

HOMILY
ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHER PROWSE
CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN
EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION
GROUNDING IN FAITH, GROWING IN SERVICE
CATHOLIC EDUCATION
NATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE
THURSDAY 20TH AUGUST 2026
FEAST OF ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

Readings

Ezekiel 36:23-28

Mark 12:4-8

Christ is the Universal Teacher of us all.

Jesus attended the first Christian school in our salvation history, the school of Nazareth. His teachers? Mary and Joseph, the Holy family. His parents were Jesus' first teachers and please God this continues even today. This scene of the Holy Family has often been meditated upon by the Saint of today, the French Abbot and Doctor of the 12th century, St Bernard of Clairvaux. This Marian theologian draws out the importance that we are a Marian community of faith and not individuals isolated from each other.

Over the last 2,000 years we Catholics have expressed ourselves to the world in three constants, or three "always."

First, along with Health and Social Services in Australia, the Church has always seen participation in Education as an expression of evangelisation. Here Encounter, Discipleship and Mission make Jesus known and loved. This is always a constant. Catholic Education exists to evangelise.

Secondly, the Catholic Church has always been inspired by Scriptures. In today's Scriptures once again, we have the challenge to "Get up, Listen, Go!" Today's First Reading from Ezekiel speaks of the gathering of God's People and the pouring of (Baptismal) water, creating new hearts and a new spirit. We proclaim the central foundation that we will be God's People, and God alone will be our God.

In the Gospel of Mark, we have the image of a seed growing. Even if it is a tiny mustard seed it has the possibility of growing into a great tree that will shelter so many from the storms of life.

This is a symbol of today: being "Grounded in Faith" in the roots of the tree of life that Jesus gives us in His Death and Resurrection, and to be "Growing in Service" in the branches that provide protection and shelter and food for all who pass by.

These are connected by the Wooden Cross, the symbol of Christianity, from which salvation flows.

The Scriptures are the soul of all that we do. May we never depart from this soul and take on other paradigms in education that cannot redeem.

Thirdly, over 2,000 years we have always had the constant that our faith is inspired by our Catholic Tradition. Its values and ethos keep us together. This is expressed both written/verbally and non-verbally.

Our Tradition is expressed beautifully in our Creeds (especially the Nicene Creed which recently celebrated 1700 years of being prayed by Christians). Then there are the many Catechisms that have arisen over the centuries, especially the more recent excellent Catechism of the Catholic Church. Also, we can speak of our Catholic Tradition in our beautiful music and poetry.

Non-verbally our Catholic Tradition has also always insisted on a Trinitarian or relational aspect in everything we do. This is important as we now move into a synodal phase in modern Catholicism. It is not all just about corporate structures and governance. Although these are extremely important, they are rather useless without the relational aspect of our Trinitarian faith. It is the relational and structural that together help us to discern, in this Assembly week of the Archdiocese, where the Holy Spirit is leading us.

This non-verbal reality is expressed beautifully in our architecture and iconography. One has only to think of our beautiful Cathedrals around the world. They started with the humble stable of Bethlehem and have continued over 2,000 years to its most recent manifestation to the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, Spain, becoming the tallest Cathedral in the world.

So, now let us move on with our Mass.

Shortly we will listen to the Executive Director of Catholic Education, Mr David de Carvalho, who will express these three "always/constants" for our time and place in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn in evangelisation expressed in an educational mode.

Without opening up too much Mr de Carvalho's well thought through presentation, there are two delights in it for me at least. First, I am delighted with the terminology he uses. He is moving away from using corporate and sociological language towards a more theological language. This is expressed in even the title of this

presentation; he calls it an Apostolic Action Plan rather than a Strategic Plan. May this "Baptism" of corporate language live and expand!

Secondly, I am immediately interested in the time bracket of this Apostolic Action Plan which is over seven years. It begins in 2026 and concludes in 2033.

In 2033 we will celebrate the second millennium anniversary of the greatest event in human history...the 2,000-year anniversary of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Mr de Carvalho is clearly fascinated by the expression of Pope Leo XIV in his Apostolic Letter (27 October 2025 on the 60th Anniversary of "*Gravissimum Educationis*"), "*Drawing new maps of hope*", when he teaches that this kerygma oxygenates every aspect of education and curriculum.

I would like to leave you with this to ponder.

Oxygen has the chemical formula O_2 . If faith oxygenates every subject in education, what is the meaning of the expression "2" for us? Possibly it refers to the two great commissions of our Christian faith which this seven-year period will anticipate. The First Commission is the great Commandment, "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13/34-35). The Second great Commission, which is never to be an omission, is that 2033 will also celebrate Jesus Himself when He gave us not the suggestion but the Commandment to: "Go out to the whole world and preach the Good News to all the peoples Baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit, knowing I will be with you always, yes, until the end to time" (Matt. 28/20).

May Jesus and the great gift of Faith that we have been given animate us always.

Recall always the words of Jesus in our humble service in education: "I am with you always, till the end of time!"