

Broadsheet of Good Practice in Integrated Schools

Editorial

We offer a big thank you to all of you who came to the Catholic Education Convention, and made it such a success. Thank you for the comments and gratitude many of you expressed to us.

As you are aware, the aim of the convention is to build our community of Catholic educators, to share ideas, both new ideas from elsewhere and best practice here in New Zealand, and to enable us all to pray and celebrate together, sharing our lives for a brief time. It was a wonderful coming together of our diverse people, cultures and roles in Catholic education. The warmth that you brought to the gathering ensured its success. We hope it continues to stimulate you. If you have not yet listened to the keynote speeches or seen the film on Catholic education, shown in the opening ceremony, we remind you that a great deal of material is available at www.nzceo.org.nz, and on the Portal.

Here are some highlights:

- The timely outline by Br Pat Lynch of just how far Catholic education in NZ has come in the last 40 years.
- The intellectual clarity of Prof Therese D'Orsa's address and the challenges of Dr Gemma Simmonds' address.
- The diversity of seminars, and the generosity of presenters giving their time and energy.
- The power of the whakatau.
- The inspiring launch of the Caritas resource *Parihaka o neherā, o nāianeī: Parihaka – past and present*.
- The precious experience of having so many priests and Bishops concelebrating Mass.
- The "awesomeness" of our students, shown in the film (which is available for any schools to use).
- The varying poses with 'Pope Francis', and the comment in a school newsletter that it will be the nearest they will ever get to the Pope.

Enjoy the memories evoked by the photos and articles here, and keep on building the best possible Catholic schools, for our students and our community.

Susan Apathy

What Our Children, and Ourselves, Have Learnt from Taking Our Children to Church.

The following reflection was written by a young mother from St Francis de Sales Parish, Island Bay, Wellington.

In the hustle and bustle of daily life, when it seems like there is so much to do it is hard to find the time to take the children to church. So why then, do we bother?

Both my husband and I grew up in families where we were taken to church often. People say times were different back then, but today most if not all parents have the same aspirations for their children: to grow up feeling supported and loved, to get a good job, to have a group of friends to share the good times with and be there for the bad, to perhaps repeat the cycle themselves one day and have children of their own. Social and financial pressures have changed, but we both decided before our children were born that taking them to church was going to be just as important as attending swimming lessons or sports practices, regardless of how difficult it may seem. The following are a few moments when we found it was all worthwhile...

When we took the children to church one Sunday, I had been up until 1am the night before. I can't remember what had kept me up, but I know it wasn't by choice. During the sermon the priest said to the children, "Help your mother with the household chores when she's tired." It appears my children actually did listen. Never was the house cleaned in such a short time. Whatever virtues you wish your children to display, a priest will always endorse them. I love that.

When the children are over-excited about going somewhere, I know it can lead to one of those moments when they just need to calm down. I say to them, "Remember, when we go in there, this place is like a church – you need to be quiet in there for everybody else's sake." I can say this, and know they understand, because our children have had to be well practised at sitting quietly, every Sunday, so that other people can pray.

When I hear my child joining in a hymn with great enthusiasm, louder than everyone else, I think to myself, "Luciano Pavarotti, Dionne Warwick and even Elvis Presley's multi-million dollar careers began by singing in a church – just like my daughter."

When my little seven year old stands at a lectern in front of 600 people and a family member whispers in my ear, "No way would I be brave enough to do that," my husband and I puff up with pride. Perhaps it is because she feels she is in a loving, supportive environment, that she practises at home over and over again, paying attention to those tricky biblical words that are difficult to pronounce. When she stands at that lectern, as the congregation look at her and smile, she reads confidently and fluently; she has learnt to have faith in herself and her own ability.

What Our Children, and Ourselves, Have Learnt from Taking Our Children to Church.



Continued

When I hear my children say they like going to children's liturgy, or participating in church plays because their friends are there, encouraging them to join the church youth group sounds like a good idea. Church youth groups give teenagers the chance to be in a social group where there can be less peer pressure, where doing 'the right thing' is valued. Through their involvement with the church young adults have the opportunity to have work experiences many young people rarely have the opportunity to obtain; they demonstrate to those around them that life is not just about what they can get out of it, but also what they can give back. Youth groups can make significant contributions and support to well-deserving causes. They can also provide great support to youth group members if they need support through a difficult patch in their teenage years.

When my children come bouncing home from school, happy after their day, I know that they are very fortunate to have places in one of the many Catholic schools, which are full to capacity. These schools, along with the Mary Potter Hospice, the Soup Kitchen, the hospital chaplaincy service, Catholic Social Services, and many other Catholic organisations all became possible through the church.

Some years ago on a wet, dreary day, I sat in a children's ward with my sick daughter. The hospital chaplain came to visit her. She was only a pre-schooler and didn't know him but did not seem to mind him coming to visit her. I think his visit brightened an otherwise miserable, very painful day for her. In amongst all the strangers she had met and associated with unpleasant experiences she saw a stranger who was comforting because

he seemed familiar to her; she knew he was not about to do something unpleasant to her. After he left she smiled at me and said she knew he was a priest because "he was dressed just like Father Geoff, from church." I'm sure this will not be the only time she will find comfort in a priest. When my daughter was in a neonatal unit a priest came to see her. At that time we were all hoping and praying – literally - that she would be alright. The priest gave her a blessing. In those first few days that blessing was one of the few comforts we had as we waited for her test results to come back.

When I take my children into the church where their grandmother was baptised, where their aunt and uncle were married, where every year as a little girl my mother took me to confession, my children look at me with intrigue. Being in that church gives them a connection to their past and a sense of identity of who they come from and our beliefs as a family. I tell them that their nana as a little girl sat in the same pew they are sitting in, and how she loved them dearly but passed away while they were too little to remember her. In that moment she seems more real to them, and they learn something about what life was like for her; as they sit in that pew they share a common bond with her.

Our children were all baptised Catholics as babies, but since then we have given them the chance to experience for themselves what it truly means to be involved in a church. We know when the time comes for them to decide for themselves how they feel about being a Catholic for the rest of their life, they will have a much better understanding of what they are doing if they choose to say to the Archbishop, "I wish to be confirmed."

Your Evaluation of the Convention

Thank you to those of you who responded to our questionnaire about the convention. We had a bigger response than usual, and we are very grateful. Once we have finished all our evaluations here your comments will go into our file for planning the 2018 convention.

The key points you made were:

You really appreciated Sr Gemma Simmonds. Many of you mentioned her as the highlight, and used words like humorous, challenging, passionate, motivating and inspiring about her presentations. Overall, you were very appreciative of the range and variety of seminars available, and you really loved the ambience, the knowledge-sharing and networking with colleagues from all round the country, and the affirmation of Catholic education that the event provided. The general organisation gained approval, including "the helpfulness of the staff at the venue," and "the hard case Irish lady handling the coats!" Quite a number mentioned that the venue was good.

There was a much shorter list of responses to the question about what we could have done better or differently. Some people liked the dinner format, but quite a few people did not. We shall take your comments on board, particularly in relation to the dinner.

(Note that the dinner was actually much cheaper than in previous conventions, which was why we were able to roll it into the overall cost.)

You had a range of valuable suggestions, or extra things you wanted to tell us. We shall go over all your comments with care and will action everything we can next time.

It was a very big challenge to be in a new venue, and we had to make a lot of decisions without being sure how they would work out. We were glad that in many respects the new venue worked well – and we will continue to make improvements.





Simon Roughton

We were expecting about 12-20 people to attend. When the walls of the room needed to be pushed out, and it was still standing room only, we realised this was a topic which needed further discussion by those in Catholic schools.

All schools have to manage their relationship with students, parents, trustees and staff: the overarching principle is to treat all people with respect and dignity, even those who create a challenge for us! Catholic schools have an added pressure to 'get it right' - because of the gospel values which underpin the philosophy of a Catholic school, a person's perception of the way they were treated in the interaction with a teacher or someone in a management position will have an impact on their view of what it means to be Catholic.

I am now offering two-hour workshops where participants will have an opportunity to discuss tools and tips which effectively avoid a complaint getting out of control. It is important to have policies and procedures and to use these, however my observation is policies and procedures generally only come out when things have started to escalate. The workshop covers the skill development and theoretical principles which underpin conflict management.

The two-hour workshop is based on a very successful six-hour workshop run nationally for electricity, gas and network companies. The feedback from participants at those workshops is consistently outstanding, with the only criticism being participants wish it was longer!

My background is in teaching. I taught and held management positions in primary schools. I left teaching to finish my Masters in Education (Leadership) and then took up a one year (maternity leave) position as HoD/DRS at an awesome small secondary school, St Catherine's College, Kilbirnie. I loved it so much I stayed for another three years. I finally left teaching to run a large University-owned Hall of Residence for 312 first year students. While in this role I developed my skills and experience in complaint management and dispute resolution. I am a LEADR & IAMA-accredited mediator. I coach and assess potential mediators on behalf of LEADR and facilitate mediations.

As an independent contractor I have a range of contracts. I work with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, using mediation skills to assist complainant and respondent agencies to resolve complaints without going through a formal process. I am also an approved NZSTA provider assisting Boards of Trustees with professional development and support. In these roles I see the impact of complaints which have escalated. I know Catholic education and I am passionate about working with Catholic school communities to reduce time and cost of complaints gone out of control.

Contact: Simon Roughton M.Ed Leadership, Dip Tchg, AccM.LEADR, Facilitator, Dispute Resolver, Trainer. simon@orbsolutions.co.nz. Ph: 021 160 0666.



Stella Maris Catholic Primary School, Silverdale, year 5-8 students attended the Uruguay U20 team training at the Hibiscus Coast Football Club. The Kapa Haka welcomed the team with a Haka Powhiri and all students got to meet the players and support staff.

Will Catholic Schools be Catholic in 2030?

This book by Br Aengus Kavanagh and Sr Leone Palliser contains thought-provoking reflections on where Catholic Schools might be in 2030. The authors have provided reflections by a number of experienced Australian Catholic educators, and in-depth discussions themselves. These could be used for

staff development in Catholic Character. Towards the end of the book there are a number of one-page reflections that are excellent resources for use in either an RE lesson or in-staff development sessions. Contact Sr Leone Palliser 2/2 Alison St Croydon Park 2133 NSW, Australia to order a copy.

Heart to Heart at Convention

St Joseph's School Oamaru principal Jenny Jackson and Co-DRS Lorraine Frances-Rees gave a seminar at the convention, for which Lorraine collected and painted stones, to give to every participant as a reminder of the key message to keep Christ at the heart of all that they do. There were a large number of attendees and on the day there were not enough stones for everyone. The day after the seminar it was discovered, however, that there were some stones left over (loaves and fishes?). So after the team posed for photos with Pope Francis and Sr Gemma, it was decided to leave the remaining stones at the foot of the Pope, with a message 'Please take one. Heart to Heart from Oamaru.' So this lovely gesture benefited the last leavers, who included the staff of the Office! Thank you, St Joseph's Oamaru.



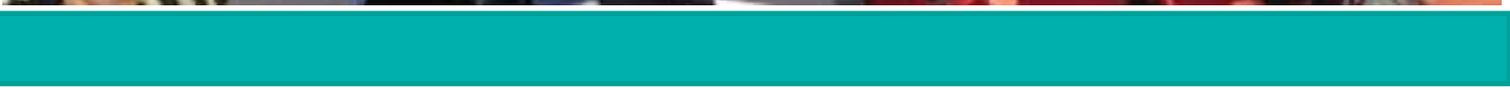
Contact Details:

New Zealand Catholic Education Office (NZCEO)
PO Box 12 307, Wellington
Tel: 04 496 1739 | Fax: 04 496 1734
Email: nzceooffice@nzceo.org.nz
Website: www.nzceo.org.nz

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Memorable Phrases from Convention – September 2015

Gemma Simmonds

The full texts of the keynote addresses are on the convention website and at www.nzceo.org.nz. Here are some quotes and comments that you might enjoy being reminded of.

From the presentation by Sr Gemma Simmonds.

“The Son of God summoned us to become revolutionaries of tenderness.” Pope Francis

“Souls illuminated by the Spirit are made like God and made God.” Basil of Caesaria

We are the Church, one body, good and bad alike. (drawing on 1 Corinthians 12, and on St Augustine)

Everything we do is an outward sign of our inward grace – a Sacrament. Awaken people to the sacredness and sacramentality of life in all its aspects.

“Eucharistic tenderness” – what does this mean, what does it look like?

“Those who have hope live differently.” Benedict XVI

“The problem with Christians is that they don’t look redeemed.” Nietzsche

Schools have to be centres where we become consumed with the longing for God, where we can have a space hollowed out in us for God to enter.

We need to show students that we ourselves are loved and cherished by God. We cannot instigate faith in the young, but we can encourage them to be open to receive the gift.

“The gateway to heaven is everywhere.” St Catherine of Siena

“Seek the key that unlocks the human heart; the same key opens the heart of God.” St John Chrysostom.

“Things great have small beginnings... without that seed there can be no beginnings.” William Wilberforce

We need to be bilingual in young people’s language – use the words and concepts they use to consider their lives, hopes, problems.

Spirit-filled life is a real life – it includes the dilemmas and the failures. Pope Francis called for priests not to be holy but to be real.

From the presentation by Sir Br Pat Lynch

“God is not afraid of new things. That is why he is continually surprising us, opening our hearts and guiding us in unexpected ways.” Pope Francis

“The eclipse of the sense of God challenges us to evangelise in innovative ways.” Pope Francis, drawing on Saint Pope John Paul II

Young people have to be actively enabled to meet the person of Jesus in the Gospels. Focus on the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. Believe those who believed in Jesus because they knew him personally.

St Paul said, “It is in hope that we are saved.” As educators we are witnesses to hope.

“We are called to wear God’s smile.” Pope Francis

Sr Gemma said that the Bishops’ document, *The Catholic Education of School-Age Children*, is the best of its kind that she has read.

