

# CATHOLIC EDUCATION WEEK 2010

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## *Rejoicing in Hope*

### *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, Rejoice*

(Phil 4:4)

**Memory can be a capricious friend.** The theme for this year's Catholic Education Week, *Rejoicing in Hope* was rattling round in my brain, and in its wanderings stirred into life a forgotten item deeply lodged in some distant memory cell. The melody and scrambled words of a long-ago song surfaced. That forgotten song was *Whispering Hope*. One line pushed itself insistently to the front, "Hope with a gentle persuasion whispers her comforting word."

In a world that so often seems devoid of hope, that often seems to sink into a dulling despair, we are asked to "give an account of the hope that is in us" (1 Peter 3:15). As I write this, the disastrous earthquake in Haiti is vivid, fresh and chilling, and as we ponder the death and destruction, and plaintively and sometimes angrily, ask "Why?" amazingly, we witness the tenacious resilience of the human spirit and the fresh, bold glimmerings of hope. The Haitian people may *hope for the sunshine tomorrow* but they are resolutely determined to brighten the darkness of today. Such is hope.

The theological virtue of hope is not some form of celestial wishful thinking. This virtue is not the expectation of the success of a \$2.00 speculative number selection on Lotto 649. It goes beyond our thoughtful, sympathetic expression to a sick friend that "we hope you will soon feel better!" There is nothing wrong with our human expressions of hope. They help us help others believe that there will be light; that the current darkness is not all consuming; that dawn always follows the darkest, longest night. It keeps us from discouragement. It sustains us. However, the hope of which scripture speaks goes beyond wishing, goes beyond the vicissitudes and despair that so often

affect our world, and goes beyond mortality. Our Gospel hope is of the eternal variety and speaks of a "hope that does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5). Placing our trust in the promise of Jesus and relying on the Holy Spirit, we aspire to the kingdom. It is this hope that can sustain us when tribulation troubles us and despair parades its toxic hopelessness.

In addition, we are asked to rejoice in hope. St. Paul says to us to "rejoice always" and then adds "again I say rejoice" as if there was any possible doubt about his intent! Catholics are known as people with a positive anthropology towards life. We are people who can take St. Paul's exhortation to heart and like it! Joy and rejoicing are part of who we are. It is interesting to note that one of the foundational constitutions of *Vatican II*, *Gaudium et Spes* (*The Church in the Modern World*) combines the two words joy (gaudium) and hope (spes), and states that the council is bringing to all people a light of hope kindled from the Gospel. Human society deserves to have hope, real hope.

Principals and vice-principals, you are truly *Beacons of Hope*. As Catholic leaders, you share with your Catholic teachers a responsibility to let the light of Christ shine within your schools. It is through your constant endeavour that our gospel-inspired virtue of hope may bring peace to hearts that are troubled, clarity to eyes that see only despair, encouragement to ears that hear no words of comfort, strength to spirits that are wilting and joy to brighten a day's dark hour.

You are the light of hope that shines in places of darkness, which whispers the comforting word. "We have our hope set on the Living God" (1Ti 4:10). Seize that hope and let it shine!