prayer intentions for the challenges facing humanity and the mission of the Church; "Pray every day", with a prayer rhythm involving three daily moments; and "Pray with the network" that is a space where users (Pope Francis among them) can share their prayers with the others.**

**Pope Francis, who is older than many of your grandparents, using his imagination and being in tune with all of you invites you to use Click to P ray. He too was a Chemistry teacher and is a living proof of what it means to be a good teacher. He is young at heart and I recommend that you download this App. You'd never know where it might lead you and how it might fire your imagination; opening it up in particular to discovering a place for God in your life.**