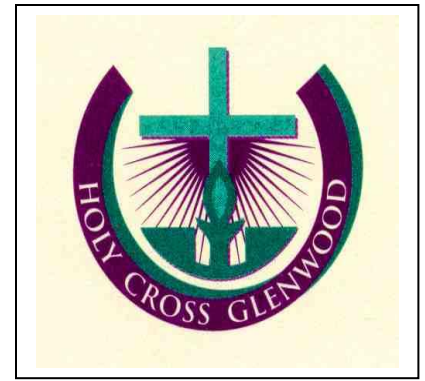


Holy Cross Primary School Glenwood, NSW

“Holy Cross, Holy Circle”



Holy Cross at Glenwood is one of the newer schools in the Parramatta Diocese in the western suburbs of Sydney. A new school offers a richness of opportunities to create a dynamic and creative approach to Catholic education. Unburdened by tradition and expectations, the community of a new school can embark on new and exciting paths of schooling.

In 2004 I was commissioned to write a school song for the Holy Cross School Community. My normal process for doing this is to send ahead some staff surveys focusing on school culture, motto, logo, and the school's patron saint. A key part of the process is always a session with the children, often a representative group from across the grades. It is usually from there that the greatest inspiration comes.

When the selected children gathered for our session at Holy Cross, the first thing that I noticed was that they automatically formed a circle, and I was included in that circle, along with Mary Anne Allen, the Religious Education Co-ordinator. And when we broke into smaller groups, these too became circles. The parent group I consulted with had also formed a circle before we convened the group.

Interestingly, the school's logo is an empty cross, with a bud growing from its base, rays of light shining from the cross and all surrounded by a circle. These four elements eventually became the four themes of the four verses of our song, “This Holy Cross”.

I mentioned this prevalence of circles to Mary Anne during the day, which led to some interesting insights into leadership at Holy Cross. While the school had a recognisable leadership team, the model of leadership was based on a circle rather than a hierarchical triangle or pyramid.

The philosophy, and indeed the practice, was and is that we are all equal in the circle, we are joined and united by the circle, and the circle can easily grow and support the weaker links by joining hands. And this philosophy permeated the whole school culture, from children to staff, to parents, and to the parish.

The greatest compliment I could ever pay to the leadership of my friend and long-time principal, Sean Grace, was that under his leadership, other leaders would always emerge and blossom. And the same is true of the principal at Holy Cross, Kathleen Allabyrne (perhaps its something to do with their shared Irish heritage!). Here is a school with many leaders among the staff, students and parents, all willing to take their turn at a different point in the circle.

From a circle, many leaders can emerge, but there's only one pinnacle in a triangle.