

Holy Trinity Primary School Curtin, ACT

“One Holy Family”



I have been privileged over the years to be commissioned to write songs for school and Diocesan communities. In writing these songs I try to become immersed in the culture of the school for the day and get a sense of the whole community. Having spent years studying the “Catholicity” of our schools, I continue to be fascinated by what lies at the heart of our schools and what makes each school community unique.

In March 2005, I was commissioned to write a song for Holy Trinity Primary School, located in the south of Canberra, within ten kilometres of Parliament House. A vital part of my consultation process was to gather in the morning with a group of parents. The group included an old mate from my “Trundlers” Cricket Club days in Sydney, Dan Bolger.

Dan could famously keep us entertained for half an hour by simply reading the season’s scorebook and was and remains a true gentleman. And he had good advice for country driving: “Chinny, always have a tie in the glovebox. If you break down, people’ll stop for a man in a tie but not for a man wearing an Anthrax t-shirt.”

During the consultation Dan said two things that stood out to me. He mentioned that the school was a family and added that teachers and parents were equal. Many times have I heard the analogy of school as family but I think it was Dan’s second comment that gave weight to his first.

I’d noticed the year before, when visiting for a concert day, the great rapport between staff and parents. They were very comfortable in each other’s presence, spoke warmly and with humour to each other and were on a strictly first name basis. Parents were regular visitors to the staffroom in the morning, grabbing the percolated coffee on offer. And their presence was genuinely welcomed. They were a part of the morning banter.

It’s easy to be warm in good times but I heard stories during the day of the community binding together in tight times and being able to face the difficult political decisions that sometimes have to be made because of their openness and level of trust and respect.

This is a community where there seems to be a genuine equality in the relationship between staff and parents. Underpinning that is the great trust that exists between the two. I had the sense that the parents felt well-informed about decisions in the school and had great confidence in the skill and integrity of the staff and its leadership team. There is a sense that we are people first and our roles come in behind our humanity. This isn’t always the case- I’ve walked into schools where the triangle of hierarchy meets you at the door and the sense of “us and them” isn’t far behind.

I’ve worked in and visited schools where some teachers give the impression their territory is being invaded when parents enter. And I’ve seen parents tread warily as if entering hallowed ground. So whose school is it, anyway?

My great friend and mentor, Bobby Cameron, stressed on me as a young teacher that we had to remember that the school really belonged to the parents; we were custodians entrusted with it and the sacred gift of their children.