

# THE DECLARATION

## OF THE PROPRIETORS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN NEW ZEALAND ON THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AUTHENTIC CATHOLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION

### CATHOLIC SCHOOLS PROVIDE CATHOLIC EDUCATION

- ▶ “Christ is the foundation of the whole enterprise in a Catholic school”.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ “A Catholic school is... formally acknowledged as Catholic by ecclesiastical authority”.<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ “The formation and education in the Catholic religion provided in the school... is subject to the authority of the Church”.<sup>3</sup>
- ▶ Catholic school education provides “a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life”.<sup>4</sup> The Special Character of a Catholic school, as defined in the Integration Agreement, provides the framework within which all aspects of education are provided.
- ▶ The Catholic school recognises and is appropriately sensitive to people within the school community who do not share our Catholic faith.

### CATHOLIC SCHOOLS STRIVE FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

- ▶ Catholic schools “reproduce the characteristic features of a school”.<sup>5</sup> Their curriculum and other features are in keeping with the teaching of the Church, and are in accordance with all that is desirable in effective schools, including high quality education and sound management systems.
- ▶ “The formation given in Catholic schools is, in its academic standards, at least as outstanding as that in other schools in the area”.<sup>6</sup>
- ▶ “The Catholic school has as its aim the critical communication of human culture and the total formation of the individual”.<sup>7</sup> This formation takes a holistic approach, providing for the fulfilment of all facets of personal potential. It extends the most able students and supports all those who require it.
- ▶ Teachers are recognised and respected as professional people in a vital vocation. They conduct themselves accordingly.
- ▶ Catholic school authorities support teachers in their continuing professional development, including Religious Education. Teachers take full advantage of that support.

### CATHOLIC SCHOOLS CONTRIBUTE TO THE CHURCH’S MISSION

- ▶ Catholic schools work in partnership with the parish and the wider Church community. They collaborate with parents, who are “the first and foremost educators of their children”.<sup>8</sup>
- ▶ The education provided in Catholic schools “offers an alternative which is in conformity with the wishes of the members of the community of the Church”<sup>9</sup> and “performs an essential and unique service for the Church herself”.<sup>10</sup>
- ▶ “The Catholic school is one of the Church’s pastoral instruments” and, as such, is “ever more effective in proclaiming the Gospel and promoting total human formation”.<sup>11</sup> It accepts a responsibility for the spiritual guidance of members of the school community.
- ▶ “Formation and education in a Catholic school must be based on the principles of Catholic doctrine”.<sup>12</sup> Each school’s Integration Agreement defines its Catholic Special Character.
- ▶ Catholic school education includes evangelisation but avoids proselytising.<sup>13</sup>
- ▶ Catholic schools develop students’ ability to critique society. They promote social justice for all, especially for the poor, regardless of colour, race, creed, sex or socio-economic status, in accordance with Church teaching.
- ▶ Students see in the adult members of the school community Christian attitudes and behaviours which reflect explicitly the example and teaching of Jesus Christ. “It is in this context that the witness of the lay teacher becomes especially important.”<sup>14</sup>

### CATHOLIC SCHOOLS CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIETY

- ▶ While recognising each person as a unique individual, Catholic schools also manifest the belief that “the person finds true significance only in relationship with others, encompassing both rights and responsibilities, freedom and accountability, self-fulfilment and self-discipline, self-expression and self-denial”.<sup>15</sup>
- ▶ Catholic schools reach out to and serve the wider community, just as the Church serves the world.<sup>16</sup>
- ▶ Catholic school education recognises and affirms all cultures and ethnic groups, especially those represented within the school community.
- ▶ New Zealand Catholic schools give practical recognition to the special importance of the Treaty of Waitangi.
- ▶ Catholic schools regard “education as pre-eminently a personal good which enriches the possessor, while also being a social good which brings advantages to the whole society”.<sup>17</sup> They prepare students to play a fully constructive role in that society.
- ▶ Catholic schools encourage students to become aware of their responsibilities as citizens of the world.
- ▶ Catholic schools teach students to “preserve the balance and integrity of the physical world for the Glory of God.”<sup>18</sup> They learn to care for the earth for the good of all.

1 “The Catholic School” (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome, 1977), para. 34  
2 “The Code of Canon Law”, Can. 803, 1  
3 *ibid.*, Can. 804, 1  
4 “The Catholic School”, *op. cit.*, para. 37  
5 “The Catholic School”, *ibid.*, para. 25  
6 “The Code of Canon Law”, Can. 805, 2  
7 “The Catholic School”, *op. cit.*, para. 36  
8 “Declaration on Christian Education”, (The Documents of Vatican II) para. 3  
9 “The Catholic School”, *op. cit.*, para. 20  
10 *ibid.*, para. 15  
11 “The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School” (The Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome 1988) para. 31

12 “The Code of Canon Law”, Can. 803, 2  
13 “The Catholic School”, *op. cit.*, paras 7 and 19  
14 “Lay Catholics in Schools. Witnesses to Faith” (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982) para. 32  
15 “The Purpose of Education - A Christian Perspective” (Anglican and Roman Catholic Bishops of New Zealand, 1992)  
16 “Ecclesiam Suam, 1964”, *passim* (Pope Paul VI)  
17 “The Purpose of Education - A Christian Perspective”, *op. cit.*  
18 *ibid.*