

30 January 2021

**Message from His Eminence Archbishop Makarios
on occasion of the beginning of the new school year in Australia**

My beloved children,

Traditionally, the beginning of each school year is the starting point of a new, creative course, accompanied by feelings of joy, hope and optimism. I fully understand the particularities of the present situation – particularities that may constrain you from all those joyful things that always marked the return to classrooms: face-to-face interaction with teachers and a carefree game with your favourite classmates.

However, I am certain that your beautiful faces will not be deprived of a smile, nor will you lose hope and optimism.

This is because I believe that you will be able to respond – much better than we adults – to the unique challenge that you face, within the context of the restrictions that stem from the pandemic. While you are required to maintain social distancing between you and your teachers, the challenge that arises is how to approach spiritually, how to communicate by opening your hearts and offering love, understanding and support to one another. Besides, in addition to acquiring knowledge, this is the other primary role and purpose of education: the cultivation of values such as solidarity, respect, cooperation and unity.

Therefore, stand with courage and patience before the difficulties that you are likely to encounter and willingly offer your pure, childlike souls as fertile ground to cultivate the values and virtues of your parents and grandparents; those that were able to make them stand before the many trials that they faced.

At the same time, through the intercessions of the patron saints for Education, the Three Hierarchs, trust Christ Who will be your companion and true friend in both good and difficult times and He will help you taste the fruit of your labours.

I firmly believe that you will have the beloved educators as helpers in your good struggle as well as your parents, obeying respectfully St John Chrysostom's encouraging words, "Everything for us is secondary especially when it comes to the care of children".

Personally, as Archbishop and your spiritual father, I wholeheartedly wish you health and strength to progress and fulfill your dreams. Our Holy Archdiocese always has its doors open to everyone and especially for young people, willing to bless and support your endeavours and help you achieve your God-inspired goals.

May you have a good and creative year!