

Catholic Schools' Day 2010

Bishop Peter J Cullinane DD

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To contribute to the formation of children's well-being, their futures and life choices is a sacred task and a great privilege. We really are on holy ground. That is true of *all* authentic education, which is why we should think of ourselves as partners with everyone else involved in education.

Yet our contribution to our nation is destined to be distinctive. What is most distinctive about Catholic schooling is the freedom we have to tell young people why they matter so much: when they know how much they matter *to God*, they have the greatest of all reasons for knowing that they matter – forever, and therefore now!

We are free to explain that God's love for them has been revealed in the person, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This gives us our best reason for affirming the dignity of every person and the sacredness of every life.

But this isn't just some kind of spirituality that individuals can come to without reference to anyone else. It is based on events that took place in human history, giving rise to the community of those who treasure the knowledge of those events, and pass it on. This faith comes to us through our participation in the life of that community.

This is why Catholic education is a seamless garment uniting home, school and parish. That is also why any weakness along the seamless garment endangers the whole fabric. That, in turn, would diminish our most distinctive contribution to New Zealand society, namely the reason our faith gives us for affirming the dignity of every person and the sacredness of every life.

One of our biggest challenges is to ensure the professional development of all teachers in Catholic schools. The distinctive purpose of Catholic schools as I have described it depends in large measure on how well all staff embody what the school stands for, and how well families understand and support the distinctive purpose of Catholic schools.

On behalf of the bishops of New Zealand, I greet you all for Catholic Schools' Day 19 May, 2010, and ask God's blessing on you all.

Kia tau te rangimarie o te Wairua Tapu ki a koutou katoa

Peter Cullinane

Bishop of Palmerston North

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