

# The Catholic Education of School-Age Children



NEW ZEALAND CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE 2014



# **The Catholic Education of School-Age Children**

A document of the  
New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference  
to guide those involved in the work of  
Catholic education in Aotearoa New Zealand

***Dear parents and trustees, principals and staff, priests and chaplains, and diocesan education staff***

E te iwi whakapono, tena koutou, tena tatou katoa,

“How beautiful are the footsteps of those who bring good news” (Rom 10:15-17).

With these encouraging words of Isaiah quoted by Saint Paul we warmly greet each of you. Every member of our parish and school faith communities has the wondrous task of bringing Christ’s good news to those whom we are privileged to serve. All the more joyful is this duty when it is our young people with whom we share the love of Jesus and the mission of his Church.

Pope Francis has been calling us to imagine with freshness who we are as God’s people. Indeed, every generation of Christians seeks understanding and clarity about our nature and purpose as disciples of Jesus. For we adults this is particularly important if we are to contribute effectively to the sacred duty to pass on our faith to the next generation (cf. *Dei Verbum*, 7, 8). In his very first homily as Pope, Francis said: “we can walk [and talk] as much as we like, we can build many things, but if we do not profess Jesus Christ ... we are not the Church ...and everything is swept away”.

This resource puts the encounter with Jesus at the centre of Catholic education. It places our schools at the heart of every parish or pastoral area’s evangelising mission. It is our expectation that it become an indispensable reference point for all Trust Boards, Boards of Trustees, school and diocesan staff as well as parish based educators in faith and parish councils. It is a robust document which does not shy from highlighting challenges for us all – parents and children, teachers, priests and bishops, parishioners and religious – as together we strive to shape every family and every educational institute into disciples of a single teacher, Jesus the Lord and Saviour of our world!

To you all we offer again our sincere thanks and appreciation for your witness in faith to our young people. May Mary, the first of all disciples, protect them and guide us all in light of her Son.

✠ John Dew  
Archbishop of Wellington  
President, NZCBC

✠ Patrick Dunn  
Bishop of Auckland  
Secretary, NZCBC

✠ Denis Browne  
Bishop of Hamilton

✠ Colin Campbell  
Bishop of Dunedin

✠ Barry Jones  
Bishop of Christchurch

✠ Charles Drennan  
Bishop of Palmerston North

✠ Peter Cullinane  
Emeritus Bishop of Palmerston North

*New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference  
January 2014*

## The Catholic Education of School-Age Children

A document of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference  
to guide those involved in the work of Catholic education in Aotearoa New Zealand

1. For centuries the Catholic Church has been an education provider, faithful to the task entrusted to her by her Founder to be “Mother and Teacher”<sup>1</sup>.
2. The Church’s pastoral ministry in education, and our corresponding responsibility as bishops, is very broad, encompassing all age groups and types of Catholic education. The primary focus in this document is on the Catholic education of school-age children, which includes those who are in Catholic schools and those who are not. The concern of the Church is to support all Catholic parents and caregivers in their children’s education and formation in the faith.
3. The dedicated work of the many people involved with Catholic schools and the Confraternity of Catholic Doctrine (CCD) movement – teachers, parents, administrators, and others – has been a source of great strength to the Church in New Zealand over many decades. Those who are currently involved carry on the great work in the tradition of their predecessors, with the same commitment, faith and creativity. The Church in New Zealand has much to thank them for.

### The nature of the Catholic school

4. In countries too poor to provide a full education for their citizens the Church provides educational institutions, especially schools, which contribute greatly to the development of the people and the nation. For many citizens these institutions are the only way in which they can gain access to any form of education.
5. In more affluent countries where the state has sufficient resources to provide a secular education for its citizens, as in Aotearoa New Zealand, the Church has developed its own system of Catholic schools. The Church’s reason for continuing to provide Catholic schools in these circumstances is to be found in the nature of the Catholic school and in its goals.
6. The deepest nature of the Church is expressed in her three-fold responsibility of proclaiming the word of God (*kerygma-martyria*), celebrating the sacraments (*leitourgia*) and exercising

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1 Blessed John XXXIII, *Mater et Magistra* 1



the ministry of charity (*diakonia*), duties which are inseparable.<sup>2</sup> The Catholic school is embedded in the Church; it is the Church in action, an authentic expression of the Church's mission. The Catholic school is not just another school, the equivalent of a state school with the addition of a religious education programme. The Catholic school is an ecclesial entity, reflecting the "deepest nature" of the Church in its life, and participating fully in the Church's mission by forming Christ in the lives of others:

"The complexity of the modern world makes it all the more necessary to increase awareness of the ecclesial identity of the Catholic school. It is from its Catholic identity that the school derives its original characteristics and its "structure" as a genuine instrument of the Church, a place of real and specific pastoral ministry. The Catholic school participates in the evangelising mission of the Church and is the privileged environment in which Christian education is carried out."<sup>3</sup>

7. As an ecclesial entity the Catholic school reflects the nature of the Church. It proclaims the word of God in its programmes and activities; it celebrates the Sacraments and assists parents and parishes in preparing the members of its community for their reception; in its embrace of those students who are disadvantaged it exercises the ministry of charity, as well as in the charitable works that the school community might undertake.
8. In their transmission of knowledge all schools are a means of passing on culture to new generations. The education provided by the Catholic school differs from other schools in that:

"Its task is fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life: the first is reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel; the second in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian".<sup>4</sup>

9. Thus the ecclesial nature of the Catholic school is reflected in its educational activity "in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony"<sup>5</sup>.
10. Parents have the primary right and a serious obligation to educate their children. As well as providing education in the faith in the home, parents have the right to choose how their children are educated outside the home. In assisting parents with their obligations to their children the Catholic school makes the Church as "mother and teacher" a practical reality.

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2 Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* 25a

3 Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* 11

4 Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School* 37

5 Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* 11

## The goals of the Catholic school

11. The primary goal of the Catholic school was clearly stated by Blessed Pope John Paul II in an address to Catholic educators in the United States in 1979:

“In order that the Catholic school and the Catholic teachers may truly make their irreplaceable contribution to the Church and to the world, the goal of Catholic education itself must be crystal clear. Beloved sons and daughters of the Catholic Church, brothers and sisters in the faith: Catholic education is above all a question of communicating Christ, of helping to form Christ in the lives of others.”<sup>6</sup>

12. The significance of this goal for all Catholic educational institutions was re-affirmed by Pope Benedict XVI in 2008:

“First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth.”<sup>7</sup>

13. A genuine and ongoing encounter with Christ gives rise to a desire to know more about him and his teaching. Facilitating that encounter is an essential function of the Catholic school. Without it the student will not have a passion for those things which pertain to Christ and his Church, and religious education will have little effect on the heart, the mind and the will.

14. The encounter with Christ and a growing knowledge and understanding of his teaching naturally lead to a “new life characterised by all that is beautiful, good, and true; a life of Christian witness nurtured and strengthened within the community of our Lord’s disciples, the Church”<sup>8</sup>. This progression from encounter, to growth in knowledge and to Christian witness is the framework of the disciple’s journey.

15. The faith required for Baptism, either as an infant or an adult, is not a perfect and mature faith. It is a beginning, a seed which needs to be nurtured and developed.<sup>9</sup> Over time Christian education deepens the faith of the believer, unfolding the “new creation”<sup>10</sup> he or she became in Baptism. That faith enables believers to bear witness to the Christian hope that inspires them.<sup>11</sup>

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6 Blessed John Paul II, Message to the Catholic Educational Association of the United States, 1979

7 Pope Benedict XVI, Address to Catholic Educators of the United States, 2008

8 Ibid

9 Catechism of the Catholic Church 1254

10 Rite of Baptism

11 Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* 64c

16. Coming to know the true God means to receive hope, and those who have hope live differently.<sup>12</sup> The hope which characterises Christian witness is inclusive rather than individualistic; it is a leaven which builds relationships and community:

“Hope that turns to God is never hope only for me, it is always also a hope for others; it does not isolate us but makes us supportive in goodness and stimulates us to reciprocally educate each other in truth and in love.”<sup>13</sup>

17. But what of that goal which is of intense interest to parents as they exercise their right to choose an educational institution for their child? Parents instinctively look for an education of a high standard which will fully develop their child’s talents, and enable him or her to fully participate in society. Academic standards matter to parents and educators alike.
18. Achieving the best possible academic standards is a goal for all Catholic schools. In its academic standards the Catholic school is required to be “at least as outstanding” as other schools in its area. Parents should not have to choose between the best academic standards and a Catholic education; the Catholic school should embody both. Expecting and facilitating the achievement of the best possible academic standards for all children, whatever their ability, is part of enabling each student to use his or her God-given talents in promoting the good of society and the spread of the kingdom of God<sup>14</sup>.

## Catholic Schools in Aotearoa New Zealand

19. On his arrival in Aotearoa in 1838 Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier, assisted by missionaries, began providing education for Māori. The first Catholic school in Aotearoa New Zealand was opened in 1840. Further schools followed, to educate both Māori and the children of settlers. There were initially no state schools, and the schools established by churches received some financial support from the government.
20. In 1877 as a result of a Parliamentary impasse over the level of religious influence in state primary schools, all state funding was withdrawn from Catholic and other church schools.
21. From 1877 onwards, for just over a century, the building and operation of Catholic schools across the country was funded solely by the efforts of the Catholic community. Providing a place in a Catholic school for every Catholic child was the ideal for all involved. The schools were only able to exist because of the selfless service and work of religious who worked for a small stipend, but even so, the schools severely strained the limited financial resources of the Catholic community.

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12 Pope Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi* 2,3

13 Pope Benedict XVI, Letter to the Diocese of Rome, 2008

14 *cf Gravissimum Educationis* 8



22. A number of pressures, beginning in the late 1950s, combined to further strain Catholic resources and a large amount of debt was accumulated to keep the schools operating. In the early 1970s it was obvious to the government that the Catholic school system was in danger of collapse.
23. The passing of the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act in 1975 gave Catholic schools a future. This enlightened legislation allowed Catholic (and other private schools) to choose to enter the state system as “state integrated schools”, and to receive state support for their operation while retaining their Catholic identity. The debt amassed before integration and the costs of upgrading schools to the state code have needed continued servicing post-integration. Attendance dues were introduced to allow this debt to be serviced, including additional debt needed to establish new schools and upgrade or expand existing schools. The New Zealand Catholic Education Office was established with a key role in representing Catholic interests to government, a role it continues with today.
24. The first Catholic schools were integrated in 1979. The Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975 did not make Catholic schools state schools. During the period of negotiation preceding the passing of the Act it was necessary to highlight those things which Catholic schools have in common with state schools, and the areas of commonality more than justify state support for Catholic schools. However, the sole reason for the existence of Catholic schools in New Zealand, even under the Integration Act, is their relationship within the community of faith called the Church. The acceptance of state support was conditional upon the legal safeguarding of the Catholic identity of the schools, the very reason for their existence:
- “...the Catholic school is more significantly an instrument of the faith of the Catholic community than an instrument of any government’s education policy or of consumer society’s economic and social objectives. This is recognised in law by the fact that even though it is for the Ministry of Education to supervise the educational content and methods of teaching in our schools, it is the leader of the local Church or Diocese who determines what is required to qualify our schools as Catholic schools, and thereby justify their existence, and it is for him to determine whether in fact these requirements are being met.”<sup>15</sup>
25. In 2013 there are 238 Catholic schools in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Church in this country has invested heavily in the Catholic school system, which has survived and flourished despite recurring difficulties in funding and staffing the schools. Thanks to the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act, Catholic schools do not face the kind of crises which burdened the Catholic community between 1877 and 1975. However there are still substantial challenges to be faced in relation to the education of school-age Catholics in the Third Millennium.

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15 Bishop P J Cullinane, Address to Catholic Primary Principals, 1981

## Young New Zealand Catholics

26. Since 1840 each generation of Catholic New Zealanders has contributed to the development of the Catholic schools which have benefited not only the children of that generation, but of the generations which followed. The dedicated and sacrificial support of Catholics for over 170 years clearly shows the value that is placed on the schools.
27. Because so many resources have been, and continue to be, invested in Catholic schools, and because they play such a crucial role in the formation of young Catholics, the effectiveness of the schools is of intense interest not only to those directly connected with them, but to all Catholics.
28. There is plenty of data to show that Catholic schools have good academic standards and that their students receive a sound education. But provision of a sound education is not the reason for the existence of the Catholic school; such an education can equally be provided by state or private schools. The Catholic school is first and foremost “a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth.” Its primary goal is “above all a question of communicating Christ, of helping to form Christ in the lives of others”. That is the goal against which the effectiveness of Catholic schools must be assessed, because it is the reason for their existence.
29. The Catholic character review process examines what a school does to maintain its Catholic character. The process needs to consider the lives of the students if it is to produce a focused picture of the impact of Catholic schooling on the students concerned. An incisive Catholic character review will seek to determine whether the students have “encountered the living God”, grown in knowledge and, as a result, have formed a deep and lasting relationship with Christ and his Church.
30. While there is much anecdotal and observational information about post-school young Catholics in New Zealand, there has been until recently no formal research into their faith and their Catholicity.
31. In 2011, research conducted by Dr C J Duthie-Jung for his doctoral thesis *Faith Amid Secularity* provided an insight into the Catholic identity of a group of young adult Pākehā New Zealanders aged 18-28 years. The research was qualitative, involving young people selected to give a good spread of age, gender, geographical location and church involvement. The research is limited to Pākehā so does not give insight into Māori, Pasefika, Asian or migrant young Catholics. Not all the participants attended Catholic schools, although the great majority did.<sup>16</sup>

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16 Dr C J Duthie-Jung, *Faith Amid Secularity*, Chapter 4

32. The *Faith Amid Secularity* research revealed that the young people in the study “demonstrate a strong Catholic sense of the presence of God, exhibiting a Catholic conviction of the goodness of humankind as part of a created order understood to be fundamentally good”. They claim a Catholic identity and claim Catholic values, but “in the everyday engagement of faith with life, there appears to be a disconnection”<sup>17</sup>.

33. The young people studied see being “Catholic” as part of their identity, but for most it is a cultural connection rather than a commitment:

“Cultural association with Catholicism is highly valued while the religious significance of the baptismal call to discipleship is generally unacknowledged.... Being Catholic was indubitably part of their identity but almost entirely lacking for most was a sense of conversion to being a committed disciple of Jesus Christ.”<sup>18</sup>

“In every way they are typical of their generation – individualistic, humanitarian, scientific, media immersed, free of past ideas of a judgemental God etc. Though they value their Catholic culture, it is more as a heritage; the background presence of a comforting religious faith in which they choose for the most part not to engage on any regular basis.”<sup>19</sup>

34. For most of the young Catholics in the study the life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ has not happened. They have learned about Christ but have not met him in a way which leads to forming a relationship with him. In this respect the “first and foremost” goal of every Catholic educational institution, that of being “a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth” has not been achieved.

35. Of particular concern is the lack of difference between most of these young Catholics and their non-Catholic peers:

“They possess a Catholic identity that bears little contrast with the secular humanism of their non-Catholic (and non-Christian peers)... For more than three-quarters of the sample in this study Catholic identity was, to a large degree, superficial – apart from denominational terminology, it was a Catholic identity that was almost indistinguishable from what would be the expected Christian identity of their Protestant peers. In fact, religious terminology aside, there appeared to be little difference from what one would realistically expect from any non-religious young adult ‘people of good will’.”<sup>20</sup>

36. Catholic schools are nevertheless a major instrument of the Church in counteracting influences which might pull young people away from their faith and its practice.

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17 Ibid

18 Ibid

19 Dr C J Duthie-Jung, *Faith Amid Secularity*, Chapter 5

20 Dr C J Duthie-Jung, *Faith Amid Secularity*, Chapter 7

37. The schools have access to young Catholics for a large part of each day, approximately 192 days of the year, for up to thirteen years. This is far more access than a parish has, and in secondary school years may represent even more time than a young person spends with his or her family. With this level of access during formative years, the Catholic school is better placed to counter the influences which dilute faith than any other part of the Church.
38. The question of why young people are emerging from Catholic schools without having formed a committed relationship with Christ is the highest priority issue for all involved in Catholic education, given that this is the major objective of Catholic schools. Questions about the expansion of the Catholic education system are secondary to addressing this question in the existing schools.
39. Many reasons are put forward for the lack of engagement of many young Catholics with the Church. These reasons include the influence of secular society, individualism and non-practising parents. Some of the participants in the study “demonstrated a profound personal response to God’s self-communication” and could be described as having developed a deep personal relationship with Christ which led them to engagement with the Church. They were less than one-quarter of the participants in the study, but they are a source of hope. Their personal journeys may well indicate what needs to be encouraged in order to facilitate others taking the same path.
40. It is often proposed that the real effectiveness of Catholic education is like planting a seed, with the sense of Catholic identity developed during school years eventually prompting the re-entry of many of those who took “time out” in their younger years. However insights from Faith Amid Secularity indicate that resting on this supposition may be a risky strategy with regard to 21<sup>st</sup> century young Catholics. The participants in the study equated being a good Catholic with being a good person, with little else being required. They “held strongly to the conviction that each individual has the right to believe as they choose – the right to shape their own version of the Catholic faith”, which for most does not currently include participation in the faith community, and which may not include it in the future.

## Catholic character

41. Maintaining an authentic Catholic identity in the schools is an unending work. It requires constant initiative, both creative and traditional, if such an identity is going to enter into the human fabric of the school community. There are many ways in which Catholic identity can be eroded or diluted, as schools are constantly under pressure from the culture in which they are situated. “Safeguarding and strengthening” are perhaps better terms than “maintaining” to describe the constant vigilance that is needed in relation to Catholic identity.
42. The Catholic identity of a school is more often weakened by things that appear to be linked to the Catholic character, and which well-intentioned members of the school community bring to the school, than it is by overtly secular intrusions. Values programmes in which

the values are not explicitly derived from the gospels are one example; the embracing of humanitarian organisations whose basis is not in the social teaching of the Church is another.

43. It requires courage to maintain a truly Catholic environment when there are pressures to compromise with the culture of society. In recent years attempts to strengthen Catholic character have multiplied in an increasing number of schools. Yet what can be lacking among those who work in a school is a “clear realisation of the identity of a Catholic school and the courage to follow all the consequences of its uniqueness.”<sup>21</sup>
44. Many factors combine to create the Catholic character of a school. It is this character that the Catholic community hopes will create that “encounter with the living God” which will lead the young person to become a committed disciple of Jesus Christ.
45. There is value in examining the individual components of Catholic character, but to do this leaves out the holistic nature of Catholic character – the interaction between the components which actually creates the Catholic identity of the school. The journey of discipleship (the progression from encounter, to growth in knowledge and then to Christian witness) provides a framework for understanding the connection between the components of Catholic character.
46. The key components of the Catholic character of a school include the people who facilitate the encounter with Christ and accompany the young disciple on the resulting journey (Catholic educators); the catechetical response to the young disciple’s need for knowledge (the Religious Education programme); formation which leads to growth in Catholic virtues and values, and – where appropriate – the living of the particular charism of the school, usually derived from the founding Religious Order; and the lived common good approach and witness of the wider faith community within which the school is situated, usually a parish or parishes.

## Catholic educators

47. At the heart of the Catholic character of a school are the Catholic hearts of those who work in the school, principal, teachers, chaplains and other staff. They are witnesses to the students of a mature faith, and an integration of faith with life. The teacher in a Catholic school may teach a secular subject but he or she does so in a way which assists in the human and faith formation of the student:

“The entire effort of the Catholic teacher is oriented toward an integral formation of each student. New horizons will be opened to students through the responses that Christian revelation brings to questions about the ultimate meaning of the human person, of human

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<sup>21</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School* 66

life, of history, and of the world. These must be offered to the students as responses which flow out of the profound faith of the educator, but at the same time with the greatest sensitive respect for the conscience of each student.”<sup>22</sup>

48. The Catholic educator is involved in a major work of evangelisation: the incarnation of the Christian message in the lives of young Catholics. The education and formation of teachers in Catholic schools are critical in ensuring that the formation offered to students is authentically Christian and Catholic.
49. The Catholic school system in New Zealand is blessed with many outstanding Catholic educators, but there are not enough people available with the right formation and qualifications to staff all schools adequately in terms of the Catholic character. For this reason we intend that research will be carried out into the levels of qualifications of teachers of religious education, with a view to improving the current situation through the provision of easily accessible courses which lead to qualifications.

## Facilitating discipleship

50. Many of the Catholic character activities schools undertake with their students outside the religious education programme have the potential to lead students to that intimate encounter with God which is the beginning of an adult commitment to Jesus Christ and his Church.
51. The emphasis at the national level on religious education is important and necessary, but similar attention needs to be paid to the aspects of Catholic character outside the religious education programme which belong to the encounter stage of the journey of discipleship. These include good experiences of prayer and liturgy, regular access to the sacraments (including Reconciliation), and retreats which are truly Catholic and spiritual in nature.
52. Teaching students to pray in different ways and providing well-prepared opportunities for them to do so is essential. For many students this is the only time in their lives someone will assist them with prayer. Providing regular opportunities to receive the sacraments is critical, as is adequate preparation for their reception. Bringing the sacraments to young people in schools encourages them to love and appreciate them before they have to start finding them for themselves as adults.
53. It is vitally important that schools do not conflate these activities with other school events in a way which obscures the spiritual objective. Retreats must be true retreats with a spiritual focus, not a camp with a spiritual overlay. A school Mass is an opportunity for building community, but the emphasis on school spirit should not be at the expense of the meaning

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22 Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* 28



of the Mass and the reception of Jesus in the Eucharist who, through the Holy Spirit, is the source of every charism.

54. A school for young Catholics is first and foremost Catholic. It may have a particular charism derived from its founding religious order or its history. That charism will rightly play an important part in shaping the school's particular identity. It must be remembered however that the charism is not the totality of the school's identity. Rather it is a lens through which the school's Catholicity should be seen. The charism must highlight in every way the school's Catholic identity, and not relegate it to a secondary place.
55. In the same way a school's focus on the saint of its name or founding religious congregation should not obscure the primacy of the relationship with Jesus Christ which it is the school's duty to foster. The young adult is first and foremost a disciple of Christ, and should not be described in the first instance as the follower of a particular saint or founder by the use of a generic name for the students. Inspiration may be taken from the life of a saint, but the focus must be on Christ.
56. There has been little emphasis at the national level on Catholic character activities outside the religious education programme, the latter having attracted most of the energy and resources. Schools have largely been left to develop and manage these activities themselves. We consider that a mechanism or structure is needed to enable the clarification of objectives for these formative activities, the sharing of effective practice, and the provision of support.

## The Religious Education programme

57. The disciple's journey begins with a personal encounter with God, and progresses to desiring to "grow in the knowledge and understanding of Christ and his teaching". The disciple is drawn into "a new life characterised by all that is beautiful, good, and true; a life of Christian witness..."<sup>23</sup>.
58. Over the last two decades a great deal of resource – human and financial – has been put into the religious education programme in Catholic schools. The emphasis on the religious education programme has been nationally driven, with the programme being standardised across all schools. Schools are required to use the curriculum resources provided by the National Centre for Religious Studies (NCRS), which have an imprimatur. This requirement was implemented in order to ensure that the resources which teachers use in the teaching of religious education are theologically sound, and to a certain extent, to assist the many teachers of religious education who are under-qualified.

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23 Pope Benedict XVI, Address to Catholic Educators of the United States, 2008

59. Religious education belongs to the stage of “growth in knowledge”. It is most effective if the person has already encountered Christ in a meaningful and life-changing way. The children in primary schools usually have an accepting faith and a relationship with God which is appropriate for a child, and therefore a certain receptivity to the knowledge which the religious education programme imparts. At secondary school level the young person’s drive for independence and adulthood often leads to a questioning of the things of childhood or those things which are seen as being passed on by parents. The developmental stages of teenage years have an effect on faith, as the *Enhancing Catholic Identity* research carried out in Victoria, Australia indicates:

“We see a recurring pattern among the students: often, their literal but childish faith implodes after entering secondary school, then even more drastically drops in years 9-10. Finally, we detect a small restoration among students in years 11-12 – though their overall pattern still remains affected by rising External Critique levels. Therefore, we suggest paying extra attention to students in years 9-10.” (Note: Victoria, Australia years are used – in New Zealand year 9-10 students would be years 10-11 and years 11-12 students would be years 12-13).<sup>24</sup>

60. If the faith of the child is to become an adult faith the young person has to encounter God anew in their teenage years, and begin a new journey into knowledge and understanding of Christ and his teaching. In his research into the Catholic identity of young adult Catholics Dr C J Duthie-Jung notes:

“All of the participants in the current study had been raised Catholic and had, therefore, experienced the normal ‘growing into’ faith that accompanies a Catholic upbringing. Missing from this journey was any adult rite of passage; an opportunity or requirement for them to claim adult faith as their own. Being Catholic was indubitably part of their identity but almost entirely lacking for most was a sense of conversion to being a committed disciple of Christ.”<sup>25</sup>

61. All students, whatever their level of faith development, need some understanding of the theological content of their faith, not just an understanding of the cultural elements of Catholicism. For those students who already have a committed relationship with Jesus Christ the religious education programme must deliver at the level needed to sustain their desire to grow in knowledge and understanding.
62. *Faith Amid Secularity* refers to the need to “recover the theology of sacrament”, noting that although the post-school Catholics in the study valued the sacraments highly as rites of passage, their “awareness of the practical details of the sacraments appeared very thin, and with one or two exceptions, little depth was evident in terms of sacramental theology”<sup>26</sup>.

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24 Prof Dr D Pollefeyt and J Bouwens, *Enhancing Catholic School Identity Project*, meeting with parish priests and principals August 2010. The research project is a long-running partnership between the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium (KULeuven), and the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV), together with the Catholic Education Offices of Melbourne, Ballarat, Sandhurst and Sale.

25 Dr C J Duthie-Jung, *Faith Amid Secularity*, Chapter 4

26 Ibid

63. The religious education curriculum allows schools some choice of topics. Research we asked the National Centre for Religious Studies to carry out into topic choice indicates possible contributing reasons for the lack of sacramental and theological understanding of the Catholic young people who participated in the Faith and Secularity study:

“The Year 7-10 realignment of the curriculum identified that little intentional teaching was being given to the Holy Spirit, the Anointing of the Sick, Christian Marriage and Holy Orders across Years 7-13 in the trial schools. This is probably also similar in a number of Year 9-13 schools... Currently in the Year 12 curriculum there are eight topics. Schools are generally teaching three or four of these and a number are tending to avoid the theological topics.”<sup>27</sup>

64. It is not clear whether topic choice, and particularly the avoidance of theological topics, is being driven by teachers choosing topics they are comfortable teaching (or feel competent to teach) or by perceived student resistance to the more theological topics.

## Values and Virtues

65. In recent years the emphasis on values in the New Zealand Curriculum has led most Catholic schools to define and promote the values they wish to inculcate in their students. The school may describe these as “gospel values” or identify particular values as part of the school’s charism.
66. For a Catholic school the values it promotes must be sourced from the gospels, particularly the parables of Jesus. This is the starting point and the focus; it is not appropriate to start with the values in the New Zealand Curriculum and attempt to link them with the gospels. This inversion of process leads to schools adopting generic values which are derived from secular humanism and detached from the Catholic faith.
67. Many of the values schools define as being important are, in reality, the values of a “good person” rather than expressions of Catholic identity, as was observed by the *Enhancing Catholic Identity* researchers:

“Generally shared ‘Christian values’ serve as convenient mediators between culture and faith... Catholic school identity is mediated by Christian values and norms that appeal to everyone. By teaching values, it is hoped that the students can (still) recognise themselves in the Catholic life style and faith. However, in reality it risks becoming a compromise model, reducing the Christian faith to its ethical aspects and thereby ‘hollowing it out’. As the gap between culture and faith widens, values education tends to become predictable and reductive, hence ineffective and even counter-productive – producing further secularisation.”<sup>28</sup>

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27 Brother Kevin Wanden FMS, report to NZCBC Commission for the Church, August 2011

28 Prof Dr D Pollefeyt and J Bouwens, *Enhancing Catholic School Identity Project*, meeting with parish priests and principals August 2010.

68. The researchers also noted that adults are capable of using values to support their faith and the interaction between faith and life, but that “in the minds of many students values education ends up in secularising tendencies...”. The researchers issue a specific warning about the pitfalls of generic values education in the Catholic school context.
69. Values are subjective; they are based on personal preference and choice, including in the way in which they are defined. On the other hand, the virtues which are explained in the Catholic Catechism are objective (cf CCC 1803-1845). For example, the theological virtues come directly from God and lead us to God, and so are the sure foundation of all the moral virtues (cf CCC1812,1813). The practice of the virtues leads us deeper into the life of Christ, as the virtues “have God for their origin, their motive, and their object”<sup>29</sup>. The gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit dispose those who receive them to live a virtuous life (cf CCC 1830-1832).
70. The often fudged distinction between values and virtues highlights why virtues are so important in Catholic schools and why they should not be eclipsed by generalised Christian or humanitarian values:

“Values are internalised sets of beliefs or principles of behaviour. Not all values are consonant with moral or ethical behaviour, even though they may be strongly upheld.”<sup>30</sup>

Virtues are components of moral goodness because they stem from the nature of God. They need to be nurtured and practised so that individuals live by them, not merely believe in them.<sup>31</sup>

71. A Catholic school must ensure that students have a Catholic understanding of values, and that an emphasis on values does not replace formation in the virtues. Tolerance, for example, is a value but it is not a virtue. While the Christian will value tolerance, he or she must also understand how this is different from tacitly approving what is wrong or promoting tolerance of what is morally wrong.
72. Virtues give us *the strength to do what is right*:

“A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of him or herself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his or her sensory and spiritual powers; he or she pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions.”<sup>32</sup>

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29 Catechism of the Catholic Church 1840

30 New Zealand Catholic Education Office Ltd, *Taking the High Ground: Virtues and Values in Catholic Schools*

31 Cf New Zealand Catholic Education Office Ltd, *Taking the High Ground: Virtues and Values in Catholic Schools*

32 Catechism of the Catholic Church 1803

73. *The Catholic School*<sup>33</sup> makes very clear that the role of the Catholic school is to promote “growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian”. The student who has encountered Christ and is growing in knowledge and understanding naturally grows into a virtuous life, because Christ is being formed in him or her. Virtue deriving from the relationship with Christ himself is thus always a guaranteed authentic component of witness, and so grows in every stage in the journey of discipleship.

## Community and the common good

74. Each Catholic school is a community within the larger community of the diocese and the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand. The community dimension of a Catholic school embraces students, parents, teachers, priests, and benefactors, and is “not a merely sociological category; it has a theological foundation as well”<sup>34</sup>:

“From the outset the Catholic school declares its programme and its determination to uphold it. It is a genuine community bent on imparting, over and above an academic education, all the help it can to its members to adopt a Christian way of life. For the Catholic school mutual respect means service to the Person of Christ. Cooperation is between brothers and sisters in Christ. A policy of working for the common good is undertaken seriously as working for the building up of the Kingdom of God.”<sup>35</sup>

75. The community of each Catholic school is part of the mission of the Church, an agent of that mission among the people – Catholic and others – who live in the area served by the school. The communal dimension of the life of the school is essential in fostering a commitment to the common good among all involved in the local school community.
76. Because the school is an arm of the parish or a group of parishes, the school is part of a larger pastoral community. The school “fulfils its vocation to be a genuine experience of Church only if it takes its stand within the organic pastoral work of the Christian community.”<sup>36</sup> Within a diocese a common good ethos and practice must underlie the relationships between all the parishes and schools, as all ultimately participate in the teaching ministry of the Church. A strong commitment to the common good should unite and support parish and school in carrying out their individual roles and the role they share.
77. Parishes are often questioned – sometimes by schools – about not providing worship and pastoral ministry which is attractive to young people. The non-participation of young Catholics in parishes is a chicken and egg situation. The parishes reflect the age groups

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33 Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School* 37

34 Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* 18.

35 Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School* 60

36 Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* 12

which participate. The participation of young people in large numbers would change the parishes, assuming other age groups were open to that change and willing to give young people lead roles in the parish. Young people have many gifts and perspectives which can contribute to parish renewal and help their parishes to be more truly an experience of Christian community. One of the most important things a Catholic school can do in the interests of the common good is to encourage young people to become a significant force, *in numbers*, in the life of the parishes the school serves.

78. The common good has been highlighted in the Catholic education system in recent years as a result of the approach taken to financing Catholic schools. However the commitment of Catholic schools to the common good extends (and has always extended) far beyond matters of financing. The schools collectively serve the Catholic community of their dioceses and the Church in New Zealand. They share in the same mission, each carrying out that mission in a particular location. Each school must strive to provide the best possible education for its students, so that it is the natural choice for parents who live in that location. If a school is perceived as failing the community begins to fracture as parents send their children – often long distances – to other schools. When the people of the area support their school it strengthens not just the school community, but the whole ecclesial community of the area.
79. Cooperation, not competition, should characterise the relationships between neighbouring Catholic schools, with the good of all being paramount. If one school is attracting students from outside its area in numbers, it potentially weakens the surrounding schools. In such circumstances an enrolment scheme is not just a device to manage numbers but a means of supporting neighbouring schools, an act which fosters the common good.
80. In a situation where a Catholic school is losing its local students to another Catholic school, the appropriate authorities must ensure that the school is supported in addressing the issues it faces in retaining its local students. Student movement away from the local area to attend school can be both a cause and a consequence of social polarisation and ethnic segregation. As poorer families do not have the resources to send their children anywhere other than the closest school, it is of vital importance that Catholic schools serving poorer communities are of the highest standard educationally and that they find ways of compensating for the poverty of their families, if necessary, with the help of other Catholic schools or communities.
81. If a Catholic school deteriorates or its facilities become outmoded it may lose its local students to other schools, both Catholic and non-Catholic. It is particularly important that the schools in lower socio-economic areas are well-maintained and have modern facilities, so that the Church stands in visible solidarity with its poorer members and their communities. The power which subsidiarity and parental choice of schools conferred under Tomorrow's Schools easily leads to competition between schools for students. This may be potentially destructive for some schools, particularly those serving lower socio-economic or particular ethnic groups.



82. For Catholic schools subsidiarity needs to be balanced by the principle of solidarity. Solidarity calls for a positive commitment to safeguarding the fundamental equality and rights of all, and the promotion of their human development. Solidarity coupled with the Church's preferential option for the poor provide the detail needed to understand the full meaning of the common good for Catholic schools. Catholic schools work together rather than competing for students, and together with their diocesan and national administrations they take care of those schools which are poorer or struggling. While population shifts may lead to the need to rationalise schools in an area, there is no place for a survival of the fittest approach in a system of schools built on the common good. Nor is there a place for the elitism which can easily lead to a two-tier system of schools.
83. A Catholic school is unique in being able to use the Church's social teaching principles not just in relationship to other schools, but also as a framework for its own organisation and ethos. Human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, participation, and the preferential option for the poor can all be used as guiding principles for the way the school operates. They can be taught to students as the guiding principles in their relationships with one another and their participation in the life of the school. Students experiencing a community which operates according to these principles will naturally come to see justice as an integral component of their faith.
84. Because the Church's social teaching is so integral to the functioning of Catholic schools, individually and as a group, staff and Boards of Trustee members should receive regular training in the principles of Catholic social teaching and their application to their responsibilities. Without this understanding the dedication of enthusiastic staff and trustees to their individual school may drive the school into a competitive and insular ethos, not recognising that each Catholic school has responsibilities to the others.

## Resourcing and the common good

85. For practical reasons – the very survival of Catholic schools in New Zealand – the bishops and other proprietors chose in the 1970s and 1980s to progressively integrate their schools into the State system under the provisions of the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act (1975). The huge costs involved in bringing Catholic schools up to the required standards meant that the only way the capital requirements and historical debts of schools could be managed was by sharing resources within each diocese.
86. The diocesan cooperatives which developed after the passing of the Act were a further application of the common good principle already reflected in the communal nature of each Catholic school. This approach was later extended to the national level, with the common good being the principle underlying the debt servicing and financing of the upgrading and expansion of the Catholic school system nationally.

87. The common good aims for the good of all and the good of the whole person. In its application it requires knowledge of the other principles of the Church's social teaching – the dignity of each person, solidarity, subsidiarity, participation and the preferential option for the poor. When the principle of the common good is applied in the shared financing of Catholic schools it must address both what is best for each diocese and its people, and what is best for the Church in New Zealand.
88. When resources are limited, applying the principle of the common good is not an easy task. Receiving a Catholic education is the right of every baptised child. The Church in New Zealand does not have the resources to build a Catholic school in reach of every Catholic child, whatever their geographic location, so there will always be some geographical barriers to access to Catholic schools.
89. Wherever there are concentrations of Catholic children, for example in new suburbs, every endeavour should be made to provide a Catholic school. The school is not just a means of educating the children; it is part of the visible presence of the Church and as such its very existence and its contribution to the wider community have an evangelising power. However this is not necessarily a priority which automatically outranks all others, even if government funding is available.
90. There will always need to be a balance between building Catholic schools in new suburbs and towns, and expanding existing schools in other areas of population growth. Some priority needs to be given to situations where there are a number of existing schools at capacity in a particular locality, but expansion should only be undertaken if enrolment schemes have already restricted numbers to local students.
91. If the capacity of a school is not adequate for its local population and there are other Catholic schools nearby which are not at capacity, the area should be planned for as a whole, rather than each school acting in isolation. Managing this type of situation, which is essentially a problem of distribution rather than capacity, requires our leadership as bishops and the skills of our national and diocesan administrators in helping the schools involved determine how the common good might best be promoted in their area. The common good has as its aim the good of all and the good of each, so must be the common ground for all the parties in the planning and decision-making process.

## Access to Catholic schools

92. The government contributes funds to ensure that parents can have access to a Catholic education for their children, and the Integration Act makes clear that a family's financial situation should not be a barrier to access to an integrated school. The wishes of the state concur with our desire and that of our predecessors – from Bishop Pompallier onwards – that financial means should not determine entry to a Catholic school. Canon law gives us the responsibility of ensuring that fees and charges imposed by the proprietors of Catholic schools do not act as a barrier for families in accessing a Catholic education.

93. Catholic schools of necessity must charge attendance dues, and do so legally under the provisions of the Integration Act. A survey in the Auckland Diocese in 2007 found that 20% of parents consider the dues unfair, 30% view the dues as too high, and 14% report that they have been unable to pay every term. The survey concluded that 15-25% of families face affordability issues. However these figures only relate to families who have children in a Catholic school; it does not include families for whom attendance dues may have been a deterrent to sending their children to a Catholic school.
94. The Auckland research notes that some lower income families with three or more school-age children send some of their children to State schools. The effect of attendance dues on access can only be fully understood when research has been done which encompasses Catholic families who have chosen not to send their children to a Catholic school.
95. Those who do not participate in Catholic education for financial reasons tend to be much less visible than those who are struggling financially but are in the school. There is a danger that those most in need of help to access Catholic education simply disappear, becoming no one's responsibility because they do not attempt to enter the school system. Examples of how families in this group are being identified and assisted should be shared, as these families exist in many communities.
96. While dioceses use different methods to collect attendance dues, their collection rate is high. All have rebating methods in place. In addition, many Catholic communities, both parish and diocesan, have found additional ways to alleviate the burden of dues on families who cannot afford to pay them.
97. Some schools, particularly Year 7-13 and Year 9-13 schools use Section 37 of the Integration Act to request "Proprietors Contributions" from parents. For many schools the sum requested is modest, less than \$200 per annum, and schools in lower socio-economic areas are generally sensitive to their community's resources in what they request. However some schools require contributions of \$500-\$2,100 as the "Proprietor Contribution".
98. The existence of these "contributions", and the unsympathetic way in which some schools set out to collect them, act as barriers to access even if the contributions are described as "voluntary". In accord with Section 37 the "contributions" are described by the schools as being for such purposes as "repayment of bank loans", "building contribution", "works and maintenance", and "the property development plan".
99. The anguish and deliberation which accompanies decisions to raise attendance dues seems to be absent from the setting of these "contributions". This situation needs to be addressed with the schools concerned as it essentially puts some schools out of reach for parents of lesser means.
100. Barriers to access to a Catholic education may be more than geographical or financial. If they are to be truly accessible to all Catholic children, their communities must feel that the

school is “their place”. The first Catholic schools in New Zealand were for Māori, and there is an ongoing obligation to determine whether there are barriers (tangible and intangible) to access to Catholic schools for Māori families, and whether Catholic schools are places where they feel “at home”.

101. The school’s ability to meet the needs of individual students can also act as a barrier to access. “The Catholic school should give special attention to the *students with greater needs*, whether because of natural weaknesses or because of family difficulties...<sup>37</sup>”. Students with greater needs include those with learning difficulties or physical disabilities, and those for whom English is a second language. Because of the relatively smaller size of some Catholic schools they may need to work together to provide the range of services and support which larger State schools are able to provide.
102. Because of the Church’s commitment to those who might easily be marginalised and those who face difficulties in learning, the Catholic Character review process should look more deeply and incisively into the provisions which Catholic schools make for students with learning difficulties and special needs. Annual scrutiny of ERO reports with a focus on ERO’s evaluation of the support provided for these students by Catholic schools would not be out of order.

## Catholic children attending state schools

103. There are many reasons why Catholic parents might decide not to send their children to a Catholic school, including limited financial means, access problems and family dynamics. Care must be taken about judging the decisions of parents, but it is important that some knowledge is gained about why they decided not to send their children to a Catholic school. Research is being undertaken which will hopefully provide some insight in this area.
104. With approximately 30% of young Catholics not attending Catholic schools there is a substantial challenge in ensuring that they receive education in the faith. The programme for the teaching of these children is provided by NCRS, and is generally taught in classes run by parishes or groups of parishes under the name “CCD”. Not all parishes have such a programme. Most dioceses have a person in the diocesan education structure who is responsible for CCD.
105. Apart from NCRS’s provision of the programme, no resources are put into CCD at the national level and there is no national oversight of participation rates, teacher quality, or the effectiveness of the programme and the delivery mechanisms. The 30% of Catholic children not in Catholic schools equals approximately 28,000 young Catholics, who currently receive very little in the way of resources or attention compared to the 66,000 children in Catholic schools.

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37 Pope John Paul II, *Apostolorum Successores* 134

106. The focus in this document on Catholic schools is not an indicator that we have a lesser interest in Catholic children attending state schools. On the contrary, the faith education of Catholic children attending state schools is a matter of deep concern. A review of CCD across the country is needed, with consideration being given to how participation rates and the delivery mechanism can be improved. The management of the delivery of Catholic education to children not in Catholic schools is currently a diocesan responsibility, and with the new technology available the time has come to look into whether there should be greater involvement at the national level.

## The national education structure

107. The primary responsibility for education in the faith for Catholics of all ages rests with us as bishops. It is a pastoral and canonical responsibility arising out of the bishop's role as teacher, which "is conspicuous among the principal duties of bishops"<sup>38</sup>. Acting together as the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference (NZCBC) we exercise this responsibility at the national level, always respecting the right of an individual bishop to make decisions in relation to his own diocese. Our pastoral and canonical responsibility for education is distinct from our role as proprietors of individual schools.
108. Ideally the NZCBC as a juridic person would have an education agency which enables it to carry out its pastoral and canonical responsibilities at the national level. Such an agency would be able to provide an integrated oversight of all aspects of our education responsibilities, from early childhood to tertiary level and including all age groups and types of education, together with providing advice at the strategic level. It would be logical for that agency to be called the New Zealand Catholic Education Office.
109. The historical development of the national administration has resulted in the name New Zealand Catholic Education Office (NZCEO) being applied to a body which is in effect an office for Catholic primary and secondary schools (and more recently, Catholic early childhood centres). In 2004 that office ceased to be an agency of the NZCBC and through the formation of NZCEO Ltd, became an agency of the 27 proprietors of Catholic schools. It would probably be more appropriate if the name used was the New Zealand Catholic Schools Office Ltd, as that better reflects the reality of what NZCEO Ltd does.
110. As NZCEO Ltd deals with only one part of our responsibility for education, it is not appropriate for NZCEO Ltd to act as the body which supports the entirety of the bishops' overarching pastoral and canonical responsibilities. A potential conflict also arises in that it would be hard for NZCEO Ltd to provide objective advice when the matter of concern may relate to NZCEO Ltd itself. For these reasons NZCEO Ltd's provision of "executive education services" to the NZCBC is, in effect, limited to advice about schools and early childhood centres rather than wider aspects of Catholic education.

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38 Pope Paul VI, *Christus Dominus – Decree Concerning the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops in the Church* 12

111. We intend to give thought to how we are supported in the exercise of our pastoral and canonical oversight of all aspects of Catholic education in New Zealand. At this stage we are not considering the formation of a new body and will use the NZCBC Secretariat to provide any support we require.

## Conclusion

112. The history of Catholic education in Aotearoa New Zealand is underpinned by the great dedication and commitment of generations of Catholics, which continues today. "I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill one only finds that there are many more hills to climb..." Nelson Mandela's words are very apt as challenges have abounded for every generation.
113. In considering the challenges of the present day it is important to give thanks for the people who have done, and are doing, the work of Catholic education. There has never been any room for complacency in Catholic education. Identifying the present challenges does not throw a shadow over the work of dedicated people. It is simply a means of keeping the approach to Catholic education attuned to the needs of the times, a process which can be invigorating if the overall objective is clearly before all those who play a role in this great work:

"Education is the most interesting and difficult adventure in life. Educating – from the Latin *educere* – means leading young people to move beyond themselves and introducing them to reality, towards a fullness that leads to growth. This process is fostered by the encounter of two freedoms, that of adults and that of the young. It calls for responsibility on the part of the learners, who must be open to being led to the knowledge of reality, and on the part of educators, who must be ready to give of themselves. For this reason, today more than ever we need authentic witnesses, and not simply people who parcel out rules and facts; we need witnesses capable of seeing farther than others because their life is so much broader. A witness is someone who first lives the life that he or she proposes to others."<sup>39</sup>

*New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference  
January 2014*

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39 Pope Benedict XVI, 2011 World Day of Peace Message 2





