



The Catholic School is . . .
the Church in action . . .
an expression of the Church's mission

Forming Christ
In Others

29th October 2016

- The Catholic School is embedded in the Church.
- It is the Church in action.
- Catholic Schools are in effect parishes educating their young.

Forming Christ in others is a duty and joy of the entire faith community

- Celebrant: What name have you given your child?
 - Parents:
 - Celebrant: What do you ask of God's Church for . . . ?
 - Parents: Baptism
 - Celebrant: In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her in the practice of the faith.
- N. The Christian Community welcomes you with great joy. In its name I claim you for Christ our Saviour by the sign of his cross. I now trace the cross on your forehead and invite your parents and godparents to do the same.

. . . .of the entire faith community

- Principals.
- DRSs.
- Chaplains.
- Tagged Teachers.

Are all key players in the upbringing in faith of our tamariki. They bear witness to our faith and its integration in themselves as individuals and within the schools as communities of faith. Their commitment is for all of us a source of deep gratitude and also a responsibility with implications for professional development as well as simple friendship and encouragement.

How does that formation work?

- Proclaiming the word of God.
- Celebrating the Sacraments.
- Exercising the ministry of Charity.
- These three dimensions of the Church's life ensure that our schools are **vibrant faith communities** as distinct from values communities.

- Prayer.
- Service.
- Sacraments of initiation.
- Are integral not optional to the life of the Catholic School.

In his very first homily Francis put it this way:

“we can walk [and talk] as much as we want, we can build many things, but if we do not profess and live Jesus Christ, ... we become an NGO, good in itself, but not the Church, not a parish,... and everything, like the sandcastles of children at the beach, will gradually be swept away.”

Special Catholic Character Reviews: Extracts from letters of Bishop Charles to School Boards

- Catholic schools are first and foremost communities of faith embedded within a parish.
- This means that witness to our faith under the umbrella of parish life is the lifeblood of the school.
- The life that flows from these sacraments of initiation points to the vital relationship the school has with its parish.

- The development of a sense of belonging takes time and needs to be approached calmly and thoughtfully.
- A focused planned path of evangelization of your families requires the full support of the Board.
- In many schools we need to move a culture of invitation to expectation in regard to the sacraments. This needs to be made clear to parents from day one as part of their welcome to the school.

- We have to embrace 100% the fact that our schools are not just state schools which teach RE but are subsets of the parish and therefore are religious or faith based schools which require a 'buy in' from parents, especially around participation in parish life.
- It is not fair if children are left on the sideline of faith unbaptized or without making their first reconciliation of Holy Communion. Children themselves, as we know, want to participate and contribute on the field of faith.

- Your parish Church sits embraced by the school. That symbolism is a powerful reminder that the life of the Church – our prayer, sacraments and service – are the starting point, the on-going nourishment and the final goal of Catholic education. We are forming a new generation of Catholics; disciples of Jesus.

- Passing on the faith is not easy. While most families appreciate the RE curriculum and recognize the positive impact this has on their tamariki fewer are ready to make a commitment to the primary place of spiritual nourishment which is the Sunday Mass of the iwi whakapono.
- As Educators in faith we know however that there are ways in which we can weave families into this experience. Altar serving, music ministry, having school parents as readers and Eucharistic ministers etc are all pastoral practices that the parish council, together with the school staff, can continue to foster in order to grow the participation of families at Mass. For some of your whānau the Marae is the place where they will feel most at home in participating in the miha and so this too is where many of your students rightly feel at home.