

Feast Day Message 2026



FROM THE EREA COUNCIL

Edmund's foundational motto to "Live Jesus in Our Hearts—Forever" is a central theme to his Feast Day. The motto refers to the fervent belief that Edmund held that the 'Holy Spirit dwells within us, and that personal encounter and belief in Jesus transforms our thoughts, actions, and emotions'.

Our EREA communities are invited to pause and reflect on this Feast Day of Blessed Edmund Rice which is celebrated annually on the 5th of May. As the founder of the Christian Brothers and the Presentation Brothers, let us remember his legacy of liberating education, compassion for the poor, and a call to justice and solidarity.

On this celebratory day we are reminded of the zeal Edmund had for compassion and justice, urging the Christian Brothers to focus on eliminating poverty and injustice by being present and attentive to the marginalised and less fortunate. So today we reflect upon the legacy passed on through generations, specifically in Australia, and its relevance to the modern community. Our Colleges, Flexible Learning Centres, Early Childhood Centres and BlendED schools aim to foster a liberating education that empowers young people to build a better world. Like Edmund, we place our trust in Divine Providence and concentrate on our actions by displaying courage that the good seed will grow in our hearts. Let us be inspired by his example to serve others with purpose and act with compassion in our daily lives.

Our EREA communities place their focus upon education of the whole person. We are committed to ensuring we offer a quality Catholic educational experience in the charism of Edmund Rice. Thus, on this Feast Day we honour Edmund Rice's vision of a 'liberating education' that aims to open hearts and minds. It is our hope that our EREA communities are active in their endeavours to continue to build a world of justice and inclusivity, ensuring every

young person will thrive. We remain grateful for the clear articulation of our purpose and mission outlined in our EREA Charter and its Touchstones. Our emphasis and long-standing commitment to serving young people, particularly those at risk of disengagement is best illustrated recently in the following:

- The Opening and Blessing of St Teresa's College Abergowrie, which serves 150 students from First Nations and Torres Strait islander communities.
- The recent approvals by Archbishops and Bishops of new Flexible Learning Centres in QLD and NSW.
- The establishment of BlendED Tasmania serving the needs of 140 students who have disengaged from traditional schooling.

These actions by EREA align with the recent messages Pope Leo XIV focused upon when he described education as a transformative, holistic, and collaborative process that integrates faith with reason, aiming to form the whole person. Marking the 60th anniversary of *Gravissimum Educationis*, he emphasised that Catholic education must act as an "apprenticeship in virtue," promoting social justice, environmental responsibility, and the inclusion of the poor. The Pope has called for a renewed commitment to Catholic schools which he views as vital spaces for dialogue between faith and culture. Let us respond to these wishes with continued outreach to all our members within our EREA communities.

Our Feast Day provides an opportunity to thank the various people who make up the EREA family. The dedication of the Principals and leaders in our 61 schools, Flexible Learning Centres and Early Learning Centres, the dedicated teaching and support staff who educate and care for our young



people, the Board Chairs and Governing Boards, our School Advisory Councils, CEOs, and the Council and Trustees. Together we respond to the need to build right relationships to form citizens for the future who understand the importance of saying no to racism, sexism, homophobia, and inequality. We thank the members of the EREA community for building quality relationships with our students that underpin their total wellbeing and opportunity to learn. Our priority areas include welcoming new families to our communities of faith in the Edmund Rice tradition, providing formation opportunities for school leaders and staff, and maintaining sound stewardship through our governing boards.

When Edmund Rice was beatified in Rome by Pope John Paul II in 1996, he was in a sense taken from the Christian Brothers and given to the whole world to be shared as a model for others to imitate. Let us ask ourselves today “Am I an Edmund Rice person?” and “Do I know what it means to be an Edmund Rice person?” The answer according to former Congregational Leader Br Philip Pinto is to “open our hearts to the poor, to be compassionate

so that others become central to our hearts, and to make others the centre of our lives”. As such our Edmund Rice network throughout the world can do marvellous things if we each open our hearts to the needs of others.

In this way we thank God for the life of Blessed Edmund Rice. He opened his heart to Christ present in those oppressed by poverty and injustice. May we follow his example of faith and generosity. Grant us the courage and compassion of Edmund as we seek to live lives of love and service.

Happy Feast Day to all members of EREA for 2026 and Live Jesus in Our Hearts – Forever

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EREA President and Council Chair

Edmund Rice Council

**Ms Sandra Brogden, Dr Stephen Brown,
 Mr Stephen Ellich, Ms Beth Gilligan,
 Mr David Penny & Mr Kieran McCarthy**

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