



## CONVERSATIONS WITH THE GREAT MINDS OF HISTORY

St Thomas Aquinas, when asked how he might describe God, said that God is mystery, majesty and is merciful.

This piece of wisdom sits with the myriad of other insights from wonderful individuals long since dead. These intellectual giants live on in our consciousness through their writings and, in today's world, via the electronic media, as rich intellectual gold mines for educators.

Enabling our students to have conversations with the dead, particularly the geniuses of human history, from the Greek philosophers, through the saints, scientists and literary geniuses, mathematicians, artists and the great thinkers of the world, all can be part of an enriched education, which Nelson Mandela calls a commitment to glittering excellence.

Entering into a real conversation with another always has an element of risk in it, since you do not know where the process is likely to end up. However, what is for sure is that a substantial, honest, conversation is likely to change those engaged in it.

Most times when you meet someone for the first time and engage in an open conversation you come away enriched by the encounter!!

Former students will sometimes tell their teachers how they had new worlds open to them when they were guided to read some of the writings of Thomas Merton or St Augustine, Tolstoy or the American Founding Fathers, and the list goes on and on.

Educators always have to ask themselves, am I enabling my students (particularly those in Years 6–13) to be enriched by having conversations with the dead? Even if we identify only ten per cent of our students who would respond to such a challenge, surely in our schools with their wonderful intellectual tradition, this is a fundamentally Catholic thing to do in the education we offer our students.

Yes, conversations with the dead can be a very liberating encounter.

## Greetings

**Tēna koutou. Ngā mihi nui kia koutou.**

**We join with you in hope and support as we collectively engage in the education enterprise, which is a work of great liberation.**

## Catholic Education Convention August 8–10, 2012, Wellington

Catholic schools are invited to budget for the convention over two financial years – details about part paying for registrations during 2011 will be sent to schools later in the year. Overseas keynote speakers include Fr Michael Holman SJ, from England, and Megan McKenna from the United States.

## Assisting Schools in Christchurch

Caritas New Zealand has approved \$45,000 for the employment of Karen Payne, principal of St Joseph's Hokitika, to provide support to principals during terms 3 and 4. Donations to the NZCEO Christchurch Appeal Fund have exceeded \$85,000, and much of this money has already been disbursed, for projects that will support school children, staff and parents. Gratitude is extended to those schools that have contributed to the Appeal Fund.

## Bishops Encourage Lectio Divina

The Bishops have recently provided parishes with simple leaflets and bookmarks on this form of meditative prayer, based on scripture. Material can be also downloaded from [www.catholic.org.nz](http://www.catholic.org.nz).

## Catholic Institute of Aotearoa New Zealand

Congratulations are extended to Paul Ferris, former principal of Kavanagh College, Dunedin, on his appointment as the interim principal of CIANZ. Paul is expected to hold this position until some time in the earlier part of 2012, when it is hoped that a permanent principal will be appointed. In the meantime, students and teachers should expect to find that courses will run as usual, with no break in services.

## ACU New Course

Australian Catholic University will take in its inaugural cohort of students for its Masters or Postgraduate Certificate in System Leadership in January 2012. Expressions of interest are required urgently, as early as possible in August. Contact [Anne.benjamin@acu.edu.au](mailto:Anne.benjamin@acu.edu.au) for further information.

## Caritas Reports on Schools' Justice Initiatives

Caritas Update has reported on a wonderful range of school activities to raise money for Christchurch and for overseas causes, including the Japan earthquake and tsunami. Justice Leadership Days have been held in secondary schools, and thousands of students have seen the Lenten DVD, 'Without Rain'.

## Principal Featured

Fr Paul Martin, principal of St Patrick's College, Kilbirnie, was the subject of a major interview in The Wellingtonian newspaper.

## Congratulations

Wellington Catholic primary principals held a highly successful leadership seminar for senior students in the primary schools of the Archdiocese. Over 400 children from 33 schools attended.

## Technology in Reading Recovery

Teachers in the Sydney Archdiocese are trialling the use of ipads with children in reading recovery, with very encouraging results.

**"Chance favours the prepared mind."**

*Louis Pasteur*



"3.14159265 . . . Blackberry pi is better than Apple pi."

## Vatican Letter on 'Religious Education in Schools'

In September 2010 a letter on religious education in schools was sent to all the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences from the Congregation of Catholic Education. The letter commented on the teamwork needed between parents and schools to guarantee the solidity of religious formation. It stated that schools should be "permeated by the evangelical spirit of freedom and charity, which fosters the harmonious development of each one's personality." It commented that religious education is different from, and complementary to, catechesis, as it is school education that does not require the assent of faith, but conveys knowledge about the identity of Christianity and Christian life. It affirmed that education founded on truth and at the service of the person can be a "powerful instrument of hope."

### Expectations Matter

A 1968 US study (Pygmalion in the Classroom) showed that if you divide school children randomly into groups and label one 'improving' and the other 'not improving' the improving group will improve and the other will not. Although later research has not completely validated this research, it is still worth bearing in mind – if we tell children they are failures they tend not to disappoint.

### Useful Feedback

Some contributing schools are requesting and receiving feedback about the achievement of their students once they reach secondary school. This sharing of data enables schools to learn from each other, with benefits for learners.

### National Congress on Divine Mercy 26–28 August

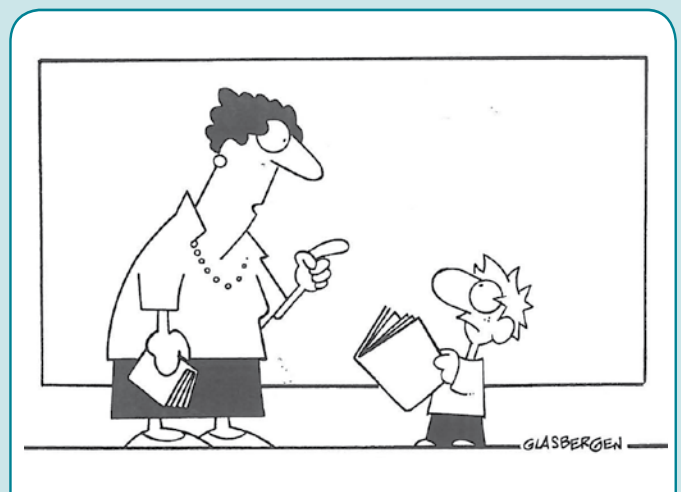
The NZ Apostolic Congress on Mercy is to be held at St Bede's College, Christchurch on 26–28 August 2011. Visit [www.divinemercy.co.nz/NZACOM](http://www.divinemercy.co.nz/NZACOM), or email [info@divinemercy.co.nz](mailto:info@divinemercy.co.nz).

### Pope Benedict on Education

In an address to a general assembly of Italian bishops the Pope spoke about the "aggressive relativism" isolating young people and making them face the great life questions alone. He said, "When in a society and in a culture marked by a pervasive and often aggressive relativism, basic certainties, values and hope, that give life meaning, seem to falter, parents and teachers can be tempted to give up on their responsibilities; they may even fail to understand what their role and mission are. . . . Children, teenagers and young people end up feeling alone facing the great questions that inevitably rise within them . . . Viewpoints stemming from our faith can provide instead a fundamental contribution to explaining and solving major social and moral problems."

**"The deeds you do today may be the only sermon some people will hear today."**

*St Francis of Assisi*



"It's called 'reading.' It's how people install new software into their brains."

better off  
**bnz partners**



**KONICA MINOLTA**

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