



Listen with the Ear of Your Heart

Across the Diocese of Ballarat this week, sixty-four schools educating 18,500 students are celebrating Catholic Education Week. The theme this year is ***Listen with the Ear of Your Heart***. St Benedict instructed his monks to "Listen by inclining the ear of your heart." His poetic language is asking us to listen, not just with our ears but with our hearts, to all that comes our way. While we might hear the words with our actual ears, with our hearts we can deeply reflect, discern, and take action if necessary. This theme aligns well with the preparation for the Plenary Council 2020 which has called on the Catholic Church to use 2019 as a year of prayer, discernment and dialogue - to truly listen with the ear of the heart.

And who should we be listening to in these times? How might dialogue guide us on this path? What might the ear of our hearts be calling us to as a Catholic education community?



The tragic events in Christchurch earlier this year, and more recently in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday, have opened up a public discourse here in Australia around extremism, racism, violence and freedom of religious practice. We were all heartened to hear and agree with New Zealand Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, when she said that "violence and extremism in all its forms is not welcome here". I believe that Catholic education is called to reiterate this view in our schools even more clearly at this time. If we truly believe in the dignity of all human persons, that all of us are loved unconditionally by the Creator, then we must stand in solidarity with those who experience persecution, hatred and extremism and say with conviction that anything that diminishes human dignity is "not welcome here".

In the journey of discernment towards the Plenary Council 2020, our Church community must truly listen with the ear of our hearts. Following this path allows us to give witness to our deepest beliefs not just in words, but in actions. Catholic Education Week, then, provides a wonderful opportunity for deep listening, for dialogue with our extended community and for events that actively demonstrate Catholic schools as places of inclusion, respect and dignity for all. That is truly something worth celebrating this Catholic Education Week!

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