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Response to The Daily Telegraph – 26 August 2020

New approach to Religious Education is ‘Good News’ for young people

The Western Sydney Catholic community has been working together to develop a new approach to teaching Religious Education at Catholic schools. There have been recent statements made in the media about this. The good news is that we now have a more relevant, thoughtful and up-to-date way to share our precious Catholic faith with the next generation.

Opinion writer Miranda Devine yesterday published an article criticising this new approach to teaching children and young people about religion. Miranda’s piece seems to seek to agitate and divide rather than make a meaningful contribution to public discussion about either religion or learning.

Today, I wish to share further thoughts on this subject with readers of the Daily Telegraph. Many clergy, parents, teachers and students were involved in the process of developing this new Religious Education curriculum over the past six years.

Let me be clear - Catholic Scripture, Tradition and Context remain firmly at the heart of our approach to teaching children and young people about our religion and everything we do in daily life. This Draft New Curriculum is a direct response to the call of the Second Vatican Council. Even this is not new - it has been more than 50 years since the Church was called to discern the “signs of the times”!

Miranda suggests that the Diocese of Parramatta has a “woke agenda”. Though the Catholic Church is an organisation that very few would consider ‘woke’, this glib cancel culture catchphrase seems to suggest that our schools are too socially aware. Our Patron, St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, is famous for saying “never see a need without doing something about it”: there’s nothing new or woke in that.

Despite the attempts by some commentators to create moral panic, Parramatta Catholic schools remain strongly Catholic and proudly so. We are working together to strengthen the faith of our young people, encouraging them to become attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible adults. The real news here is ‘Good News.’

Very Rev Christopher de Souza
Vicar General and Episcopal Vicar for Education

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