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To all students leaving Y11 of our Catholic Schools

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Dear Student,

As your Bishop, I wanted to share some words with you as you leave Year 11 in your Catholic school, to send you my prayers and best wishes for the next stage of your journey. Some of you will stay on in your current school, some of you will move elsewhere. Wherever you go, I hope that you have enjoyed your time in your Catholic school, and that you will treasure good memories of friends and staff.

So now, as you continue on your academic and life journey, I call on you to reflect on the words written to us recently by Pope Francis:

In today's world, marked by so many conflicts and so much suffering, I suspect that many of you feel disheartened. So together with you, I would like to set out from the proclamation that is the basis of our hope and that of all humanity: "Christ is alive!" ...

Christ is alive and he loves you with an infinite love. His love for you is unaffected by your failings or your mistakes. He gave his life for you, so in his love for you he does not wait for you to be perfect. Look at his arms outstretched on the cross, and "let yourself be saved over and over again". [\[1\]](#) Walk with him as with a friend, welcome him into your life and let him share all the joys and hopes, the problems and struggles of this time in your lives. You will see that the path ahead will become clearer and that your difficulties will be much less burdensome, because he will be carrying them with you. So, pray daily to the Holy Spirit who "draws you ever more deeply into the heart of Christ, so that you can grow in his love, his life and his power". [\[2\]](#)

You may not be a Catholic yourself, you may belong to another Christian Church or to another faith, but I hope that being part of your Catholic school has helped you to come closer to God, to know Jesus Christ more, as a way of living a good life. What is important is that you see how Christians try to follow the example of Jesus, and his call to love everyone, because every human being is made in the image and likeness of God.

Now you are moving into another period of your life, growing into adulthood. This is a very significant change and I hope and pray that what you have gained from your Catholic school will help you grow and develop into the person God wants you to be, finding personal fulfilment and contributing to a better world.

With every blessing for you, your family and friends and for your future,

+ *David*

✠ David J Oakley
Bishop of Northampton