



EDMUND RICE EDUCATION
AUSTRALIA

the RICEAN

SEMESTER TWO – DECEMBER 2020 – VOL 31



a year like no other



**We acknowledge
the Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Peoples of Australia
as the Traditional Owners and
Custodians of the land of
our schools.**

**We are inspired and nurtured by
their wisdom, spirituality and
experience. We commit ourselves
to actively work alongside them
for reconciliation and justice.**

**We pay our respects to the Elders;
past, present and future.
As we take our next step we
remember the first footsteps
taken on this sacred land.**



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What is Truly Important?

This Christmas

Turn off media and devices.

Be profoundly gentle with yourself.

Slow down.

Choose simplicity.

**Hold gently those who knew pain or
loss during 2020.**

**Come into personal touch with the
people and the planet around you.**

**Pull out the board game,
form the yarning circle, meander
and laugh.**

Be grateful.



OUR VOICE IN LEARNING

Celebrating Our Newest School

**EREA is proud to announce our newest school,
St Mary's College, East St Kilda, will commence in 2021. The school continues almost 150 years
of education of young women and men in the area.**

Opening Address by Mr Terry Blizzard – Inaugural Principal, St Mary's College:

Fr Jerome Santamaria, Brothers Kevin and Frank, Dr Wayne Tinsey, Executive Director EREA and incoming Executive Director Dr Craig Wattam, Alumni of PCW and CBC, Ms Anna Burke and Mr Eddy McGuire who have been so generous in spirit, invited guests and friends of our College Community

As you heard from Darcy and Campbell we are excited today to announce that after almost 150 years of educating young Victorian men and women at Christian Brothers College St Kilda and Presentation College Windsor, 2021 marks a new beginning. From January next, our College will be known as St Mary's College, becoming the inner city's only secondary Catholic co-educational school, utilising the CBC East St Kilda and PCW Windsor sites.

Each of the two schools have played a major role in educating young Victorian men and women who have made a significant and positive impact on our society since Fr. J.F. Corbett had a vision for Catholic

Education in this precinct 150 years ago. We are excited to be able to continue to build on his legacy and that of the many dedicated Presentation Sisters and Christian Brothers who have come before us. This is a community that has among its history examples of outstanding community leaders, of women and men committed to the service of others, of devoted family people, decent citizens leading decent lives.

In this exciting time of reimagining, it must be noted that while the name may be changing, our commitment to faith, values, a strong community and the service of others that has always been there will remain a priority, as young women and men share their educational journeys together. To borrow the words of our Executive Director, St Mary's will be a school where students receive an education, not merely a qualification.

We owe so much to those who have come before us and we will honour the rich traditions and proud history of the Brothers informed by Edmund Rice, resonating so perfectly with the Presentation Sisters, and Nano Nagle.

St Mary's College will be an inclusive community where we celebrate diversity.

**St Mary's College will be committed to justice and fairness and believe in opportunity
and a fair go for all.**

St Mary's College will be a courageous school that knows what it stands for.

St Mary's College will truly be a school for all.

Our Voice in Learning

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the team of colleagues who have come together to contribute to the reimagining of our school. Your extraordinary passion and commitment to Catholic education in this precinct has been unwavering. To those generous friends who formed the working parties, thank you for your insight and passion.

To Dr Wayne Tinsey and EREA, thank you and congratulations for your foresight and commitment to a vision for what Catholic Education could look like in this precinct. To Bobby Court, Board Chair of EREA and Catherine Greenley thank you for your most wonderful determination and commitment.

To Sister Nola and her colleague sisters, thank you for your gentle support and trust in this project. Sister Nola together with Ms April Honeyman have provided much valued counsel and friendship.

To our colleagues at Catholic Education Melbourne, you have walked beside us through this, and your support of our application was crucial. I would

especially like to acknowledge Anna Raddos, Patricia Sweeney and Sue Maughan, together with Teresa Lincoln and Deb Egan.

To Fr Joe Caddy and Fr Jerome Santamaria, thank you for your vision and commitment also.

Most important of all, I thank the fantastic students from both schools who have been so integral in helping to shape St Mary's. Your insight and advice as to what constitutes a good school has been amazing. Our hope is that you have the opportunity to be and do whatever you want in life.

Today is an exciting day for our College, filled with anticipation for what could be in the future for St Mary's College, informed by the past. There is work to be done as we form the hearts and minds of the young people in our care. I suspect Fr Corbett would be very pleased with what his vision has become.

(Mr Terry Blizzard – Inaugural Principal, St Mary's College)



Reflecting on a year like no other

I believe some of the benefits of online learning are that you have to be independent. You have to learn to problem solve by yourself when you haven't got someone there immediately to help, and that is an important life skill, where we need to show that independence. So I believe on that front, it was really beneficial and one of the more positive sides of the quarantine break

(Luke Homan – Year 10)

Conversing with the excellent people from Nairobi is an experience that I look forward to repeating. Comparing the effects Covid has had in Kenya to its effects in Australia and sharing the similarities and differences of Kenyan and Australian culture was an outstanding beginning to this friendship. Their unity and togetherness were very inspiring, and I believe we both have much to learn from each other.

(Emmanuel – Year 11)

Online learning was a difficult time. I learned that I best learn in the school environment and find it conducive to motivate me. Being so isolated in your home environment made it difficult to recuperate. Work and relaxing felt like they were in the same environment and intertwined.

(Tyler – Year 12)

Our Voice in Learning



*Jolyon, Year 12 St Joseph's College
who cared for his sick parents during 2020*

We've cherished everything more so than we would have originally.
(However) a computer screen can't replace human contact. It was more strenuous, because
you weren't getting that interaction.

(Ben – Year 12)

During online learning, many opportunities were presented to us through the use of technology. During this time, I could often work at my own pace, prioritise my time, getting assessments done earlier, and work more efficiently, as distractions posed by others was limited. Another great benefit was the chance to relax in the morning and slowly build up to a learning mindset, without having to wake up earlier and catch public transport. This meant I could achieve more each day without losing 2 hours travelling time and saving money on transport costs. While I did miss the face to face questions and some discussions, learning from home was overall a very positive experience, and allowed me to utilise time more efficiently, engage in class forums and lessons, and to work effectively due to the lack of distractions.

(Liam – Year 9)

I learnt that even though it was harder to stay motivated when I set my mind to something I could get it done quickly and with a better product at the end. I found that I work better independently when there are less distractions around me.

(Jethro – Year 6)

The Corona period meant we were able to test something that we'd probably been thinking about for a long time. If our goal as a school is learning outcomes that goal was met much better for some young people through off-site learning, and their engagement was much higher.

(Chloe Hand – Principal)

Our Voice in Learning



OUR VOICE IN LEADERSHIP

Farewell and Thanks to Our EREA Community

My Dear Friends and Colleagues

It is a privilege for me to have this opportunity to speak with you for the last time as Executive Director of EREA. After 13 years of having the extraordinary privilege of leading our National family, I conclude my tenure at the end of this year. It is difficult for me to put into words the feeling of gratitude that overwhelms me as I approach the end of this wonderful journey.

There have been so many memories and highlights over the years and there are so many people to thank. I had intended to visit each school community one more time this year, to express my gratitude to you personally but unfortunately, COVID got in the way.

And so, through this medium, one that we have all come to know so well during 2020, I offer these few words of farewell with the deepest respect, humility and gratitude.

We are a national family, diverse and scattered, yet united by our Charter and Touchstones. We are privileged to live our vocation in education under the inspiration of the vision of Edmund Rice. The possibility of life in all its fullness for every student and an uncompromising commitment to inclusivity, define the Catholic education that both our Gospel, and the vision of Edmund Rice, demand that we offer.

As I near the end of this wonderful phase of my journey, I would like to thank the Christian Brothers for their belief in me over the last 50 years. As someone who left school and was lost

for a time, the Brothers believed in me, gave me the opportunity to become a teacher, find a place in the world and gave me the roots of a spirituality that has sustained me. During my time in the leadership of EREA, it has been my absolute privilege to do anything that I have been able to do to nurture and grow the vision of Edmund Rice and the legacy of the Christian Brothers.

I have endeavoured to lead EREA with great respect and love for the profession of teaching and those who support the learning of young people. In my talks and letters, I have strived to celebrate the great privilege it is to be an educator and touch the future through the care, nurture and formation of emerging generations. I have been guided by my strong belief that inclusion and care of the marginalised are indispensable to all Christian ministry and should guide the way we form and nurture the aspirations of the young.

And so, my friends, I thank you for the faith and the trust that you have shown in me. I thank you for your friendship, your kind eyes and warm smiles when I have had the privilege of visiting your schools. I thank you for the conversations, messages of encouragement and words of advice. Most of all, however, I thank you for all that you do so selflessly to be the loving, compassionate and inclusive face of God for the community you serve.

I am fortunate that, for the next few years, I will be able to continue my links with our Edmund Rice schools globally through work that I'll do to animate the vision of Edmund Rice Education Beyond Borders, our international coalition of over 300 schools in 24 countries around the world. I am blessed to have this possibility of maintaining my links with the form of Catholic education that has

Our Voice in Leadership

nurtured me, sustained my career and shaped my relationship with God.

I take this opportunity to wish my successor, Craig Wattam, all the best as he begins his time as Executive Director. Craig is an extraordinary educator who will take EREA from strength to strength and I am sure that under his leadership, our national family will move to places that we are yet to dream of.

And so my friends, until we have the opportunity to meet face-to-face once again, may God bless you, may God's providence keep you and please know that I will continue to hold you and EREA dearly in my thoughts and prayers as we move forward in our life journeys.

With deep gratitude, affection and admiration
Wayne Tinsey – EREA Executive Director

... inclusion and care of the marginalised are indispensable to all Christian ministry and should guide the way we form and nurture the aspirations of the young.



Reflecting on Wayne's Leadership

EREA Executive Director 2007 - 2020

It is of course so difficult to capture in just a few words, any adequate or complete perspective of a contribution such as Wayne Tinsey has made to Edmund Rice Education Australia.

I have known Wayne through all his time at EREA by virtue of my two terms as a member of the EREA Council and my term as Chair of the EREA Board. Let me focus on just one thing – Wayne's focus on the person.

Wayne is totally present to you when you meet and work with him – but he may not be as focussed as you, on what you are wanting to discuss. He is likely to be as focussed on what you are really trying to say and why you want to say it.

When you visit a school with Wayne, he is totally focussed on the young people he encounters and how they perceive things at their school – especially the things that give them energy and raise their passions.

When you go on immersion with Wayne, he is totally absorbed in the culture of the place you are visiting and ways to be respectful to that culture and the people you encounter. He is also very conscious of how you are coping

with all that you are experiencing.

When you see Wayne talking with people who are victims, of whatever kind, he is totally intent on listening and being empathetic to the person's situation and hurt. He is so generous in offering his listening and compassion.

Wayne is a giver. He has given so much of himself in all that he has given to EREA. So much of his DNA is present in the way in which EREA does things. Most of the good things spoken of EREA reflect his focus, his compassion, his empathy and his gentleness.

If we accept that a part of EREA's mission in Catholic education, is to build communities of love at each of our schools, Wayne's example and his focus on the person, must surely be his most significant contribution to EREA's success. He has led the way in living up to EREA's touchstones, its values, as the way to a better life and schools that are better places – true communities of love.

*Graham Goerke –
EREA Council President*

A brief note of thanks and recognition for your work over the last 13 years.

I have had the privilege to work within EREA for almost all of your tenure and have appreciated and admired the care for individuals, generosity of spirit and breadth of vision that has been a hallmark of your leadership.

From a blank canvas you have led the creation of a lay body that kept the essence of the Christian Brothers charism, contemporised the message and made it increasingly accessible to all.

I think that our schools are more 'catholic' than ever before and while I fear for the future of the institutional church, the real church and the gospels are alive in our schools.

I hope you and Lita find the time and space in semi-retirement to be able to reflect on and be proud of your achievements and those of EREA.

*Tony Paatsch –
St Joseph's, Vic*

I have been extremely fortunate to have encountered Wayne at what I now see as two pivotal moments in my life. Each time I

Our Voice in Leadership

learnt something about Wayne and more importantly about myself. The first of these was a Principals' Conference when one of his talks was about his heroes, the second was when I was interviewed for my current position. So what have I learnt from Wayne?

His deep faith is evident in everything that he does and that all his work is done out of love, with love and for the good of everyone and, in our network, most importantly for the good of our students.

This witness, this servant leadership, has been a beacon to all of us who know Wayne. His acceptance of all and willingness to embrace people who may otherwise be overlooked in all spheres is exemplary. He has been a wonderful servant to Our Lord and Blessed Edmund. I thank him for all of these things and try daily to live as I have seen Wayne's witness. The Edmund Rice College, Bindoon community and I wish him every blessing in the next part of his journey and know that in everything that he does he will make a difference.

*Marie Barton –
Edmund Rice College, WA*

Without doubt, Wayne's foundational leadership of EREA since its inception in 2007, has provided the essential transitional legacy from the Christian Brothers to lay leadership. Wayne's

prophetic leadership has been a shining light; building vision, calling our schools in unity as communities of faith, solidarity, inclusion and action. Relationships are at the heart of Wayne's leadership and he has a personal care for all and especially for the Principals and leaders. He affirms us and in turn calls us to lead with that same compassion, generosity and care for those most in need and to recognise diversity.

In his reflective publication "*Touchstones*", Wayne speaks of authentic leadership: "*Authenticity is being true to yourself: taking the values and attributes you admire in others but making them yours.*" This so truly reflects Wayne's authentic leadership. His affirmation, encouragement and personal commitment to everyone across EREA also extended beyond Australia and Wayne has drawn international communities together beyond borders through EREBB.

We will all miss Wayne's inspiring addresses on the true mission of Edmund Rice education but even more so, we will miss his genuine friendship and his sense of fun.

Wayne is ever calm, relaxes those with him, he is passionate and mindful but to put it quite simply and colloquially, Wayne is a good bloke. Thank you, Wayne, for all you have done and more, for who you are.

*John Couani –
St Pius X College, NSW*

On behalf of the entire St Paul's extended community can I express our most sincere gratitude for your unwavering commitment to our College and all involved with EREA?

Without your personal commitment and belief in St Paul's we would have struggled to survive and be where we are now.

Having known you for the entire 13 year journey of EREA can I also add a very personal vote of thanks and congratulations to you.

You have never ceased to amaze and inspire me with your wonderful and powerful written and spoken reflections.

Your address to the multitudes gathered from around the globe, in Kolkata, in 2017 symbolised not only your commitment to EREBB but your belief that collectively we can make a huge difference in the lives of those who need us so much – and you certainly have achieved that in your own personal journey.

You leave EREA with an amazing legacy of commitment to our schools and to the lives of all we are blessed to serve.

May your retirement be everything you hope for and this chapter of your life be as exciting as the last 13 years. Take Care, God Bless.

*Paul Belton –
St Paul's College
SA*



Charter Leadership Awards 2020

The Charter Leadership Awards were bestowed recently on five exceptional members of the EREA community. Below are some short reflections shared about each of the recipients from their colleagues.

Liberating Education Charter Award

Br Michael Talty – Deception Bay FLC

Br Michael Talty has been teaching at Deception Bay Flexible Learning Centre (DBFLC) since it opened in 2006. Br Mick has committed himself whole-heartedly to ensuring that some of the most vulnerable and marginalised young people in Australia achieve success within a safe, supportive environment.

Br Mick is a beautiful human with a heart of gold who epitomises the meaning of liberating education and lives the Edmund Rice Charism. Through his faith and guidance, he has helped 100's of young people transition from DBFLC into employment and to gain valuable life experience. He is a generous and kind spirit who has helped many vulnerable young people to find their voice and to thrive.



Gospel Spirituality Charter Award

Br Denis Moore – Parade College

Br Denis has had an extraordinary fifty-two year commitment to Edmund Rice education and is beyond measure in terms of a model of faith, service, humility and innovation.

Whilst retired from his duties as Principal, he continues to recontextualise the Parade Story as the resident historian, which has particular significance for EREA, as Parade celebrates 150 years of boys' education.

He is a model of Gospel Spirituality through a quiet demeanour, wisdom, perceptiveness and wry sense of humour.

The focus of his life is the education of young men imbued by Gospel Spirituality and the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice.



Inclusive Community Charter Award

Margriet Shaw – St Edmund's College

Margriet has played a major role in the development of students' creative expression for 17 years. Her absolute passion and commitment to opening the hearts and minds of students with very challenging disabilities has been evident. She has demonstrated her leadership skills as Coordinator of Creative Arts by mentoring teachers and support staff and choreographing dances and drum routines for the Eddie's Entertainers performance group. Margriet leaves a legacy that will continue to provide our students with the confidence to express themselves creatively and bring joy to those around them.



Justice & Solidarity Charter Award

Mike Francis – Carnarvon FLC

Mike leads our new Carnarvon Flexi. Leaving the comfort of their home and life in Geraldton and moving, with his wife Toni, to this very isolated town to give hope to disenfranchised young people shows his commitment to our Charter. Mike has positive relationships with our young people and families of Carnarvon, who for many complex reasons are unable to engage in other schools. He is building positive connections with the Aboriginal Community. Our Network and young people are privileged to have a person of Mike's experience, skills and dedication to lead this new flexi community.



Executive Director Charter Leadership Award

Helen Bird – Edmund Rice Education Australia National Office

Helen Bird has been an integral part of the development of EREA since its inception in 2007. For many in our community, Helen's smiling face and gentle nature has been their first contact with our organisation and they have felt welcomed and cared for by her throughout their interactions with EREA. Helen has not only served the leadership of EREA with distinction, she has also contributed greatly to the mission of supporting those on our global margins. She has helped EREA develop strong links with India and been a great supporter of EREBB. Thank you Helen for your generosity, hard work and deep insight into the Charism of Edmund Rice.



OUR VOICE IN THE CHURCH

Everyone and Everything Is Connected

Introducing Pope Francis' New Encyclical

Shortly after the promulgation of Pope

Francis' latest encyclical, James Martin SJ tweeted that if the message of *Laudato Si* was that "Everything is connected," the message of this encyclical is "Everyone is connected." This new emphasis does not replace the vision of integral ecology at the heart of *Laudato Si* but builds on it, as it explores what integral development might look like.

This is an encyclical that is very much grounded in our present-day experience, whilst offering a vision of hope for the future. Although the encyclical was not written in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it acknowledges the ways in which this crisis has exposed our false securities and the fragmentation of society, even as it has demonstrated our hyper-connectivity (n7).

In the opening chapter "Dark Clouds Over A Closed World", Francis explores a globalisation that promotes the interests of the powerful, whilst diminishing those without power, "making them more vulnerable and dependent" (n12). This is a world characterised by "limitless consumption and expressions of empty individualism" (n13). The remedy to these new forms of "cultural colonisation" (n14), he offers is "to think of ourselves more and more as a single family dwelling in a common home" (n17).

The second chapter explores the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37), told by Jesus in response to the question "who is my neighbour?" In his commentary on this powerful story, Francis suggests that the bottom line for all economic, political, social and religious projects should be whether they exclude the most vulnerable (n69).

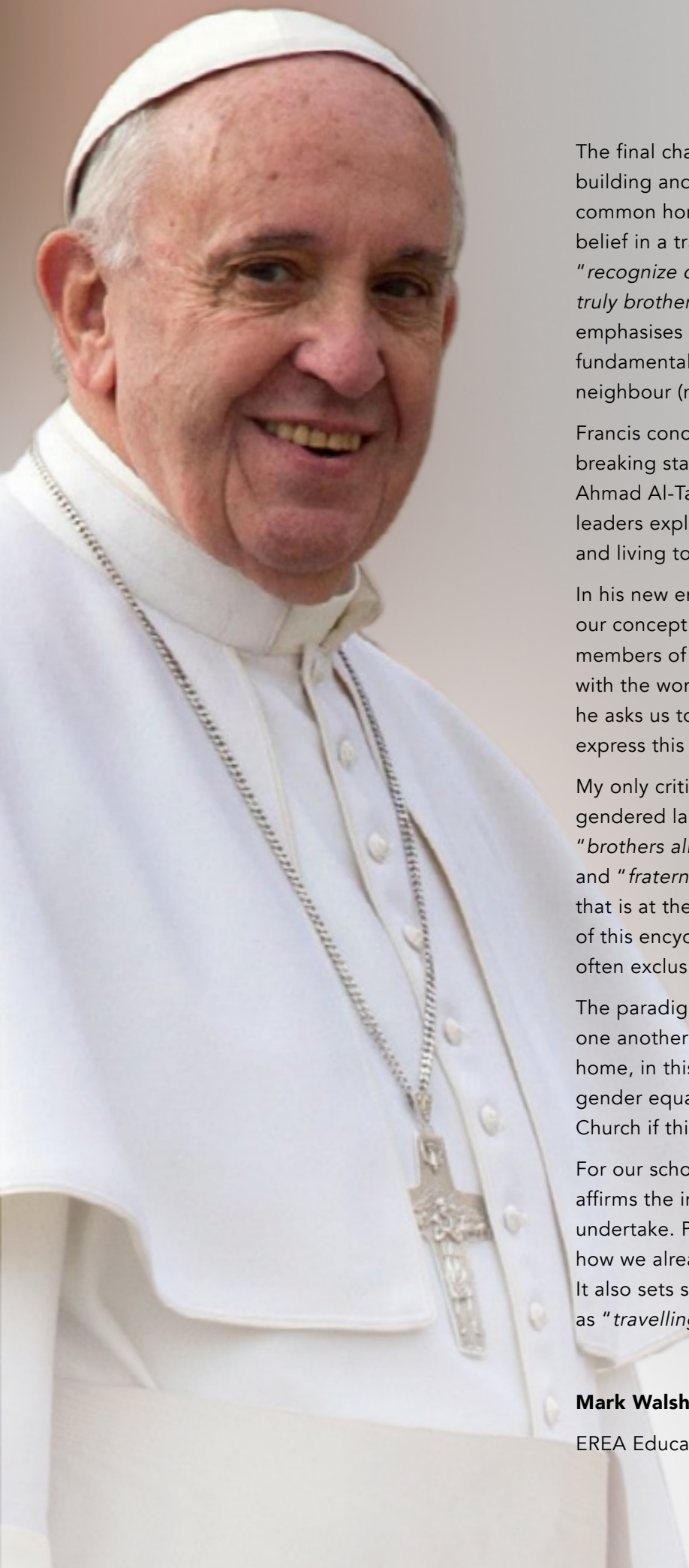
The response of the Samaritan to his Jewish neighbour transcended prejudice as well as historical and cultural barriers (n83). So too must ours.

In the next chapter Francis explores how healthy, mature relationships open us to others who, in return, expand and enrich us (n89).

"Every human being has the right to live with dignity and to develop integrally" (n107), but this must be measured by the good of the whole human family through solidarity (n113, 116). To this end, our economy must "Be clearly directed to the development of others and to eliminating poverty, especially through the creation of diversified work opportunities" (n123).

Recognising the limitations of borders, Francis invites us to have "A Heart Open to The Whole World" (Ch. 4). Here Francis outlines a vision in which the salvation of one is bound up with the salvation of all (n137). This is a vision that is simultaneously global and local (n142) and sees other cultures as "differing reflections of the richness of human life" (n147). Global society is not the sum of the countries that comprise it, but rather the communion that exists amongst them as members of the "greater human family" (n149).

Francis' vision of a global community calls for "A Better Kind of Politics" (Ch.5), that has the "service of the common good" at its heart (n154). It is a vision that is based on encounter and made real through "Dialogue and Friendship in Society" (Ch.6). Chapter Seven, "Paths of Renewed Encounter", recognises the need for peace and healing, inviting each of us to be peacemakers and healers (n225).



The final chapter explores the role religions play in building and serving our global family, living in its common home (n271). Here Francis appeals to a belief in a transcendent truth that allows people to "*recognize one another as travelling companions, truly brothers and sisters*" (n274). Further, he emphasises that violence is a distortion of our fundamental religious convictions: love of God and neighbour (n282).

Francis concludes the chapter by revisiting a groundbreaking statement he made with Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in 2019, in which the two religious leaders explore our responsibilities towards peace and living together as a human family (n285).

In his new encyclical, Francis is asking us to broaden our concept of neighbour and to see all people as members of one human family, deeply interconnected with the world in which it is at home. In doing so, he asks us to reimagine the language that we use to express this sense of connection.

My only criticism of this encyclical is its reliance upon gendered language, including its title *Fratelli Tutti* (lit. "*brothers all*") and the extensive use of "*fraternity*" and "*fraternal*" to describe the sense of relationship that is at the heart of this document. Whilst the vision of this encyclical is inclusive, the language used is too often exclusive.

The paradigm shift asked of us, in the way we see one another as a human family sharing a common home, in this document requires that we also address gender equality within that family and within the Church if this vision is to become a reality.

For our schools, this is a valuable encyclical that affirms the incredible ministry that you currently undertake. Pope Francis would be deeply proud of how we already live out the essence of his message. It also sets signposts for where we can continue to go as "*travelling companions, truly brothers and sisters*".

Mark Walsh

EREA Education Officer

**the
RICEAN**

OUR VOICE IN THE WORLD

Leading During Covid-19 – Reverend Mpho Tutu

Recently Edmund Rice educational leaders from across 15 countries gathered online to share about leading schools during these challenging times.

We were joined by Rev Mpho Tutu – educator, peacemaker, faith leader – who shared thoughts about Hope Leadership in Education during the Pandemic.

This online gathering gave participants the opportunity to meet with other senior leaders from across the world. With responses ranging from the practical to the profound, they shared how they have been leading schools during this time.

I feel so welcome among you and I thank you so much for welcoming me into your midst. It is a joy and privilege to be part of your leadership gathering. I would have rather been with you in Cape Town as the original plan, but Corona had other ideas for us this year.

But I greet you in the name of our Risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ with great gratitude for vocations of leadership that you have taken on and for your continuing discernment as leaders in this time. Pope Francis observed at the beginning of the Corona Crisis that we are all together in one boat. We, as inhabitants of this beautiful planet earth, are all in one boat. When we looked early in the year and heard people complain about being in their yachts on the Caribbean, we realised that though all of us are in the same boat, not all of us are in the same class

in the boat. Some of us are in first class with those wonderful vast palatial spaces to be in and live in and some of us are packed into steerage where things are not going quite as well for us.

We know that in this time of COVID the grace has been in recognising how much we depend on each other for our lives and livelihood for our very being and how deeply intertwined we are together.

You as educators have faced some of the greatest challenges of this covid time. As educators you are not only shaping us for this COVID time but shaping a generation for the time to come and we know that in this covid time so many of us have lived through lockdowns and you as educators and education administrators have come into contact with every aspect of human life. ... *continued page 20.*



Rev Mpho Tutu and her father Desmond Tutu



Leading During Covid-19 – Reverend Mpho Tutu



Not everyone has had access to laptops and computers and other smart devices in their homes, not everyone has their own smart device, even if they are able to have a smart device in their homes its not every home that each person has their own device to join into the educational pursuit. They often share devices, and it is a juggle among age groups of who gets to be in school because we cannot all be in school together.

We have all juggled with the challenges of households even if each person has their own smart device, they do not each have a room to go into to access the education that is on offer. The challenges are not only for the students but also for the teachers and educational administrators of how do you support your teachers in this time when they are suddenly driven into huge learning challenges, the idea is that there is the IT guy who will fix all the things and fix all the questions and now your teachers are faced with the challenges of being their own IT guy along with the challenges of how do you offer an engaging and exciting lesson to students who are looking at you on screen?

How do you keep them hooked in to the learning that you are trying to deliver and yet it is precisely as educators and educational administrators that you have offered the breath of sanity to students. The breath of rhythm and schedule to students, the gift of knowing that there is someone outside the

bubble of whatever their home environment looks like of knowing that there is someone outside that bubble who is holding them in love and in prayer, who is dedicated to their growth and their becoming the fullness of God's image of them in this created world. We are in one boat and I was reminded very recently when we read Matthew's Gospel the story of Jesus walking on water and we know that in the preaching task our attentions turns quickly to Peter who asks Jesus *'if it is indeed you Jesus tell me to step out of the boat and walk towards you'*. And the sea is rolling, and the tides are high, and Jesus says to Peter, *'Yes indeed it is I, come out of the boat and walk towards me.'* Peter steps out of the boat and begins to walk to Jesus and realises the chaos that surrounds him and yields to his fear and begins to sink, and Jesus reaches out to him and says, *'why did you doubt, of course it is me and I have you in my sight and in my care, but chaos won't overwhelm you.'*

The thing that was striking to me in the way this is told in Matthew's Gospel is that it is only when Jesus and the disciples are in the boat together that Jesus calms the sea. And here is the lesson for us, the lesson of recognising that there is nowhere for any of us to jump off the boat and seek our own salvation. It is only when we are together, when we are committed together to the safety of each of us, to the wellbeing of each of us that the real health and wellbeing solutions come, that Jesus speaks calm into the chaos.

Our Voice in the World

**“You are called to a vocation as an educator,
but you are called be a person whose heart is
always listening to God.”**

(Reverend Mpho Tutu)

I was observing how much it is that you as educators and educational administrators have had to learn in this covid time and I am struck by how much it is a vocation that you are called to. Education is a vocation, a calling from God.

A vocation is both a direct call and an invitation, an invitation to wisdom, to what Solomon calls a listening heart. Wisdom is literally a listening heart so in this time of covid, in this time of such profound change, in this time of so much upheaval, remember what it is that you are called to. You are called to a vocation as an educator, but you are called be a person whose heart is always listening to God.

When I was entering the Priestly Ministry we had what was called a discernment process and the discernment process was several committees and commissions that you went before and listened to and spoke with, and at each step along the path there was a marker for what the discernment would look like and a marker for when this discernment process ended.

I really believed that finally I was going to get ordained and the discernment process would be over, and I discovered that what God calls us into is constant and God's invitation is constant. The constant invitation is to constantly be listening to God's voice, and to be constantly

and consistently discerning how it is that God is calling us to be in the world.

So, the hope that I offer you this morning is the hope that is literally embodied in your vocation as educators. The hope that God is constantly inviting you to be those people whose wisdom is the wisdom of a listening heart, whose vocation will be affirmed again and again, who are constantly called into discerning God's voice and God's path for you.

**And sometimes you feel
that the whole applecart has been kicked over
and you have been thrown into chaos.
But know that in the mist of chaos, God's still
small voice is discernible.**

So, I invite you to hold fast to that vocation of constant discernment, of constant listening for the voice of God to lead you in the ways that you must go.

May God's voice be a light to your path and a lantern before your feet. Amen

To watch Rev Tutu's presentation



OUR VOICE IN THE WORLD

OUR GLOBAL SCHOOLS

● Closed

● Partially Open

● Open



NORTH AMERICA

● Canada – Partially Open

● USA – Partially Open

SOUTH AMERICA

● Uruguay – Open

● Argentina – Partially Open

● Bolivia – Closed

● Peru – Partially Open

EUROPE

● UK – Open

● Ireland – Open

At the height of the pandemic in April, over 1.6 billion young people were not able to go to school in person. Every Edmund Rice school across the world has had to move to remote learning, ranging from online, using WhatsApp to complete closure. With many schools remaining disrupted, the opportunity to connect through our global network of Edmund Rice Education Beyond Borders has enabled solidarity, collaboration and the sharing of resources.

State of Schools as at 26th November

17.5% students
out of school globally

306,897,496
affected students

27 country-wide closures

Source: UNESCO as at
13th December 2020

ASIA

● India – Partially Open

AFRICA

- West Africa – Partially Open
- Kenya – Partially Open
- Tanzania – Open
- South Africa – Open
- Zambia – Open
- Zimbabwe – Open

OCEANIA

- Australia – Open
- New Zealand – Open
- PNG – Open

FINAL REFLECTION

What is truly important?

One of my teachers from school, Br Denis HERNON, used to say, "Can you leave that which is essential and attend to the important?" If ever a year has taught us, through experience, what is truly important – it was 2020!

On January 31st 2020 I landed in Italy for a time of Sabbatical. Within a week the nightly news was recording 700 or more deaths from Covid 19 and Italy had become the epicentre of the pandemic. Each night the Sabbatical participants gathered to catch the nightly news to be met by scenes of lines of coffins, grieving families unable to farewell elderly parents, distraught and exhausted doctors and nurses, dying patients surrounded by PPE covered medical staff in their final hours devoid of human touch. It was more than sad. Each day the sense of dread, powerlessness and to some extent hopelessness grew.

You, the staff that form our EREA communities will literally fall over the 2020 finishing line for possibly the most well-earned holiday of your professional lives. Teaching, counselling and support staff have gone more than the extra mile to be present to and walk with students and families during lock down times where the computer screen and some sort of ZOOM became the new norm.

Leadership teams who have twisted and turned – a reverse 2.5 somersault with 2.5 twists – to support their front-line workers while trying to find creative and effective ways to honour the journey which is the school culture and year. Office staff and finance staff who have with compassion and presence found ways to support stressed caregivers and grounds staff who have made flexibility a byword. You have been magnificent and only the sands of time will reveal the difference you made as the seeds of care planted in your charges blossom.

We have had a difficult year:

A dear friend of mine got married in the chapel of an Edmund Rice school with his family on ZOOM from the USA and her family on ZOOM from Germany.

The mother of a friend of mine died during these months and I watched the funeral virtually attempting to send my hugs and presence through cyber space.

Students who have struggled because no matter how caring and professional our virtual support was, they – like all of us – longed for human face to face interaction.

Families locked away in homes that could have become caves and at times felt like prisons.

Our natural human urge to gather and share story truncated at the knees while chat rooms tried to meet this most basic of human need.

Sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, friends and loved ones in every form longing to touch and hold, hug and cradle but so often prevented from doing so.



What is truly important?

But every cloud has a silver lining – every dark night a dawn and even the longest drought will one day know the smell of fresh rain falling. So as we journey towards Christmas, towards Emmanuel – God with us – we bring a new found wisdom to the crib. This year, no gold, no frankincense, no myrrh but rather a knowing beyond words:

the power of touch, of human holding, of hugs and arms wrapped round

that we need to gather, that we are an Ubuntu people (I am because WE are), and that in our gathering and our story telling we touch the depths of our human spirit

the power of personal connection our need to deeply connect with the natural world – that we were not born for ZOOMs and SKYPEs but to walk beaches, surf waves, dance in forests and breathe deeply the mountain air

that we are indeed one human and planetary family and that what effects one, in one way shape or form, effects all

the extraordinary strength and generosity of the human heart especially in the face of adversity

the power of the small things – touch, mask-less eyes and faces, the flower, the freshness of the forest air

the strength of and need we all have for home

And so:

This Christmas and forever celebrate and honour the gift of human touch. Hold hands with your loved ones. Ruffle the hair of your children. Give and receive hugs.

Never forget nor take for granted the beauty of nature and the great outdoors. Walk that beach, enjoy that forest, the mountain vista or the gentle wave.

This Christmas and forever look into eyes and take in the wisdom and journey in every face. Beyond masks savour the beauty and the dignity of every face who fills your day.

Gather and give thanks. Gather and share story. Gather and dance. Gather and break bread. Gather and never forget those times when we could not gather.

With gratitude enjoy the gift of the artist. From these months when we could not enjoy the poets, the dancers, the actors, the singers and the sculptors - choose in 2021 to turn your seat in the restaurant to the guitarist in the corner, the piano player who may in the past have faded into background noise, the subway clarinet player with hat for coins or sit on the edge of your seat wrapped in awe as some maestro spins story through song, dance or music that takes your heart to the heights and leaves you gasping for more.

This Christmas

Turn off media and devices.

Be profoundly gentle with yourself.

Slow down.

Choose simplicity.

Hold gently those who knew pain or loss during 2020.

Come into personal touch with the people and the planet around you.

Pull out the board game, form the yarning circle, meander and laugh.

Be grateful.

And if you have a desperate need to make some New Year's resolutions – perhaps all we need is ONE.

"What did 2020 teach me that is truly important?"
And whatever your answer is – tango with that every day for the rest of your life!

Br Damien Price

The RICEAN



Trinity College



EREA School Leaders



St Joseph's College



CBHS Lewisham



St Kevin's College

What did 2020 teach me that is truly important?

*Edmund Rice Education Australia
offers a liberating education, based on a gospel spirituality,
within an inclusive community
committed to justice and solidarity.*



EDMUND RICE EDUCATION
AUSTRALIA