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CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND – THE BISHOP'S OFFICE –
Te Taumata o te Pihopa Katorika

May 2014: Bishop's Appointees Newsletter

Disciples
of Christ



Catholic Diocese of Auckland

To All Bishop's Appointees on School Boards of Trustees

The document "The Catholic Education of School-Aged Children" published by the New Zealand Bishops Conference at the start of this year has been at the centre of some discussion and I am aware that this publication has been the focus of the recent Board Workshop attended by many of you and other Board members. My hope is that each of you will continue to foster ongoing discussion at your schools to ensure that all Board members understand the importance and significance of this document in shaping the future of Catholic education within the Auckland Diocese and throughout New Zealand.

The Bishops of New Zealand are united in wanting our Catholic schools to recognise that the Catholic school is first and foremost "a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth". In saying this we take for granted that our schools will be schools of excellence; providing students with a holistic education and quality teaching and learning to ensure students attain the skills necessary for academic success. However these attributes alone are not the reason for the existence of our schools, as such an education can be provided at a State school.

The primary goal of Catholic education is "above all a question of communicating Christ, of helping to form Christ in the lives of others"

Schools must facilitate:

1. A genuine and ongoing encounter with Christ
2. A growth in knowledge and an understanding of his teaching
3. Christian witness

as a framework for the disciple's journey within the Church community

"Maintaining an authentic Catholic identity is an unending work .. if such an identity is going to enter into the human fabric of the school community". It is the school's Catholic Special Character that creates that "encounter with the living God" which leads the young person to become a committed disciple of Christ.

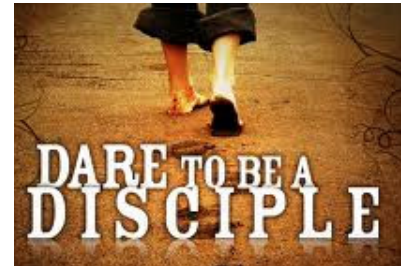
The Vision Statement for Catholic Schools in the Auckland Diocese, "Living as Disciples of Christ" aligns effectively with the vision begin promoted by the Bishops. For our young people to live as Disciples of Christ they need to undertake the journey of the disciple. Our schools play an important role in fostering this journey or progression from encounter, to growth in knowledge and then to Christian witness. The key facets and components of this journey are:

- ◆ People who facilitate students' encounter with Christ and accompany the young disciple on the resulting journey - Catholic educators
- ◆ The catechetical response to the need for knowledge - the Religious Education programme
- ◆ Formation which leads to growth in Catholic virtues and values and the living of the school's charism
- ◆ The lived common good approach and witness of the wider faith community within which the school is situated (usually a parish)

As Board members with responsibility for the governance of your school, its vision and future direction, the task you face is to look at the four facets of the disciples journey and to determine how you are able to help facilitate any developments that may be required.

1. **The Catholic Educator:** To know Christ is at the heart of the disciples' journey. The staff of your school and the leadership of the Principal and DRS are key to ensuring students encounter Christ, and staff by accompanying the students on their faith journey enable students to get to know Christ. Staff need to be strong in their faith, credible witnesses of what it means to be Catholic and show an authentic integration of faith with life.

2. **The Religious Education programme** enables students to understand and grow in the richness of their faith. It is important that Religious Education classes are stimulating, and engage student interest and involvement. Religious Education teachers need to have a depth and breath of understanding of the programme being taught and should have or be working towards an appropriate qualification for teaching Religious Education.

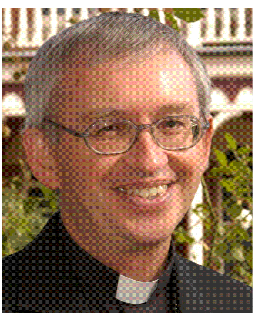


The incorporation of a Catholic world view into the teaching of all subjects assists students to make linkages and so better understand the integration of faith with life and the search for truth.

3. **Ongoing Faith Formation:** Schools assist in fostering the ongoing faith formation of students. For many students, school is the only place where they learn to pray. Students need to learn a variety of different prayer forms including quiet reflection or meditation. Regular celebration of the sacraments within the school community is essential. Weekly attendance at Mass should be a norm and frequent opportunities available for the sacrament of Reconciliation. Retreats need to be a spiritual experience for students and not confused with outdoor education camps or visits to places of significance or be time when speakers present information about a variety of issues.

4. **The lived common good approach and witness of the wider faith community:** Students need to appreciate they belong to a wider faith community than that of their school. For many school is the limit of their experience of the Catholic Church. Hence connections to their local parish is very important. Primary Schools and Parishes are encouraged to further strengthen their connections. Secondary students should be encouraged to connect with their local parish but additionally connections to the Church in Auckland can be made by encouraging attendance at the 7.00pm Mass at the Cathedral hosted Youth Ministry (4th Sunday of the month) and Tertiary Chaplaincy Mass (2nd Sunday of the month).

Our Catholic Schools are important instruments of faith within our communities. Please accept my personal thanks for the work you do for Catholic education . May God bless you in your endeavours.



Yours sincerely in Christ

+ *Patrick Dunn*

Bishop Patrick Dunn
Bishop of Auckland