



EDMUND RICE EDUCATION  
AUSTRALIA

# Celebrating Blessed Edmund Rice's Feast Day

## A Message from the EREA Council

*"Cast all your cares into the arms of Divine Providence" – Blessed Edmund Rice*

Greetings to all in Edmund Rice Education Australia

Today, the fifth of May, we celebrate the Feast of Blessed Edmund Rice. One of the readings at Mass on this day is the account in the *Acts of the Apostles* of the conversion of St Paul. In this reading, when Ananias hesitates to accept Paul and expressed his concern that Paul was a persecutor of Christians, the response was:

*But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."*

The Bible records that God has chosen many instruments in the course of human history. Edmund Rice is such a person, chosen to proclaim God's name in Edmund's own time and place.

Though we may remember Blessed Edmund for many of his qualities and works, one of his sayings has particular pertinence today. Edmund's trust in Divine Providence marked his life and is, as the Christian Brothers declare, "our inheritance".

Providence, let alone Divine Providence, is not something that is spoken a lot about today. However, Pope Francis calls it one of the most comforting truths:

*God does not forget us, each one of us! He does not forget about each of us with a first and last name. He loves us and does not forget us. What a beautiful thought!*



Edmund maintained the belief in the love of God throughout his life in spite of the difficulties that he faced: the death of his wife, the disability of his daughter, the obstruction of authorities, and the opposition at times even of his own brothers. His hope was firmly founded on his profound experience of God's infinite love.

Edmund, however, did not simply keep this hope to himself. He has been described as a "providential instrument" for the Irish people and one who gave hope to them at the cultural crossroads of their history. He has been called a liberator alongside such people as Daniel O'Connell.

Though he began in small ways as an individual, he called others to him to provide an education open to all, but particularly to the poor. His was an education to develop in the young a sense of hope, a sense of their worth as individuals, citizens and followers of Christ. As Pope Francis has said:

*Our hope is not a concept, it is not a sentiment, it is not a mobile phone, it is not a heap of riches! Our hope is a Person, it is the Lord Jesus Whom we recognize as living and present in us and in our brothers, because Christ is risen.*

Edmund chose to share his resources and his life with those less well off than himself. He did not look to "a heap of riches". Pope Francis went on to say:

*If everyone is out to get whatever he can for himself, there will never be justice. By trusting in God's providence, all can have the possibility to live in dignity.*

In a world where there is violence, indifference and war, in a world where there is devastation, injustice and suffering, our hope needs to be in the person of Jesus Christ. We are compelled to look outwards and to do our part, as Edmund did in his time, but in our own way.

Our Catholic Schools in the Edmund Rice tradition offer both hope and challenge through the living out of the Charism that we have inherited from Blessed Edmund as expressed in the Charter for our schools.

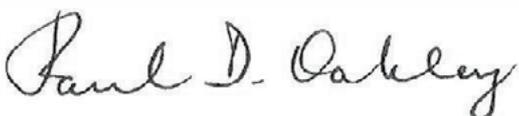
To take but one of the Touchstones of the Charter, Liberating Education means that:

*We open hearts and minds, through quality teaching and learning experiences, so that through critical reflection and engagement each person is hope-filled and free to build a better world for all.*

As we note in another Touchstone, it is Jesus' message of compassion, justice and peace that we seek to make a living reality.

Each of our schools, and indeed each one of us, is invited to take up these challenges as we go about our lives in the world of today.

As we remember Edmund with thanks and pride, let us place our challenges and cares in the arms of Divine Providence, praying that our trust in the goodness and kindness of God will never waver.



**Paul D Oakley cfc**

President, Edmund Rice Education Australia

On behalf of the Council – 5th May 2017



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