

FAITH FLOURISHING & WELLBEING

.....
a practical guide for leaders and teachers
in faith-based schools



Andrew Murray

Published in Australia by



Garratt Publishing
32 Glenvale Crescent
Mulgrave, VIC 3170
www.garrattpublishing.com.au

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Cover & Text Design by Guy Holt Design
Edited by Juliette Hughes
Cover image and leaf motifs from iStock kitka 1842148640
Infographics designed by Guy Holt Design
Printed by Tingleman Printers

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ISBN 9781923095250

Cataloguing in Publication information for this title is available from the
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*To Benita and Charlotte, for being there, holding steady
through every season of striving and surrender.*

*To Robyn, Graeme and Mary, who have walked beside me
when the load was light and when it grew heavy.*

*And to the friends who offered coffee, listening
and a moment of grace on difficult days.
You know who you are.*

Some journeys test you.

Some relationships save you.

This work is a testament to both.

GLOSSARY OF *TE REO MĀORI* TERMS

Te Reo Māori terms are used throughout this book by New Zealand author Andrew Murray. This glossary provides a detailed explanation of their meanings.

Aotearoa

The Māori name for New Zealand. Literally translated as ‘land of the long white cloud’. Used to acknowledge the indigenous naming of the nation and its cultural context.

Hinengaro

Mind, thoughts, and emotional life. Encompasses psychological and emotional well-being, including feelings, perceptions, and mental clarity.

Kaitiakitanga

Guardianship, stewardship, or responsible care. Refers to an ethic of intergenerational responsibility, where leaders act as custodians of people, resources, and the environment rather than owners. Closely aligned with moral responsibility and service.

Karakia

Prayer, incantation, or ritual utterance. Karakia are used to acknowledge the sacred, seek guidance, offer protection, give thanks, or mark transitions. In contemporary contexts, karakia may be Christian, traditional Māori, or integrative in form. They function not only as spoken prayer but as a relational act that situates people within spiritual, communal, and ethical responsibility. In leadership and educational settings, karakia are often used to open or close gatherings, grounding work in purpose, humility, and attentiveness.

Manaakitanga

Care, hospitality, generosity, and respect shown toward others. In leadership contexts, *manaakitanga* emphasises relational ethics, attentiveness to people’s dignity, and the moral obligation to care well for those entrusted to one’s leadership.

Te Whare Tapa Whā

A Māori model of well-being developed by Sir Mason Durie. It conceptualises health as a four-sided house comprising *tinana* (physical), *hinengaro* (mental and emotional), *wairua* (spiritual), and *whānau* (relational) dimensions. Flourishing requires balance across all four.

Tinana

Physical body. Refers to physical health, bodily care, rest, and material conditions that support well-being.

Wairua

Spiritual dimension of life. Refers to a person's inner life, sense of meaning, connection to the sacred, and spiritual vitality. **Wairua** is integral to well-being and cannot be separated from everyday life or work.

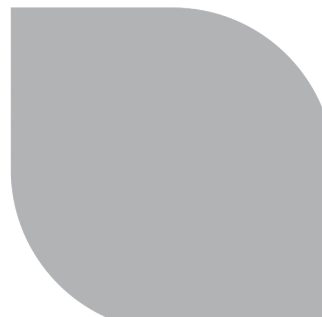
Whānau

Family, broadly understood. Extends beyond the nuclear family to include extended family and relational networks. **Whānau** is both a source of support and a site of responsibility.

Whanaungatanga

Relational connectedness, kinship, and belonging. Emphasises the importance of relationships, shared responsibility, and mutual obligation. Leadership is exercised through relationship rather than hierarchy.

SAMPLE



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INTRODUCTION

Faith, Flourishing & Wellbeing

'Be still and know that I am God.'

(Ps 46:10 NRSV)

It's 7.45 am in the staffroom. Someone is photocopying a prayer service. Another adjusts a display before the bell. A teacher pours coffee and quietly checks on a colleague who looks tired. Outside, the Principal and Deputy lean against the front gate with their coffees, greeting families as they arrive, calling students by name and welcoming the community into the day.

These ordinary moments may seem small, yet they are where Catholic education truly lives. They are signs of the care and connection that hold a community together.

Most of us who work in Catholic schools did not arrive here by accident. Somewhere a teacher, mentor, or quiet moment of grace showed us that this work could shape lives. We felt called to something bigger than a job. Yet even a calling can grow heavy. Days stretch long. Lists never seem to end. People who spend their lives caring for others often find little time left to care for themselves, their families, or their faith.

Teaching and leading are deeply rewarding, but also relentless. Pressure builds quietly. Expectations rise while time shrinks. Many staff describe seasons when they feel stretched thin, moving through the day with outward steadiness and inward weariness. If you have ever ended a long day sitting in the car too tired to turn the key, you are not alone. That moment isn't failure. It is simply human.

This book was written for that moment. It asks a simple question: What helps us live and lead well, not just for a term or a year, but for the whole journey?

It is written first for teachers and those who support them. The word 'wellbeing' appears often in policies and posters, yet true flourishing goes deeper. It invites us to look beyond surface solutions toward a way of living that restores joy, purpose, and balance. This book is for every teacher, leader, and support staff member who wants to continue doing meaningful work without losing themselves in the process.

Because the truth is this: you cannot pour from an empty cup. Caring for yourself is not self-indulgence. It is the very thing that enables you to care for others.

This book weaves three ideas that belong together.

- Faith gives our work a story and a purpose beyond ourselves.
- Flourishing reminds us that the whole of life matters – body, mind, relationships, and spirit.
- Wellbeing is the daily environment in which that life can grow.

These ideas are not abstract. They ground themselves in real life: the hopeful, messy, sometimes exhausting reality of being human in a school community. Flourishing is not perfection or relentless positivity. It is living with integrity even when the pace is fast or the pressure is high. It is knowing what matters most and finding small ways to honour it.

Throughout my years working with Catholic educators in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, I have heard countless stories of joy, fatigue, hope, and disappointment. What unites these stories is generosity. Even when tired, people keep showing up for others. Flourishing, for them, is not about doing more. It is about remembering why the work matters and building patterns of life that allow them to carry it with grace.

A flourishing school is not one without difficulty. It is one where people feel seen and valued, where time is respected, and where relationships create a culture of care. You can feel it in the tone of briefings, in the warmth of staffroom conversations, in the quiet pause for prayer before a meeting. You can see it in students who feel safe enough to try again, and in staff who end the week tired but not depleted.

Flourishing grows through small habits. A pause before the next class. A kind word instead of a sharp one. Protecting days off. Sitting in silence or prayer without needing to fix everything. These simple rhythms begin to restore the balance that busy weeks can erode.

In Aotearoa, many find a language for this in Māori understandings of wellbeing. *Te Whare Tapa Whā* teaches that *wairua* (spiritual), *hinengaro* (mind and emotional life), *tinana* (physical body), and *whānau* (family) must stand in balance for a person to thrive. If one dimension weakens, the whole *whare* tilts. Catholic spirituality gestures toward the same truth: that God holds our whole person—body, mind, spirit, and relationships – in a single gaze of love.

This book moves gently from the inner life outward. It explores how flourishing takes shape in relationships, in the cultures we create, and

in the way we lead and accompany one another. Each chapter weaves together stories, reflection, and simple practices that invite you to notice where life may be nudging you toward wholeness.

At the end of every chapter, you'll find two short sections – a few Reflection Questions and a Flourishing Tip. They are designed to slow the pace, invite honesty, and offer one small step you can take into the week ahead. Return to them often; they are part of the rhythm of this book.

At the heart of it all is a quiet conviction: flourishing is possible, even now. Not because life becomes easy, but because grace is always near. Faith reminds us that we do not carry this work alone.

If you are a teacher, may these pages help you rediscover joy in the small, sacred moments of your classroom. If you are a leader, may they offer ways to create a culture where people feel safe, supported, and able to breathe again. And if you are reading this because you feel tired and stretched, may you find here a gentle reminder that you are not alone.

Flourishing is not a destination. It is a daily practice. One steady choice at a time. One moment of honesty. One return to what matters most. It is the compass of the whole book and the thread that runs through every story, every insight, and every practice that follows.