

Staff Faith Formation
Theme Introduction
January 2023

created
+ called

a revolution of love and tenderness

Created + Called *a revolution of love and tenderness*

Read the outline for this year's Marist Association 2023 theme. Circle any key words.

“Be who God created you to be and you will set the world on fire.”

These words from St Catherine of Siena express a desire to be our deepest and truest selves in response to being known and loved by a God who, as Herbert McCabe OP says beautifully, is “helplessly and hopelessly in love with us”. God’s love changes us. It ignites the flame of desire in our hearts to be God’s love in the world. It ignites a revolution, a revolution fuelled by God’s love!

So, what might this revolution look like? When the prophet Micah was faced with the stirrings of revolution in the air because of the mistreatment of the lowly and oppression of the poor, God gave a clear message of what to do. “*What does the Lord require of you? Do justice, love tenderness, and walk humbly with your God?*” (Micah 6:8)

In *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), another unexpected figure is presented by Pope Francis. He encourages believers to look to Mary so we can “*believe once again in the revolutionary nature of love and tenderness*” (EG, 288). In Mary, we see the qualities of humility, tenderness and concern for others are not virtues of the weak but of the strong. Mary is created and called to ‘magnify’ the Lord with her whole being, and this ignites a transformation in others. Her prayer speaks of a

revolution that “*brings down the mighty from their thrones*” and “*raises the lowly*”, through bringing forth the “*loving tenderness of the heart of our God*” (Lk 1:78) and the birth of a new world (EG, 288).

At times though, we might feel that we don’t really understand who God has created us to be, or it feels we are far from setting the world on fire. Let us trust that we are already created as God desires us to be.

During the Nazi holocaust, the young 13-year-old Anne Frank wrote in her diary about the power of justice, tenderness and walking humbly with her God, saying: “*The sharpest weapon of all is a kind and gentle spirit*”.

Today, the *revolution of love and tenderness* starts with you and me.

As this year’s theme image invites us to enter a contemplative space through its deep colours, let us pray that we may all be living signs of the Father’s tenderness (*Water From the Rock*, 102) as we set the world on fire with God’s love.

Journal Reflection

Take 10 minutes to write and reflect on the theme introduction before sharing.

Which word or words from the theme caught your attention?

How might this word(s) direct you in your role this year?

Are there any ideas that arise from the reflection that resonated with you strongly?

What is it about the word or concept that has captured your attention?

Sharing

1. Share your initial thoughts with a **partner** at your table. (10mins)
2. Have a conversation at your **table group** about the theme and how it might influence your work this year. (10mins)

**What is God's dream for
you?**

What does this revolution look like?





What is your **dream** this
year?



Rosa Parks

Created+Called explores God's love for each of one of us and what God dreams for how we should live this fabulous life that God has "created" for each of us.

How does this revolution look? How do we live this life? Let's examine the story of Rosa Parks to enter into the theme and this question.

On December 1st, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, a woman by the name of Rosa Parks broke the law to win release from the prison in which she found herself. An African-American, Parks sat down in one of the seats on a city bus reserved for whites only. Hers was a courageous act, both risky and revolutionary for its time.

The Montgomery bus boycott was a political and social protest campaign against the policy of racial segregation on the public transit system of Montgomery, Alabama. It was a foundational event in the civil rights movement in the United States.

Br Sean Sammon former Superior-General of the Marist Brothers said he thought there was something much more significant that caused Rosa to sit down on that bus.

He said "*she had a dream a dream of freedom and of justice, and more importantly, was willing to pay whatever price was necessary to make that dream a reality.*"

Our Call as Catholic Leaders

Choose one quote to read and reflect on the question below before sharing (10mins)

At the very heart of each Catholic school is a desire for the full flourishing of each student, across religious, physical, cognitive, emotional and social domains. Effective Catholic schools prioritise the development of student social competencies by embedding learning opportunities into pedagogy, curriculum, behaviour support systems, expectations and structures.

Catholic Education Melbourne 2016



- Leaders and staff understand, and are solidly committed to, the Catholic identity of the school
- Activities of pre-evangelisation, primary proclamation, catechesis and spiritual formation seek to ensure our young people have a personal encounter with Christ
- Schools are Eucharistic communities... where students regularly take part in Mass and Reconciliation and are engaged in various forms of prayer and meditation

200 Years Young (2021) A Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of Australia about Catholic Education

How will I help our students and staff to 'flourish' this year?

A Note about the Image

'Where Heaven and Earth Meet'



The 2023 theme invites us to enter into the visual space of the Mark Rothko inspired multi-forms, which prompt fresh eyes and an expansive personal interpretation of Created + Called. **'Art to me is an anecdote of the spirit,'** Rothko said. Through layers upon layers of paint applied to create blocks of colours, his canvas reveals a contemporary icon that evokes a religious experience through creating a feeling of contemplation and transcendence.

The art invites you to slow down as you are immersed deep within the colour of the image.

Rothko considered his colours as his spiritual performers. He believed that we are cluttered with so many images, yet it is only abstract art that can bring us to the threshold of the divine.

Sandy Prouty notes that Rothko's works began with his brush and were completed with the viewer's perspective through experiencing "a sense of intimacy, awe, a transcendence of the individual and a sense of the unknown" (Rothko 1953).

Reflection on the Created and Called Image

After taking some time to read the reflection 'Where Heaven and Earth Meet' consider these questions.

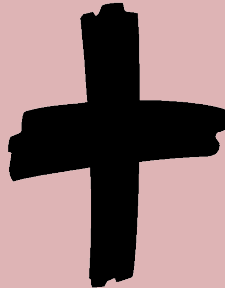
In an exercise of stillness, take a minute to sit with the image looking at it. Be Still!

What do you see? Then what does Rothko invite you to see?

How do you enter into spaces of quiet and contemplation in your life?

How will you help others, staff, students, parents, and invite them into this space to slow down and appreciate the gifts God gives us?

How do we work together as a team in Catholic education to help our students achieve their full potential as human beings?



Closing Prayer

Loving Father, Created and Called is an invitation to reflect on God's love for each one of us and the life we are called to live.

Help us to share this gift of creation with others in our community as we strive to bring a revolution of love and tenderness to our world.

Like Mary, imbued by the Holy Spirit, may we give birth to a renewed faith and united pastoral action in our school community this year.

Amen.