

Our world of just on 7 billion inhabitants has shown a remarkable focus on the smooth transition of papal leadership over the last few months. With 1.2 billion adherents, the Catholic Church's universality is recognised by friend and foe alike.

Despite the human frailties and down right unacceptable behaviour of individuals who ought to know better, the Church is overwhelmingly regarded as an institution that has something of substance to offer the world.

This is not just in the Church's myriad of good works, but also in its intellectual and moral contributions to the debates about how human flourishing can better occur particularly for the poorer members of humanity. The Church community seeks to work globally with people of goodwill to lighten the burdens of countless millions of people who stumble to survive. We can expect Pope Francis to continue to display the leadership the world expects to come out of the Vatican.

As we move away from the Easter season, we ought not forget the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Apostles were illiterate clueless individuals prior to the Resurrection and Pentecost. Then all of a sudden they became theologians, excited by the dramatic enlightenment the Resurrection's aftermath showered on them. They became strong credible witnesses to the alive Christ.

In this Year of Faith we are all urged to demonstrate in our behaviour that we are bold witnesses to the realities of the Resurrection, without which we would be the most pitied of individuals.

Let us be proud of our Catholicism and our connections with the other 1.2 billion Catholics in the world.

"It is in Him that we live and move and have our being".

*"Be still and know
that I am God."*

Psalm 46

Greetings

Tēnā koutou – ngā mihi o te wā ki a koutou.

With Pope Francis' 'honeymoon' period still strong, we can glow in the leadership he is demonstrating.

We Welcome Pope Francis

The Catholic education community welcomes our new Pope, Francis. His actions and gestures in his first weeks as Pope give us cause for great hope and joy. We join with our Bishops and the rest of the Catholic community in assuring Pope Francis of our loyalty and our prayerful support.

National Catholic Schools Day, 22 May, 2013

We look forward to receiving news of the various celebrations around the country, as schools join with their neighbours to celebrate, and to promote themselves to their communities. We trust you will have a wonderful day.

New Readers for the Junior School

A new series of readers for the junior school have been produced by Nelson Cengage Learning, Garret Publishing. The series, called 'Start with Your Heart', is designed to assist teachers and students to develop a deeper appreciation of the presence of God in their lives. Visit www.nelsonprimary.com.au and type the series title in the search box to see this lovely range of readers and teacher resources.

Congratulations on Supporting Caritas

Sacred Heart Girls' College and Francis Douglas Memorial College (New Plymouth) combined to stage their annual Air Bands competition concert, raising \$3159.62 for Caritas.

Worth Reading

'Getting into Debt - everything you wanted to know about Third World debt in a short handbook', can be downloaded free from www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk. It is aimed at Year 10 students and above.

Congratulations to Principals New to Leadership of Catholic Schools

Cath Swney, St Joseph's Catholic School, Paeroa

Catherine Ryan, St Mary's College, Wellington

An Idea to Consider

St Bede's College, Christchurch, has a 'Virtual' prayer group. People from all over the country receive a weekly email 'Prayer Request for the Week', and commit to praying regularly on Thursday. Irene Maguire, i.maguire@clear.net.nz can provide further information.

Congratulations

A growing number of primary and secondary schools have reported in their school newsletters that many students have been baptised or undertaking other sacraments of initiation. We congratulate these schools. Throughout the country increasing numbers of schools and parishes are engaging in RCIA/RCIC programmes with their students. In his book 'The RCIA: Transforming the Church, a Resource for Pastoral Implementation' Thomas H Morris points out that the Rite of Christian Initiation is not a programme whose goal is membership of the Church, it is a sacramental formation programme that prepares individuals and communities for a particular way of life, a discipleship for mission.

Christian Meditation Success in Wellington

More than 12 primary schools in the Wellington region have taken on Christian Meditation for children (WCCM), with training and support available from willing volunteers. Those involved are congratulated on the success of this programme. For information contact Fr Peter Murphy petermurphy54@hotmail.com.

Founded on Rock

Schools and Boards of Trustees are reminded of the new DVD by Kevin Treston, a leading Australian Catholic educator, 'Eight Beliefs that Matter: Mission and Ethos for Catholic Schools'. Buy from Pleroma Books, or ask the diocesan Catholic education office. It provides excellent professional learning and development.

A Website to Investigate

www.magisreasonfaith.org is the website of the Magis Center of Reason and Faith, founded by Fr Robert Spitzer SJ. It provides interesting You Tube programmes on recent science debates (including the latest in physics) and their bearing on religion and the existence of God.

The Power of Facebook – It Makes You Think

Jamie Curry, Year 12 student at Sacred Heart College, Napier, has received 7 million hits on her Facebook page (with up to 100,000 for one of her video clips). She posts photos, videos and status updates, with a great sense of humour, and with an emphasis on being herself (with braces, without makeup). Jamie's parents thought she was "just messing around" and were taken aback by her fame.

The Importance of Hope

At the 17th World Congress on Catholic Education, 'The School, a Place of Hope for Human Rights' held in October 2011, in Saragossa, Spain, Fr Angel Astorgano, the Secretary-General of the OIEC (Catholic International Education Office, Secretariat in Brussels), commented on the impression that is prevalent in much of the Western world that "everything is going badly and there is no way out." He stressed that the objective of the OIEC is "to generate hope and sketch new horizons for the future." He had a particular message for schools: "The school, as an important place of education, together with the family, should be a space where the seed of hope is sown that will later give fruits of confidence and hope for the morrow."

Evaluating Religious Education

Ofsted, the English inspectorate, has an interesting range of resources on its website, www.ofsted.gov.uk. Search 'Religious Education'. A 2010 report, 'Transforming Religious Education', is worth reading, as is the Good Practice Resource, 'Outstanding sex and relationships education in a Catholic context: The John Henry Newman Catholic School'. There are also documents on the grade criteria and descriptors inspectors use when they assess subject teaching, including Religious Education. None of these documents has an exact parallel in New Zealand, and all are stimulating to the thinking of teachers and DRSSs.

Publications from the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference

School communities are reminded of the very effective and colourful prayer cards that explain and promote Lectio Divina, and also the statement 'Securing the Common Good: Whakamaaua te tikanga pai o te katoa' originally put out for the 2011 General Election, but worth using frequently as a succinct statement on Catholic teaching on enhancing life in our communities, protecting the vulnerable and working for the common good. Both documents can be downloaded from www.catholic.org.nz, the national site of the NZ Catholic Church.

Catholic Schools Serving Across our Communities

Compared with the national decile patterns for schools, the 238 Catholic schools nationwide are distributed fairly evenly across the deciles, but with somewhat more in the upper deciles. In March 2011 there were 53 schools in deciles 1-3, 107 schools in deciles 4-7, and 79 schools in deciles 8-10. At both primary and secondary levels there are somewhat more schools than the average in deciles 7 and 8 and somewhat fewer in deciles 1 and 2.



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"Thanksgiving is not over. It is every day."

John Iversen