

February 2018

A Message from the EREA Executive Director Wayne Tinsey

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The warmest of greetings at the beginning of another school year. I especially welcome staff who are new to our Edmund Rice education family. Thank you for choosing us and I hope that you find your experience of our community to be both rewarding and life giving.

I was recently asked what I think is the essence of our mission in Catholic education. These are some thoughts that occurred to me.

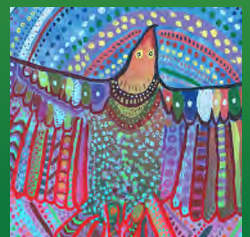
We are called to be and to form young people to be the loving, compassionate and inclusive face of God in our world. In their encounter with us, others must experience the God of love. We belong to a tradition of love; love flowing from God to the whole of creation, offering life in its fullness to all. We are called to be the face of this love.

As St Teresa of Avila so beautifully put it:

‘Yours are the eyes through which God looks with compassion on this world, yours are the feet with which he walks to do good, yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.’

We introduce the young to Jesus, who lived his humanity so deeply and reflected the love of God so totally, that he reveals the very essence of God. The entire ministry of Jesus was rendering visibility, tangibility and concrete-ness to divine love. It must be so for us also!

Only by opening ourselves to our deepest humanity, will we ever come to know our essential God-nature. Faith is the openness to this reality; a resolve to know God. ‘Passing on the faith’ is not a call to transmit a set of beliefs and practices, but rather, an encouragement of the young to be open to their true nature; their oneness with God.



Our greatest gift in mission is our own life experience. How can we expect the young to seek God if we cannot model for them lives based on this goal? And so, the most powerful formation that we can undertake as Christian educators, is the quest to know ourselves and experience the divine in our deepest humanity.

The education we provide should encourage our young to live from the inside out rather than the outside in. The external world and its priorities should not dictate the interior life. Rather, if we begin with our innate oneness with God and bring that to bear on our outward circumstances and the way that we carry ourselves in the world, our lives can become congruent, loving, compassionate and authentic.

Christian mission gives priority to those whose humanity, hence, whose capacity to experience God, is compromised through circumstances of birth or the trajectory of life. Anyone who is deprived of a voice, who does not have the potential to speak their truth, who is suffering because of the structures that our world imposes on them, is poor. These people are those who most need to see this loving, compassionate and inclusive face of God.

In 2016, Pope Francis reminded us that: 'The Gospel of the marginalised is where our credibility is at stake, is discovered and is revealed.'

The poor for whom we have a 'preferential option' in our mission, are those who need special care in order to reach their full human potential. In our schools they can either be materially poor, isolated due to race or culture, have special learning needs or face any other type of challenge which lessens their capacity to claim the fullness of life that is promised by our Gospel.

We believe that our response to the plight of the poor should not only be generous acts which will improve their situation, but advocating for a different and more just social order. We accept that our willingness to accept this challenge will determine our capacity to be authentically Catholic schools. We believe that inclusion is at the heart of the Gospel and exclusion in its many forms, is the Gospel's greatest betrayal. We strive ceaselessly to tell the poor and excluded that God loves them and that the Gospel is 'good news' for them as well.

My best wishes to you all as you rise to these challenges throughout another school year.

Wayne



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