

Education in Hope: Forming Resilient Disciples in a Change of Era

Education in hope stands at the heart of the Church's mission in a rapidly changing and uncertain world described by Pope Francis as a change of era rather than simply an era of change¹ In *Drawing New Maps of Hope*, Pope Leo XIV reaffirms that education is not an ancillary task of the Church, but “forms the very fabric of evangelisation,”² where the Gospel is translated into relationships, culture, and concrete educational practice. In this vision, education becomes a profound act of hope—one that prepares young people not merely to adapt to change, but to engage it faithfully, critically, and courageously.

Pope Leo's Apostolic Letter situates Christian education within a complex global landscape shaped by fragmentation, digital saturation, social insecurity, ecological crisis, and the erosion of meaning. In response, Catholic education is called to form the whole human person—spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and morally—so that young people grow as resilient disciples capable of discernment, compassion, and hope. Catholic educators are the “profession of promises”³; they commit to accompany young people over time, to nurture truth-seeking in community, and to cultivate hope that endures through difficulty and uncertainty. Educators are witnesses as much as instructors; their vocation is to model faith that listens, discerns, and acts with love. Resilient disciples are formed in communities where questions are welcomed, diversity is honoured, tikanga and te reo Māori are valued, and the dignity of every person is upheld. Such formation equips young people to live faithfully within complexity, to resist reductionist or utilitarian views of education, and to see themselves as co-creators of a more just, reconciled, and hope-filled world, that is human-centered, and relational⁴

In an environment where young people face anxiety, loss of trust, identity questions, climate concerns, and social pressure, Catholic schools are called to be communities of hope that are guiding stars where young people learn to “not retreat but are revitalized; they do not build walls, but bridges”⁵. This hope is not naïve optimism, but a resilient hope grounded in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus

¹ Leo XIV, *Disegnare Nuove Mappe di Speranza* Drawing New Maps of Hope, apostolic letter (Holy See, October 28, 2025) https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/apost_letters/documents/20251027-disegnare-nuove-mappe.html.

² Ibid., para. 1.1

³ Ibid., para. 3.2

⁴ Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas* Magnificent Humanity, encyclical letter (Holy See, May 15, 2026) <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html>

⁵ Ibid., para. 1.1

Christ. The Catholic school, therefore, as a hope-filled Catholic community offers modelled pathways that lead to hope; through prayer, sacramental life, moral and ethical formation, pastoral care, and education in Catholic Social Teaching. In doing so young people are supported to interpret the world through a Gospel lens, to respond in hope and compassion, and to act with courage in a changing world ⁶, while being committed to building a “civilisation of love”⁷

⁶ New Zealand Catholic Education Office (NZCEO) & National Centre for Religious Studies (NCRS), *Being Church in Aotearoa New Zealand Catholic Schools*, (NZCEO, 2025)

<https://www.nzceo.org.nz/being-church-in-aotearoa-new-zealand-catholic-schools/>

⁷ Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas* Magnificent Humanity, encyclical letter (Holy See, May 15, 2026) <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html>