



## From Maintenance to Mission: Strengthening Catholic Education

*Imagine a world where Catholic education fades into history, where faith is no longer central to learning. Across Canada, Catholic schools have faced increasing secular pressures, with enrollment challenges and shifting cultural priorities. If we do not act now, we risk losing a system that has shaped generations in faith, leadership, and service. This is not an abstract concern—it is a reality that we must prevent.\**

The call has been made. Now, the responsibility rests with us all. Catholic education's future is determined not by words alone, but by the faithful actions of those who believe in its mission.

*Catholic education must not only withstand the challenges of the present but must also illuminate the path for future generations. Our mission is to cultivate faith-filled leaders, instill Gospel values in every student, and build a resilient Catholic school system where Christ remains at the center.*

As part of ACSTA's Catholic Ed Talks Series, Kate Mallon, Executive Director of GrACE, delivered a compelling and urgent message to Alberta's Catholic trustees. Speaking on behalf of GrACE, Mallon challenged trustees to move beyond maintenance and fully embrace their role as faith leaders and defenders of Catholic education.

## Catholic Education as Evangelization

Catholic schools exist not just to educate, but to evangelize. The BC and Yukon Bishops' 2025 Pastoral Letter reinforces this mission:

"Catholic schools, united in the work of education and evangelization, are invaluable for the renewal of culture and society."

Yet, Catholic education faces significant challenges:

- **Secularization** – pushing faith to the margins.
- **Political and governance pressures** – demanding stronger advocacy.
- **Disengagement among families and parishes** – weakening faith formation.

Mallon was clear: Trustees are not just policymakers—they are protectors of faith-based learning and leaders in mission.

## The Sacred Triad: Strengthening Partnerships



Home, school, and parish—the Sacred Triad—must be intentionally connected to form strong, faith-filled students.

Pope Francis reminds us that Catholic education cannot operate in isolation—it must be rooted in partnership with families and parishes to truly form disciples. As stated in **Proverbs 22:6**, *"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."*

A thriving Catholic education system depends on these three essential pillars:

- **Home** – Parents are the first educators of faith and must be active participants in their child's spiritual growth.
- **School** – Catholic schools provide the structure, curriculum, and environment where faith is integrated into daily learning.
- **Parish** – Parishes nurture spiritual development through the sacraments, community worship, and faith-building activities.

A successful example of this partnership can be found in a Catholic school community in Alberta that revitalized its Sacred Triad approach. Recognizing that faith formation was weakening, they initiated a **Family-Faith Engagement Program**, where parents attended faith-building workshops, students participated in parish-led activities, and clergy became more involved in the school's daily life. Within a year, mass attendance among school families increased, faith discussions became a part of classroom learning, and a stronger sense of community developed.

This initiative underscores the importance of unity—when home, school, and parish work together, the faith of young people flourishes.

**There is no room for institutional silos or siloed thinking. Catholic education must be an integrated effort that unites families, schools, and parishes in a common mission.**

### **Lessons from History: Leadership Requires Action**

Throughout history, bold leadership has defined great movements. Catholic education faces a similar moment today.

Mallon evoked historical calls to action:

- **William Wallace** rallied Scotland not just with leadership but by urging others to step forward. When Robert the Bruce hesitated, Wallace pleaded: *"If you would*



*just lead them.*" Leadership isn't about titles—it's about courage when it matters most.

- **Michael Collins**, leader in Ireland's fight for independence, recognized that a nation's strength lies in its people: *"The strength of any nation is not in its leaders, but in its people."*

This truth applies directly to Catholic education. Schools will thrive not because of institutions, but because of what we choose to do.

## A Call to Action

Mallon's message to Alberta Catholic trustees was a call to action:

- **Step Forward Boldly** – The future of Catholic education depends on active engagement.
- **Reject Passive Thinking** – Trustees must embrace their role as faith leaders.
- **Understand GrACE's Role** – GrACE doesn't prescribe action; it inspires individuals to lead.
- **No Room for Complacency** – Catholic education must be mission-driven, not just sustained.
- **Keep Faith at the Center** – Christ, discipleship, and evangelization remain the focus.

This is the beginning of a cultural shift that will define the future of Catholic education in Alberta.

## A Unified, Mission-Driven Partnership

Catholic education is no longer about maintenance—it is about mission. GrACE, ACSTA, CCSSA, and the Alberta, NWT & Yukon Bishops are not separate entities; they are deeply interconnected.

Each Partner Plays a Vital Role:

- **GrACE** – Drives awareness, engagement, and advocacy.
- **ACSTA** – Protects Catholic trusteeship and governance.
- **CCSSA** – Leads faith-based educational leadership.
- **The Bishops** – Provide spiritual oversight and pastoral leadership.

Together, they ensure that Catholic education remains not just publicly funded, but mission-driven.



## **The Jubilee Year: A Time to Move from Maintenance to Mission**

We stand in the Jubilee Year of Hope, a time of renewal, restoration, and recommitment to our faith. In Scripture, the Jubilee is a sacred call to action. **Leviticus 25:10** states, *"Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you."*

This Jubilee challenges Catholic trustees, educators, and faith leaders:

- **Will we merely sustain Catholic education, or boldly renew its mission?**
- **Will we allow external pressures to dictate our future, or will we advocate for faith-filled schools?**
- **Will we wait for others to act, or will we lead?**

Now is the time to shift from maintenance to mission, to reclaim the Catholic identity of our schools, and to ensure faith is not an afterthought but the foundation of Catholic education.

## **Final Call to Action: A United Front for Mission-Driven Catholic Education**

Mallon's message to Alberta's Catholic trustees was clear: The strength of Catholic education lies in unity. It will not thrive solely through the efforts of institutions—it will flourish through the collective commitment of trustees, educators, families, parishes, and the broader Catholic community. **There is no more room for silos—Catholic education must move forward as one body, one mission, one faith.** Together, Alberta, NWT, and Yukon's 1.2 million Catholics must actively engage to safeguard and advance the mission of Catholic education.

**May the Holy Spirit guide our efforts, strengthen our resolve, and inspire us to build a future where Catholic education flourishes in faith and mission. Amen.**

**Isaiah 6:8** reminds us of the proper response to God's call: *"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"*