

200 Year Celebration of Catholic Education in Australia

Acknowledgement of Country, Seas and Waterways

As we enter this 200 Years of Catholic Education, it is a timely reminder for us that the concept of Creator Spirit has been a part of First Nations Peoples who have walked upon and cared for these lands, seas and waterways for many thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of First Nations Peoples to this place and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation. We pray and give thanks for these ancient peoples who have enriched and sustained our continent over all that time. We praise God for the people who nurtured the lands, seas and waterways here in the place that we call home.



Figure 1 Personal photo of B Burns 2021

Context of 200 Years of Catholic Education in Australia

Catholic schools are a vital part of Australia's education landscape. From humble beginnings almost 200 years ago, Catholic schools have grown to become the nation's largest provider of education, serving some 768,000 students and their families. Today, Australia's 1,751 Catholic schools educate one in five students and employ more than 98,000 staff, making Catholic education a key partner in the delivery of quality schooling with the government and independent sectors. (NCEC, 2021)

Catholic Education in Australia has a vibrant and challenging history. Religious, social, economic, and political factors have all influenced the growth and unique story of Catholic Education in Australia. From the original desire for Catholic children to be taught within their own faith setting, to the large number of Religious imported to teach our children as a result of the Education Acts and cessation in funding, to the vibrant and modern Catholic schools we see today, the purpose of providing faith filled communities dedicated to being Christ-centred has not waived.

The national theme, "Faith in the future" reflects the core purpose of Catholic education to form students in their faith, and to provide an education that enables our graduates to make a meaningful contribution to the world. The theme reflects our commitment to build on the great work of those who have come before us and to provide a Catholic education for future generations of students in a world that is rapidly changing and poses new challenges for Catholic school communities. Yet, we have faith that we can face these challenges and continue to build on, and strengthen, our mission of Catholic education. (NCEC, 2021).

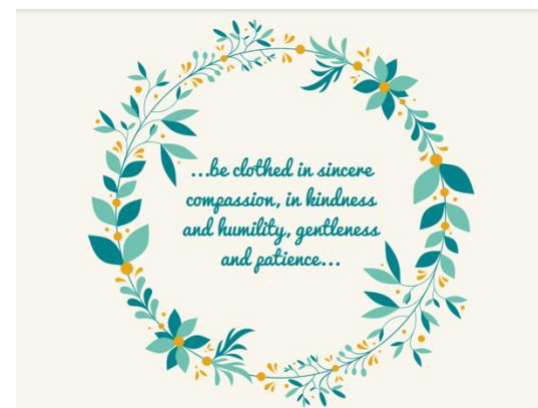
Scripture

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Colossians (3:12-17)

You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body. Always be thankful.

Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God



Reflection - Bec Burns Consultant - Formation

St Paul's letters are written when he was leading an emerging Christian Church through the many challenges in establishing touchstones for the faithful modelled on the life and actions of Jesus, in its origins. Paul's role was one he chose and was one of true calling; vocation. In writing to the Church in Colossae, Paul speaks of gratitude. Gratitude for each other and gratitude for being a part of a story that was so much bigger than himself, a story of which he did not know the ending or impact. He acted from faith and joy.

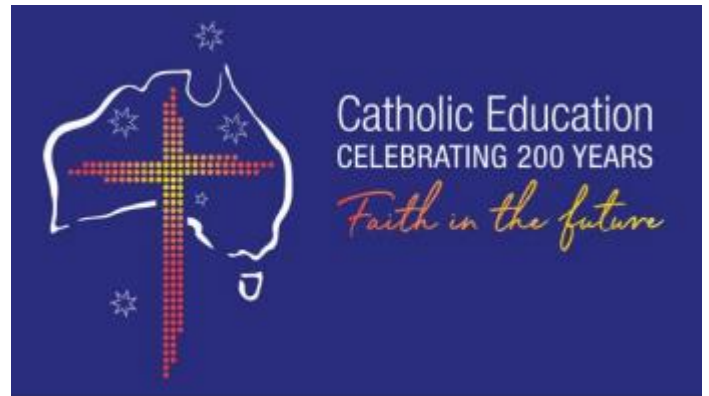
I recently learnt a new definition of Joy informed by the writing of Fr Michael Himes. He described Joy in vocation as not always being happy; rather, he explains, joy is 'a sense of knowing that the work you are undertaking is urging you to keep moving forward'. This knowing and desire is not always easy and there are times of real challenge. It is only when you reflect on this work you are undertaking that you get the true sense of purpose. Catholic Education in Australia has also experienced these challenges and like our church it is the people who experience true Joy from their being a part of education that truly continue our story to push forward in a positive way. This includes our Educators, Support Staff, System workers, Parish Connections, our Parents and most importantly our students.

The image included is the logo for Celebrating 200 years of Catholic Education.

Faith in the Future

The logo for 200 years of Catholic Education in Australia invites us to contemplate some of the symbols and imagery which captures the role and influence of Catholic Education in our country over the years:

- The Christian Cross - representing the faith dimension of Catholic Schools and our mission of service in Christ.
- The Southern Cross and map of Australia - representing the Great South Land of Australia
- Dots are used as a key design element, connecting to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and our Australian heritage
- The colours - burnt red and yellow - represent the desert in the heart of the Australian outback, contrasting the deep blue representing the Southern sky and ocean surrounding our continent. (NCEC, 2021).



We Pray

In this 200th year of Catholic Education in Australia, we celebrate the distinctive legacy that has characterised Australian Catholic Schools as Christ-centred communities which witness to the Faith.

We remember our very humble beginnings, from the first school established in Parramatta, in western Sydney with an enrolment of 31 students, to the more than 1,750 schools and colleges nationwide in 2021.

We recognise the significant role these communities play in witnessing and enlivening the Catholic Christian tradition. May we be resolute in drawing strength from those on whose shoulders we stand, whose stories we continue to tell and retell, and from the person of Jesus Christ in whose life we are inspired and guided.

Action

- Listen to the [National Song](#) by Fr Rob Galea
- Commit to sharing the [200 Year National Prayer](#) with your family.
- Learn more about the history of Catholic Education in Australia through [this Timeline](#).

