



**17 May 2021
Media Release**

National Mass to celebrate the bicentenary of Catholic education in Australia on 24 May 2021

Celebrations are continuing for 200 years of Catholic Education in Australia, marking the bicentenary of the first 'official' Catholic school opened in Parramatta in October 1820.

A National Mass will be celebrated simultaneously across Australia on the Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians on Monday 24 May 2021 to mark the occasion.

National Catholic Education executive director Jacinta Collins said the National Mass would be a highlight of the bicentenary year.

"As a faith community, our National Mass to celebrate 200 years of Catholic education holds significant meaning, particularly on the Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians - the Patroness of Australia," Ms Collins said.

"The scale of Catholic education in Australia is unique in the world, serving over 777,000 students and employing over 100,000 staff.

"We are blessed to have the support of governments and our families that ensures we can make a Catholic education accessible to families in every major town and city, and in many regional, rural and remote parts of Australia," she said.

Masses will be held with school representation in most Cathedrals across Australia, as well as a number of individual parishes and schools. Live streaming of some Masses will also be available for school communities who cannot attend a live Mass including live from:

St Mary's Cathedral Sydney

from 10.15am AEST

via https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_wUCUiz1Io

"While the current COVID environment prohibits a large-scale Mass like World Youth Day in Sydney, we hope that all members of our school communities and families will join together in the joyous liturgical celebration at a Cathedral or parish Mass, or via the live streaming options available," Ms Collins said.

The Prime Minister of Australia Scott Morrison has provided a written message and video message of congratulations to the Catholic education community for the occasion, which will be made available on 24 May 2021.

Background:

The bicentenary commemorates the anniversary of the first official Catholic school in Australia, founded in October 1820 by Irish Catholic priest Fr John Therry. The school, which Catholic historians believe was located on Hunter Street in Parramatta, taught 31 students. This school was transferred to the site of the present St Patrick's Cathedral in 1837 and was entrusted to the care of the Marist Brothers in 1875. Parramatta Marist High School, now located in Westmead and St Patrick's Primary, Parramatta trace their origins back to this first school.

Over 200 years Catholic schools have educated millions of young people and today educate one in five Australian students.

Information on the live streaming of other Masses will be available via www.200years.catholic.edu.au

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