

New Book Calls Catholic Schools Back to the Heart of Leadership

A new book by educator Andrew Murray is challenging a growing assumption within Catholic education: that exhaustion is simply part of school leadership.

Faith, Flourishing & Wellbeing, published by Garratt Publishing, will be launched on April 21 at St John Bosco School in New Plymouth, a community close to Andrew Murray's heart, where his daughter attended and where he once served on the board.

Drawing on more than 30 years in Catholic education across Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, Andrew Murray offers a response to a question many leaders are quietly asking: how do you sustain leadership over time without losing yourself in the process?

A former secondary school principal and current PhD candidate at Australian Catholic University, Andrew Murray has worked closely with Catholic school leaders navigating increasing complexity in their roles. Andrew Murray's research focuses on the conditions that both enable and constrain the wellbeing of those leading faith-based schools.

"What I kept hearing was not a lack of commitment," Andrew Murray said. "These are deeply committed people. The issue is that the role has become so complex that many are simply trying to get through."

One principal Andrew Murray worked with described finishing each term "completely spent," only to begin the next already behind. "I love this work," she said, "but I don't know how long I can keep doing it like this."

The book draws together real stories from Catholic principals and teachers, alongside theological reflection and contemporary research. It is written as a practical guide, offering simple habits and reflection points aimed at helping educators reconnect with their purpose and lead in a more sustainable way. At its core is a clear claim: Catholic leadership cannot be reduced to management. It is a vocation shaped by relationship, faith, and a commitment to the dignity of each person.

"When leadership becomes purely functional, something important is lost," Andrew Murray said. "In Catholic schools, the work is about people. It is about formation, not just outcomes."

The book speaks directly to principals, deputy principals, Religious Education leaders, and teachers navigating increasing demands while trying to remain faithful to the mission of Catholic education. It acknowledges the reality of burnout while refusing to accept it as inevitable.

Instead, Andrew Murray reframes the conversation around flourishing. This includes attention to personal wellbeing, spiritual life, relationships, and the broader culture of the school.

Through weekly habits and guided reflection, the book encourages educators to rediscover their centre, reclaim a sense of vocation, and build cultures of trust and care within their schools.

Professor Gerard Moore, Principal of BBI-The Australian Institute of Theological Education, described the book as offering "ideas and actions... that can transform

the workplace through stronger relationships, deeper reflection, and personal growth.”

For Andrew Murray, the goal is not to add to the demands already placed on school leaders, but to offer a more sustainable way forward.

“People do not need another framework,” Andrew Murray said. “They need ways of living and leading that actually sustain them.”

As Catholic schools continue to navigate cultural change and rising expectations, Faith, Flourishing & Wellbeing offers a timely reminder that leadership, at its best, is not about endurance, but about life.

- Andrew Murray