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To all students leaving year 6 of our Catholic Schools

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My dear young friend,

I would have liked to address this letter to you by name, but as you can imagine this is not possible. Nevertheless, these words are addressed to you in a personal way. You are leaving your present school in these unprecedented days and for an uncertain future. I feel for you at this time and in the very strange way in which your primary education has come to such an abrupt halt. You probably have many mixed feelings about leaving your school, gratitude for the friends you have made, more than a little sadness that you will not be continuing the journey to the next school with some of those friends.

I can only hope and pray that you found your school experience generally positive and that you feel these years prepared you for whatever comes next. If you belong to another faith tradition, I hope that you have an encouraging idea of all the good that the Catholic Church does in our world today - not least, in the work of Catholic education! If you are a Catholic, you will have received two sacraments to help you grow stronger in your Catholic life. The Sacrament of Penance is a powerful means of helping us to see how we are responding to the words of Jesus in the Gospel and growing in the freedom we have as children of God. In the Eucharist, Jesus is sacramentally present to us, feeding us with His own Body and Blood so that we have the energy to make the journey of faith ahead of us as His disciples. I am looking forward to meeting you individually when hopefully you receive the power of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

By your age, I knew that God was calling me to be a priest. There were many twists and turns before I said "yes" to Jesus! I pray that as you prepare to begin the next stage of your education, you too will grow in a sense of what your vocation is. In Baptism, you have received the gift of grace. Please God you will not waste this precious gift or throw it away. My prayer for you is that this great gift from the Lord will grow stronger and become the blessing for you that it is for me.

With my kind regards and every blessing for your future,

+ *David*

Rt Rev Dr David J Oakley
Bishop of Northampton