

## LORETO EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

*“Our greatness and strength consist in this, that we have free and open access to God from whom all greatness comes.”*

- *Mary Ward*

Central Educational Advisory Board

Australian Province of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
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### **OUR EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY**

The Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary was founded at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century by an Englishwoman, Mary Ward, to serve the Church through education. The goals of our education today are in essence the same as the goals of our Foundress: the spiritual, intellectual and social development of the individual, and the preparation of students to take their place in the society in which they live, as well as to achieve their ultimate goal, the knowledge of love of God, in so far as this can be attained.

The Christian person as envisaged by Mary Ward is characterised by:

- Freedom of spirit
- Justice
- Integrity.
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These ideals incorporating personal responsibility, responsiveness to God and others, the search for truth – epitomise the yearnings of all peoples in every age. Being fundamental human values, they are particularly relevant in today’s world where the dignity of the human person is threatened.

In modern society, with its rapid change and scientific and technological advance, the most important issues to be raised are not in fact technological – they are issues of values, and the translation of these values into action. A recognition of our responsibilities is a necessary part of education. Our society is a pluralist one, with often conflicting attitudes to religion, morality, human rights and associated areas. Hence our education needs to involve the development of our ability to evaluate critically, and to make decisions based on informed judgement and Christian principles, decisions reflecting a faithful use of the freedom given us by God.

Our schools, through their climate, teacher–pupil relations and curriculum, aim to meet the spiritual, intellectual, psychological and social needs of each pupil, developing more fully the ability of each one to think objectively and responsibly, to value the search for truth, and to appreciate the dignity and value of the human person.

## **Particular Emphases**

The aims of our educational policy can be seen as threefold: to nurture the development of the unique person; to develop each student's awareness of and response to others; to bring the student to a knowledge and love of God. These aims are not listed in order of importance; indeed they necessarily overlap and complement each other. The emphases and objectives that we value can be considered under the following headings:

**The School as Student-centred**

**The School as Community-centred**

**The School as a God-centred faith community**

### **THE SCHOOL AS STUDENT-CENTRED**

- A lively concern for the personal vocation and human potential of each student.
- The development of the individual talents of each student through a wide and varied curriculum, and although a prevailing atmosphere of encouragement and recognition; this includes an acceptance of and ability to adjust to physical, cultural, social and intellectual differences in oneself and in others.
- Encouraging a love of learning and a striving for excellence, with recognition of the need for self-discipline and a readiness to work hard.
- The promotion in each student of a sense of worth and dignity, of self-acceptance, a recognition and appreciation of sexuality as an integral part of the person, and of one's relationships with others.
- Training in the making of responsible and personal decisions through genuine conviction and internalised values.
- A respect for truth: intellectual truth through the development of logical reasoning and critical judgement; moral truth as a search for a commitment to "the good" and involving a recognition that amid changing values and relative standards there are still "absolute" ideals for which we strive, even though we must adjust to change.
- A concern for the emotional and social development of each child, involving an awareness of the importance of interpersonal communication skills.
- The development of the aesthetic sense, of sensitivity and imagination, through the active encouragement of the creative spirit in art, music, drama, literature and the like.
- Training in the creative use of leisure.
- Imparting of the knowledge and attitudes and the development of the skills and abilities to prepare students of today's rapidly changing society.
- Health as a wholeness of body, mind and spirit.

## **THE SCHOOL AS COMMUNITY-CENTRED**

- A Christian, world-view, which transcends national barriers, social classes and economic differences and promotes international understanding as a basis for living in the present world.
- Justice as a fundamental value, leading to an acceptance of individual and corporate responsibility for the local and wider community.
- An understanding of the importance of the family in society and an appreciation that loving fidelity and commitment lived out in the family can provide the basis for the expression of these values in the context of one's life.
- A preparation for living in a changing world and changing life styles without losing one's self-identity; furthering an understanding of the role of men women in family, society and the Church, and fostering equal opportunity in education; in the spirit of Mary Ward, particular emphasis should be placed on understanding the changing role of women in society with a view to promoting a constructive and Christian approach to this role in the future.
- The development of a sense of social responsibility and respect for others in all aspects of school life.
- Guiding our students, through vocational counselling and career education, to choose a vocation in life which is not only self-fulfilling but more importantly self-giving and self-transcending.
- The appreciation and transmission of the heritage of language and culture.

## **THE SCHOOL AS A GOD-CENTRED FAITH COMMUNITY**

- Education in faith through catechesis is and must be seen to be a prime concern.
- The teaching staff in our schools aim, as Christian educators, to bring students to an awareness of God's love, care and compassion, so that they will find meaning in their life and hope for the future. This can best be achieved when both staff and students in cooperation form a Christian community where all can achieve growth through love, trust, responsible freedom and mutual respect.
- An integral part of our catecheses is our religious studies programme. Emphasis within this will be given to Scripture and theology.
- Our task as educators is to lead the students to the God they experience within themselves and to bring them to the threshold of genuine religious experience through whatever means seem appropriate.
- A priority will be to foster an appreciation of, and involvement in, the liturgical life of the Church.
- Our catechesis aims to develop in the students the realisation of their place within the Church today and in the future, and of the contribution

they can make to the life of the Church in their homes and in the wider community.

### **CONCLUSION**

The integration of Christian education into the whole pattern of life will enable the students to find God as the source and goal of their true humanity, the one in whom they “live and move and have their being”. From this basic orientation the students may grow towards responsible self-direction so that they may contribute to the good of our society, of which they are members, and in whose responsibilities as adults they will share. In this way Religious Education, embracing the total development of human persons with respect to their final goal and the building up of human society, is our prime concern.