



The Santa Maria College Podcast

Episode 10: Faith Unveiled - Navigating Belief in the 21st Century with Melissa, Adele and Sascha

Jake: [00:00:00] Welcome to the Santa Maria College podcast, where once a month we sit down with members of our community who are creating, innovating, leading, and contributing to making the world a better place. From the College's history, to social justice, to entrepreneurship and innovation, we tap into a wide range of topics that affect our girls who are the leaders of tomorrow.

So come along with us for the ride as we pick the brains of those who have been pivotal in Santa Maria's growth and celebrate those who continue to be change makers.

In a rapidly changing world, one thing that remains constant is the importance of faith. As we embark on our journey through life, faith serves as a guiding light, providing us with strength, solace and purpose. We understand that navigating faith in the modern world can be both exciting and [00:01:00] challenging and that's why we're here today to have an open and honest conversation about it.

Today, I'm joined by Year 12 students, Adele Carrick and Sascha Finlay-Collins, as well as Melissa Trolio, who is Director of Mission here at Santa Maria College. Throughout this episode, we'll delve into various aspects of faith, exploring how it intertwines with our daily lives, shapes our beliefs, and empowers us to face the uncertainties of the future.

From the struggles to the moments of profound connection, we'll be sharing our stories and insights. No matter what your background or beliefs may be, this podcast aims to foster an environment of understanding and respect. Together we'll explore the questions, doubts and joys that come with embracing and nurturing our faith.

So, let's embark on this journey together as we seek to strengthen our faith, find meaning in the present and navigate the ever-evolving world with hope and conviction. Whether you're just starting to explore your faith or have been on this path for years, this episode is for you. [00:02:00] Adele and Sascha and Melissa, how are we today?

Melissa: Good, thank you. How are you?

Jake: I'm good. How's your term been so far?

Melissa: Busy. I hate to use that word, but it's busy. School's a busy place.

Jake: Yes, it is, certainly. And you guys are almost at the finish line. How are you feeling? When are your mock exams? Are they Soon?

Adele: Week 10.

Sascha: Yeah, so it's getting close. Yeah. Test to go, but. Yeah. See the end.

Jake: Before you know it, you'll be there.

I guess we'll just jump straight in. So my first question to you both is, generally speaking, how has your Catholic faith influenced your values and decision making in life?

Adele: My Catholic faith has influenced me to live by the values of love and service.

I have had the loving example of family and friends growing up and while these people might not always call themselves Christians, [00:03:00] or go to church, their love and generous, caring example has had a big impression on me, and helped make my faith real and, I live by showing compassion to others, serving others, and showing kindness to everyone.

Sascha: Yeah, I agree completely. Every day I try to make decisions that are in line with my values of justice and compassion. I try to think of how what I do will affect other people. And even though that doesn't always mean I get it right, as a Catholic I can ask for forgiveness and apologise to people for my mistakes.

Jake: What does Faith look like to you? It would be good if you could start off by what that looks like inside of school versus, you know, life beyond the school environment. What is sort of the difference and yeah, if you could talk a little bit about that.

Sascha: For me, faith is um, honouring God and trying to make our world a better place.

So outside of school, I try to go to church as much as I can and play a role in my parish. I also [00:04:00] work with a few service groups in environmental projects and in different advocacy projects, which to me is all important components of being a Catholic.

Jake: And you Adele?

Adele: I think that being faithful is doing good, so looking out for others and looking for the best for everyone that you meet.

Jake: And what are some of your faith involvements in school?

Adele: I participate in service groups, so Young Vinnies and the Ministry team, and then I also do altar serving and other faith co curriculars.

Jake: I saw you were at the Young Vinnies event last week. Could you talk a little bit about that and, you know, something you took away from that or what the afternoon was sort of about?

Adele: I think the afternoon was really about learning about homelessness and people's situations in the world and how it's different to ours. And then, [00:05:00] also being more aware of their situations and compassionate and learning about how we can assist others.

Jake: Can I quickly ask about Punmu? How was that experience for you?

Adele: Yeah, it was amazing. I learned a lot about the Indigenous culture and their way of life.

Jake: How about you? What does faith look like for you, Sascha, in school? What are some of your involvements?

Sascha: I do a lot of the same co curriculars as Adele, so I'm involved with the Ministry team, altar serving and a Special Minister. I also do Ecosisters and we do a lot of good projects through that co curricular.

Earlier in the year, we've been working on a three bin system and monitoring that and making sure the school's educated about how to use them.

Jake: And how's the response been from that? Have you had any feedback?

Sascha: Oh, it's been a rocky road. We still get a bit of contamination here and there. But yeah, just working on improving what we can.

Jake: It's a big job, like, it's not just something that's going to happen overnight. So, I think you guys are [00:06:00] doing a really good job.

Melissa: Absolutely. And even to work on that connection between faith and caring about our common home or our environment and being stewards, it all ties together.

Jake: In today's digital age, you know, information and opinions are so readily accessible to you guys. How do you stay informed about your Catholic beliefs and teachings? Apart from, you know, obviously you've got your traditional, religious education classes. Is there anything you do beyond that? Yeah, I'm just wondering how that looks for you guys.

Melissa: Yeah, absolutely. And I guess in the space, that we provide for young people, well Years 5 - 12 that school almost becomes church. So I think it's a difficult one because like you said, information and opinions are readily accessible, particularly over social media.

So, I guess church for our young people for the most part is school or is the religious education classroom or our faith based [00:07:00] community. So as many of those catechesis type of opportunities that we can offer our students, I think, yeah, it's a tricky one.

So I think as staff, we are probably all over accounts to follow and you know, Pope Francis has his own Twitter and the Vatican has its own social media.

I know most of us who teach RE would subscribe to a lot of news blogs and we share most of what we read with our students in our classrooms, but yeah, I think it's a tricky one because it's probably not high on the agenda for our students to be following religious accounts or social media that has faith components in it.

So, I know I share a lot of it in my own classrooms and leave that up to my students to decide whether to give that a follow or not. But there is a lot out there and I think the church is engaging with the digital world fairly well. It's just kind of knowing what to follow or who to follow and it's a tricky world.

Jake: Over your [00:08:00] career and space in education, what are some of the significant changes you've seen in terms of information and opinions. How's the landscape sort of changed in your opinion?

Melissa: I think it now needs to be far more engaging if we're trying to sell it to our students and sometimes we do have to sell it. It is hard because there are so many other pull and push factors at play that we do need to find ways to be extra engaging in the classrooms when we're talking or discussing about beliefs and teachings, but I think we do it pretty well in our upper school courses when we engage in current issues and we're looking at contexts that do influence our young people.

So trying to engage in what's new and relevant, but trying to make it engaging is definitely one of the challenges we have, particularly as RE teachers.

Okay, now it's my turn to ask, a question of you. Adele, Sascha, do you find it challenging to balance your faith with other aspects of your life?

[00:09:00] So, I know you're both very academically natured students, but your social life, I know you're involved in, many extracurricular activities. So, how do you manage that balance between your love for your faith, but your love for your other parts of your life as well?

Adele: Yes, it is very challenging, especially in Year 12, but I practice my faith by participating in College masses, rosary, and attending weekend masses at my parish. These practices give me a chance for stillness and reflection and give me a sense of balance in the busyness of Year 12.

Also, participation in the College's service groups such as Vinnies and the College's ministry team are also practical ways to live out my faith and be involved at the school absolutely.

Sascha: Yeah, I've had similar experiences. I'll be on the roster to read at mass, completely forget about it, and end up having a work [00:10:00] shift on that same Sunday morning.

Yeah, it all comes down to making sure you timetable your days so that you can prioritise what's important.

Melissa: And obviously faith is important to you both, so you do make room for it.

Jake: Are there any specific Catholic teachings or practices that you find relevant or meaningful in today's world, and if so, why?

Adele: I think Jesus' second great commandment, love thy neighbour, is especially important amidst social justice issues in contemporary society and it acts as a reminder to love and serve others.

Jake: And you, Sascha?

Sascha: Yeah, it's also helpful to look at Catholic social teaching so the values of preferential option for the poor and the common good all help us to stop thinking about ourselves in a society that's so me focused and think about, yeah, other people and how we can put others first.[00:11:00]

Jake: And has your experience with the Catholic Church being impacted by global events, like COVID 19? How's that sort of come into play with your faith? Has it made it tricky or?

Adele: During COVID, we weren't obviously able to go to Mass, but then on the other side of COVID pretty much, the Catholic Church seems to be stronger.

Like our parish is growing. There's lots of families and young people and there's just a more supportive and stronger sense of community.

Sascha: Yeah, I think events like COVID 19 have helped make the Catholic Church even more interconnected than ever before.

Jake: I think it's forced them to... rethink how they do things.

Melissa: And that's exactly what I was just about to say. I think COVID 19, not just in the faith space, but in all kinds of spaces, made us think about how we do things and not necessarily reinventing the [00:12:00] wheel as such, but it made us rethink how we did certain things.

So, I remember seeing a beautiful image of a priest alone in his parish, but the priest knew his parishioners so well that he had them all send in like a portrait of themselves and he had positioned all the portraits in the pews of his parish simply because he knew each kind of you know, weekend Mass where they all sat and the picture was stunning.

So just that connection, I think he had with his parishioners that, you know, they had willingly sent photos in, he'd placed them in the pews and recalled where they all sat. I think it just reminds us of sometimes what we take for granted.

Jake: For sure. Are there any Catholic figures or authors or sort of influences who have inspired you in your faith journey?

Sascha: Yeah. One of my heroes is Saint Mary MacKillop. Her um, [00:13:00] journey to educate young women across Australia really inspires me in how she pursued justice and equity for all. As an Australian Saint, I found her really easy to relate to in my own life.

Jake: How do you guys see your Catholic faith playing a role in shaping your future aspirations and career choices?

Adele: Living a good life, serving others, and being compassionate and kind to everyone.

Melissa: Do you think maybe that whatever it is you choose to do, will be because of your faith and your values? Like, do you see yourself in a role that will assist other people or will allow you to demonstrate, you know, these values of compassion and service that you talked about earlier?

Adele: Yeah, I think so. Probably something that I'm going to be able to help people.

Jake: Awesome. And you, Sasha?

Sascha: I received some really interesting advice earlier in the year that this has brought to mind for me. I was [00:14:00] told in your working life to pick companies to work for with values that align with your own.

Jake: 100%.

Sascha: That's especially helpful for me because I'm thinking of studying engineering. So it'd be quite easy to get swept into mining and other industries that really damage our planet and not at all ethical or aligning with Catholic values. So, yeah, I want to try and see industries to work in. That can work for a more sustainable future.

Jake: Yeah, maybe like environmental engineering.

Melissa: You know, with the frame of mind that we're thinking going into this 21st century world, this is exactly the type of engineers we're going to be needing - those who consider the impact before, you know, any decisions are made. So, I love that you've considered that advice.

Jake: Well, that brings us to the end of this podcast episode. So, thank you Adele and Sascha and Mel for coming on. Like I know it's really daunting for you guys, but yeah, I'm sure, you know, our listeners will find this [00:15:00] valuable and you know, you can probably inspire other students who could potentially be listening.

So yeah, thank you so much for your time.

Melissa: Thank you for being brave as well. It's not an easy topic to discuss.

Jake: No, it's not. So, thank you.

Melissa: Thank you.

Jake: So, to all our listeners, we really appreciate your support. You can find the full transcript to this episode at www.santamaria.wa.edu.au/podcast or remember to subscribe and please share your thoughts with us. We love hearing from you.

And if you have any ideas for future episodes, do not hesitate to reach out to us at crd@santamaria.wa.edu.au. Thank you so much. And we can't wait to catch you on our next episode. Stay tuned.