

Catholic identity is joyful

An important aspect of Catholic identity is that it should be a happy identity. It should be a joyful and hopeful identity. It shouldn't be the sort of identity that counts the problems and difficulties of life, but an identity that reaches always for the hope that things will be better, the hope that our actions, however small, will make a difference.

Pope Francis calls for new paths of creativity, renewal, a collegial spirit, an open door and a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church ... concerned with being at the centre and then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. This teaching echoed in his book *The Church of Mercy* underscores an important principle of Catholic identity for leaders today: to develop and nurture cultures of inclusion, welcome, tenderness and mercy. To engage in dialogue with the prevailing culture and to bring the joy of the Gospel message to those with whom we live and work.

When Jesus says I came that they may have life and have it abundantly, he was establishing an important template for Catholic identity – to bring happiness and joy to others, alleviating need, standing with the poor and marginalised.

To this end Catholic identity involves us in being 'detectives of grace'. Leaders who look for the positives, who look for the kindnesses, who seek out examples of God's grace and blessing in the day to day. This does not mean ignoring tragedy and disaster – these should be acknowledged and addressed – but cultivating positivity and celebration of the many blessings we meet each day. There are many positive things, there are many, many, many good people and as part of Catholic identity, we should celebrate those

things and bring people to a point of seeing life as a joy-filled experience when they can.

For all of us who work in Catholic ministries, there is a challenge to build communities which foster relationships, support each person, inspire hope and practise the humility to seek forgiveness when things go wrong. Ministries that foster community are joyful places – they are places in which people want to participate because they enjoy working there. This is the vision that Jesus had for our world.

"God's mercy is our liberation and our happiness. We live of mercy and we cannot afford to be without mercy. It is the air that we breathe. We are too poor to set any conditions. We need to forgive because we need to be forgiven."

Pope Francis



Reflections: How could you foster a joy-filled community in your ministry?

We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the lands on which our ministries exist and the Elders both past and present on whose land we walk, work and live. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.