

# **Questions for Adapting and Renewing Catholic Schools**

## **Address to Parramatta Catholic School Leaders**

Parramatta, Australia

6 August 2015

Archbishop Fisher, Brother Priests, Sisters and Brothers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

### ***Introduction***

Thank you for your generous and kind introduction and, above all, for the opportunity for me to visit Parramatta, originally at the kind invitation of Archbishop Anthony Fisher and later backed-up by Father Peter Williams, the Diocesan Administrator. It is a real pleasure to address this assembly of clergy, principals and religious education coordinators of the Diocese of Parramatta.

This morning I want to raise with you some considerations about your Catholic schools' mission as evangelizing communities, and about the role of pastors and priests, principals and religious education coordinators in particular in inspiring, directing, and assessing just how well your schools are doing in proclaiming the joy of the Gospel.

It is sometimes remarked that what students do in the pursuit of social justice and volunteer service truly sets our Catholic schools apart, ensuring their unique identity. Important as these activities are, they are *not* our primary distinguishing trait or unique characteristic. Other schools also engage in community service and foster a real commitment among their students of serving others, especially those less fortunate.

We do that, too, and should. It's an essential dimension of our mission, as anyone who has read the Pope's new Encyclical, *Laudato Si* can testify. But volunteer work which serves the marginalized is not the most important reason why the Church puts so much of her energy and so many of her resources into primary and secondary education.

## **I. Catholic Schools in the Evangelizing Mission of the Church**

The Catholic school today, and all the more so tomorrow, finds itself in a new ecclesial context. It seems that the Church is at a turning point, that a kind of revolution is at hand, one provoked by Pope Francis; and one which will surely have an impact on the vision for the future of Catholic schools in the Diocese of Parramatta.

In the future, they must set as their primary *raison-d'être* the mission of evangelizing. Now let me explain what I mean by this.

The revolution that Pope Francis has inaugurated is setting us on course for a new chapter of evangelization in the Church's life. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, "The Joy of the Gospel," published in November 2013, he invites "all the faithful to a new season of evangelization."<sup>1</sup> That includes priests, principals and teachers. Where? Among other places, like our families and parishes, in our schools.

The Holy Father has issued a great challenge to us. He is inviting

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<sup>1</sup> Francis, Address to the Pontifical Mission Societies (9 May 2014).

us to share his dream, his dream “of a ‘missionary option,’ that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world, rather than for her self-preservation.”<sup>2</sup> For the Pope, every person and every institution in the Church is to be put into “a missionary key.”<sup>3</sup> All our structures are, therefore, urgently called to be more mission-oriented, including our Catholic schools.<sup>4</sup>

If we want to put our Catholic schools into this missionary key we will have to abandon the complacent attitude that says: “We have always done it this way.” In your Diocese you are celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on Catholic Education by taking “renew and adapt” as its theme for 2015.

Pope Francis gives some pointers on how to go about implementing the renewal necessary today in our schools: “I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 27.

<sup>3</sup> Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 34.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 28.

<sup>5</sup> Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 33; cf. Francis, Address to the Students, Alumni, Teachers and Parents of the Jesuit Schools of Italy and Albania (7 June 2013): “I also want to encourage you, educators, to seek new, unconventional forms of education, so as to

No matter what our specific responsibilities are for Catholic education, we are all being called to account and being issued an urgent appeal to chart a new way forward for carrying out the evangelizing mission of our schools.

What are the practical ramifications of this Franciscan revolution for us as Catholic school leaders? How are we to respond to this challenge? What does it mean to put the fostering of evangelization – a term, I believe, to be preferred to “Catholic identity” – at the forefront of our educational endeavours in our families, parishes and schools?

An evangelizing school is one that puts the proclamation of the Gospel at the heart of its educational project – of its vision, curriculum and activities. It takes as its mission to make Jesus Christ known and loved by all in its community: the teachers, the students, the parents.

By highlighting its evangelizing mission, I do *not* mean that a Catholic school should become an extended religious education or catechetical program. It has its own purpose: to educate the whole student, not just spiritually but also physically, emotionally, academically. Nor does a Catholic school proselytize; that is, force in any way its convictions on anyone. But it does propose the Gospel – and this by persuasively and intelligently appealing to the minds and hearts of

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comply with the needs of places, times and people. This is important; . . . always go a step “further” and never be satisfied with conventional things. Seek new forms in accordance with the places, times and people. I encourage you to do this.”

its students.

If a school is to be effective in its mission of evangelizing, then all those involved must understand what is central to the Gospel. Here once again Pope Francis couldn't be more direct. He refers constantly to the kerygma: "The Church's mission of evangelization is essentially a proclamation of God's love, mercy and forgiveness, revealed to us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ."<sup>6</sup>

It is, then, because of their Catholicity, that our schools stand apart, embodying certain definite characteristics. This uniqueness of being "Catholic" goes far beyond being schools where regular religious instruction is tacked onto a mandated curriculum. Rather, the school's entire educational program – *what* is taught, *how* it is taught and *by whom* it is taught – is inspired by the faith of the Church. Being "Catholic," therefore, is a distinctive characteristic, one "which penetrates and informs every moment of [a school's] its educational activity, a fundamental part of its very identity and the focus of its mission."<sup>7</sup>

Although Catholic schools in Australia have always been aware of this distinct mission, enjoying their own identity, today it is more necessary than ever that the entire educating community be aware of their

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<sup>6</sup> Francis, Homily (12 October 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, 11.

responsibility to give public witness in their schools to Christ and his Gospel. Moreover, this witness must be made clear to the wider community; that is, it must be visible, tangible and intentional. Due to the secularization of wide sectors of western culture, Catholic schools find themselves in a missionary situation, even though they are rooted in the Christian tradition and have a great heritage and story to tell. It is vitally important, therefore, to be aware of the risks to their mission that can arise if they lose sight of the profound reasons why they exist, if they fail to energize their witness. “That can happen, for example,” says a recent document on schools released in 2013 by the Congregation for Catholic Education, “when they unthinkingly conform to the expectations of a society marked by the values of individualism and competition. It can also happen through bureaucratic formalism, the consumerist demands of families, or the unbridled search for external approval.”<sup>8</sup>

Once we accept that the Church’s primary mission is proclaiming Jesus and his Gospel, then it becomes self-evident that Catholic schools, which are “from the heart of the Church,” themselves share in that same mission.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, in 2007 the Bishops of New South Wales and the ACT insisted in their pastoral letter that schools dedicate themselves to

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love*, 56.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Address to Catholic Educators at the Catholic University of America, Washington (17 April 2008).

ensuring that they are “centres of ‘the new evangelization’.”<sup>10</sup>

## **II. A Leader’s Questions for his Catholic School Community**

Looking to the future requires that those entrusted with schools in our faith community have both a clear sense of purpose and are ready to use new methods and instruments to secure their unique contribution to the Church and the wider community.

My task now is to put on the table a kind of blueprint of what makes a school authentically Catholic; that is a school whose firm foundation is Jesus Christ<sup>11</sup>: what you should be looking for and working towards in your school when you and all stakeholders ask for accountability about its mission.

Above all and first of all, in every aspect of their programs, life and activities, our schools should, directly or indirectly, be directed toward fostering a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in the Church among their administrators, teachers, students, and families. It is this encounter with him “which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Bishops of New South Wales and the ACT, “Catholic Schools at a Crossroads” (Sydney: Catholic Education Office, 2007), 12-13.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love*, 63; cf. 56; Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instrumentum Laboris: Educating Today and Tomorrow – A Renewing Passion* (2014), III, intro: “At the heart of Catholic education there is always Jesus Christ: everything that happens in Catholic schools [and universities] should lead to an encounter with the living Christ.”

<sup>12</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, intro.

Without Jesus Christ as the starting point and the end point of the entire educational enterprise, there really isn't a Catholic school.

I am structuring the rest of my remarks around four questions you can ask yourself and your educational community about your school's commitment to the "missionary option" of the new evangelization. First, is its educational philosophy grounded in a Christian understanding of the human person? Second, is the school imbued with a Catholic worldview? Third, is it animated by a vision of faith, one which is integrated across the whole curriculum? And fourth, is personal witness to the Gospel evident among teachers and staff?

### ***1. Does the School Foster a Christian Understanding of the Person?***

First, I suggest you look for whether the understanding of the human person which underlies the explicit or implicit educational philosophy of the teachers and staff is founded on Christ. Do they acknowledge that the Catholic school is "a school for the human person and of human persons"?<sup>13</sup>

In their commitment to the development of the whole person of their students, Catholic must schools look to Jesus, the perfect man, since in him "all human values find their fulfilment and unity. Herein lies the specifically Catholic philosophy of education at the school's foundation.

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<sup>13</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, 9; cf. St. John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, 71; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, 18.



Its duty to cultivate human values . . . has its origin in the figure of Christ.”<sup>14</sup> As Vatican II’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, whose 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary we are celebrating this year, states, and as St. John Paul II so frequently repeated, “it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of the human person truly becomes clear.”<sup>15</sup>

Education is not a commodity, even if Catholic schools are rightfully preparing students to contribute to society through their future work. Teachers are to form their students as persons, taking fully into account their transcendent dignity. That young people have a supernatural destiny is a fundamental truth which undergirds a Catholic philosophy of education. They are to be taught how to live in this world, to be sure, but with their eyes likewise turned to the fullness of the Kingdom.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the pressure of propaganda from many quarters, you do not want your schools merely to be instruments for preparing future generations for the needs of the marketplace or the collection plate. They must also foster the life of the soul.

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<sup>14</sup> Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School*, 35.

<sup>15</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 22; cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, 9.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School*, 29.

If a parish community and school get it wrong about who their students really *are*, that is, persons created in God's image and likeness and given life in Christ through the Holy Spirit, then from the outset their school will go off track.

Using blunt language, I think we can say with Peter Redpath "that Catholic education's main aim is to produce good Catholics, to produce good Catholic human beings, human beings who love God and neighbor as themselves and thus get to Heaven."<sup>17</sup> Besides providing a well-rounded education of the whole person intellectually, physically and emotionally, a Catholic school, over and above all this, "should help all its students to become saints."<sup>18</sup> So said Benedict XVI. While these assertions might seem to lack nuance, think about the alternative. Who wants Catholic schools to produce bad Catholics or lead the young on the wrong path?

## ***2. Is the School Imbued with a Catholic World View?***

A second concern I would draw your attention to touches upon the ethos of the school. How does it "feel" to you? Is it imbued with a Catholic spirit or view of the world? After all, what students come to know, to believe, and to accept as true is largely determined by the

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<sup>17</sup> Peter Redpath, "Foreword," in Curtis L. Hancock, *Recovering a Catholic Philosophy of Elementary Education* (Mount Pocono: Newman House Press, 2005), 13.

<sup>18</sup> Benedict XVI, Address to Pupils, London (17 September 2010).

attitude, the stance toward life, which your school fosters in them.<sup>19</sup>

G. K. Chesterton, the famous Catholic polemicist and apologist, got it right. In his essay “The New Case for Catholic Schools” written early in the twentieth century, he insisted “that every education teaches a philosophy if not by dogma then by suggestion, by implication, by atmosphere.” Chesterton believed that a *Catholic* atmosphere should therefore seep into every nook and cranny of the Church’s schools. If it is not an ecclesial ethos that permeates the environment, then a secular one inevitably fills the void.

As a Church we are heirs of a two-thousand-year-old tradition, an enormous treasury which is moral, artistic, scientific, spiritual and intellectual. A Catholic school’s mission is to immerse its students in this rich heritage: “to develop the sense of the true, the sense of the good and the sense of the beautiful,”<sup>20</sup> as Pope Francis recently said to a group of students and teachers.

There *is* a Catholic “take” on the world, a uniquely Catholic way of seeing reality, a culture which has been shaped by reflection, action, service, official teaching and prayer – all grounded in the teachings of Jesus and the Church. This is the atmosphere you want in your schools.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. William Dygert, in *No Greater Work*, edited by James M. Frabutt, Anthony C. Holter and Ronald J. Nuzzi (Notre Dame: Alliance for Catholic Education Press, 2010), 4.

<sup>20</sup> Francis, Address to Italian Students and Teachers (10 May 2014).

In a visible way your school's physical environment ought to reflect this Catholic ethos. It should embody the best "artifacts" of the Church's devotional, liturgical and artistic tradition. Therefore, a Catholic school should be immediately recognizable because of its sacramentality: "From the first moment that a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illumined by the light of faith, and having its own unique characteristics."<sup>21</sup>

For your Catholic schools to be true to their mission, they should suffuse their environment with this delight in the sacramental and respect for the sacred. Accordingly, they should express the visible, sacramental signs of Catholic culture through images, symbols, icons, as well as the practices of popular piety. A chapel, classroom crucifixes and statues of Mary and the saints, liturgical celebrations and other visual reminders of Catholic life, including good art that is not explicitly religious in its subject matter, should be present in every school. Such signs both express and reinforce a school's commitment to furthering what Karl Adam called "the spirit of Catholicism."

Everything, therefore, that happens in Catholic schools should contribute to expressing and handing on an organic Catholic vision of the

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<sup>21</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, 25.

world: the persons involved, the physical space, the allocation of time, the choice of activities, the kind of relationships fostered among the stakeholders, the quality of the teaching and learning, the curriculum offered. Each and every aspect of the school should reverberate with the life of faith. When a Catholic worldview permeates a school's life, then it is the driving force behind everything it does, effectively serving the Church's mission. A Catholic school strives to create within its walls a climate in which the students' faith will gradually mature and enable them to assume the responsibility placed on them by Baptism and Confirmation.<sup>22</sup>

### ***3. Is the Faith Integrated or Isolated in the Curriculum?***

Your third concern, I would suggest, deals with your school's curriculum. Does its overall curriculum integrate the vision of faith into what is taught by the teachers and learned by the students? This is important because the curriculum is how a school community expresses its goals and objectives. It "makes explicit what are the school's reference values, subject priorities and practical choices."<sup>23</sup>

We live in a knowledge-based society, and school curricula must take this fact into account. But education entails a lot more than just

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School*, 47; cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 8.

<sup>23</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love*, 64.

instructing students, teaching them how to gather and collate information. Many agencies and governments have a merely functional view of education, as if its primary purpose is to serve the market economy and the labor market. Catholic schools should not, however, yield to any technocratic and economic rationale, even if there are government pressures as well as other attempts to view them in this way. I do not mean in any way to belittle the demands of the economy or future employment, but students need to be respected as integral persons and be helped to develop a multiplicity of skills that enrich the human person, such as creativity, imagination, the ability to take on responsibilities, to love the world, to cherish justice and to be compassionate.<sup>24</sup>

It is helpful to recall that the Catholic vision holds that all truth – scientific, mathematical, historical and so on – proceeds from the same divine source, God. In Catholic schools, the pursuit of knowledge is best accomplished when faith and reason are viewed as mutually illuminating ways of searching for and discovering truth. As Catholics, we are not afraid of truth, despite the skepticism of discovering or communicating it found in contemporary culture. No truth of science can contradict faith, when each is properly understood. Let’s not forget that Catholic schools are not just “faith based”; they are “faith and reason based” schools.

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instrumentum Laboris*: Educating Today and Tomorrow – A Renewing Passion (2014), III, 1, e.

They ought, then, to educate students to think, evaluating facts in the light of faith and its values. Students should be taught that the faith provides the essential principles for them to engage in a critical evaluation of contemporary culture with all its strengths and its weaknesses.<sup>25</sup>

The curriculum, therefore, must help the students reflect – and I am thinking here primarily of high school students – on the great problems of our time, including those of environmental degradation, injustice, poverty and the denial of human rights, all of which are widespread. A solid and comprehensive teaching of the Church’s social doctrine is a *sine qua non* of a contemporary Catholic school curriculum.

Besides providing instruction in specific subject matter such as religious education and Catholic social teaching, the curriculum should also reflect the integration of faith with the different subjects that are taught. This does *not* mean explicitly teaching religion in every class. Rather, the objective is to communicate a Catholic worldview seamlessly by weaving it into whatever the students are learning. Admittedly, in some subject areas, this is much easier than in others. In language arts, social studies and history, and biological science, it is more readily done than in chemistry or mathematics. The test question is a simple one, though the answer is less so: How does what is taught and learned in the

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, 20.

classroom of your Catholic school differ from what how that same material is communicated and understood in a non-Catholic school classroom?

When he was in London a few years ago, Pope Benedict addressed a gathering of students and made the point I am trying to get across. This is what he told them:

In your Catholic schools, there is always a bigger picture over and above the individual subjects you study, the different skills you learn. . . . But always remember that every subject you study is part of a bigger picture. Never allow yourselves to become narrow. The world needs good scientists, but a scientific outlook becomes dangerously narrow if it ignores the religious or ethical dimension of life, just as religion becomes narrow if it rejects the legitimate contribution of science to our understanding of the world.<sup>26</sup>

#### ***4. Is Witness to the Gospel Consistent among Teachers?***

If *what* is taught is crucial to Catholic education, so also, perhaps even more so, is *who* does the teaching. “It depends chiefly on them – the teachers – whether the Catholic school achieves its purpose.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Benedict XVI, Address to Pupils, London (17 September 2010).

<sup>27</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 8; cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, 26; Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of*



The Church is called to preach the Good News; within the Church, the Catholic school shares in that mission; and those in the Catholic school who carry out the task are the teachers.

The explicit witness of teachers to Jesus and his Gospel is indispensable to a school's Catholic mission of evangelization. To fulfill their mission, teachers are expected to be examples of Christian life, a witness which "is a vital part of the school's identity."<sup>28</sup> This is why we are justifiably concerned that teachers be outstanding not only in their teaching ability, but also in their knowledge of Christian doctrine and in Christian living.<sup>29</sup>

Why is their personal commitment to the Lord so important? Because "the central figure in the work of educating," asserted Pope Benedict XVI, "is specifically the form of witness."<sup>30</sup> The prophetic words of Blessed Paul VI ring as true today as they did nearly forty years ago: "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers,

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*the Third Millennium*, 19.

<sup>28</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education St. John Paul II, *Ad limina* Address to Bishops from Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin (30 May 1998), 4: *Origins*, 28:5 (18 June 1998), 77; cf. Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, 32, 40.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. St. John Paul II, *Ad Limina* Address to the Australian Bishops (13 October 1988), 6: *Insegnamenti*, 11/3 (1988), 1206.

<sup>30</sup> Benedict XVI, Address to the Participants in the Ecclesial Diocesan Convention of Rome (6 June 2005): *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition (15 June 2005), 7.

and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”<sup>31</sup>

The witness of our teachers is, therefore, vital to a school’s fulfilling its mission. As you know so well, children and young people, in that age-old desire to test the authority of their elders, are quick to perceive any discrepancy between the words and actions of their teachers.

Teenagers especially thirst for authenticity. “For these reasons, the Church is justifiably concerned that teachers be outstanding not only for their teaching ability, but also for Christian doctrine and for Christian living.”<sup>32</sup> Students, in fact, learn far more from their teachers’ example, especially in the practice of Christian virtues, than from any masterful pedagogy.

A teacher-witness does not merely transmit information but is personally involved with the truth of what is communicated and how that

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<sup>31</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 4. In the same line as his predecessor, Benedict XVI asserts that “the central figure in the work of educating is specifically the form of witness. This witness becomes a proper reference point to the extent that the person can account for the hope that nourishes his life (cf. 1 Pet 3:15) and is personally involved in the truth that he proposes” (Benedict XVI, Address to the Participants in the Ecclesial Diocesan Convention of Rome [6 June 2005]). In an address to teachers, Pope Francis said: “But above all with your life be witnesses of what you communicate. Educators . . . pass on knowledge and values with their words; but their words will have an incisive effect on children and young people if they are accompanied by their witness, their consistent way of life. Without consistency it is impossible to educate!” (Address to the Students, Alumni, Teachers and Parents of the Jesuit Schools of Italy and Albania [7 June 2013]).

<sup>32</sup> St. John Paul II, *Ad Limina* Address to the Australian Bishops (13 October 1988), 6.

truth, like all truth, has its origin in God. Such an educator finds his or her model in their living encounter with Jesus Christ. If your teachers have accepted committed their lives to him, then they will not separate what they believe from the way they teach. In a word, they are coherent. While students certainly learn from the way subject matter is taught, whether or not it is engaging and skillful or boring and lacking competence, they learn even more from the witness of integrity, fidelity and holiness of the teacher.<sup>33</sup>

We often hesitate to expect from our teachers a witness based on their own personal encounter with God's love manifested in Jesus Christ. A teacher who convinced, enthusiastic, and in love with the Lord is the kind of educator we must look for to staff our schools.

In the selection and hiring of teachers, therefore, those who are responsible play a crucial role of seeing to it that every teacher meets the standards of doctrine and integrity of life essential to maintaining and advancing a school's evangelizing mission. Moreover, the faculty and support staff should be expected to meet and constantly update not only their professional qualifications but their formation in what makes their school Catholic and hence their ability to be effective witnesses to the faith.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Address at the Prayer Vigil for the Beatification of John Henry Cardinal Newman, London (18 September 2010).

A disgruntled or dissident teacher is a fish out of water and has no place in a Catholic school to which parents entrust their children for formation in the faith. Such a teacher simply cannot give the witness expected. In fact, he or she is counter sign and can cause no small amount of confusion among students, even if this is unintended.

Even if, for unavoidable reasons, optimal witness is lacking in a given educator, we should never lower our expectation that our teachers are regularly nourished by the sacramental life of the Church. We don't need the Pope to tell us an obvious truth: only those who know and love Jesus Christ can introduce others into a living relationship with him.<sup>34</sup>

I am unaware of what is required for teachers in Parramatta to teach religion. Where I come from, it is often assumed that any “good” or “practicing” Catholic can do this. Sometimes only minimal competence is required – less that is the case in any other subject level!

As leaders, you are well aware of the need for good professional formation among your staff. But teachers require more than this. I believe that all Catholic school teachers should have a solid, organic and comprehensive formation in the Church's faith.

All teachers need a “religious formation that is equal to their

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Address to the Ecclesial Convention of the Diocese of Rome (11 June 2007).

general, cultural, and, most especially, professional formation.”<sup>35</sup> Moreover, “The intellectual life nourishes the spiritual life, but the spiritual also opens vistas of understanding, in accordance with the classical adage *credo ut intellegam*.”<sup>36</sup> Programs of doctrinal and religious formation are more necessary than ever if we are to ensure the Catholic identity and mission of our schools.

### ***Conclusion***

I have now come to the end of my reflections on four of the questions that you might ask yourselves and your communities when evaluating how your Catholic school is living the challenge of renewing and adapting itself in light of Pope Francis’ call for us to examine ourselves on well all ecclesial institutions and structures are doing in proclaiming the Gospel of joy. What I have attempted to do is put on the table some matters which you might consider in charting the future of Catholic education in the Diocese of Parramatta.

Thank you once again so very much for your kind invitation to be with you this morning.

— J. Michael Miller, CSB  
Archbishop of Vancouver

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<sup>35</sup> Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, 60.

<sup>36</sup> USCCB, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 136.