

# **CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF CHRISTCHURCH**

*Āhuatanga Katorika Kaupapa Arotake  
Me Te Ahu Whakamua*

*Catholic Special Character Review for  
Development*

**Te Kura o Tūpaki  
Our Lady of the Assumption School  
(Hoon Hay, Christchurch)**

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**August 2018**

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## Ngā Whāinga o te Arotake - Aims of the External Review

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference wishes the review to show how effective the school is in handing on the faith and forming a new generation of Catholics, and how students have grown in faith as a result of the Religious Education programme. This is the evangelising mission of the Church, in which the school participates.

The external review process is based on the requirements found in the document, *Āhuatanga Katorika Kaupapa Arotake Me Te Ahu Whakamua, Catholic Special Character Review for Development.* (New Zealand Catholic Education Office Limited, 2018 Draft Edition).

In the review, schools are asked to consider and demonstrate the ways in which they provide for their students:

- an encounter with Christ
- growth in knowledge and
- the development of Christian witness

The review also investigates stewardship of the relationship with the Church and the State.

Reviewers encourage and commend best practice, and, working with the school, provide indications of opportunities to further strengthen and develop the Catholic culture.

## School Details

<b>School Type:</b>	Full Primary Years 0-8
<b>Roll based staffing entitlement</b>	13.9
<b>S464 Tagged positions</b>	7 plus Principal and DRS
<b>S464 Tagged positions filled</b>	Yes
<b>Maximum roll</b>	300
<b>Actual roll</b>	287
<b>Non-preference entitlement</b>	15
<b>Non-preference actual</b>	0
<b>Principal</b>	Janet Cummings
<b>Director of Religious Studies</b>	Bridget Grant
<b>BOT Chairperson</b>	Siobhan Bergin
<b>Parish Priest</b>	Fr Chris Orr
<b>Dates of onsite review</b>	1-2 August 2018
<b>Review Leader</b>	Mark Gregory
<b>Support Reviewer</b>	Deb Daines (Principal, New Brighton Catholic School)

## Response to Recommendations from the 2013 external review

**1. To further enhance relationships with parents by strengthening the use of technology through the on-line learning management system or blogs established by the DRS.**

Senior leaders and reviewers agree that the reference to an online learning management system (software package) became obsolete over time. The school now uses online sources such as its website, Facebook page, emailed school newsletters, DRS newsletters and classroom blogs, to promote the Catholic special character to keep parents well informed.

**2. That an induction process be available for non-Catholic teachers and support staff with particular reference to their attendance at and participation in school and class Masses.**

The current process when Catholic and non-Catholic teachers and support staff commence their employment at Our Lady of the Assumption School is:

- all receive a Staff Handbook which contains a statement on the Catholic Character of the school
- all staff sign that they have seen a copy of the Code of Ethics indicating they understand the requirements of working in a Catholic school
- all staff receive a copy of the Staff Covenant, based on the chosen school values

Non-Catholic Support Staff would welcome the opportunity to be more informed about the Mass before attending for the first time e.g. when to sit, stand, what to say, sign of peace etc. (2018 recommendation).

**3. That the use of te reo and tikanga Māori in classrooms be further developed and encouraged by providing teacher professional development and other support.**

A professional relationship has developed with Mana Whenua Education and the school's local runanga. A Cultural Narrative unit in 2017 saw the school name in both te reo Māori and English on the school gates, letterhead, webpage and other school documentation. There is now bi-lingual signage around the school. The kapa haka group, now strengthened, will participate for the first time in the Cultural Festival this year. Senior leaders and reviewers agree on the school-wide achievements accomplished to date, and now the focus is to immerse bi-culturalism into everyday classroom practice (2018 recommendation).

**4. That the school wide focus on student centred learning is implemented in RE.**

The school is continuing to develop a more collaborative and self-directed focus on learning in Religious Education. This is very clearly illustrated within the Hillary Hub where students have been actively involved using the Diocesan-wide Y7 - 8 RE Digital Learning Resource. Other classes are adopting similar resources and styles of learning from their increased knowledge by participating in the New Zealand Certificate in Christian Studies (RE) papers.

**5. That the school wide planning for RE be reviewed and consider a more formal structure involving all teachers: staff meeting where Strand is introduced and pre-test information is analysed to inform teaching of the Strand. At the end of the strand there is a reflective review about how to do it better next time.**

The board appointed a new DRS at the beginning of 2017. She has been well supported by the RE Advisers in developing a more consistent planning format for teachers and assisting the DRS with an annual action plan to develop and enhance the Catholic Character and the teaching of Religious Education. Regular reviews show an improvement in the childrens' level of knowledge and understanding.

**6. That the DRS appraisal visits to RE classrooms occur before the end of Term 2 so that there is opportunity to follow up where necessary. The visits should be documented for the teacher's appraisal portfolio. This appraisal visit and professional conversation would also identify professional development needs. DRS uses her release time to visit RE classes as well as to meet administration requirements.**

This year the DRS has appraised teachers in Term 2 using a successful model used by the New Zealand Graduate School of Education. This same model occurs for writing observations and giving immediate feedback to teachers. The status of the DRS has risen from one to two management units.

## TE TŪTAKI KI A TE KARAITI – ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST

*How does the school encourage and facilitate the development of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ who reveals the transforming love and truth of the living God?*

### Areas of Success

Students have a comprehensive and meaningful range of spiritual formation opportunities. Four School Masses occur during the year supplemented by Team Masses where tamariki actively participate leading the readings, prayers of the faithful, altar serving, and partaking in the offertory procession and singing. Senior students also experience an annual retreat. Whānau are warmly invited to join their children for these celebrations of our Catholic faith.

The school is very proactive and effective in promoting the involvement of ākongā and their whānau in the life of their parish and the celebration of the Sacraments. Board and staff leaders estimate that about 30% of families are active members of their local parish community.

Every third year the school works with the parish to identify students with preference of enrolment who have not received the Sacrament of Baptism. A personal invitation is sent to whānau to consider. Three years ago, 15 young people enrolled in the school / parish Baptism programme. Having the whole school present to witness and celebrate the event highlighted the importance of the occasion. The programme was repeated recently with a further six children being initiated into the Church. The school and parish is to be commended for this initiative. First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation programmes are strongly supported with over 50 young people participating in these individual sacramental programmes.

The values of the New Zealand Curriculum are viewed through a "Catholic lens" and presented from a Catholic perspective. As expressed in the School's Charter: *The precept, "to love God above all things and one's neighbour as oneself," succinctly summarises the values of Jesus Christ.* The school's chosen values are based on the three theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Love based on the scripture verse, 1 Corinthians 13:13. Its motto; *'Seeking Knowledge Living Our Faith'* complements the above values the school is promoting.

Values Assemblies are used as a vehicle to promote Gospel values on a regular basis. These are student-led and incorporate scripture references to emphasise the chosen value. Students use a range of resources that include video clips, quizzes, role plays and questions to encourage ākongā to live the value in their everyday contact with others.

Prayer is a strong feature of the school. Classroom prayer includes a range of traditional and contemporary forms, including meditation, that encourage a personal relationship with Christ. Karakia is a priority each morning and throughout the day. Currently, the board is planning to design an outdoor sacred space to promote prayer and quiet reflection.

Prayer packs encourage prayer life in the home. Junior students share the pack with their whānau throughout the year on a rotational basis. Although restricted currently to junior families, a number of older siblings share in the experience as a whānau. Students look forward to this special opportunity to pray together as a family using an assortment of resources provided by the school to promote different styles of prayer. Extending this practice to other areas of the school could be worth considering.

A 'Welcoming Ceremony' introduces new whānau and new entrants to the school community. This involves the whole school in a liturgical celebration of welcome. During the liturgy each family is presented with a Bible for their faith journey ahead. The school was grateful to Bishop Paul Martin who recently presented Bibles to new families. Parents interviewed spoke fondly of this liturgy, the welcome they received and how they valued and appreciated the special gift.

Parent and student groups interviewed as part of this review spoke positively about seeing a number of teachers at the Parish Sunday Mass. Teachers actively worshipping in their local parish are effectively modelling the importance of integrating the role of school, home and parish in their personal faith formation and encounter with Christ.

Staff understand their role of being strong agents for evangelisation. In the pre-review questionnaire staff shared the following insights:

- *I love sharing my faith with the children and take great delight in expounding scripture with them.*
- *It gives me the opportunity to share my faith with those I teach, reinforces my personal beliefs and helps me to be a better person, develops my own personal faith and learning.*
- *I enjoy discussing my faith with the students and that I appreciate children are receiving such great role models and teachings of the way Jesus wants us to live our life.*

Opportunities for evangelisation include the school's website and a variety of social media. The fortnightly newsletter features work of the children in Religious Education, social justice actions, information about the Catholic faith, notices from the parish newsletter and parish rosters for Sunday Mass. There is a deliberate emphasis to portray the school as an integral part of the parish.

Parents interviewed as part of the review agreed that the Catholic special character of the school is far more prominent now under the leadership of the current Director of Religious Studies. They find any resources sent home, for example, the prayer packs, DRS Newsletters and the Family Whānau Book assist them in their role of supporting their children in faith.

The school's faith leadership team of the principal and DRS has a committed focus on the spiritual formation of staff, students and whānau. There is a strong working relationship between the principal and the Director of Religious Studies. Although only appointed 18 months ago, the DRS is growing in her knowledge, confidence and experience as a faith-based leader. Both work collaboratively to lead the development of the Catholic special character of the school with great support from the board, its Catholic Character committee, parish priest and his assistant. The status of the DRS has recently risen from one to two management units.

Currently, the DRS is not a member of the Leadership Team. Reviewing the structure of the Leadership Team might allow for the DRS to be included on either a permanent basis or when matters are related to the school's Catholic Character and the teaching of Religious Education. Likewise, the DRS could be invited to Team Leaders' Meetings should this group become a separate entity, as discussed during the review.

### **Opportunities for Development**

That senior Catholic character leaders, in consultation with the parish priest, investigate ways of incorporating some school classes or hubs at selected Parish Sunday Masses.

## TE WHAKATUPU MĀ TE MĀTAURANGA – GROWTH IN KNOWLEDGE

*How does the school assist its community to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ, his teachings and the Catholic Church?*

### **Areas of Success**

The Director of Religious Studies and the principal provide effective leadership in religious instruction and observances. Both are faith-filled positive role models for the staff, students and whānau. Supporting these two is a very active and passionate board chair and Catholic Character committee, all of whom give strong witness to their faith.

The recent Catholic Education Convention was a true highlight for the representatives from Our Lady of the Assumption School. Those attending were the principal, DRS, board chair and deputy principal. As a group of four, there was much to share and discuss during and following the convention. Already, plans are underway to at least equal the number of representatives for the next event in three years.

The school implements the national Religious Education curriculum paying particular attention to the minimum requirements as set by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference. Teachers' timetables and planning clearly indicate that students are receiving regular instruction in Religious Education.

Reviewers observed ten teachers leading a Religious Education lesson. The students were well engaged in quality, well-planned lessons. Relationships among the students and between the teachers and students were very positive. There was a clear level of mutual respect and serenity within the classes. Teachers shared and discussed the learning intentions with students and provided clear links to their prior learning. Teachers demonstrated pleasing content knowledge and were able to adapt this knowledge according to the needs and understanding of their students.

Effective use of the Y7-8 RE digital resource is a feature of the senior, Hillary Hub. Differentiated learning occurs where students grouped together with similar needs receive further teacher direction. A choice factor in the related tasks allows those more independent to demonstrate their learning and re-visit resources to gain increased knowledge. Students in Years 5-6 classes are also experiencing RE lessons where technology is assisting them in their understanding. Follow-up tasks linked to digital resources supplement their understanding and bring a competitive element with the use of timed quizzes. Other year groups make effective use of the Faith Alive digital resources.

The collated results of the Diocesan Year 4 Online RE Assessment are familiar to teaching staff and board members. Collated information is shared with both groups. Knowledge of the Sacrament Strand was well above the Diocesan Average. The weakest strand, *God*, has been bolstered and given a greater time allocation for 2018. The school is to be commended for adapting its programme delivery according to the knowledge and understanding of its students.

As one board member wrote in the pre-review questionnaire: *"The board receives regular updates on the Religious Education Programme through either reports or presentations prepared by the DRS. The most recent presentation involved a video of various students through the various levels of the school, referencing the Religious Education curriculum and what it means to them through the eyes of the student. This was a very powerful and reassuring presentation."*

Assessment information is widely used for a number of different purposes. Not only is this information used to report to parents and students, but also forms a picture of the knowledge gained within individual classes and the school as a whole. Presenting the collation of school-wide data to the Board of Trustees occurs on a regular basis with aspects included in the board's Analysis of Variance Report to the school's community and the Ministry of Education.

Whānau are well informed of their child's progress in Religious Education through formal reports and teacher / whānau learning conversations. The school is making a real effort to write comments that give specific feedback to parents and students on the growth of knowledge attained within different strands and modules.

The qualifications of teaching staff are increasing incrementally. The board, principal, DRS and most teachers support the expectation of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference that leaders and teachers of Religious Education work towards a formal qualification in Religious Education. Aligned with this professional learning, is the opportunity for individual teachers to deepen their faith and develop an increased understanding of the teachings of the Catholic Church. For those teachers taking part, we acknowledge their willingness and personal support of the New Zealand Bishops through their active participation in the New Zealand Certificate in Christian Studies (RE) papers.

A Catholic perspective is now being included into thematic areas of the integrated curriculum. Using the knowledge gained in the Catholic Social Teaching paper, one of the principles, Stewardship – *valuing and caring for the gifts that God has given to us*, prompted the use of Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si* as a catalyst for social action. 'Eco leaders' and the 'Greenfingers' group are actively involved in the promotion and sustainability of their school garden and its free range chickens.

When teaching Sexuality Education, a Catholic perspective is central to the delivery of the programme. Consultation with whānau reinforces the notion that, *'Each unique human person has been created by God – Te Atau with a capacity to change and grow. In response to this gift we respect the dignity and tapu of ourselves and others.'* As part of the consultation process, whānau receive an overview of the content within each curriculum level of the school. Most kaiako involved in teaching the programme have participated in professional learning approved by the Bishop. It was encouraging to note three teachers involved in the recent round of courses.

### **Opportunities for Development**

That senior leaders develop a more formal process to induct non-Catholic teachers and support staff with particular reference to their attendance at and participation in school and class Masses.

## **TE WHAKAATU KARAITIANA – CHRISTIAN WITNESS**

*How does the school provide a hope-filled Christian witness which empowers its community members to integrate their faith and their life?*

### **Areas of Success**

The principal, DRS and other teachers in S464 positions are active witnesses of faith in the school and in their parishes. Six staff members are regular worshippers within the parish, some of whom take leading roles supporting the liturgy. School whānau witness the strong connection between the parish and its school through the presence of their child's teacher. Not only are staff members witnesses to their faith, but also, members of the Board of Trustees. During the review, both reviewers experienced a community 'proud to be Catholic.'

The board contains committed Catholics, who together with the principal, Director of Religious Studies and parish priests, firmly place matters pertaining to the school's Catholic character first and foremost. Acknowledgement by the priests of the strong Catholic Character committee, which includes the proprietor's representatives, is focused on promoting and supporting active Catholic witness in the school and parish community.

The school purposefully works to build whānau participation in the education of their tamariki. Recently, the school provided parent evenings on cyber safety led by a national cyber safety expert,

and in 2018, offered two parent workshops on *Anxiety in Children* led by a member of the Schools Mental Health Team. Both meetings were well attended, and in the case of the latter, parents have requested a follow-up workshop on resilience.

Our Lady of the Assumption School is one of a number of Catholic schools in the Catholic Community of Learning, Te Mara Akoranga Katorika. The overall objective is to raise achievement of all students by working collaboratively and sharing best practice across the community of schools. Social justice features prominently as the Catholic special character focus for all schools. It also aims to build the capacity of staff and students to engage in discussion on social justice issues. As all Catholic secondary schools in Christchurch are part of this Community of Learning, there are smooth transitions for students between Catholic primary and secondary schooling.

There is a strong relationship with the Catholic parish of Hoon Hay and Halswell, Our Lady Queen of the Apostles. Clearly, the school sees itself as 'the parish school' where relationships are positive, collegial and focused on developing the faith journey of its members. Within the school setting, priests are regularly observed either visiting classes or visiting more informally to talk with staff and children. Staff, students and whānau appreciate their presence within the school. There were many positive comments in the staff questionnaire about the two priests, for example:

- *'Our two new priests are very involved with the school and are becoming more and more visible around the place.'*
- *'Our new priests are building a better, stronger link between parish and community.'*
- *'Since the new priests have arrived there has been a huge boost in community spirit and more parents are engaged and talking about the parish.'*

The school recognises the importance of te Tiriti o Waitangi and the status of Māori as Tangata Whenua. It is growing in its understanding of bi-culturalism. In 2017 staff worked with facilitators from Mana Whenua Education and through them with the school's local runanga, Ngāi Tūāhuriri, made links to the land on which the school stands and the people that lived there in early times. The school was very fortunate being gifted a school name, given names for two areas within the school grounds and the permission to use the story as part of the school's taonga.

The school consulted its Māori community using a survey to whānau in August 2016. A positive response to the survey was received with whānau acknowledging the progress achieved to date in growing te reo and tikanga Māori. Class observations during the review indicated very few teachers used te reo Māori within their Religious Education lessons and prayer sessions. For a school to be immersed in bi-culturalism, it is important that all teaching staff increase their confidence by regularly using te reo Māori names and commands to build the knowledge and confidence of themselves and their students.

Pastoral care is a strong feature of the school. Its 'Helping Hands' programme assists families in need. Prepared meals are provided, financial assistance offered and transport support scheduled to and from school as required. Every care is taken to retain the confidentiality of the recipients. For students, a pastoral care register is kept and updated by the leadership team twice a term. The systems that are in place ensure ākonga are personally known, cared for, and provided with support that reflect Gospel values and Church teachings. Within the board's annual budget is a confidential discretionary fund for the principal to support students and families in need.

Pastoral Care Surveys occur every three years by the Catholic Character committee members, the DRS and the principal. These surveys ask the community for their input and feedback on the Catholic character and associated programmes. Collated results are prioritised and used to address, improve, acknowledge, celebrate and promote. The board finds this strategic process useful for its growth and future development.

Analysis of the staff questionnaire indicates most teachers feel affirmed and appreciated by fellow staff and school leaders. Two board members are responsible for checking on the well-being of the principal. This process is valued and appreciated by the principal.

During the review, there was a definite feeling of serenity in the classrooms and playground. Students respect each other, their teachers and other staff members. The school values of Faith, Respect, Responsibility and Lifelong Learning provide ākonga with the necessary steps and expectations to become faith-filled, self-directed learners.

The school supports local and national Catholic groups in their service and outreach. The organisations of Caritas and St Vincent de Paul are given priority by the school in its social justice activities. There is a real spirit of generosity evident within the school where the community demonstrates a genuine desire to assist those less fortunate. School leaders grant high status to the Young Vinnies Year 8 leaders. Students take their role seriously and relish the opportunity to promote a culture of service and outreach.

### **Opportunities for Development**

Senior leaders are encouraged to continue to develop and make explicit the dual charism of its founding religious orders, the Good Shepherd Sisters and Josephite Sisters to initiate a process of identifying Gospel values or virtues aligned with these religious congregations. It would also be fitting if the school acknowledged these founding orders within its Charter, website and applicable school documents to keep this important historical connection and dual charism 'alive and well.'

Catholic character leaders are encouraged to seek feedback about the effectiveness of their pastoral care programme in promoting the personal health and well-being of staff.

Consider reviewing the Behaviour Management Policy to incorporate references to the Catholic special character by including the school's chosen Gospel values, the restorative justice practices promoted within the school and the focus on restoring relationships through a spirit of reconciliation.

Class observations during the review indicated very few teachers used te reo Māori within their Religious Education lessons and prayer sessions. For a school to be immersed in bi-culturalism, it is important that all teaching staff increase their confidence by regularly using te reo Māori names and commands to build the knowledge and confidence of themselves and their students.

## **TE KAITIAKITANGA ME TO WHAKAPAKARI I TE TUAKIRI KATORIKA – SAFEGUARDING AND STRENGTHENING CATHOLIC CHARACTER**

*How does the school in its stewardship, and its compliance with legal obligations, safeguard and strengthen its Catholic identity?*

### **Areas of Success**

The Board of Trustees has a clear and well informed understanding of the importance of Catholic character governance in a Catholic school. In 2016 the Board of Trustees and school community reviewed and set new strategic aims based on its motto, *Seeking Knowledge, Living Our Faith*. The school's Charter is a well-structured document that prominently features the Catholic special character in both strategic and annual sections. The strategic goals encompass action plans that are monitored and evaluated throughout the year. A separate student achievement target specifically relates to the dimension, *Growth in Knowledge*, with references to the new Religious Education Bridging Document and the school's focus on developing a school wide social conscience through its social justice initiatives based on, *See, Judge, Act*.

All documentation relating to employment includes clear and concise information relating to the Catholic special character of Our Lady of the Assumption School. The school has an Appointments Policy in keeping with the Catholic special character and tagged positions include the correct wording to advertise vacant positions. The school makes use of the recommended letters of appointment issued by the New Zealand Catholic Education Office.

Enrolment procedures are transparent and meet the requirements of the Integration Agreement.

School promotion material clearly articulates the Catholic nature of the school. The Board budgets for Religious Education and for Catholic special character including release time for professional development opportunities for teaching staff.

All teaching staff are involved in a formative appraisal system. The documentation includes the new draft Standards for the Teaching Profession and the aligning of the Catholic Elaborations. The DRS leads the observation of Religious Education lessons to provide feedback and feed forward to staff on the effectiveness of their teaching.

The school is compliant with its Integration Agreement in terms of the correct number of S464 positions filled, non-preference numbers, maximum roll compared to actual roll, and consultation with the Proprietor through its annual Attestation and Internal Review reports.

The preference/non-preference details, as at the time of the Catholic Special Character review (August 2018), were as follows:

<b>Our Lady of the Assumption School (Hoon Hay)</b>	<b>Maximum Roll (as per Integration Agreement) = 300 students</b>	<b>Non-Preference Maximum (as per Integration Agreement) = 15 students</b>
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Preference Criterion	Number of Students	% of Current Total Number Students
5.1	266	92.7%
5.2	4	1.4%
5.3	16	5.6%
5.4	0	0.0%
5.5	1	0.3%
Non-Preference	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>100%</b>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

*It is expected that the Board of Trustees and staff include these recommendations in its strategic and annual plans and address them fully before the next external review. Catholic Education Office staff are available to offer professional support as required.*

### *Encounter with Christ*

- 1) That senior Catholic character leaders, in consultation with the parish priest, investigate ways of incorporating some school classes or hubs at selected Parish Sunday Masses.

### *Growth in Knowledge*

- 2) That senior leaders develop a more formal process to induct non-Catholic teachers and support staff with particular reference to their attendance at and participation in school and class Masses.

### *Christian Witness*

- 3) Senior leaders are encouraged to continue to develop and make explicit the dual charism of its founding religious orders, the Good Shepherd Sisters and Josephite Sisters, to initiate a process of identifying Gospel values or virtues aligned with these religious congregations. It would also be fitting if the school acknowledged these founding orders within its Charter, website and applicable school documents to keep this important historical connection and dual charism 'alive and well.'
- 4) Consider reviewing the Behaviour Management Policy to incorporate references to the Catholic special character by including the school's chosen Gospel values, the restorative justice practices promoted within the school and the focus on restoring relationships through a spirit of reconciliation.
- 5) Class observations during the review indicated very few teachers used te reo Māori within their Religious Education lessons and prayer sessions. For a school to be immersed in bi-culturalism, it is important that all teaching staff increase their confidence by regularly using te reo Māori names and commands to build the knowledge and confidence of themselves and their students.
- 6) Catholic character leaders are encouraged to seek feedback about the effectiveness of their pastoral care programme in promoting the personal health and well-being of staff.

The review team is confident that the leaders of Our Lady of the Assumption School (Board, Principal and DRS) have the willingness and ability to address the recommendations of this report.

The reviewers thank the community of Our Lady of the Assumption School for the welcome extended to them and for the opportunity to observe and experience the way they safeguard and strengthen their Catholic special character.

**Mark Gregory**  
**Catholic Special Character Reviewer**