

Editorial - Br Vince Connors cfc



What is Catholic Education? What are the specific qualities that are or should be characteristic of it? What is its purpose and how well do present day Catholic schools achieve their purpose?

These are some of the important questions that Catholic schools (and I would think any school that is "Faith" centred) should be asking of themselves. The honest answers to these and similar questions of self-examination are crucial in providing a yardstick by which to measure not only the effectiveness of the school but its very legitimacy as a community of "Faith" education.

Many of the articles in this edition touch on these and similar issues, and most if not all issue strong challenges to today's parents, teachers and administrators, and provide stimulating and thought provoking commentary on where schools are and where the authors believe they should be heading.

Some of the views expressed will be and should be the subject of healthy debate, for it is only when good people whose intellects are sharp, whose minds are open and whose hearts are on fire to achieve God's purpose, bring their combined talents to the task that we can expect to arrive at the best answers. Hasn't it been so since the earliest days of the infant Church?

At the same time though, I believe there are some issues that are fundamental and as such should not be open to debate. Surely it is not possible to claim that a school is "Faith" based or specifically Catholic if it does not see relationships as more important than academic results, and the attempt to build community as a higher priority than expanding curriculum. This of course is NOT to

deny the very necessary emphasis that must be given in any serious educational establishment to high academic standards but simply a matter of setting priorities.

If a school is not a "safe" place where all can find forgiveness for failure, special care and concern is provided for those who are most in need and where justice is available for all, how Catholic is it whatever its rhetoric might be?

Surely a most necessary characteristic would be that every member of the school community has the opportunity to meet their God in prayer and in one another, and be genuinely respected and valued for who they are rather than for what they can do.

In short, I believe a Catholic school must seek to be transformational or it ceases to be legitimate as a Catholic school. It must attempt to create a climate that makes present here and now God's kingdom in the school community, and by so doing develop graduates who will in turn transform their world – their homes, their families and their society – by refusing to condone unethical practices, by challenging injustice in whatever form, by honest and fair dealings, and by a practical care and concern for their fellow human beings and for the environment which we all share.

Are these the type of features we use to judge the success of our schools or are we more concerned with OP1s,* Rhodes Scholarships and sporting premierships?

How does your school stack up against such features?

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