

# St Anthony's Primary Wanniassa, ACT

## *"A Morning Prayer"*



By late 2001, I had begun to travel around sharing my songs with children, teachers and leaders of Religious Education. In October of that year, I was invited to spend an afternoon with the RECs of the Canberra-Goulburn Archdiocese, which was to be held at St Anthony's Primary School in Wanniassa. In preparation for this I'd contacted the REC of that school, Claire Frazer, and asked if I could borrow some singers to assist with the presentation. She graciously agreed and thankfully, so began a lovely relationship with that school community.

I arrived at about eight o'clock that morning to begin setting up in the hall. At about a quarter to nine, Claire came over and asked if I'd like to join the school for their morning prayer together, and could we sing *These Hands* as part of that gathering. Of course I said I'd be honoured.

St Anthony's is a large school with about 600 students. On this brisk spring morning they gathered as usual in their quadrangle all facing a central area. I'm sure we said a formal prayer or two and then Claire held the microphone up and we began to sing.

Now these children could sing. As we launched into the first chorus I looked up and saw almost every single child moving their hands to the words of the song and singing with hearts and soul. I remember then casting my eyes to the Brindabella ranges behind and the trees with their spring leaves and the frost coming off the voices of these children and thinking that God must be very pleased with such praise.

I remember being at a Religious Education Co-ordinator's meeting in Sydney a couple of years ago and was chatting with an REC of a similar vintage to me. The conversation came around to us recalling our early days of teaching when it was an expectation that every class in the school would begin their day with prayer and a Religious Education lesson. In fact, at my school, my principal would walk the corridors to ensure that this was happening.

These days we're all pretty locked into our two hours of literacy followed by a block of numeracy, which leaves RE, at best, as something we squeeze in before lunch. Yet here was a school in St Anthony's that made a clear statement, that we begin each and every day as one community, praying together, with our hands, our hearts, and our voices to God. And somehow I think they've got their priorities in pretty good order.