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The nature and purpose of religious education are not static aspects of the discipline; they are not bounded by specific contexts. Rather, religious education as with all disciplines, at any one time responds to, influences, affirms and challenges particular cultural, social, physical and temporal contexts. One needs to browse only the wide range of topics published in this journal over the years to understand the contextual nature of religious education. The articles in this current issue of JRE are seeking in their own way to respond to and/or extend our knowledge and understanding of some key contemporary issues Catholic schools and communities are facing in present times. For example, the whole area of Catholic identity is certainly attracting increased interest in terms of how Catholic institutions including childcare centres, schools, tertiary institutions and such like articulate and live that identity. Religious education and religious educators are not immune, and indeed cannot ignore, this interest. Catholic identity itself is influenced by a number of factors including the nature of diverse student populations as well as the nature of teachers’ religious affiliations. Teacher formation and how that might affect not only Catholic identity but also school religion programs, is another issue that some of this issue’s papers examine.

William Sultmann and Raymond Brown make an important contribution to our insight into and understanding of Catholic identity with their examination of Post Conciliar Magisterium literature. Using a Leximancer analysis, they extracted identity concepts from such literature and then in turn applied Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) which enabled a deeper examination of those concepts. The findings of their analyses have enabled further definitional criteria to be posed for the five foundational pillars of Faith, Learning, Community, Leadership and Formation. One pillar of specific interest to religious education is Learning, the attributes of which were reflected in three themes of the literature: the centrality of learning and teaching; the significance of relationships; and, the religious dimension of the school.

Catholic identity was also the focus of an article by Richard Rymarz who highlights the challenges to the notion of permeating Catholic identity in all that is done in the school. Writing from a Canadian perspective, Richard notes the difficulties Catholic schools have placed before them by secular cultures. One such challenge is that of teachers who reflect the social, cultural and religious contexts of their times; teachers’ identity influences school identity. Another challenge is that of family identity. As the numbers of students who are not Catholic are enrolled into Catholic schools increase, the Catholic identity of those schools can become vulnerable. A further aspect of higher numbers of students who are not Catholic is that in some Canadian provinces funding to such Catholic schools has been abolished.

Also from a Canadian context, is a paper by Kent Donlevy, Dianne Gereluk, James Brandon, and Peggy Patterson who turn their attention to a rather challenging aspect of Catholic identity in terms of student diversity and implications for Catholic teaching. Specifically they examine the challenges to Catholic education in three Canadian provinces which have had their funding reduced because of their enrolment of students who are not Catholic. A further complication for such schools is that a condition of funding includes the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and questioning youth to form Gay Straight Alliance associations in their schools. The authors highlight and explore two aspects of enrolling diverse student populations for both the school as well as their religion curricula: on the one hand enrolling diverse student populations promotes the common good; but on the other, doing so questions the “fidelity to the Catholic Catechism and hence the school’s curriculum” thus illustrating “a practical conflict between orthopraxis being the respect and care of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, questioning) youth and the orthodoxy of the catechism”. The relevance of this paper reaches far beyond Canada and provides thought-provoking matter.
Philippa Bellows’ article addresses an issue which also increasingly occupies much discussion within Catholic faith communities and schools: formation of Catholic educators and catechists particularly those involved in sacramental education and preparation. She pays attention to the key terms evangelisation, catechesis and formation and investigates how the Church’s statements on Catholic formation might assist religious educators to come to a better understanding of their roles in terms of catechesis and religious education. Currently due to a number of challenges including shortage of priests, decreasing numbers of parishioners and less parental involvement in the Church, the roles of religious educators and catechists become more important. However, given these educators are themselves within a similar temporal and cultural context, their own lack of knowledge of key Church teachings and formation exacerbates the challenges. One aspect of the paper that invites further clarification is the term ‘religious education’. Church education documents do not distinguish between ‘catechesis’ and ‘religious education’; rather, they distinguish between ‘catechesis’ and ‘religious instruction’ (CCE, 1988, paras. 68-70; CCC, 1997, paras. 72-75). Both belong to religious education but each has a distinct role which complements the other. Catechesis as the process of faith development is a distinct component, process, or dimension specifically seeking to form faith, to catechise, or “to teach people how to be religious in a particular way” (Moran, 1991, p. 249) within religious education. Religious instruction on the other hand, as the process of academic education or instruction or “to teach people religion” (Moran, 1991, p. 249) is the other distinct process/component/dimension within religious education.

In their paper, “‘The heartbeat of religion’ – vital connections between theology and religious education for classroom teachers”, Peter Mudge and Dan Fleming seek to provide further much needed clarity between the two disciplines of religious education and theology. While they provide some understandings for religious education their essential focus is with theology and the nature of its relationship to religious education. Definitions for theology are examined more closely in an attempt to understand the place of theology in a postmodern context. They argue that religious educators in Catholic schools need to be more committed to the process of theological reflection and formation, and offer a model for theological reflection based on and adapted from Pattison and Lynch (2005, pp. 410-413).

This issue of the *Journal of Religious Education* offers a variety of perspectives on some challenging areas within and for Catholic schools all of which have implications for religious educators and religious education in both its dimensions: faith formation and education. While the matters addressed in this issue are not new, some are highlighted explicitly for the first time and no doubt will be occupying increased prominence in the near future.

Jan Grajczonek
Editor

References


MAGISTERIUM PERSPECTIVES ON CATHOLIC SCHOOL IDENTITY

Abstract

Australian based research on the identity of the Catholic school (Sultmann & Brown, 2011) generated key pillars to depict the dynamic, complex, and unique life of the school. Notwithstanding this, a limitation of findings lay in particularising theoretical perspectives and generation of a wider discussion as to their theological implications. Within this context, Post Conciliar Magisterium literature on the Catholic school was examined more exclusively. This documentation was exposed to a Leximancer analysis to extract identity concepts which, in turn, were subjected to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to detail identity themes, narrative expressions and principles of integration. Findings from Magisterium perspectives confirmed and expanded the significant dimensions of Catholic school identity established previously. The discussion of findings proposes definitional criteria for these pillars and offers a practical theological reflection on their associated themes, narratives and integrative principles.

Introduction

Identity within a Catholic Christian tradition is defined as the “constants that define Christianity in its missionary nature” (Bevans & Schroeder, 2004, p. 33), or more broadly, ‘the worldview’ – “what people, individually or collectively, know and believe, feel and value” (D’Orsa & D’Orsa, 1997, p. 72). Within the context of the Catholic school, the elaboration of this identity has been argued to be an ‘extraordinarily timely topic’, the exploration of which is said to constitute a project akin to “shaping the future of the Church and of society” (Miller, 2007, p. 17). Moreover, in light of the Conciliar and Post Conciliar literature emanating from the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II), the necessity and opportunity for exploring and advancing Catholic school identity is significant. Pope John Paul II contended that this literature has lost none of its brilliance and provides “a compass by which we can take our bearings in the century now beginning” (John Paul II, 2001, p. 33).

The fundamental approach at Vatican II was to explore the tradition and apply it to the signs of the times. The intention of the Council to be pastoral, non-condemnatory and open to new learning gave it a style illustrated by horizontal as well as vertical relationships, service over control, openness to change, inclusiveness, and active pastoral participation. Some twenty years on from the closure of Vatican II, Pope John Paul II announced an extraordinary session of the Synod of Bishops to reflect on the “experience, meaning, implementation and effects of Vatican II” (Dulles, 1985, p. 5).

The Synod of 1976 determined that the central theme emerging from the Vatican II was that of the Church and that this should be examined in terms of itself (ecclesia ad intra) and in relation to other realities (ecclesia ad extra). The ensuing Final Report of the Synod (1976) offered five dominant and continuing themes: The mystery of the Church and the universal call to holiness; the Word of God and evangelisation as the first and continuing responsibility of all Christians; Liturgy and active participation; the Church as communion, a spiritual union among the faithful based on a common sharing in the life of the triune God; and, the Church in the World and the evangelisation of cultures through transformation in the light of the Gospel and the signs of the times (Dulles, 1985). These themes, captured explicitly in the encyclical, Christifideles Laici (CL) (John Paul II, 1989), served to reinforce the milestone statements of Vatican II and invite an elevated consciousness of not only “belonging to the Church, but of being the Church” (John Paul II, 1989, p. 26). At the same time a series of Post Conciliar literature on the Catholic school was progressed, documents which
offered a substantial source of reflection for understanding and integrating those concepts of Vatican II and its aftermath. It is from this Magisterial literature that concepts appropriate to identity can be derived and so offer a perspective on the constants, or the worldview, which underpin Catholic school life.

The Catholic School (TCS), (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977), the first of the post Conciliar documents, declares “Jesus Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school” (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, p. 33). That is, within the totality of its life, in the ordinary and not-so-ordinary happenings, the pervasiveness of Christ is experienced. In this light, the Catholic school is challenged to review its entire program according to that vision from which it draws its inspiration.

Another post Conciliar document, The Religious Dimension of Education in the Catholic School (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988), gave particular attention to those areas that apply to the religious dimension of education. Here, the Catholic school is challenged to fulfill its educational goals by blending human culture with the message of salvation into a coordinated program; one that allows the Gospel to permeate and renew, in the manner of leaven, all of the systems that constitute sound educational practice.

The post Conciliar document, The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998), advances this renewal by concluding that the school derives its mission as an instrument of the Church and its pastoral ministry draws from the richness of Church tradition. In this way, Catholic schools are seen as places of evangelisation where a lively dialogue allows for enculturation and formation of people with differing religions and social backgrounds.

The final document, Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful (CCE, 2007) continues the stream of teaching from earlier Magisterium statements and emphasises a personal and group response by those who serve in the school. Conscious that the school is an ecclesial community, this document highlights that the Catholic school is a ‘home and school of communion,’ communitarian and intentional; a place of formation for the individual and the community of persons who constitute it.

The preliminary analysis of themes from the four Magisterium documents (please note that the only other document since Vatican Council II is on lay Catholics as witnesses to the faith. This document is not specifically on Catholic schooling and, as such, is not included here) illustrates an unfolding and integrated set of dimensions to the identity of the Catholic school: The centrality of Christ; the integral and pervasive impact of the religious dimension; the significance of outreach and inclusiveness; and, the authentic response of those who serve and witness through the communitarian nature of the Catholic school. Notwithstanding these dimensions, what becomes important is an explicit identification of identity (see Hirst, Renshaw & Brown, 2009), and what might support the nature of their connection. The present research does this by applying systematic qualitative procedures of data analysis so as to extract and clarify from Magisterium literature that which is considered as core to the tradition and is responsive to the ‘signs of the times.’

**Method**

**Magisterium literature as data pool**

**Analysis tools**

Leximancer is a data mining and visualisation tool (Leximancer, 2005). The key to Leximancer interpretation is the notion of concepts: collections of words that travel throughout the text. These concepts are reported in terms of how frequently they occur in sentences (absolute count) and their frequency of occurrence compared with the dominant concept (relative count). Leximancer also specifies and depicts the associated text that accompanies the concepts identified within the text.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) attempts to “unravel the meaning contained in accounts through a process of interpretative engagement with text and transcripts” (Smith, Jaman, & Osborn, 1999, p. 189). The process offers flexibility to data analysis of language discourse and provides accessibility to meaning in ways that otherwise would not be possible. IPA has relevance to the analysis of narratives such as that contained in concept passages drawn from teaching documents of the Magisterium.
Results

The Catholic School

The Leximancer analysis of *The Catholic School* (CCE, 1977) revealed five significant concepts: School, Catholic, Educational, Work and Religious in terms of their overall frequency and comparative levels of representation in the text. The results of the discourse analysis on these concepts confirmed the specific identity expressions for each key concept as follows: School – through mission of Church, integration and cultural dialogue; Catholic – through outreach to poor, mission of Christ, teacher authenticity and school renewal; Educational – through purpose, aims and process; Work – through stewardship, connectivity and pedagogy; and Religious – through religious education and religious environment. Taken together these identity expressions reflect a school culture which is open in its approach to sharing a liberating faith, to experiencing grounded life-giving relationships, to applying quality organisational systems and to emphasising religious education and faith practice as mechanisms for enhancing meaning.

*The Catholic School* provides a basis from which the Vatican II’s themes of Christ centeredness, the significance of evangelisation (personally, socially and culturally), the challenge of service and prophetic action, the call to Christian discipleship and operating in right relationships could be recorded. At the same time, recognition is given to the functional organisational aspects of the school as a system, its on-going task of adapting to the signs of the times through renewal, and its distinctive focus on religious education and the religious dimension of its mission. Notably, this religious dimension of identity was least recorded in the document and thereby invited a more detailed interpretation in subsequent Magisterium literature. Such a response emerged from the Congregation of Catholic Education (1988) in the statement: *The Religious Dimension of Education in the Catholic School*.

The Religious Dimension of Education in the Catholic School

The Leximancer analysis of *The Religious Dimension of Education in the Catholic School* (CCE, 1988) established two dominant identity concepts: Students and School. The discourse analysis on the related text for these dominant concepts pointed to their fundamental and integral relationship. The concept of Students was expanded – through expectations and outcomes; and School – through interdisciplinary relationships, Church community, personal integration and school climate. In summary, the core identity concepts and themes were summarized by integrative principles: Students – Formation; and School – Integration.

Within the first identity concept, Students, the significance of the Catholic school engaging in, and educating towards, a culture of faith is highlighted. Moreover, in recognition of a changing context, and a view of learning as life-long, the importance of faith, skills and journeying in a changing world are recognised. The themes of expectations and outcomes are practical in nature and leave little doubt as to the nature of identity and the associated goals of mission. The integrating principle of Formation mirrors a uniquely religious approach to this Catholic educative experience.

The second concept, School, reinforces the religious dimension within the totality of Catholic school life and culture. Emphasis is given to the integrated aspects of the religious dimension in curriculum, Church community, pastoral care and relationships. The impact of this religious dimension conveys the development of a cultural climate that is distinctly Catholic, yet sufficiently general to permit the pervasiveness of the dimension to apply as broadly as circumstances and mission application allow. While it can be established that *The Religious Dimension of Education in the Catholic School* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988) presents a comprehensive view of the religious dimension and by implication, the extent of formation in support of this, what is not specified is the level of connectivity across the arenas of Church life and community within which this might be nurtured. This latter set of interests was discussed in the next core document of the Magisterium, one that attended to the reality of the multiple environments engaged by the Catholic school as the new millennium was anticipated.

The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium

The Leximancer analysis of *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (CCE, 1997) revealed seven concepts for detailed analysis: School, Education, Formation, Teachers, Catholic, Experience and Genuine.
The discourse analysis of concepts highlighted their significance and related themes: School – through prophetic call and defining features; Education – through responding to the signs of the times and being integral to society; Formation – through a focus on the totality of experience and a process of conversation; Teachers – through being significant contributors to an educating community and through professionalism; Catholic – through service in a challenging world; Experience – through the continuance of tradition in innovative ways; and Genuine – through school, faith and life integration, and witness. The associated integrating principles for the seven concepts selected for detailed analysis were: School – Prophetic Mission; Education – New Evangelisation; Formation – Story Conversation; Teachers – Vocation; Catholic – Outreach; Experience – Renewal; Genuine – Integrated Living.

The comprehensive nature of identity and its expressions of being as articulated in *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (CCE, 1997) are directed primarily at the institutional level of the school. It is the Catholic school's mission to be prophetic and distinctive by its defining features, to respond to the signs of the times through dialogue, to recognise the relationship between formation and experience, to value teachers, exercise a primary role of service and yet to be faithful to the tradition in integrating faith with life as culture is experienced. The document addresses these significant themes of Catholic school philosophy and achieves a point of integration where meaning is generated with respect to mission and context. In this way, the document articulates a worldview which is already formed from its history, one that is mindful of its tradition yet still open to the development of a deeper interpretation of its identity through engagement. It is in the nature of this engagement, specifically through the personal and collective journey in faith by those who comprise the community, that the institutional focus is achieved. It is to these themes that the most recent document, *Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful* (CCE, 2007), advances the Council’s principal theme of communion in Spirit as foundational to Church and school identity.

*Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful*

The Leximancer analysis of *Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful* (CCE, 2007) revealed five identity concepts of significance: School, Persons, Ecclesial, Community and Communion. The first two concepts possessed considerable frequency counts and provided a reminder of themes from earlier Magisterium documents. The next three elaborated on themes appropriate to a deeper appreciation of the identity of the Catholic school in light of the Vatican II’s teaching on communion.

The discourse analysis of key concepts provided related themes of: School – through mission, conscience, relationships and climate; Persons – through communion, vocation and formation; Ecclesial – through subjectivity; Community – through relationship inclusiveness; and Communion – through connectivity and complementarity. Overall, the core identity concepts were specified in more precise terms through the attribution of integrative principles with results comprising: School – Witness; Persons – Servant Community; Ecclesial – Baptismal Leadership; Community – Communio; Communion – Interdependence.

The analysis of *Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007) identified themes of a distinctly personal and relational nature. The first, School, while giving emphasis to mission did so from the perspective of a living communion with an orientation on personal attributes of conscience, relationships and climate. The second and third themes, Persons and Ecclesial, gave added impetus to this trend through concepts of communion and vocation which were linked with formation.

The remaining concepts of Community and Communion served to offer increasing perspective to the overall and central theme. In this light, integrating principles supported personal engagement and included identity characteristics of witness, service, leadership and interdependence. Overall, the identity concepts, seen collectively, presented as not only defining tradition, but also suggesting an engagement from an institutional perspective which is premised on an interior commitment and vocational orientation to mission and culture.

The aggregated findings of the Leximancer and discourse analyses are shown in Table 1. Overall, fifteen concepts were registered as important, with concepts of School, Catholic, Students, Persons, Educational, Ecclesial, Community and Communion possessing significant levels of frequency.
Table 1

Summary of magisterium literature analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Integrating Principles</th>
<th>Source*</th>
<th>Absolute Count</th>
<th>Relative Count %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Evangelisation</td>
<td>TCS</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>RDECS</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prophetic mission</td>
<td>CSTTM</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>89.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Witness</td>
<td>ETCS</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Liberating faith</td>
<td>TCS</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>98.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outreach</td>
<td>CSTTM</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>79.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Formation</td>
<td>RDECS</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>94.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>New evangelisation</td>
<td>CSTTM</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>Organisational systems</td>
<td>TCS</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>91.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formation</td>
<td>Story conversation</td>
<td>CSTTM</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>91.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>Servant community</td>
<td>ETCS</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>87.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Vocation</td>
<td>CSTTM</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>82.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Renewal</td>
<td>CSTTM</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>79.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Life-giving relationships</td>
<td>TCS</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>60.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Religious literacy</td>
<td>TCS</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>60.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genuine</td>
<td>Integrated living</td>
<td>CSTTM</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecclesial</td>
<td>Baptismal leadership</td>
<td>ETCS</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Communio</td>
<td>ETCS</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communion</td>
<td>Interdependence</td>
<td>ETCS</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>51.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*TCS – The Catholic School; RDECS – The Religious Dimension of Education in Catholic Schools; CSTTM – The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium; ETCS – Educating together in Catholic schools

Examination of Table 1 reinforces Catholic school identity as centred on evangelisation and characterised as integrative, prophetic, witness based, outreaching and liberating. A primary focus on student learning (holistic formation) exists, delivered within a context of relationships, community, and engagement of systems for sound organisational and pedagogical practices. Formation of all participants, nurturing authentic service and interdependence within a servant community are fundamental, with each finding expression in vocation, baptismal leadership and renewal.

The concepts arising from the collective analyses reflect Catholic school identity within the wisdom and proclamation of the Council. The release of each document offers a relevant position to the challenges of the decade and yet incorporates a response which respects the wisdom that preceded it. This litany of key expressions of identity depicts a progressive and systematic response to Vatican II’s call for the Church to read and respond to the signs of the times while maintaining connection with its tradition. Overall, the findings listed in Table 1 suggest a pattern of core pillars similar to those established from integrated research (Sultmann & Brown, 2011) while providing a depth of definitional detail within each (see Table 2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PILLAR</th>
<th>ELEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAITH</strong></td>
<td>• founded on the person and message of Christ;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• appreciative of Church tradition;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• expressed with the support of Church community;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• in dialogue with life and culture;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• inclusive and outreaching to the poor;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• in service of a challenging and changing world;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• expressed through spirituality which integrates, provides witness, engages leadership and involves life-long conversion;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• conscious and committed to identity and mission;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• expressed in life-giving relationships which are integrated, prophetic and distinctive;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• evident in the integration of faith, life and culture;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• intent upon nurturing joy and hope within personal and communal life lived in the Spirit of the living Christ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEARNING</strong></td>
<td>• shaped by foundations in faith;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• possessive of an educational purpose with aims, goals, programs and processes;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• evident in a community of witness, professional practice, connectivity and tradition;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• prophetic and inclusive, grounded in a relevant and responsive pedagogy;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• nurtured through personal formation and school renewal;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• shaped by life-giving relationships, school religious climate, and systems of management and stewardship;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• focused on being and building the kingdom of God within and without.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEADERSHIP</strong></td>
<td>• Christ centred and integral to Church mission;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• expressed by all;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• founded in baptism and evidenced in an authentic vocational call to discipleship;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• nurturing of the integration of faith, life and culture in self and others;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• seen in service and communion which is open, systems based and authentic;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• contextualised in communicative, complementary and co-responsible action for the common good;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• emergent from and open to the liberating action of the Spirit;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• accountable for its stewardship.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**FORMATION**

Formation in a Catholic school is:
• integral to understanding, commitment and practice of identity and mission;
• possessive of a clear intention in support of all to share in the mission and ministry of Christ;
• in dialogue and connection with ‘story’ which begins with experience and facilitates the search for meaning;
• seen in processes of conversion of the ‘head, heart and hand’ to the person and message of Christ;
• advanced through personal readiness and commitment to engage a Baptismal call;
• observed in outcomes of witness, sacramental consciousness, religious literacy and faith practice.

**COMMUNITY**

Community in a Catholic school is:
• an ecclesial servant community within the wider community of the parish, local (Diocesan) and universal Church;
• sensitive to the signs of the times and in dialogue with a changed and changing context and culture;
• a living Christian community united by Spirit;
• inclusive of programs and practices which are in-reaching and out-reaching;
• a model community where belonging, collaboration and life-long formation and conversion are lived out;
• in service of itself for service within the world.

**Discussion**

The expressions of identity arising from Post Conciliar documentation on the Catholic school parallel those conclusions of Miller (2007) as to Catholic school identity encompassing: “a supernatural vision founded on Christian anthropology, animated by communion and community, imbued with a Catholic worldview throughout its curriculum, and sustained by Gospel witness” (p. 17). As well, the corresponding emphases on education as a means for formation towards a transcendent destiny, holistic in approach, contributing to person and community, sustained by integrated approaches across the curriculum and offered within an ecclesial culture reinforced by witness and relationships are powerful reminders of the inspiration and challenge within the Catholic school (also see Miller, 2007, pp. 17-59). The documents, singularly and collectively, expand on the tradition of the Catholic school to be a place where faith, life and culture are integrated and where the individual and community are invited into understanding, commitment and action across five interdependent and dynamic foundational pillars.

**Faith**

Within an ecological framework (Sultmann & Brown, 2011) the pillar of Faith was seen as foundational to identity while also ‘rinsing through’ the interdependent pillars of Learning, Community, Leadership and Formation. Significant themes for theological reflection within the analysis of the Faith pillar were the underlying meaning systems of Christ as cornerstone, school as Church mission, and evangelisation.

**Learning**

A core theme of the total data pool was the registration of the Church’s educational project as central to the formation of the whole person. Learning was viewed from the perspective of a model life found in the model and message of Christ and finding ultimate fulfillment in being Christian in the world. Such a view, by implication, requires clarity with regard to the ‘who’ of the person and the ‘what’ of the message. Moreover,
a pedagogy that is developmentally sensitive as much as programmatically and instructionally sophisticated is required. Specifically, the quality of Religious Education, Catholic culture and the pervasiveness of the religious dimension across the whole educational enterprise are challenged to be aligned with the person and message of Christ.

The attributes of the Learning pillar which invite theological reflection were reflected in at least three themes throughout the combined narratives: The centrality of learning and teaching; the significance of relationships; and, the religious dimension of the school.

As the focus of schooling is learning, it is learning for a new social and cultural order where the goals of learning concentrate on the development of the person in relationship with, and for participation within, the community. Within a Catholic context, these goals become the expressions of “the graduate upon graduation” (Pastoral letter of Bishops of NSW and ACT, 2007) and are evident in at least three dimensions: self, relationships and community. Significantly, these goals parallel the Goals for Schooling for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008) in that they nurture successful learners (individual), encourage confident and creative individuals (relationships), and help to support active and informed citizens (community). Notwithstanding these goals, the foundational essence of them is premised upon what is valued in terms of the nature of the person, the processes that empower learning and the type of community that learning fosters.

Contemporary classrooms can be argued to be environments where aspects of command, control and survival have been replaced by imagination, creativity and collaborative learning. As such, the importance of relationships holds a time honoured place. The concept of living relationships reflects the permanence, pervasiveness and importance of relationships in the multiple and dynamic exchanges among people within the school community. Living relationships are conceptualised as possessing a ‘living’ dimension which is characterised in all dimensions of interpersonal activity and in the quality of the individual and relational outcomes of these exchanges. They are said to encompass an expression of lived spirituality (Whelan, 2010) which leads to the development of whole people, whole learning and whole communities (Bird & Sultmann, 2010).

The religious dimension of the Catholic school is the culture that pervades the totality of experiences within the learning community. In keeping with the Church’s mission of offering an enriched meaning to human existence, the Catholic school promotes the reign of God and the person of Jesus as the essence of education and the means of fulfilment for the human person. The characteristics of the reign of God are seen in relationships of justice, love and peace, and the growth of the person in Christ is evident in an individual’s action, thought and judgment, based on a Christian perspective (McLaughlin, 2000). The religious dimension of the school is manifested in the values which underpin curriculum choice; seen in structures and processes that critique, liberate, empower and build community; evident in social justice programmes, service learning and immersion experiences; nurtured through attendance to prayer life and spiritual devotions; and expressed in the celebration of sacraments, rituals, events, stories and history recollections.

Community

Community in terms of this research is not seen only as a collection of people, but incorporating shared consciousness, a communion of beliefs and values that unite and find expression in authentic action and witness. Key to a practical and theological understanding of the Community pillar of the Catholic school are the concepts of the Church as communion, the social justice principles which shape process and structure, and the application of these in governance and management systems.

The building of relationships within the Catholic school community, and among the communities that constitute the wider Church communion, is supported by at least three longstanding social justice principles: collegiality, subsidiarity and common good. Collegiality recognises the whole communion and the demonstration of mutuality of interest and service beyond the immediate boundaries of responsibility. It implies a discipleship of equals and calls for a level of co-responsibility by all towards the good of the particular and the whole. Subsidiarity influences how ‘entities’ relate, specifically in terms of allocation and complementarity of responsibilities. It encourages decision making at the level most appropriate and most respectful of human
involvement. Common good emerges from the commitment to community in both the immediate and wider sense. It generates awareness and a desire to be mindful of relationships that are centred on justice, mutual development and needs of all.

Leadership

The concept of leadership entailing ‘processes of influence’ (Duignan, 2007) suggests that leadership is pervasive across individual behaviours, group action, relationships, managerial systems and wider organisational activities. In terms of a practical theological perspective, leadership is viewed as a response to Baptism, one that engages principles of service and communion and is advanced by knowledge and competencies.

The expression of leadership in the Catholic school, the ‘special something’, the ‘deep vocational commitment’, the ‘x factor’, is revealed in the unique reserves and qualities of Catholic school principals (Grace, 1997). Within a detailed analysis, Grace (2010) identifies the phenomenon as ‘spiritual capital’, and, while overlapping in conceptual terms with theological literacy and religious institute ethos, proposes that it includes a level of uniqueness that sustains mission, underpins purpose and nurtures hope. It is a spirituality which animates, inspires and operates dynamically. In practical terms, leadership which is Spirit based embraces a higher vision and the invitation to understand the Spirit of God in the world and to evaluate and transform culture in the light of the Gospel.

A comprehensive analysis of leadership research in Australia (Mulford, 2007) concluded that leadership no longer stands independent from the organisation and its core mission, nor is it separate from context. Clearly, it entails the activation of complex and engaging processes, necessitates a commitment of the heart and is accountable. It possesses a ‘how’, ‘what’, and ‘why’ which reinforce its expansive nature, its level of potential and its challenge. A summary framework on the relationship of leadership to learning is offered by Dempster (2009) in a landmark article geared to all educators. Central to the processes of influence are leader attributes of: Agreeing to and sharing a clear moral purpose; disciplined dialogue; evidence-based decision making; active professional learning; enhancing conditions for learning; monitoring curriculum and teaching; exercising distributive leadership as the norm; and, connecting with parent and community support for learning.

Formation

Formation within the Christian Tradition involves the shaping and directing of one’s life in accord with the model and message of Christ. The practice of formation for the practical theologian is both a necessity and opportunity to reflect upon the underpinning foundations in faith that nurture Christian praxis. This is a progressive experience which draws upon the goal of knowing Christ, being clear about purpose and process, and recognising the complexity and sensitivity of experiences which engage the mystery of Christ.

Formation facilitates growth in the sense that, “there is the connection that at one and the same time each of us is the goal and principle of formation” (CL, p. 169). In this light, formation is fundamental to education in the Catholic school for it entails forming others while being open to being formed from the experience. That is, formation is founded on mission and is itself a necessary prerequisite for mission.

The experience of formation for mission within the Catholic school involves providing experiences that support the work of the Spirit within the Tradition and culture of the school. Key to these experiences is how the Gospel might engage the signs of the times within the lived reality of identity and mission. Within the mission of the Catholic school, formation becomes “an ever clearer discovery of one’s vocation and the ever-greater willingness to live it so as to fulfill one’s mission” (CL, p. 156).

Conclusion

This article aimed to propose definitional criteria for dimensions of Catholic school identity and to reflect upon these dimensions in terms of themes and principles. Catholic school identity as depicted in post Conciliar literature of the Magisterium was found to be Christ-centered and Kingdom-based, with the Gospel reflected in each of the strategic pillars of Faith, Learning, Community, Leadership and Formation. Moreover, reflection of data from a practical theological orientation revealed that life within a Catholic school is challenged to be
dynamic, authentic and integrated. Key to these outcomes has been the confirmation of a dynamic system of interdependent strategic pillars. Future research could model these pillars so as to identify their levels of significance, expand upon their core inclusions and that which might explain their dynamic relationships.

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References


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Abstract

Catholic schools seek to provide an educational vision where the religious dimension is given prominence not just in formal religious education classes but throughout the curriculum and in the wider life of schools. One way of expressing this idea is to argue that Catholic identity should permeate all that is done in the school. This paper, the first in a two part series, argues that while permeation may be a worthwhile goal for Catholic schools to strive for this must be undertaken within the context of a number of significant challenges. These include, most notably, the changing demographics of schools where many parents, students and teachers no longer exhibit high levels of religious commitment. This results in a loss of the critical mass needed for effective collaborative action.

Introduction

The notion that religious identity should permeate every facet of Catholic schools has been widely discussed, especially in philosophy of education literature (Buelow, 1985; Gleason, 1994; Joseph, 2001; O’Brien, 1987; Whalen, 1965). This permeation notion, from the Latin permeare, or to pass through, is also well founded in Church documents. One of the strongest supporting statements comes from Pius XI’s *Divini Illius Magistri* (DIM). Drawing on Pope Leo XIII’s 1897 encyclical *Militantis Ecclesiae*, Pius XI (1930) wrote:

> It is necessary not only that religious instruction be given to the young at certain fixed times, but also that every other subject taught, be permeated with Christian piety. If this is wanting, if this sacred atmosphere does not pervade and warm the hearts of masters and scholars alike, little good can be expected from any kind of learning, and considerable harm will often be the consequence. (para. 80)

The essence of permeation described above as the creation of a “sacred atmosphere” is the cultivation in Catholic schools of a strong and manifest Catholic identity that is expressed in the very life of the school and is not restricted to any particular aspect. It would include: ritual action such as prayer and liturgy, symbolic representations such as the prominence given to religious and devotional art, both the formal and informal curriculum and the living witness of those associated with school communities. Catholic identity also involves what Miller (2006, p. 17) calls making manifest a supernatural vision of education along with imbuing schools with a Catholic worldview. In recent times Church documents such as *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (CCE, 1997) underline the importance of permeation as a guiding framework for Catholic schools.

The goal of permeation of Catholic identity throughout schools is well reveled in a number of Canadian curriculum documents. For largely historical reasons there is no single model of Catholic education in Canada (Baldwin, 2008). The Canadian constitution stipulates that education is a provincial concern, therefore, each of the ten provinces and three territories has autonomy on the approach taken to denominational education (Dixon, 2003; Power, 2003). In British Columbia Catholic schools receive some funding and in other provinces Catholic schools are self-funded and private. In three provinces, Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan, Catholic schools receive full government funding. In these provinces although differences remain in management and
governance, Catholic schools share significant commonalities. Most important of these is that the activities of Catholic schools are regulated by popularly elected boards or trustees that, in turn, appoint superintendents (Stamp, 1985).

A key rationale for the existence of Catholic schools is that they provide a distinct and necessary alternative to what is offered in public nondenominational schools (Gilles, 1949; Tkach, 1983). This distinctiveness is closely aligned with the notion that Catholic identity should permeate Catholic schools. The goals of permeation are spelt out most explicitly in documents from Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta (Curriculum Permeation Report, 2010; Catholic Schools – Permeated by Faith, 1996; Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers’ Association, 1995; Saskatoon Catholic Schools, Board of Education, 2005). One prominent and illustrative example is provided by Catholic schools in Edmonton, Alberta. Alberta has a number of Catholic Schools’ Boards which have overseen elementary and secondary education in the province since it entered the Canadian federation in 1905 (Hiemstra & Brink, 2006). These Boards are also responsible for particular parts of the province and provide leadership and direction to schools in these zones. The importance of permeation for Edmonton Catholic schools is laid out primarily in Permeation: Living Eucharist in the Learning Community (PLELC) published by Edmonton Catholic Schools (2002). PLELC defines permeation in these terms:

The notion of permeation flows from the central importance of the religious dimension of the school. The religious dimension can most authentically be expressed when all aspects of the life of the school are developed fully. (pp. 8-9)

PLELC builds on earlier work, especially, The Religious Dimension of Education in Edmonton Catholic Schools: A Manifesto for Catholic Education (RDEECS, 1999). Here Catholic identity is related to the “theological principles and vision of Catholicism” (RDEECS, 1999, p. 5). Catholic schools exist in a tension between faith and culture but it is from this tension that a distinctive Catholic vision arises. In RDEECS this vision is characterised by a number of markers of Catholic identity such as community, tradition and rationality. The challenge remains, however, as to how these markers are actualised in Catholic schools and who is going to bring them to fruition.

This paper will not provide further philosophical or theological discussion of the notion of permeation. Rather it will examine some of the practical challenges that are presented when contemporary Catholic schools attempt to actualise a permeation ideology. The significance of the study is that it critically examines some of the basic assumptions and ramifications surrounding the notion that Catholic identity permeates Catholic schools in Canada. The paper addresses, in the first instance, a Canadian educational context as the permeation notion is heavily used in official documents on Catholic schools in Canada. This is not to say that the discussion here does not have relevance for Catholic schools in other contexts, most notably in those places where permeation of Catholic identity, or something similar, has a central place in the discourse surrounding Catholic schools. The paper will examine, as a fundamental principle, the importance of understanding relatively recent changes in the wider culture. It will then discuss some of the ways these changes impinge on the ability of Catholic schools to realise the goals of permeation. Using this as a basis, the second part of this paper will make some comments on the place of religious education and modifications to the wider curriculum in schools which aspire to permeation ideals.

The Challenge of Permeation in the Contemporary Cultural Context

Aside from the notion that Catholic schools should be permeated with Catholic identity there has been much other discussion about the how Catholic schools should respond to the challenges placed before them by secular cultures (Cook & Simonds, 2011; Greene & O’Keefe, 2001; Ryan, 2008; Schreiter, 1997; Schuttloffel, 2012; Schweitzer, 2007). Pollefeyt and Bouwens (2010), in an illustrative example, look at four models of Catholic schools based on two descriptive scales: Christian identity and solidarity. The goal, in their analysis, is to achieve a dialogue school, one which maximises both descriptors. This is, however, premised on an assumption that Catholic schools have the resilience to reconfigure themselves to suit changing circumstances. This is a precondition for any putative model for Catholic schools in contemporary, secular culture. In order to be able to make the theorised adjustments Catholic schools must, in the first instance, have at their disposal large numbers of highly committed people who are able to realise the particular model of education that is being proposed. This understanding is supported by a number of studies which examine the
role of commitment in both personal and institutional religion (Cornwall, et. al., 1986; Davidson & Knudsen, 1977; Wimbelley, 1974, 1989). Mol (1977) argued that commitment, described as a high level of emotional energy or attachment, is the vital mechanism for maintaining a religious identity both on a personal and institutional level. It is especially important in educational institutions which set for themselves high goals such as permeation of Catholic identity.

The permeation idea places significant demands on Catholic schools. These demands are not primarily in the area of curriculum development, a topic that will be explored in the second part of this paper. Difficult as it may be to shape a curriculum that reflects the principles of permeation of Catholic identity, a more decisive factor is the inclinations, background and talents of the teachers, parents and students who make up the school community. Teachers, for instance, in a range of Church documents are called to be not only exemplary professionals but also to animate and cultivate the unique religious atmosphere that is the essential precursor to permeation (Buchanan & Rymarz, 2008; Cook, 2001; Mayotte, 2010). The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium (CCE, 1997) puts the responsibilities of teachers in Catholic schools in these terms:

In the Catholic school, prime responsibility for creating this unique Christian school climate rests with the teachers, as individuals and as a community. Teaching has an extraordinary moral depth...we must remember that teachers and educators fulfill a specific Christian vocation and share an equally specific participation in the mission of the Church, to the extent that it depends chiefly on them whether the Catholic school achieves its purpose. (para. 19)

Recent shifts, however, in the religious culture in many Western, postindustrial societies, such as Canada, have made the realisation of permeation of Catholic identity in schools much more problematic (Beckford, 1989; Rymarz, 2010). In particular, the changed contemporary cultural context has important consequences for the parents, students and teachers who make up the communities in Catholic schools. These changes have been characterised variously as an increasing secularisation, the rise of a consumerist mentality in religious markets or the relegation of religion to providing vicarious comfort in cultures that have moved beyond an active and salient expression of religious belief (Bibby, 1988; Davie, 1994; Metzger, 2007; Stark & Fink, 2000). What ties many of these theoretical positions together is that they all acknowledge, not the disappearance of religious belief, but its transformation into a private, almost idiosyncratic form. One key characteristic of this transformation, which has great relevance for our discussion here, is that strong religious commitment is greatly ameliorated. In Lambert's (2005) view this is in keeping with a generational process of secularisation where religion loses its ability to shape culture and in turn is transformed into a personalised construct which is ultimately subservient to the dominant cultural view.

Teachers’ identity plays a significant role in influencing school identity (Gommers & Hermans, 2003). For Catholic schools, teachers who display strong religious commitment are indispensable for the permeation of Catholic identity to be realised in a variety of conceptualisations (Ormerod, 2008). To be sure there are other factors which play a role in permeation of Catholic identity in schools. Many of these rest, however, on the contentious assumption that schools have significant numbers of highly committed faculty. This is not simply a question of relatively passive agreement on the part of teachers. There are many individuals prepared to work in Catholic schools who “support its ethos,” to use the ubiquitous expression (Braniff, 2007). Many of these people have a high level of training and bring professional competence to their working lives (Cook, 2000). They may accurately describe themselves as ‘spiritual’, where spirituality is understood as a private and personal set of beliefs (Bellah et al., 1986). This spirituality, however, often does not lead to an active, ongoing role in strengthening the Catholic identity of the institution (Small & Bowman, 2011; Uecker et. al., 2005). What is needed are teachers who not only support the notion of permeation but also are able to animate this ideal and create a formative moral community where the stated goals of the institution are shared and actualised (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Hill, 2009). Morey and Piderit (2006) commenting on vibrant religious institutions, drew attention to the difference between cultural knowledge and cultural inheritability. Strong religious institutions are able to call on large numbers of individuals who not only know about the institution but are willing to commit to its future. In order to prosper, “organizations require significant levels of commitment from the community of cultural catalysts” (Morey & Piderit, 2006, p. 271). For permeation of Catholic identity in schools to be realised significant numbers within the school community must be prepared to animate its Catholic identity.

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In many Catholic school districts, such as those in Canada, there is an expectation that teachers be Catholics. Provost (2000) pointed out, however, the expectation of Catholic schools, especially if they embrace the permeation ideology, is that teachers exhibit a far more active and robust faith than that required by a simple canonical definition of Catholicity, namely that of being baptised. He calls for a “critical mass of people who are Catholics in full communion” (Provost, 2000, p. 23). The importance of critical mass in maintaining the religious vitality of institutions is well described in the literature (Oliver & Marwell, 1988). Oliver et al. (1985) have described lack of a critical mass of highly committed individuals as the most fundamental problem compromising collective purpose within groups. This argument can be extrapolated to Catholic educational institutions (Sullins, 2004).

If permeation of Catholic identity is to be realised, educational institutions do not need to be made up exclusively of people of strong personal commitment, and, indeed, it is not essential that the majority of people show this dedicated service (Convey, 2012; McBrien, 1994). However, there is a point below which the work of schools as genuine places of religious permeation is imperilled if they do not have a sufficient number of highly committed teachers to carry this work forward. This highly committed group is not in opposition to the more loosely affiliated individuals, but they are distinct from them because they are prepared to live out their deepest religious convictions and to practically support the goals of permeation. In terms of a practical strategy every effort should be made by School Boards and other planning agencies to encourage and cultivate highly committed teachers. Mulligan (2005) notes that the future of education in Canadian Catholic schools is closely tied to how successful the ongoing development of teachers is. To this could be added the need to use more sophisticated techniques to recruit suitable teachers into Catholic schools during university or college training.

Similar cautionary comments could also be made about the parents who presently send their children to Catholic schools. Implicit in the success of the permeation model is that parents support the idea that schools should become places where Catholic identity is prominent and integrated into the life of the school. Beyer (1993), however, has commented that many contemporary Catholics see religious affiliation in cultural terms, typified by “a diffuse spiritual quest, emotional and largely unorganised or even haphazard practice” (p. 153). This type of affiliation is more typically suited to Catholic schools that espouse a less integrated sense of Catholic identity. The fact that demands for places in Catholic schools can remain high in some places is not an indicator of resurgence in strong religious commitment on the part of parents (Flynn, 1995; Gibbs, 1994). Indeed, enrolment patterns in Catholic schools could change. In the United States overall, Catholic school enrollment has more than halved in the past forty years (DeFiore, 2011; DeFiore et. al., 2009). In Canada, provinces with at least nominal Catholic majorities, Newfoundland and Quebec, have abolished funding to Catholic schools, leading to their demise in these provinces (Mulligan, 2005). Catholic schools seem especially vulnerable if parents are sending their children to them for a variety of reasons, which are not primarily religious (Ajuwon & Bradshaw, 2009). This places them in an educational marketplace where more generic educational goals take precedence over the religious dimension of schools, with obvious implication for the Catholic identity of schools. If parents place a high priority on the religious aspect of Catholic schools, then this gives strong impetus to the goal of permeation. Other schools cannot provide this educational dimension. They can, however, provide other educational experiences and if these are placed ahead of the religious dimension of the school in the eyes of most parents then enrolment in Catholic schools could fluctuate according to shifts in demand.

The background and expectations of students in Catholic schools also places significant challenges before those interested in realising the permeation model. The lack of religious socialisation of younger Catholics is now more acute than for those of older generations (Francis, 1986; Fulton et al., 2000; Rymarz & Graham, 2006). Gallagher (1998) argued that many young people today have few or no formative experiences with religion. If the religious socialisation and experience of many students are weak then this has ramifications for the religious dimension of Catholic schools, especially if the goal of these schools is to provide an atmosphere that is permeated with Catholic identity. It can be overlooked, but a key assumption in permeation models of Catholic education is that students themselves will provide much of the impetuous for making Catholic identity a distinctive marker of the school. In cannot be the task of the teachers alone to ensure the dynamism of the religious dimension of the school. One of the key markers of the cultural shift in wider society, however, is that there is a clear connection between levels of religious commitment and the age. As Bibby (2009), commenting on Canadian data, pointed out this is often a result of the starting point of age related cohorts:
The adult change has not involved a movement to outright atheism so much as a movement from decisiveness about belief in God to tentative belief or increasing agnosticism. With teens we see what amounts to an ongoing intergenerational shift – from tentativeness to agnosticism, and from agnosticism to atheism. (p. 169)

Another important example of the direction of religious affiliation amongst younger Catholics has been supplied by D'Antonio et al. (2007). They observed that a trend to less commitment and greater disaffiliation seems to becoming established. They report comparisons between generational cohorts of Catholics, where the most disconnected and uncommitted Catholics are those born after 1979, the so-called millennials. Furthermore, the trend lines here seem point to continuing decline. Recent work in Canada points to a similar disengagement in religious commitment amongst younger Catholics (Eagle, 2011; Thiessen & Dawson, 2008).

It may be argued that declining religious commitment of students makes the permeation notion even more relevant as schools must now become the primary place of religious formation. This argument does not, however, take into account the irreplaceable role that the family plays in catechesis (Bourg, 2004; John Paul II, 1984). Schools cannot be expected to carry out the work of the primary formator of the child, namely, the family. In terms of realising a permeation model, critical mass arguments can again be applied to students now enrolling in Catholic schools. If a sufficient number of students enrolling in Catholic schools do not come from families where faith nurturing and sponsorship is occurring, this problematises the whole notion that Catholic religious identity can permeate Catholic schools.

Conclusion

The notion of permeating Catholic identity throughout Catholic schools can be addressed in at least two ways. It can be discussed in conceptual terms, drawing on theological and philosophical discourse. This paper has focused, however, on the human element that is pivotal if the goals of permeation are to be realised in Catholic schools. The second part of this article addressed some of the practical challenges, relating to the place of religious education and curriculum development in general and how these relate to the goals of permeation.

Significant challenges arise without a critical mass in the school community of teachers, students and parents who are highly committed to the deepest goals of Catholic schools. In light of this discussion two related issues arise all of which are worthy of further research and ongoing dialogue. Firstly, what is the best course of action for those Catholic schools where these challenges prove to be too great? For instance, what if some Catholic schools are unable to furnish a critical mass of teachers, parents, and students who exhibit, or wish to develop, a strong and ongoing religious commitment? Discussion on permeation can proceed on the assumption that Catholic identity can be somehow imposed from above, that school authorities, through policy statements and documents, can make up for a genuine desire on the part of school communities to see religious identity a strong and ubiquitous presence in Catholic schools. This is a fallacious assumption, as students, parents, and teachers must help generate Catholic identity and not just encounter it. This raises a number of policy issues for Catholic school authorities. Central to these considerations is the development of long-term strategic thinking which recognises the challenges facing Catholic schools in increasing secular cultures such as Canada. This cultural shift does not directly challenge the rationale for denominational schools. Rather it erodes the distinctive nature of such schools as a reflection of the diminishing place for institutional religion in public discourse.

Secondly, and of foundational importance, is what can be done to assist those schools that are trying to address the human aspect of the challenges that arise from embracing the notion of permeation. In this case questions about the best way to assist teachers, parents, and students grow in their faith and also in their commitment to seeing Catholic schools as communities with an indelible religious dimension become paramount. This is not a straightforward issue and something beyond an in-service approach needs to be considered. What may be needed in this case is a reconceptualisation of the role that families, schools and parishes play in ongoing formation and evangelisation. A related issue for further research is how best to nurture, in particular, religious education teachers.
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CURRENT CHALLENGES TO CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN THE CANADIAN PROVINCES OF SASKATCHEWAN, ALBERTA AND ONTARIO

Abstract
This paper examines challenges to Catholic education in the Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Ontario. In Saskatchewan and Alberta the inclusion of non-Catholic students in Catholic separate schools has become a legal issue as it reduces the income of public school boards and increases their per capita student costs. In Ontario, Catholic schools’ opposition to the creation of Gay Straight Alliance clubs has garnered political attention. The paper suggests that the first challenge might be ameliorated by Catholic school leaders clearly demonstrating that they act primarily on denominational grounds and that the inclusion of non-Catholic students promotes the common good. The second challenge, involving fidelity to the Catholic Catechism and hence the school’s curriculum, illustrates a practical conflict between orthopraxis being the respect and care of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, questioning) youth and the orthodoxy of the catechism.

Introduction
Catholic schools in Canada have recently found themselves on the defensive in the Northwest Territories (NWT), and the provinces of Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. On June 4, 2009, the Supreme Court of Canada denied the Yellowknife Public Denominational Education Authority (the Catholic school board) leave to appeal from a decision of the NWT Court of Appeal in a case where a returning officer refused to deny two non-Catholics from running for the office of trustee for that Catholic school board. The NWT Court of Appeal had held in favour of the returning officer as there was no constitutional guarantee protecting Catholic schools in that jurisdiction and hence there were no grounds to discriminate against non-Catholics sitting as board trustees (Yellowknife Public Denominational District Education Authority, et al. v. Debbie Euchner, 2009; Choles, 2009).

In Saskatchewan, Catholic school trustees are litigating their right to admit non-Catholic students into their schools. In Alberta, Catholic school trustees are defending the right of Catholic separate schools to expand their district boundaries.

In Ontario, the provincial government recently passed Bill 13 specifically aimed at the establishment of Gay-Straight Alliance clubs in all Ontario schools. The bill was opposed by Ontario’s Catholic bishops (Schwartz, 2012). After a public debate, the Bill was passed by the Ontario legislature. No legal challenge has yet been raised (Howlett, 2012). The NWT case has been finalized and the Ontario challenge has become quiescent, but the two legal challenges in Saskatchewan and Alberta remain before the courts.

This paper is in two parts. Part I provides the background for Catholic separate schools in Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta and outlines the challenge to the inclusion of non-Catholic students in Saskatchewan and Alberta’s Catholic separate schools. It suggests how this challenge might be addressed by Catholic school leaders and argues that the inclusion of non-Catholic students supports the common good. Part II looks briefly at the controversy over the compulsory inclusion of Gay Straight Alliance clubs in Ontario’s Catholic schools and how this precipitates a challenge to the religious studies’ programs in Catholic schools bringing to light a possible fundamental clash between orthopraxis and orthodoxy within the Catholic school faith community (Tupper, 1896).
Part I

The Current Challenges to Catholic Education in Saskatchewan and Alberta

Ontario and Quebec, formerly Upper and Lower Canada, were created in 1867 by way of a compromise between the French and English communities which guaranteed that each linguistic group would have its own constitutionally protected schools in the new Dominion (Tupper, 1896). This constitutional compromise was continued for the Canadian prairie provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905 in order to protect French Catholic communities in those areas (Sissons, 1959). Although Catholic communities in those provinces are no longer primarily French, separate Catholic schools remain constitutionally protected and thrive notwithstanding many historical legal challenges (Noonan, 1998).

The current challenge is the inclusion of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools which is the primary matter before the Saskatchewan Court of Queen’s Bench in the Theodore case (Good Spirit School Division), and an unarticulated but present element in the Alberta Court of Queen’s Bench in the Waskatenau case (Board of Trustees of Aspen). We begin this part of the paper with an explanation of what legally constitutes a Catholic separate school and then move to a description of the litigation in both provinces concluding with the connection between inclusion and the common good.

The Genesis of Catholic Separate Schools

Catholic separate schools are Catholic schools under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the local Catholic bishop but established and operated administratively pursuant to the *Education Act 1995* in Saskatchewan and the *Education Act* in Alberta (Sacred Congregation, 1977, para. 71, 73; Code of Canon Law, canons 796-806). The right of Catholic ratepayers to establish Catholic separate schools in these provinces is protected by section 17 of the acts which created these provinces, although what is protected is determined by what denominational rights and privileges Catholic schools had as of 1905 prior to the creation of the provinces (*Saskatchewan Act, Alberta Act, Reference Re: Bill 30*). Section 17 of both acts is identical and reads:

17. (1) Nothing in any such law shall prejudicially affect any right or privilege with respect to separate schools which any class of persons have at the date of the passing of this Act, under the terms of chapters 29 and 30 of the Ordnances of the North-west Territories, passed in the year 1901, or with respect to religious instruction in any public or separate school as provided for in the said ordinances.

The above Ordinance is generally referred to as articulating the rights of Catholic separate schools although section 93 of the *Constitution Act of 1867* is also referred to in determining the scope of those rights.

The relevant part of section 93 reads:

93. In and for each Province the Legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to Education, subject and according to the following Provisions:

(1) Nothing in any such Law shall prejudicially affect any Right or Privilege with respect to Denominational Schools which any Class of Persons have by Law in the Province at the Union.

The expression “denominational schools” referred at the time to Catholic and Protestant schools in what was to become the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. It is evident that given the *Constitution Act, 1867*, and the federal acts creating Saskatchewan and Alberta, Catholic separate schools have an entrenched right to exist as publically supported schools and to carry on their religious instruction. The advent of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (*Charter*) could well have changed that status as group or collective religious rights inevitably clash with individual rights such as freedom of religion, conscience, expression, and association and the right not to be discriminated against due to religious belief, and other articulated areas. Knowing this was a possibility, if not a certainty, the first ministers included section 29 in the *Charter*. It is section 29 that protects the constitutional rights of Catholic separate schools from *Charter* scrutiny.

29. Nothing in this Charter abrogates or derogates from any rights or privileges guaranteed by or under the Constitution of Canada in respect of denominational, separate or dissentient schools.
In other words, section 29 of the Charter ensures that denominational constitutional rights that pre-existed the Charter, prior to 1982, remain in effect notwithstanding the claims one may make under the other Charter rights.

Ostensibly, the constitutional protection of Catholic schools was firmly established but the danger of Catholics losing their schools’ constitutional protection is real as demonstrated in the abrogation of those rights in the provinces of Newfoundland-Labrador (Constitution Amendment Proclamation, 1998, Newfoundland Act) and Quebec (Constitution Amendment, 1997; Fagan, 2004; Young & Bezeau, 2003). In Newfoundland-Labrador, Catholic denominational schools had existed beside other religions’ denominational schools and in total they constituted the educational system of that province. That all changed with the constitutional amendment which was initiated with a provincial referendum followed by its decision being ratified by the Federal parliament. In Quebec, the educational system had been organised on religious lines but a constitutional amendment ended that regime as the new educational system was structured upon differences in language. It was not lost on Catholic school supporters in Canada that without public support for Catholic schools, or at least a lack of antipathy, the constitutional protection of Catholic schools in Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta were at risk. It is not a stretch to see the existence of Catholic separate schools in Saskatchewan and Alberta losing their constitutional protection should the public at large seek a constitutional amendment to do so.

We suggest that the current litigation in Saskatchewan and Alberta constitute arrows aimed at the heart of public support for Catholic separate schools in those provinces. It is to that litigation that we turn.

**Saskatchewan: The Theodore Case**

The Village of Theodore rests in the southeastern part of the province of Saskatchewan. From 1893 onward, there had always been a school in the Village, yet, on August 20, 2003, the Theodore public school was closed by its school board, the Yorkdale School Division Number 36 School Board, (referred to as “Yorkdale” but later through an amalgamation is now named Good Spirit School Division No. 204) due to low enrolment. Immediately prior to that closure, on July 2, 2003, the Theodore Roman Catholic School Division No. 138 was established by way of an order from the Minister of Education. That new school division was comprised of one school - the Theodore Catholic school - in the Village.

What followed was litigation, commenced by Yorkdale, alleging, among other things, that under section 15(1) of the Charter it was discriminatory for the provincial government to fund a Catholic school which was not in fact a separate school as it was teaching non-Catholic students - an activity not contemplated by the constitutional purpose or intention to protect Catholic schools at the time of the creation of the province. The argument was that in allowing non-Catholic students to attend the Catholic school it lost its separate school status under the law. Hence the government could no longer legally fund the Catholic school as it was a private religious school and as other such schools were not funded it was a breach of section 15 of the Charter (Amended Statement of Claim, 2008).

The Defendants, the Catholic school board and the Government of Saskatchewan, countered with various constitutional arguments but essentially said that the admission of non-Catholic students did not affect the school’s separate school constitutional status and therefore the government was constitutionally bound to provide public funding to it. In dealing with an interim order, Queen’s Bench Chambers judge, Madame Justice Pritchard, crystallised the key issue of the litigation stating, “The core issue appears to be whether the Theodore School is in fact a separate school to the extent it admits students who are not of the Catholic faith and educates them on Catholic doctrine” (Pritchard, 2008, para. 12). Five years later, the parties are still at odds in the courts.

The ostensible issue in this case appears to be financial in that Yorkdale lost students to Theodore Catholic school resulting in a decrease in public revenue and increased average per pupil school district costs to Yorkdale. However, we suggest that in fact the issue goes much deeper. Yorkdale was correct in stating that its revenue had been reduced but its litigation has been expanded beyond the financial issue to the legal status of Catholic separate schools in Saskatchewan when non-Catholic students are admitted to those schools. If Yorkdale, as it then was, is successful in its litigation, the result would be the loss of separate school status and hence public funding at par with public schools. Therefore, many Catholic schools may not be financially...
viable as presently constituted. A decision by the Saskatchewan Court of Queen’s Bench in favour of Yorkdale would be persuasive, but not binding, on Alberta’s Catholic separate schools which also enroll non-Catholic students in their Catholic separate schools. This is a definite danger to Catholic schools as it has been argued, although we believe unpersuasively, that there is no legal basis for allowing Catholic schools to admit non-Catholic students (Eidsness, Steeves, & Dolmage, 2008). It is to the Alberta situation that we now turn.

Alberta: The Waskatenau Case

On March 19, 2003, the Aspen View Regional Division No. 19 (“Aspen”) decided to close the local school in the community of Waskatenau, Alberta, due to declining enrollment. In response, five Catholic members of the Waskatenau community requested that Lakeland Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 150 (“Lakeland”) open a Catholic Separate School in their community. To do so required an extension of Lakeland’s boundary to include Waskatenau and on June 29, 2004 the provincial minister of education issued two Boundary Adjustment Orders that extended the Lakeland boundary to include Waskatenau.

On November 5, 2004, the Aspen Board of Trustees (Board of Trustees) commenced litigation seeking to repeal the Minister’s Order for several reasons including a loss of income due to decreased pupil enrollment. Aspen’s legal argument was, among other things, against the expansion claiming that Catholic ratepayers only had a constitutional right to establish separate schools, not to expand school boundaries as to do so would eliminate the right of Catholics in that new area to establish their own separate school board. Moreover, Aspen questioned the *bona fides* of those five individuals who had initiated the application for expansion, stating that their “real motive is simply to effectively overturn the decision to close Waskatenau School, and keep a school open in their community” (Dacyk, July 23, 2003).

Lakeland and the Government of Alberta defended their actions with a complex set of legal arguments among which was the alleged right of Catholic schools to alter their school district boundaries as a necessary corollary to the establishment of school districts. This litigation is ongoing.

This litigation may very well be the tip of the iceberg in Alberta as recently there has been a petition to seek to abrogate Catholic separate schools in Alberta led by the former Minister of Education (CBC News, December 2, 2010). It is clear that all is not congenial between Alberta’s Catholic schools and many others in the province.

Amelioration of the Challenges

In today’s world, religion is seen as a private affair and hence inappropriate to raise in matters of public policy in the public square (Chamberlain, 2002). This being so, it seems odd for the public purse to be used to support religious school systems let alone one particular religious school system (Fagan, 2004; CBC News, 1999; National Post 2011). It seems even stranger to allow a publically supported religious school system to admit children from other religious faiths – or no religion at all – thereby negatively affecting the finances of the secular public school system.

Unfortunately, the Theodore and Waskatenau cases have exacerbated the public’s concern with Catholic schools in Saskatchewan and Alberta where the Catholic school response could be seen as being “we have constitutional rights and we will exercise them.” There are no doubt good and significant denominational reasons in support of the Catholic school defenders in the above cases, but at issue is the public perception of those reasons Catholic school supporters should ask whether something that can be done legally should be done given the resulting socio-political cost and potential legal jeopardy.

In particular, if public school litigants establish that Catholic school supporters have used their legal right to establish a separate school district or used their right to expand a school board’s geographic area, for purposes, which are not primarily denominational, the argument for the continuation of constitutional protection of Catholic schools in the two provinces is greatly weakened. We suggest that it would have been politically prudent for Catholic ratepayers in Theodore and Waskatenau to have reconsidered their actions in going ahead as planned in the face of public school board opposition. Failure to act solely or at least primarily on denominational grounds puts the constitutional status of Catholic separate schools at risk as it is the general public which will determine whether or not Catholic separate schools continue to exist in those provinces.
The Common Good

In both Alberta and Saskatchewan, there appears to be a misunderstanding concerning the inclusion of non-Catholic students into Catholic schools. One can appreciate the position of the public school board in the Theodore case that if non-Catholic students attend Catholic schools the public schools will have less revenue and per capita student costs increase. However, the inclusion of non-Catholic students contributes to the common good for several reasons. Inclusion offers non-Catholic religious parents support for their family’s religious belief in a deity within a publically supported, and hence financially accessible, school system. Indeed, many Muslim families are sending their children to Catholic schools in Toronto, Ontario precisely for that reason. The same appears to also be true in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan’s Catholic schools. It seems that immigrants from cultures which are faith based prefer a sense of the divine and overt respect for religious belief – albeit even if not the immigrant’s particular religious beliefs – present in religious schools.

One might think that non-Catholic students would be proselytised into the Catholic faith in Catholic schools but that is not the case and is anathema to the Catholic faith (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988). Catholic schools are directed by the Catholic Church to support “personal autonomy through critical rational thought, freedom of conscience and religion, the principle of revisability, and the crucial importance of teaching the young about fairness, justice, equality, and respect for diversity - as democratic ideals” (Donlevy, 2008, p. 3). Beyond that liberal view of rights, Catholic schools strongly embody the communitarian concept of the good, which precedes the right and is situated where the individual develops within a community’s historical context, values, and with an understanding of the importance and responsibility owed to others. As Michael Walzer (1983) suggested, “we understand our fellow citizens through the meanings that we share, without which we cannot come to agreement about the principles that provide the foundation for a political structure” (p. 314).

We suggest that, given the above, the inclusion of non-Catholic students is evidence to society how all students should be treated with dignity and respect (Donlevy, 2009) which is, in part, an answer to the criticism that Catholic schools are not accepting of gay students and Gay Straight Alliance clubs.

Indeed, it can be said, at least from the Catholic perspective, that inclusion gives society an example of how to avoid what Groome (1998) called sectarianism which is, “a bigoted and intolerant exaltation of one’s own group that absolutizes the true and the good of its members, encouraging prejudice against anyone who has [an] alternative identity” (pp. 42, 44).

It is suggested that if Catholic separate schools are to survive and thrive in Alberta and Saskatchewan, Catholic school supporters would do well to consider that their schools’ constitutional protections are ultimately in the hands of the majority of the people in their provinces. It is therefore up to the Catholic minority to actively seek to build bridges with public school boards, to avoid, if at all possible, controversial actions involving conflict with public boards taking such controversial action only for primarily denominationally-based reasons and not for mere convenience or short-term gain. Further, it is incumbent upon Catholics to make the case that when non-Catholic students attend Catholic separate schools, there are many positive results which serve the common good for all students in the schools, their families, and also the long term interests of society as a positive example of acceptance, respect, and understanding of the Other in Canadian society.

The issue of the inclusion of non-Catholic students is not the only challenge facing Canadian Catholic schools as recent events in Ontario suggest.

Part II

Ontario’s Catholic schools have been shocked by the recent action of the Ontario government in mandating, where a student requests, the creation of Gay Straight Alliance clubs in Ontario’s Catholic schools. Notwithstanding the opposition of Catholic school trustees and the Ontario’s Catholic bishops, on June 5, 2012, legislation providing for Gay Straight Alliance clubs in Ontario’s schools was passed by the Ontario Legislature. In response, Ontario’s Cardinal Collins (2012) wrote the following:
Today the Ontario Legislature has passed Bill 13. The Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario has expressed serious concerns regarding certain aspects of this legislation, as have numerous other individual citizens and groups. Recognizing that the Accepting Schools Act is now the law, Catholic partners will seek, as we have always done, in a way that is in accord with our faith, to foster safe and welcoming school communities. Bullying, in any form, is unacceptable. At the core of our Catholic Christian beliefs is the command to welcome every person with love and respect.

Bill 13 created a new section of Ontario’s Education Act, which reads:

303.1 (1) Every board shall support pupils who want to establish and lead activities and organizations that promote a safe and inclusive learning environment, the acceptance of and respect for others and the creation of a positive school climate, including, . . .

d) activities or organizations that promote the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, including organizations with the name gay-straight alliance or another name.

(2) For greater certainty, neither the board nor the principal shall refuse to allow a pupil to use the name gay-straight alliance or a similar name for an organization described in clause (1) (d).

The Cardinal’s ostensible concern was that the new section failed to take into account that “education is the primary responsibility of the parents” and that the subject of human sexuality and bullying can be dealt with through the Gospel message as interpreted by the Church. He implicitly suggested that the Church’s message in the schools would be frustrated under the new legislation. Further, it had to be a concern that the new additions to the Act use a vague expression, “incidents based on homophobia” (section 301(b)(a)(i)) where the words “intrinsically disordered” and “depraved” when used in religion classes could be seen as disrespectful to LGBTQ students and, albeit unintentionally, expressions of homophobia.

Notwithstanding the above, it seems that at the heart of the bishops’ concern was that a GSA club in a Catholic school normalises what the Church considers a “disordered condition.” In other words, although gay students must be protected from bullying, homosexuality should not be seen as an acceptable sexual orientation as the homosexual act is, according to the Catechism (Vatican, 1993), “depraved.” Clearly, that theological and anthropological position is in direct conflict with the positive approach to homosexuality proffered by GSAs which hold homosexuality as an acceptable, normal, human sexual orientation, the expression of which is healthy, and to oppose such a belief as homophobic and oppressive. As one GSA organisation stated:

GSA clubs provide a safety net for students during the coming out process. With a GSA club, youth break through the isolation to find support from peers and school staff. GSA clubs unite LGBT students, straight allies, and members of the school community who are committed to making schools safer and more accepting for LGBT students.

GSAs draw on the courage of LGBT youth and the commitment of straight allies working in partnership to build bridges, improve school climates, and change school policies. Strong, well-supported GSAs can have a major impact on the education environment and possess the power to transform individuals, school cultures, and educational institutions. (GSA Network)

The above statements are positive and surely would give succour to LGBTQ students who otherwise would have to hide their sexual orientation for fear of bullying and who, as a marginalized and oppressed group, should be encouraged to find solace within community. These are reasonable and important steps for LGBTQ students’ health and welfare in schools. However, as noted above, the Catholic bishops’ responsibility is to have their schools remain faithful to the Magisterium’s (Bainvel, 1912) view of human anthropology and the Catechism. It is here that constitutional rights collide. One has to wonder why the Catholic bishops and Catholic school trustees in Saskatchewan and Alberta have been silent on this issue.
The Reaction of Catholic Schools in Alberta & Saskatchewan

Neither Alberta nor Saskatchewan has legislation similar to Bill 13, nor have their Catholic bishops issued a public response to it. However, there is no doubt that GSAs have been a concern of Catholic Church leaders and Catholic school trustees and administrators in those provinces.

In Alberta, some school districts have issued policies that clearly are intended to address the GSA club issue without using the GSA name. As in Ontario, the position seems to be that if the issue in schools is bullying, it can be addressed from a religious viewpoint and does not necessitate GSA clubs. In Saskatchewan, there are no official documents referring to GSAs available to the public from Catholic schools or the bishops.

As an aside, it is noteworthy that Cardinal Collins was the bishop of Edmonton, Alberta before moving to Ontario. Moreover, given the controversy in Ontario and now in Manitoba with Bill 18 (Lambert, 2013; Owen, 2013;), it is beyond reason to believe that the GSA issue has not been brought up at meetings of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Canadian Catholic School Trustees’ Association. Bill 13 has reverberated across Canadian Catholic schools but the silence of Catholic school trustees and bishops outside of Ontario is deafening.

Given the above, the real problem is how Catholic schools’ religious studies curriculum and religious teachers will address the conundrum of saying to LGBTQ students that they are children of God, welcome in the Church, indeed are an important and integral part of the church but that their sexual orientation is “intrinsically disordered” and that its sexual expression is an act “of grave depravity” (Catechism, section 2357). Will it be sufficient to say that the Church has provided guidelines on the pastoral care of homosexual persons (Congregation, 1986)? Will that call to orthodoxy assist the LGBTQ student in her or his life? We suggest that Gospel values demand more. Indeed, social justice demands more to support LGBTQ youth who are at risk both internally from anxiety, depression, and suicide and externally from bullying and shunning within adolescent school communities.

It is true that the Catholic schools are bound to evangelise Catholic youth in teaching them the truth as understood and taught by the Church (Congregation, 1988). As McLaughlin (1996) stated with respect to Catholic education:

[the] Catholic faith must be presented in its entirety under the guidance of the Magisterium . . . respecting the hierarchy of truths . . . and ensuring integrity of content . . . . There is therefore a persistent need to discern the essential features of the Christian message which is to be transmitted to pupils . . . . (p. 143)

Yet, notwithstanding the above and not in contradiction to it, the protection of LGBTQ youth demands the special attention that GSA clubs provide. There is a real and substantive need for a supportive community that engenders a communal sense of solidarity for those marginalised and in jeopardy. A GSA club gives LGBTQ students public visibility and credibility within schools which is crucial for their health. As Charles Taylor (1992) related:

Our identity is partly shaped by the recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being. (p. 25)

We suggest that the time has come for Catholic schools to accept GLTBQ students as they are and, further, that as a group they have a need for community within the school, supported by the school administration. They deserve, as well, to be visible within the curriculum as individuals who are indeed faithful Catholics who respectfully and in good conscience have a disagreement with the Magisterium. Catholic schools should offer them no less. Indeed, public support of constitutionally protected Catholic schools in Ontario may depend upon such reconsideration.
Conclusion

This paper has offered a glimpse into current challenges facing Catholic schools in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Ontario. It suggested that public support for the constitutional protection of Catholic schools in those provinces is weakened by what is perceived as an over reliance upon legal rights over political astuteness and a sensitivity to the concerns of public schools’ authorities, and a reliance upon orthodoxy over orthopraxis in relation to GLTBQ students. Without a rethinking of these issues, the paper has warned of the potential loss of constitutional status of Catholic separate schools in those provinces. Lastly, we have argued that the inclusion of GSA clubs in Catholic schools is a positive phenomenon and should be embraced by school authorities both in the curriculum and faith community as being a matter of conscience for those that disagree with the position of the Magisterium.

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Philippa Bellows

CATECHESIS IN THE POST-MODERN WORLD: CHALLENGE AND CELEBRATION

Abstract

God’s revelation is handed on through catechesis. To be a catechist is both a privilege and a challenge. This paper acknowledges that all is not well in the postmodern world of evangelisation, catechesis and Catholic formation and brings the Church’s teaching into the context of challenges faced by all Catholic educators and those involved in sacramental preparation. It identifies some key catechetical omissions and reflects on Catholic catechesis and formation by identifying the social and ecclesial context in which catechesis takes place. These omissions impact on Catholic religious education; they emphasise how changes to contemporary spirituality are at the heart of catechesis and education, and address the need for formation for all educators. The Church’s own statements and existing research literature are drawn on, with particular focus on evidence from research following World Youth Day 2008 during which Pope Benedict encouraged renewed participation in the sacrament of confirmation.

Introduction

Those charged with responsibility for handing on the faith will be aware of the joys of bringing families together to celebrate the sacraments of Christian initiation. They will understand that this is only part of the lifelong learning described variously as evangelisation, catechesis, formation and religious education. They will also be well aware that the process of handing on the faith is enormously challenging on many levels.

The Church recognises barriers to catechesis and is responding. This investigation into catechetical challenges and how the Church addresses them purports to highlight what the ‘universal’ Church teaches in a way that will be useful to faith educators in parishes and schools.

“New Evangelization” (Pope John Paul II, 1979, para. 865) centres on finding new ‘approaches’ to evangelisation and renewal in a changing world. Through the new evangelisation the Church is calling for culture change by inviting greater participation of all her people. This outreach affects all the faithful and impacts directly on those involved in catechesis, spiritual formation and Catholic education. Pope John Paul II (1989, para. 60) highlights the “absolute necessity” of an age-appropriate “systematic approach to catechesis” as part of doctrinal formation. Pope Benedict XVI (2006) calls for a “renewed zeal for evangelization and education in the faith” (para. 10). Rossiter (2010) considers how Catholic schools’ religious education can be part of this solution if modern approaches to spirituality can be fully embraced.

Sources

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, (1999, subsequently Catechism), The General Directory of Catechesis (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997) and selected key sources from the contemporary Magisterium provide us with a foundation of Church teaching on evangelisation, catechesis and formation within the Church. By eliciting the Church’s own statements on Catholic formation and discussing them in the light of contemporary research we shall be able to examine current challenges to catechesis, and how these challenges are met by the universal Church. By investigating what the Church sees as the role of parents within the process of catechesis and formation we shall be able to establish where catechesis and Catholic religious education begins. By relating the challenges to Catholic schools we shall be able to examine how religious education and catechesis can be mutually supportive.
Table 1

Selected statements on Catholic formation from the universal magisterium

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evangelii Nuntiandi</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catechesi Tradendae</td>
<td>1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiaris Consortio</td>
<td>1981</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christifidelis Laici</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Catechism of the Catholic Church and Fidei Depositum</td>
<td>1992, revised 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Directory for Catechesis</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ubicumque et Semper</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Sources for the Church’s recent statements on Catholic Formation (the Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, pp.1-8)

To understand what the Church says about evangelisation, catechesis and formation we can draw on the last forty years of official documentation which encourages and informs the whole process of evangelisation. The key documents cited above are cited because they provide the essence of recent Church’s teaching on formation.

Formation is a life-long process of coming to accept God’s unconditional love graciously, and respond in love to God and to one another. Evangelisation, catechesis and formation are all part of the same Christ-centred, ecclesial mission. John Paul II (1979) reminds us that catechesis is a “moment... in the whole process of evangelization” (para. 18).

Paul VI (1975) describes “Evangelization” as the initial proclamation of the word of God and acceptance of it. It summarises the Church’s mission and is more broadly understood as bringing the gospel to all humanity to transform it. Paul VI (1975) states: “Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity” (para. 14).

‘Catechesis’ is handing on the faith through learning and teaching. Willey (2011) describes catechesis as “the communication of God’s revelation” (p. p. 29). The Congregation for the Clergy (1997) states that ‘catechesis’ is a “fundamental element of Christian initiation and is closely connected with sacraments of initiation” (para. 66). Catechesis is “education in the faith” (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 148) which by definition is Christocentric (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 235), its aim being communion with Christ (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 80 cf. John Paul II 1979, para. 5; Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], para. 425). Catechesis follows primary proclamation, and is a distinct element of formation, inseparable from it.

‘Formation’ refers to on-going growth in Christ (John Paul II, 1989, para. 60), through the work of the Church. A “total integrated formation” (John Paul II, 1989, para. 61) covers all aspects of Christian living. The Congregation for the Clergy (1997) for example, describes ‘formation’ as the preparation of catechists to teach in the name of Christ and the Church (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 236). Subsequently ‘formation’ is used to encompass all that evangelisation, catechesis and formation describe as the process of maturation in a faith already acquired and ‘catechesis’ is used more specifically to refer to planned learning and teaching of the faith which includes sacramental preparation.

The Role of Parents in Catholic Formation

Since before the Second Vatican Council, the Church has taught that parents are the “principal” educators of their children (Paul VI, 1965 b, para. 3; CCC, para. 1653) and that the family is the special place for the “formation of offspring.” (Pius XI, 1929, para. 12). Furthermore, because the family is instituted by God, its responsibility for formation is more important than that of wider society (Pius XI, 1929, para. 12). This priority of parents to nurture their children in the faith underpins the Church’s statements on the role of parents
today: parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children: “For it devolves on parents to create a family atmosphere so animated with love and reverence for God and others that a well-rounded personal and social development will be fostered amongst children” (John Paul II, 1981, para. 36).

John Paul II (1981, para. 36) states that the educational role of parents is part of humanity’s vocation to become a self-gift in love, to one another through marriage and to one’s children. Willey (as cited in Redford 2002, pp. 249-250) affirms that support for parents in educating their children should be central to the Church’s “catechetical efforts” and highlights this as a key area for further research and resources. The Church recognises the evangelising role of the domestic Church and its need to be evangelised (John Paul II, 1981, para. 51), so it calls for parents and Christian communities to work together, and for Catholic schools to participate with families and parishes in forming a pastoral, “educating” community (John Paul II, 1981, para. 40).

More recently, the Synod of Bishops (2011, p. 55) reinforces that the family is the principal place for teaching children how to pray and for ‘sustaining and nourishing’ the faith. Through shared family prayer parents enable their children to grow in understanding and love of God.

The Christian family is called to take part actively and responsibly in the mission of the Church in a way that is original and specific by placing itself in what it is and what it does as an ‘intimate community of life and love’ at the service of the Church and of society. (John Paul II, 1981, para. 50)

Thus, the Church continues to emphasise that the Christian family is at the heart of formation; the domestic Church is central to the mission of the universal Church and that the family is a community founded on and renewed by the love of Christ. This aspect of Church teaching highlights the Church’s view of children’s Catholic formation by the time they start sacramental preparation and suggesting that as ‘principal educators’ parents should play an active role in their children’s on-going formation. But is the message of the universal Church being fully received and embraced in the domestic and particular Church?

Catechetical Challenges and the Church’s own statements

The Church has long acknowledged social imbalance (Paul VI, 1965 a, paras. 4 & 6; John Paul II, 1981, para. 6), increasing secularism and atheism as challenges to the whole process of evangelisation (Paul VI, 1975, paras. 54-56; John Paul II, 1989, para. 4). Increasing “religious indifference” (John Paul II, 1989, para. 4) and “abandonment of the faith” (Benedict XVI, 2010) affecting whole communities have been highlighted since by the Church to be real challenges to catechesis in our time. Pope John Paul II (1979, para. 19) identified one of the challenges to catechesis as a lack of initial evangelisation and called for a catechetical model to allow for this. He also emphasised the need for “authentic” family catechesis in places where “widespread unbelief or invasive secularism” prevents catechesis elsewhere (John Paul II, 1979, para. 68 as cited in John Paul II, 1981, para. 52).

Now Pope Benedict XVI (2010) reminds us that we are all affected by profound sociological, technological, cultural and economic change. Whilst there are global benefits, there are consequences for religious life which include a “troubling loss of the sacred” (para. 1). He explains that evangelisation and Christian initiation should include education in the faith and terms the current challenges as an “educational emergency” (Benedict XVI, 2007). Pope Benedict XVI (2007) cites relativism replacing love of Christ, parents and teachers abdicating their responsibilities to hand on the faith to children and consumerism replacing Christian mission as reasons for difficulties in bringing children and young people into a lasting relationship with Christ.

Pope John Paul II (1979) stated that catechesis was in need of renewal, but warned of endangering “integrity of the content” (para. 30). Reluctance to bring catechesis into the modern world by clinging to outdated routines, “leading to stagnation, lethargy and eventual paralysis” (para. 17) is clearly a barrier to catechetical effectiveness. The Congregation for the Clergy (1997) emphasises that catechesis seeks to lead people into a deeper relationship with Christ and a “balanced presentation” of his humanity and divinity is essential (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 30 cf. CT John Paul II, 1979, para. 29). However, the Congregation for the Clergy (1997) evidences that the Church is fully aware that catechesis is often ineffective. Further catechetical inadequacies identified by the Congregation for the Clergy (1997) include lack of authenticity of fundamental Catholic doctrine, including eschatology. That the Congregation for the Clergy (1997, para. 30) cites John Paul II, (1979, para. 30) in mentioning selectivity in some areas of catechesis to the detriment
of others (e.g. moral and social teaching) suggests that problems of inadequate catechetical provision are neither new nor easy to address. Moreover, the findings of the Congregation for the Clergy (1997) have significant implication for the content and pedagogy of sacramental preparation:

“Catechesis is intrinsically bound to every liturgical and sacramental action.” Frequently however the practice of catechesis testifies to a weak and fragmentary link with the liturgy: limited attention to liturgical symbols and rites, scant use of the liturgical fonts, catechetical courses with little or no connection with the liturgical year; the marginalization of liturgical celebrations in catechetical programs. (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 30, cites John Paul II, 1979, para. 23)

That the Congregation for the Clergy (1997) highlights a “weak and fragmentary” link between catechesis and liturgy, “limited attention” to “symbols and rites” and the sidelining of “liturgical celebration” reveals a key challenge of sacramental preparation.

John Redford (2002, p. 209) cites the Congregation for the Clergy (1997, para. 71) and draws attention to the centrality of scripture in catechesis. Redford investigates the Congregation for the Clergy’s (1997) concern that scripture is not fully integrated with tradition and magisterium. His discussion of the extent to which we can use scripture to underpin Christian doctrine is highly pertinent to sacramental preparation. Redford points out the implication that the post-Vatican II Church has retained some unsettled questions regarding the use of scripture. He states that tensions over interpreting scripture and hermeneutics must be resolved before catechesis can be put right. Here we have evidence of a long-standing barrier to effective catechesis which suggests that the scriptural content of catechesis is distorted therefore preventing full understanding in the experience of catechists and candidates. Inevitably poorly formed catechists, who lack knowledge and understanding of the faith or the skill to teach it, present a significant challenge to catechesis (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 30).

Currently, the Synod of Bishops (2011, p. 15) recognises that many local Churches are challenged by a lack of priests, family pressures undermining parental involvement and fewer people sharing in the evangelising role of the Christian community. Whilst this affects the whole process of evangelisation, it inevitably adds to the workload of catechists and is likely to have a negative effect on the quality of catechetical provision.

Thus, the Church recognises two key areas of catechetical challenge: those resulting from a societal decline in religious values and those concerning the content of catechetical provision. Both these areas affect the formation of catechists and the catechetical experience of young people. The former applies to the whole process of evangelisation and constitutes an “educational emergency” (Benedict XVI, 2007) in itself. The latter requires a little more analysis; the Church is aware of significant deficiencies in catechetical provision and these potentially distort the transmission of core beliefs of the Catholic Church (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, 30).

In 1997, the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops [USCCB] Ad Hoc Committee to oversee the use of the Catechism (subsequently Ad Hoc Committee) conducted a review of catechetical materials. The catechetical publications were assessed for authenticity and completeness of the Christian message and the extent to which the publications were in conformity with the Catechism. The Ad Hoc Committee (USCCB 1997) identified ten catechetical deficiencies, sufficiently prevalent amongst the publications reviewed to suggest some significant recurring omissions in the transmission of the Church’s core teaching in line with those outlined in the Congregation for the Clergy (1997, para. 30). Whilst the materials reviewed were all from the United States, the correlation to the Congregation for the Clergy (1997, para. 30) suggests that the same or similar deficiencies are likely to be widespread.
Table 2

A comparison between The ten catechetical deficiencies and the Congregation for the Clergy (1997, 30).

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Insufficient attention to the Trinity and Trinitarian structure of Catholic beliefs and practices</td>
<td>It is necessary to arrive at a more balanced presentation of the entire truth of the mystery of Jesus Christ. Often, emphasis is given only to his humanity without any explicit reference to his divinity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obscured presentation of the centrality of Christ in salvation history and insufficient emphasis on the divinity of Christ</td>
<td>Tradition is less influential... reference to sacred scripture is virtually exclusive ...the inter-relation of scripture, tradition and the magisterium...does not harmoniously enrich a catechetical transmission of the faith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indistinct treatment of the ecclesial context of Catholic beliefs and magisterial teachings</td>
<td>There are certain doctrinal lacunae concerning the truth about God and man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate sense of a distinctively Christian anthropology</td>
<td>A proliferation of catechisms and texts, the products of particular initiatives whose selective tendencies and emphases are so differing as to damage the convergence necessary for the unity of the faith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient evidence on God’s initiative in the world; corresponding overemphasis on human action</td>
<td>Insufficient recognition of the transforming effects of grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate presentation of the sacraments</td>
<td>There are certain doctrinal lacunae concerning the truth ...about grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficiency in the teaching on original sin and sin in general</td>
<td>Frequently...a weak and fragmentary link with the liturgy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meagre exposition of Christian moral life</td>
<td>There is a need for a more solid moral formation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate presentation of eschatology</td>
<td>There are certain doctrinal lacunae concerning the truth ... about eschatology</td>
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Taken as a whole, the ‘ten deficiencies’ suggest that the core elements of the mystery of the Trinity, the Church, humanity, the divine economy, grace, the sacraments, sin, morals and eschatology are all being poorly transmitted in a sample of published catechetical programmes. The most obvious feature of the comparison above (table 2) is that the Ad Hoc Committee (USCCB, 1997) identifies lack of teaching on the Trinity as the first deficiency, whereas the Congregation for the Clergy (1997, para. 30) does not mention it. The Ad Hoc Committee (USCCB, 1997) measures teaching on the Trinity against CCC, paragraphs 261 and 267, hence their findings suggest that the Trinity is neither communicated as a central mystery of the Church, nor that it is revealed by God, nor that the divine persons are inseparable. Because the Trinity is a pillar of the Christian faith, it seems unlikely that the challenges to catechesis identified in the Congregation for the Clergy (1997, para. 30) or the earlier magisterium, would be so evident were the Trinity properly communicated. Caroline Farey (2008) argues that the Trinity is frequently omitted from Catholic catechetical resources or improperly, even heretically, taught because of poorly formed catechists, difficulties in communicating it, weak resources and active discouragement from influential scholars and publishers who think it is gender biased. She highlights the seriousness of eliminating Trinitarian teaching and reminds us that the Congregation for the Clergy (1997) calls for all catechesis to be “Christocentric – Trinitarian” (p. 100).
The Church’s action on catechetical challenges

The Church has been addressing challenges to catechesis since the Second Vatican Council through a series of publications (table 1 p.3). From calling for “catechesis full of gospel vitality” (Paul VI, 1975, para. 54) and including the publication of the Congregation for the Clergy (1997) and revised edition of the Catechism (1997), the Church has addressed escalating challenge. Not least, full involvement of the lay faithful is outlined by John Paul II (1975, para. 54) and attention drawn to the formation of catechists in the Congregation for the Clergy (1997, paras. 234 – 247). Nonetheless, the fact remains that Pope Benedict XVI (2007) has identified an “educational emergency” which highlights the Church’s action over the last decade.

Pope Benedict XVI (2010) draws attention to the need for evangelisation to respond to different situations in the world. He states that ‘new evangelization’ cannot be limited to a single formula as evangelisation is based on the desire to partake in God’s gift of himself. Consequently he established a ‘Pontifical Council to Promoting the New Evangelization’ to address key issues including reflection on the pastoral and theological meaning of the new evangelisation. The council is to liaise with Bishops’ Conferences on evangelisation, to support initiatives in new evangelisation, to examine the use of modern communications for evangelisation and to promote the use of the Catechism (para. 3).

Moreover, Pope Benedict XVI dedicated the next Ordinary General Assembly in 2012 to ‘The new evangelization for the transmission of the Christian faith’ (The Synod of Bishops, 2011). In its preparatory programme the Synod of Bishops (2011, 14 pp. 33 – 34, cf. John Paul II, 1979, para. 54) draw on the Congregation for the Clergy (1997) and call for a “renewed emphasis” on catechesis and the catechumenate as the “pedagogy of the faith”. Recognising that catechesis is the “formation for Christian life” (2011, para. 14 as cited in the Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 68) the Synod of Bishops describes the catechumenate as a reminder that initiation is the responsibility of the whole Christian community and proper formation is centred on the Paschal Mystery (2011, para. 14 cf. the Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, paras. 90 & 91). The Synod of Bishops (2011, para. 22) sets out to raise baptised peoples’ awareness of their missionary role in full consciousness that new evangelisation requires “effort, attentiveness, education and concern” (p. 55).

Since the publication of ‘ten catechetical deficiencies’ in 1997, the Ad Hoc Committee has continued to review catechetical series for conformity to the Catechism. The review is voluntary and a ‘conformity listing’ of reviewed materials is maintained (USCCB, 2011). That suggests a partial solution to omissions in some United States published materials. The USCCB Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis has since published the Curriculum framework for catechetical programmes for young people of high school age (USCCB, 2010), designed to provide a “systematic” approach to support catechists and programme publishers, drawing on the Congregation for the Clergy’s (1997) “Pedagogy of God” (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, paras. 137-147). Used in conjunction with appropriate methodology and resources, it addresses the ‘ten deficiencies’ and is suitable for use for catechesis and catechist formation.

Contemporary research

Culminating in the call for ‘new evangelization’, changes in young people’s spirituality have been widely acknowledged since the Second Vatican Council. These changes impact as much on religious education as catechetical programmes. Rossiter (2010) states that the Australian Catholic religious education curriculum presupposes regular mass attendance by pupils. He suggests that evident change in young people’s spirituality requires change in the content and delivery of religious education. Rossiter (2010, p. 129) argues that an understanding of “contemporary, relatively secular spirituality” is key to making religious education relevant to pupils. A more “relevant” approach to young people’s spirituality in religious education will challenge traditionally held approaches and will enable young people to take greater ownership of their own moral and spiritual lives.

Grace (2010, p. 120) describes the ability to relate theological understanding to everyday life as “theological literacy”, which in turn underpins the “spiritual capital” needed to empower the individual’s personal sense of spirituality and mission. His research asks whether “spiritual capital” is being renewed in contemporary
British Catholic schools while head teachers are reporting a broad increase in social disadvantage. Grace (2010, p. 125) concludes that “spiritual capital” is an “urgent priority” in an era of increased secularisation and urges all those involved in religious education and faith formation to provide resources to renew it.

Graham (2011 p. 28) calls for “daring new approaches” to formation which responds to the contemporary magisterium to highlight the priority of addressing the formation of Catholic teachers. He states that in the current climate of secularisation this will require courage and communication, adding weight to arguments that formation in contemporary society requires a new level of religious and spiritual literacy.

On the Way to Life, (The Heythrop Institute for Religion, Ethics and Public Life [HIREPL], 2005) commissioned by The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, examines how Catholic religious education, catechesis and formation are influenced by contemporary culture. It is an interpretive study which offers some analysis of the ecclesial, secular and personal context of religious education, catechesis and formation. Its purpose is to inform a process, invite further interpretations and debate. HIREPL (2005) discusses the extent to which secularisation, accountable for the decline of religion, and modernity, as a context for ‘spirituality’ replacing ‘religion’, are adequate models for interpretation. The report draws on statistical data and analyses current trends that characterise contemporary culture. It also acknowledges Catholicism as a ‘culture’ with doctrines, symbols and behaviour.

Drawing on evidence from Purnell (2005), HIREPL (2005) has found that the Church needs to develop language and an ‘interpretive’ vision to address social and human questions and combat the force of secularization. HIREPL interprets evangelisation as a two-way process: the Church’s mission and “colonisation” of the Church by society. It states that the Church needs to strengthen its members “in the power of Christian truth, its credibility and beauty” (p. 7).

HIREPL (2005) draws on statistical evidence from the European Values Study [EVS] 2000 which identifies tensions in society by evidencing a diminution of Christian practice, despite a relatively strong (71.8%) belief in some form of higher being. It acknowledges that the research questions are “frustratingly loose” (HIREPL, 2005, p. 11) and difficult to interpret from a theological and catechetical perspective. HIREPL (2005) does not offer a substantial theological analysis. It argues that education, catechesis and formation must rekindle their own theological rationale. However, the report’s claim that the Church’s programmes of religious education, catechesis and formation are “considerable assets” characterised by “vitality and professionalism” (HIREPL, 2005, p. 57) seems to be at odds with the USCCB’s Ad Hoc Committee (1997) and the Congregation for the Clergy (1997, 3 para. 30). This suggests a lack of rigour in HIREPL’s synopsis of catechetical content and is possibly indicative of a shifting trend away from the pillars of the Church’s teaching in order to respond to changing societal challenges and cultural needs. The report over-emphasises human action in reclaiming a vision of Catholicism, describing education, catechesis and formation as something “the Church has to offer humanity” without any reference to communion with Christ or the Trinity (HIREPL, 2005, p.55). HIREPL argues for “Catholic modernity” as a solution because it incorporates contemporary values without compromising Catholic identity. “Sacramental vision” (HIREPL, 2005, p. 63) which makes this possible, is centred on Christ overcoming sin and the “analogical relationship” between God and humanity. This leaves us uncertain as to how far ‘sacramental vision’ includes reference to a tri-personal God because the context of Trinity is neither clarified nor developed. The report details the importance of Christ as the telos of the human journey and freedom obtained through the cross, but lack of reference to the Trinity and God’s initiative with over-emphasis on human action characterise ‘sacramental vision’ and the report’s theological solutions to contemporary ecclesial and societal challenges.

So how far does the Synod of Bishops address the difficulties highlighted by HIREPL (2005)? The Synod of Bishops draws on a familiar picture of new evangelisation re-affirming social and cultural needs which have become well-established since the Second Vatican Council. However, they neglect to draw significant attention to the contribution to evangelisation made by many new movements and youth outreach. For our purpose, World Youth Day is of particular importance because it offers evangelisation to young people, in a climate where the primacy of family formation is diminishing.
In his message to young people for World Youth Day [WYD] 2008 Pope Benedict XVI drew attention to renewal by the Holy Spirit through a deepened appreciation of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. He stated that “the truth” of these sacraments is “perhaps neglected in the faith life of many Christians” and “that many young people distance themselves from their life of faith after they have received Confirmation”. He urged young people to “rediscover the sacrament of confirmation” and its spiritual significance (Benedict XVI, 2008, para. 6). Here we have an example of new evangelisation in action. Arguably, for this action to be followed through into the lives of young people and their rediscovery of confirmation, it must be supported by fully formed catechists and functional resources that can sustain identified catechetical deficiencies (USCCB, 1997; Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 30).

Pilgrim’s Progress 2008 [PP08] provides some useful statistical data on the impact of WYD on young Catholics which enable us to look at how a ‘rediscovery’ of confirmation might be brought about (Singleton, 2011). PP08 was a large-scale, multi-method enquiry into the effects of WYD on the religious practice of young, English-speaking Catholics aged 15-35 (average age 21). This online survey identified factors of WYD that increased the frequency of mass attendance five months after the event. Frequency of prayer and mass attendance before and after WYD were measured and respondents were asked to rate WYD events as “very helpful”, “fairly helpful” or “not helpful”. Respondents were asked to place other aspects on rank order. That 62% rated “Faith: being with others, sharing the same faith” highly with other highly ranked aspects being: “Church: pride in being Catholic, being part of something greater than ourselves”; “Holy Spirit: the sense that God was present” and “Community: the special kind of friendliness and openness” is an indicator of the importance shared spiritual experience and a sense of religious identity to young people (Singleton, 2011, p. 62).

Singleton (2011, p. 67) concludes that WYD “has the capacity to produce increases in religious practice” especially amongst young people who are already partly formed. Almost all those who reported more frequent mass attendance had parental or peer religiosity in their background which highlights the importance of parents as primary educators and of community in faith development. Although PP08 does not measure permanent change, it does show that WYD’s combination of social and religious experiences with catecheses and encouragement does strengthen existing faith in young Catholics. The message for all involved in support of a ‘rediscovery’ of confirmation is that evangelisation begins at home and a climate of community, shared worship and purposeful catechesis does make a positive difference.

The Synod of Bishops (2011) has omitted discussion of internal dissent in the Church. With the suggestion that young people are very often receiving catechesis before they are fully evangelised, and that resources are inadequate to address the issue, it is worthwhile to examine what current research can tell us about formation.

The Catholic Youth Ministry Federation [CYMFed] was launched in 2009 as part of a national initiative to strengthen youth ministry in England and Wales. The CYMFed team commissioned research (van Duyvenbode, 2009) to map young Catholics’ views and sense of identity. The sample group was 1000 Catholics aged from 11 – 25 with a broad social background and geographical spread across England and Wales and a gender balance. The survey identifies belief in God as a central factor in young peoples’ sense of Catholicity, with significant diversity over what “belief in God” constitutes. Only 25% of young Catholics identified “an awareness of the Holy Spirit”; (van Duyvenbode 2009, p. 4) although the statistics for how many have received the sacrament of confirmation are not available, the report shows that only 35% of self-identifying Catholics (22% of the whole group) believed in “a personally involved God” (van Duyvenbode, 2009, p. 2). These statistics do evidence the view that many young Catholics are unevangelised. They add credence to the hypothesis that there is a lack of evangelisation in the home and that young people enrolling in confirmation preparation programmes are likely to be unevangelised. Other findings are likely to correlate with the experience of young people from other faiths or no faith, for example many young Catholics feel worried about school or work, their families and their place in wider society van (Duyvenbode, 2009, p. 3).

Conclusion

By investigating different contemporary sources we have been able to evidence that key barriers to catechesis are increasing global and familial secularisation, omissions in content and untrained catechists. The Church recognises these problems and communicates them but the evidence suggests that this communication is not being fully received at the level of domestic and particular Church. The barriers to catechesis we have
identified arguably also hinder the extent to which published apostolic exhortations and encyclicals do reach the people. However, we have also seen a climate of great hope for spiritual renewal within the Church’s work for new evangelisation as exemplified by the positive changes brought about in the lives of young Catholics by WYD. Rossiter’s (2010) recommendations for a renewed understanding of spirituality in religious education have the potential to cross boundaries between schools’ religious education and parish catechesis to become part of the solution. Graham’s (2011) argument for addressing the formation of Catholic educators is in line with that of the Congregation for the Clergy’s (1997) recommendations for formation of catechists. Barriers, caused by poor transmission of scripture, discussed by Redford (2002) and the ‘ten deficiencies’ (USCCB, 1997) have been identified. A more vibrant culture of education delivered by language that recognises young people’s spirituality is essential to lift these barriers and respond to Pope Benedict’s call to rediscover the sacrament of confirmation without destroying “integrity of the content” (John Paul II, 1979, para. 30).

Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>Catechism of the Catholic Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYMfed</td>
<td>Catholic Youth Ministry Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVS</td>
<td>European Values Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIREPL</td>
<td>Heythrop Institute of Religion Ethics and Public Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>PP08</td>
<td>Pilgrims’ Progress 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>USCCB</td>
<td>United States Catholic Conference of Bishops</td>
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<td>WYD</td>
<td>World Youth Day</td>
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References


**About the Author**

Philippa Bellows is a lecturer in teacher education at the University of Plymouth, specializing in religious education and the humanities. She has been involved in parish catechesis for many years and has lectured in applied theology. Her recent Ph.D. research is into the background of the ‘Seal of the Holy Spirit’ in confirmation catechesis.

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Abstract

Recently, in his introduction to an undergraduate theology course, Professor Terry Lovat (2012) submitted the observation that – “theology is the heartbeat of religion” (p. 2). This article supports Lovat’s assertion by arguing that, given the requirement by the Australian Catholic Bishops that teachers are qualified with a Graduate Certificate in Theology or equivalent, these same teachers, their school leaders, and CEO/CSO personnel need to be provided with clarity regarding the essential connections between religious education (RE) and theology. This article is one attempt to provide this clarity. To prepare themselves to address the many complex questions raised in the RE classroom, teachers need to be theologically literate and reflective. In order to identify the nature and repercussions of this literacy, the article examines - the nature of RE, some useful definitions of “theology”, and establishes the case for understanding theology in a postmodern context, and for ongoing commitment to the process of theological reflection. This type of understanding and commitment, it is argued, is essential for the theological formation of religious educators and for their effective engagement with other teachers, and with students in the classroom.

Basic accreditation requirement in theology for RE classroom teachers

In 2010, the Conference of Diocesan Directors of Education for New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory agreed on an accreditation framework for Catholic Schools which included a number of accreditation requirements for Religious Education teachers in Catholic schools (Conference of Diocesan Directors of Education, 2010; hereafter CDDE, 2010). These requirements were developed out of an awareness that the Catholic school community has a responsibility in providing “appropriate and supportive yet rigorous pathways for the preparation and ongoing professional learning of teachers, especially in Religious Education” (CDDE, 2010, p. 1). This original document has been appropriated by the 11 Dioceses in NSW in their own policy documents for a rolling implementation beginning in 2012 (with one beginning in 2013). In this article, we draw on the Archdiocese of Sydney’s policy document Accreditation Policy to Work, Teach and Lead in Systemic Catholic Schools for no other reason than that it is readily available online for public perusal (Catholic Education Office, Sydney, 2011. Hereafter CEO, 2011. See reference list for website).

Our focus is on the specifically academic requirements for Category D, which refer to Accreditation to Teach Religious Education, and which are expanded for Category E’s requirements, which refer to Accreditation for Senior Leadership in a Catholic School (CEO, 2011, p. 7). According to the Archdiocese of Sydney’s policy document, in order to be accredited as a Religious Education teacher, teachers must fulfil ONE of the following tertiary education criteria within four years:

- Undergraduate studies which include a minimum of six approved units in Religious Education/Theology at a Catholic tertiary institution OR
- Undergraduate studies which include a minimum of six approved units in Religious Education/Theology at a secular tertiary institution OR
- A minimum of four CEO approved postgraduate units of study in Religious Education/Theology at a Catholic tertiary institution OR
• The completion of CEO approved qualification in Religious Education/Theology from an endorsed provider. (CEO, 2011, p. 7)

In connection with the above, we also note in passing that Categories B and C imply the need for both theological literacy and some commitment to ongoing theological reflection. For example, Category B (Accreditation to Teach in a Catholic School) lists eight possible components of a formation program, which could include input and reflection on at least six of these components – Mission of the Catholic Church; Catholic Life and Culture; Pastoral Care; Scripture, Prayer and Liturgy; Christian Leadership; and Catholic Ethical and Social Teaching. For its part, Category C (Accreditation for Leadership in a Catholic School) includes these same six components, with the addition of two that also presume theological literacy and reflection – Faith Formation of Staff; and Catholic Worldview across the Curriculum (CEO, 2011, pp. 5-6).

What is notable about the above cited criteria for Categories D and E is the fact that they place Religious Education and Theology together, clearly indicating a link between the two disciplines, but not explaining the nature of this link. Is it one of equivalency? Complementarity? Or, a difference that is not articulated but is present nevertheless? How does one, in this situation, locate the heartbeat of theology within the body of religious education?

Furthermore, these accreditation requirements have meant that many beginning and experienced teachers are now taking up graduate studies in Religious Education and Theology, and many of these teachers are now questioning the exact relationship between RE and theology. In order to understand this question, it is necessary to consider the nature of theology, and the complexity of the questions that it raises in relation to RE.

**How is the discipline of religious education understood in this article?**

The following working description of “religious education” is essential for the central argument of this paper, and seeks to provide a context for considering the relationship between RE and theology. However, it is also the subject of a future dedicated article by the authors. The working description is accompanied by some brief, indicative references.

Religious education is understood in this article as an activity that incorporates the classroom RE program and other activities beyond the curriculum (Ryan, 2008, p. 9) which at the same time includes a critical ‘academic study of religion’ approach (Lovat, 2009; AAR Religion, 2010). It focuses at various times on learning about, from, and for religion (Hella & Wright, 2009; Teece, 2010), as well as for “interfaith dialogue”, and even embracing “interbelief dialogue” (Bournet, 2008; cf. Castelli, 2012). It is taught in the context of a globalised, postmodern and intercultural world, and its approach is interdisciplinary, international, interreligious, interfaith, and interconnected. It encourages teachers and students alike to be both “caretakers” and “critics” of their own and other religions (Pratt, 2003, pp. ix-x; Slater, 2007, pp. 333-334).

This view of RE supports ways of knowing beyond the informational that lead as well to hermeneutical, critically reflective, emancipatory, praxis, and wisdom ways of knowing (Habermas, 1984; Mudge, 2009, 2012). In addition to the above operations, its classroom pedagogical cycle includes movements such as naming students’ experience, dialoguing with other religions and human faith traditions, reflecting theologically, and responding (Ok & Toy 2011; Ospino, 2010; Stern, 2010). Within the theory and practice of the school, it supports Lovat, Toomey, Clement, Crotty & Nielsen’s (2009) Troika of values education, quality teaching, and service learning. It endorses methods and strategies such as the interpretive approach, reflexivity, applications to concrete and local situations (Jackson, 2006; O’Grady, 2010), fertile questions, lateral thinking, and subversive teaching (de Bono, 1973; Harpaz, 2005; Kameniar, 2007; Postman & Weingartner, 1969), and yet at the same time rejects the stance of ‘neutrality’ in the teaching of RE (l’Anson, 2010, pp. 106-107). It encourages the cultivation of theological reflection for all of teachers, parents and students (Ford, 2000, p. 16; Stone & Duke, 2006, pp. 7-10). Finally, it aims to take RE theory and practice beyond the mechanics of religion to the reality of being religious (Teece, 2010, p. 99), beyond instruction to education for life (Miedema & Biesta, 2003), and beyond orthodoxy alone to concrete and meaningful orthopraxis (l’Anson, 2010, p. 109).
What is theology and what is the context in which it is taught in the RE classroom?

Given the above working definition, how then can one accurately detect the beating heart of theology, both within the academy and the RE classroom? One of the complexities in approaching the discipline of theology is a lack of agreement regarding the nature of the discipline itself and, correlative, a diversity of understandings regarding what theology is and how one should go about it. Taking a clue from the name of the discipline, theology relates to words (Gk: *logos*) about God (Gk: *Theos*), or what Philip Kennedy (2006) refers to as the “human struggle to stammer about God and God’s putative relation with all there is” (p. 4). Such a task necessarily involves a consideration of the human phenomenon of faith, understood as the cognitive, affective, and behavioural response to an encounter with the transcendent (Groome, 1980, p. 57). As a focus for study, these areas align well with St Anselm’s (d. 1209) definition of theology, “faith seeking understanding” (translated from the Latin phrase *fides quaerens intellectum*, originally from the preface of Anselm’s *Proslogion*, and cited and translated in Logan, 2009, p. 24). The features of this definition of theology are that the discipline takes faith as a response to God as its starting point, that it is provisional and therefore an ongoing activity, and that its ultimate goal is some form of rational understanding (Ormerod, 1997, pp. 3-4).

However, Anselm’s definition is not without its complications. Several arise immediately with regards to the first word: “faith”. Whose faith does theology seek an understanding of? Is it the faith of an individual, or a community (cf. Ormerod, 1997, p. 5)? Furthermore, does this imply that faith, however we define it, is a prerequisite for the study of theology? These questions are frequently at the fore of religious educators’ minds when they engage with theology for the first time: is this a discipline designed to assist reflection on their personal faith? Will this be a form of faith education or catechesis? And, in its consideration of faith, does it also seek an understanding of other faiths as well? Closely aligned with these questions are others regarding the purpose of the understanding theology seeks: is it intended to assist in making the classroom a place of evangelisation, or a place for seeking academic insight and truth, or both and perhaps more? (see for example: Lovat, 2009, pp. 7-8 and passim; and Knitter, 2009).

The answers to these questions will largely determine how the relationship between theology and religious education is perceived, and it is here that this article hopes to provide some clarification. This might be seen to be especially the case with regards to the last question focused on the purpose of the understanding sought by theology – if the final object of theological understanding is evangelisation within a particular tradition, for example, then surely the content and methodology of a religious education teacher’s theological training will be different than if the object was the search for academic insight and truth.

We would object to this response on the grounds that, regardless of how the object of Religious Education is perceived, the religious educator must be formed in such a way as to be able to respond to the questions and concerns that arise in the classroom of this age, which is characterised by the features of postmodernism as explored below. As such, a theological education which enables teachers only to “repeat a traditional theology or version of Christianity and see all reality in its own terms, with no recognition of the significance for it of other perspectives or of all that has happened in recent centuries” (Ford, 2005, p. 2), or perform “intellectual archaeology”, as Ormerod (1997, p. 4) puts it, will be of little use for religious education, however its ultimate goals are perceived.

Engaging with a slippery world – religious education, theology and postmodernism

One crucial example of a reality that needs to be recognised for its impact on both theology and religious education is postmodernism. In addressing this issue, we have deliberately chosen to focus on the impact of “postmodernism” rather than “postmodernity”. In concert with Clark, Lints and Smith (2004, p. 73) we understand “postmodernism” as a term describing the specifically theoretical or academic accounts which critique modernity across disciplines ranging from architecture to physics, here applied to RE and theology; whereas ‘postmodernity’ describes more specifically a broader cultural milieu.

The assumption is made throughout this section that postmodernism can lead to both curses and blessings. But even curses and dangers can generate great possibilities and fertile opportunities. Clark and his colleagues (2004), for example, lament the negative connotations often placed upon postmodernism (p. 74), while
Ward (2005), citing Marion and de Certeau, concludes reassuringly that “postmodern theology portrays how religious questions are opened up (not closed down or annihilated) by postmodern thought” (p. 335). He continues: “The postmodern God is emphatically the God of love, and the economy of love is kenotic [self-emptying for the other]. Desire, only possible through alterity, and distance, is the substructure of creation. It makes transcendence both possible and necessary” (p. 335).

Given that we have argued that RE and theology are interconnected realities, it also follows that postmodernity affects both these disciplines with equal impact. According to Blackburn (2008) the slipperiness of postmodernism can be partly explained by its

- playful acceptance of surfaces and superficial style, self-conscious quotation and parody,...and a celebration of the ironic, the transient, and the glitzy...[it is hard to pin down since it] is usually seen as a reaction against a naïve and earnest confidence in progress, and against confidence in objective or scientific truth. (pp. 283-284)

Ward (2005b) echoes these thoughts when he observes that postmodernism is

the other side that haunts the modern...[characterised by] its acceptance of the plural and the rejection of grand narratives of progress and explanation...[and by] a nonfoundationalism, a hybridity, an appeal to a certain excess, the employment of masks, irony, anti-realism, and self-conscious forms of representation. (p. xiv)

Following the pedigree of philosophers such as Heidegger, Gadamer and Derrida, postmodernism holds that all knowledge is already prejudiced, that our world is conditioned by certain “horizons”, and that there can be no universal, neutral, “objective” knowledge, but only certain “stories” told about the world from subjective viewpoints (Clark et al, 2004, p. 73).

This “slipperiness” of definitions, stories and viewpoints leads to what Lyotard and Habermas refer to as a “legitimation crisis” — “if we cannot appeal to universal rationality to justify or legitimate our account, then how can there be ‘agreement’” (Clark et al, 2004, p. 74). In the eyes of many commentators, this lack of certainty and this slipperiness of meaning affects both RE and theology. This ambiguity is captured in Blackburn’s (2008) closing observation that postmodernism ignores

- the quite ordinary truth that while human history and law admit of no one final description, they certainly admit of more or less accurate ones, just as a landscape permits of no one unique map, yet there can be more or less accurate maps. (p. 284)

Not one map but many less accurate maps? By implication, not one reliable pathway but many less accurate but possible pathways? Where does this leave RE and theology? (Compare the contrasting processing patterns of arboreal and rhizomatic, with many parallel insights, as detailed in Sajjadi, 2008, pp. 186-187; see also Ward, 2005a below).

The symbiotic relationship between RE and theology can also be influenced by other aspects of postmodernism. On the more obviously “positive” side, postmodernism contains a very supportive concern about justice and compassion. Clark and his colleagues (2004) observe that within the writings of Derrida, Levinas, Lyotard, Rorty and Foucault, “we find a trenchant critique of the way in which social and institutional structures marginalise and dominate the powerless and oppressed” (p. 74).

However, possibly one of the best descriptions of postmodernism has recently been offered by Graham Ward from Manchester University. Ward (2005b) perceptibly observes that postmodernism operates in such a way that the “principles of established order have become questionable and what remains is a ‘hole, opened by a society that calls itself into question.’ It is a hole that cannot be covered over; nor can it be avoided” (p. xv). This “hole” could be equated with the proverbial “elephant in the room” — peripherally discussed, rarely engaged, and largely avoided and stigmatised. This article argues that it is the task and privilege of theology, and in particular religious education guided by theological reflection, to pay attention to and befriend this “hole”, to describe it, to consider its blessings and curses, and to propose its place in a world where “The mystery of life is not a problem to be solved; it is a reality to be experienced” (Leeuw, 1828, p. 9).
Finally, according to other commentators, postmodernism can give birth to a postmodern sensibility which can be described in part, albeit imprecisely, as – consumer-oriented, value free, adaptable and pragmatic, cynical or distrustful of institutions, reluctant to commit, intellectually disengaged, but at the same time technoliterate (D’Orsa & D’Orsa, 2010, pp. 68-70). Cohen (2006) argues that both postmodernism and globalisation have led to the proliferation of “diaspora” communities, to the dispersion of religiously homogenous communities, and to increased religious tourism (pp. 148-150). For their part, focusing on the implications of postmodernism for pedagogy and spirituality, Hodge and Derezotes (2008) assert that postmodernism favours a plurality of ways of knowing and the existence of multiple, multivalent pathways for processing this knowing. They posit further that postmodernism supports the existence of multiple realities that incorporate both material and spiritual dimensions (p. 107), and that knowledge “does not accumulate in any absolute sense, but rather grows and changes, eroding ignorance, as different value perspectives are illuminated and synthesized over time” (pp. 107-108).

In a description that reinforces the slipperiness of postmodernism, its pervasiveness, and its rhizomatic locus (cf. Sajjadi, 2008), Ward (2005a) tellingly observes:

The dreams of order…collapse into the subterranean complexity of the rhizome: a root-stock growing in no particular direction and without detectable regularity. Words like development, progression, advancement, meaning, profundity, and depths are supplanted by other words like dissemination, indeterminacy, deferral, _aporia_, seduction, and surface. Meaning is local, community is tribal, society is pluralistic, and economics is the pragmatics of the marketplace. This is the age of the sign. (p. 322; an _aporia_ is an irresolvable contradiction in which a text, argument or theory is undermined, deconstructed or dismantled, and is often accompanied by profound uncertainty, paradox and perplexity)

In summary then, this section has argued that postmodernism must be recognised and engaged within the enterprise of theology, for a number of significant reasons. First, it avoids repetition of a traditional theology or version of Christianity and opens up critical investigations within RE related to what is happening in society and the world. Second, it has shown that while postmodernism is a “slippery”, ambiguous and rhizomatic concept that might give rise to apprehensions and some negativity, it is nevertheless also a positive force that acknowledges situations of injustice and marginalisation, and is more likely to open up and critique personal and communal “horizons” and religious questions rather than close them down or annihilate them. Third, and finally, RE fused with theology is one of the few partnerships able to recognise, critique and respond to the “hole” described by Ward that cannot be covered over or avoided. The final two sections of this article build upon this profile of postmodernism by describing the nature of theology more accurately, and by proposing that one valuable method for “doing theology” in the classroom is that of theological reflection. One of the central arguments in this article is that “doing theology” is vital to both RE teachers and students, needs to be applied to real life situations, and overlaps with other equally important areas such as ethics, history, scripture study, sacraments, justice, and ecology.

**Responding to a slippery world – theology and RE in the current context**

Anyone who has dealt with a slippery situation knows that it is fraught with danger, but also with possibilities. An ice skating rink is a helpful analogy here: whilst an unskilled person might enter the rink and do a great deal of damage to themselves and others, someone with appropriate training can skate around the slippery surface in effective – and sometimes artistic – ways. The slipperiness of the postmodern world and, correlativey, the postmodern classroom, similarly require a theological heartbeat accompanied by a set of theoretically reflective skills, that equip religious educators with the tools necessary to navigate their context effectively, and, dare we suggest, even artistically.

The kind of theology that provides these tools will thus be more than simple repetition, “intellectual archaeology”, or academic gymnastics, for it will need to reflect on and respond to the complex and multifaceted questions that our current context presents (Lennan, 2007, pp. 466-468; O’Collins, 2011, p. 329; Andraos, 2012, pp. 3-4). Only in this way can theology provide a genuine insight into the complexity of its context and the nature of its subject matter through what McArthur (2012) refers to as a “virtuous mess”,

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understood as a theoretical approach which does not shy away from complexity because it is characterised by its capacity to deal with the “world as we really experience it... which may include the ‘indeterminate’ and the ‘ambiguous’” (p. 421; cf. Kingwell, 2000).

In light of what has been outlined throughout this article, therefore, we understand theology as a discipline that is owned by no one but belongs to everyone (Douglas & Lovat, 2010, p. 85). Furthermore, it is a discipline that is characterised by many different colours inasmuch as it attempts to grapple with the postmodern universe, which is no longer black and white, but rather “an astonishingly vast, subtle and beautifully differentiated universe of many colors” (Kelly, 1993, pp. 4-5). At its broadest, theology can be envisaged as “thinking about questions raised by and about religions” (Ford, 2000, p. 3), implying exploration of such questions within major religious traditions, as well as within the search for meaning in general. In a more detailed sense, theology can also be understood in this discussion as that area which “deals with questions of meaning, truth, beauty, and practice raised in relation to religions and pursued through a range of academic disciplines” (Ford, 2000, p. 16).

What is the point of theology?

The article now puts forward twelve significant reasons why religious education must be planned, taught and considered within a theological context, and explains why theological reflection is a valuable method for understanding and teaching both disciplines.

Theology and theological reflection help us to deal systematically and effectively with the daily challenges of wondering, doubting, trusting, weighing up options, discussing, reading, listening, meditating, discerning and deciding. In some RE classroom contexts, these processes would translate as those fundamental engagements (cognitive, affective, behavioural) otherwise known as, for example, reflection, wisdom, praxis, morality and ethics, prayer, contemplation, and lectio divina (Ford, 2000, p. 10).

Theology assists us in dealing with “questions of truth, beauty and practice” raised in relation to religions and pursued through a range of academic disciplines” (Ford, 2000, pp. 16f; cf. Goosen, 2000, p. 20). In a systematic way, it therefore engages with “research, rigorous thinking, and serious dialogue” with other theologians and with other disciplines in order to “pursue fresh knowledge and new insights” (O’Collins, 2011, p. 323).

Theology in partnership with RE helps ensure that religion is not treated simply as a dry historical artefact devoid of any relational context. Astley and his co-authors (2012) issue a timely caution in this regard:

Today religious educators are called upon to enable young people to develop as fully-rounded human beings in a world, and often in a nation or local society, that is thoroughly multicultural and thoroughly multifaith. No longer is it sufficient to teach about the history of religions: religion is not relegated to the past. No longer is it sufficient to teach about the observable outward phenomena of religions: religion is not restricted to practices, artefacts and buildings observable in the outside world. In this context, it is also necessary to take seriously what it is that religions believe about themselves, and what religions believe about other religions. The theology of religions is what ultimately matters in understanding and interpreting the re-emergence of religion in the twenty-first century as a matter of public significance and social concern. (p. ix; cf. Clooney, 2010a & b in the final section of this article, n. 4)

Theology is the only comprehensive discipline, together with targeted studies of philosophy and wisdom, that enables RE teachers to effectively engage ideas about, for example – God, worship, ethics, facing evil, Jesus Christ, major religious traditions, salvation, eschatology, and the general purpose and meaning of life (Ford, 2000, pp. 33-224; Pazmino, 2009).
Building upon the foregoing point, theology overlaps with other valuable disciplines such as philosophy, which in turn has manifold applications for the RE classroom. For example, refer to Emmanuel Levinas’ treatment of the ethical obligation in the encounter with the other person, and the corresponding challenge to respond with compassion to their pain and suffering (Ben-Ari, 2010; Biesta, 2003; Forte, 2012, p. 5). Furthermore, some approaches to theology include a particular focus on issues of injustice and the role that theology has played in these, and can play in responding to them (O’Collins, 2011, p. 324).

Theology helps us engage with the positive and negative aspects of postmodernity (Ford, 2000, p. 12ff), particularly as outlined in the previous section by various authors.

Theology helps us reflect on wisdom in order to deal with “multiple overwhelments”, especially commencing with the mystery of God, but also emanating from society and the world (Ford, 2000, p. 10ff). Walter Brueggemann (1982, 1987, 1989, 2002) is one scholar who has helped many to identify and articulate these multiple overwhelments, which he describes as experiences of painful disorientation, displacement, dismantling, isolation and despair, among other terms. He avers that such experiences can make individuals and communities feel like “a compost pile”, weak, vulnerable, outcast, and unsettled (1982, pp. 22-28, 46-47; 1987, p. 2; 1989, p. 1; 2002, pp. 9-10). Theology can help confront such situations, which the Psalmist describes as being mired in “the pit” (e.g. Pss 13:16; 70:2; 88:6; 103:4).

Perhaps pursuant to an experience of “multiple overwhelments”, theology also enables us to engage in contemplation of wisdom for the flourishing of life that in turn can lead to the cultivation of interfaith/ interbelief dialogue and wisdom, such as with scriptural reasoning between Jews, Christian, Muslims and others (Ford, 2007, pp. 273-303). Hussain (2006) reinforces this assertion in his reflections on the vocation of the “accidental theologian”. “It is not enough”, he argues, “to talk about each other [solely through cognitive categories]… This comes secondarily, I think, through scholarly literature. For me, it comes primarily through the relationships that are formed [in the university and school contexts]” (p. 167; refer also to Kavka, 2006, on the importance of studying and “receiving tradition”, in his case the Jewish tradition). These dynamics could also be experienced through the study of inspirational people with compelling narratives, such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer or Dorothy Day (as cited in Floyd, 2005, pp. 43-61).

One of the outcomes of such contemplation of wisdom is flourishing through cultivation of scholarly virtues such as humility. As Eugene F. Rogers (2006) points out, this entails a common commitment to humility so that the classroom teacher and others “are committed to practice not self-importance but humility, certainly not the narcissism of their differences” (p. 178; in the context of values education also supported by Lovat, Toomey, Clement, Crotty & Nielsen, 2009, pp. 1-5, 7-19).

In addition to this, the conjoint study of theology and RE has a number of praxis dimensions potentially leading to wisdom, not to mention the capacity for life-long learning and reflection. Such praxis dimensions include the abilities to understand more fully – a person’s and community’s own religious tradition; another person’s tradition; the need for critique and reform of one’s views and tradition (cf. Burrell, 2006, pp. 158-159); the application of a tradition’s wisdom to address a particular need in society or the world; and the need to either defend or justify a religious tradition or theological viewpoint (refer to a range of sources including Kogan, 1995, pp. 89-106; McGrath, 1998 pp. 1-8; Migliore, 2004, passim; & Rashkover, 2006, pp. 152-153). Furthermore, the consistent practice of these dimensions can lead to the cultivation of both intellectual and affective empathy which, when combined with further consideration of values such as justice, can contribute to the development of virtue (Lovat, Mudge & Fleming, 2012).

From a technological perspective, there is a need to engage with the challenge to educate students and teachers about theology and RE within an online environment that is safe, vibrant, sustained, and given to lively engagement for a community of learners open to the concrete cultivation of praxis and wisdom (Hege, 2011, pp. 13-19). Theological competence and reflection can help teachers and students develop “technological literacy” whereby they begin to understand technology as a skill or tool rather than a pedagogy or way of life in itself, and also empower them to ask critical questions such as – what are the benefits of this technology, and what has been lost or changed due to its introduction? In Postman’s (1993) words, they can develop the capacity “to admire technological ingenuity but do not think it represents the highest possible form of human achievement” (p. 184; contra “technopoly”).
Last but not least, in terms of a method for engaging theological issues, and with an eye to the earlier definition of RE, the process of “theological reflection” can better enable the religious heart to beat when both individuals and communities become involved in what is also known as “practical theology” or “applied theology”. Broadly speaking, these forms of theological reflection can be understood as theoretical and empirical studies of everyday, lived experience with concrete links to that experience. To focus on one variegate in this cluster, practical theology can be understood as,

part of a wider academic movement which treats contemporary human experience as worthy of sustained analysis and critical reflection...While practical theologians remain deeply committed to engaging with Christian traditions, this engagement typically takes the form of critical dialogue between those traditions and contemporary experience. (Pattison & Lynch, 2005, pp. 408-409; cf. also the rich insights into theological reflection in Cameron, Reader, Slater with Rowland, 2012, passim)

The overlap between theology and other disciplines and influences, along with a suggested cycle of theological reflection, is captured in the following diagram. A selected list of interconnections between theology, religious education and other areas, as discussed in this paper, appears in the central circle. One possible model for theological reflection (based on and adapted from Pattison & Lynch, 2005, pp. 410-413) is represented as a cycle surrounding this central shape:
Theology for the next millennium – conclusions and future directions

It may be argued that unless theology is recognised as “the heartbeat of religion” in the manner described above, it is possible that both disciplines might suffer conjoint “heart attacks”. It is common knowledge that a heart attack may occur when blood supply is slowed or stopped to the heart due to a blockage. The narrowing of the coronary arteries due to plaque build up (atherosclerosis) causes more than 90% of heart attacks. The length of time in which the blood supply is cut off from the heart determines the amount of damage to the heart (cf. Hanks, 1986, p. 707).

The same dynamics can damage the delicate relationship between religious education and theology. This can lead to the situation where communication or “flow” between the two is stopped or impeded. In worst case scenarios, where RE and theology are completely cut off from each other, the healthy heartbeat of their relationship stops, and different types of “deaths” might take place – of insight, communication, relationships, dialogue, and even whole communities.

What factors and insights, then, can keep this relationship vital and ensure that its “heartbeat” is healthy? This article has asserted that teachers and students can maintain such health through a “diet” that takes account of – the value of theology and theological reflection within current teacher accreditation frameworks and classroom contexts; the slippery and messy postmodern context in which we live, teach and learn; the need to take seriously the various reasons advanced for theological reflection here and in other sources; current cycles of theological reflection, such as the one offered in this article.

All of which insinuates numerous challenges for theology and religious education for the third millennium. Ford (2000) suggests some that deserve consideration. Opening with the conviction that “there is no doubt that, if the human race continues, theology will be at least as common and as necessary in the third as in many previous millennium” (p. 169), he outlines some of the principal challenges such as – to continue to deal with questions linked to common issues and dialogue for all religions, including questions of meaning, truth, beauty and practice linked to these same religions; and to persist in linking theology and wisdom but at the same time applying the “hermeneutics of suspicion” to this endeavour (pp. 169-170).

Ford (2000) concludes by stressing the need to tackle five key, difficult theological questions that are both intrinsic to RE and essential for the formation of teachers in general:

1. Will the question of God and enquiry into all else in relation to God, be central to the field of theology?
2. How can theology be thoughtfully responsible in many spheres? (i.e. what is its moral ecology?)
3. How can academic institutions be shaped so as to serve their threefold responsibility? (to the academy, the religious community, and society)
5. Who will do theology? (pp. 170-175).

As a penultimate reflection, Ford (2000) offers a perceptive observation germane to the strivings of theology students. He proposes that theology,

is shaped through being questioned, known, judged, and affirmed by the source of all wisdom. Such comprehensive receptivity is acknowledged by many of the great theologians as the inspiration of their wisdom. They in turn stand before beginner theologians, confronting them with that mysterious overwhelming concern – the question of God. (p. 175)

Perhaps the final word can be left to Hélène Cixous (cited in Ward, 2005), the Jewish pupil of Derrida, and co-founder of Écriture feminine. In a passage focused on this same ‘question of God’, and echoing this article’s intertwining relationships between RE and theology, along with its manifold challenges, possibilities and applications, she writes in an almost confessional tone:

When I have finished writing, when I am a hundred and ten, all I will have done will have been to attempt a portrait of God. Of the God. Of what escapes us and makes us wonder. Of what we do not know but feel. Of what makes us live. (p. 335)
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There are problems with the use of the word ‘postmodern’ when applied to culture. Sometimes the impression is given that it is used as a synonym for ‘contemporary’; other usage does not clarify differences between postmodernity as the description of a particular style of culture and postmodernism as an ideology; also, its meaning can be conflated with the views of postmodern (and post-structuralist) philosophers. However, what is prominent in cultural postmodernity is the level of questioning and uncertainty about meaning and truth.

In the past, people tended to chart their meaning within a given framework (worldview or meta-narrative) that was relatively well accepted. Now, there is a recognisable tendency not only to challenge traditional cultural meanings, but to call all frameworks into question. Meaning is then perceived as relative, subjective, individualistic and linked to particular contexts. This tends to create diffidence about finding any worthwhile meaning to life. With less cultural reinforcement, individuals can feel more alone in their construction of meaning. They can find it difficult to locate helpful meaning, while at the same time sensing that there is a virtual supermarket of meaning available if they care to shop for it.

A key task in the contemporary search for meaning is how to negotiate the apparent agnosticism about meaning that goes with cultural postmodernity. Two issues need to be addressed: Can there be trustworthy meaning when there is so much questioning, uncertainty and relativism? What does truth mean in a constantly changing landscape of meanings.

The postmodern uncertainty about meaning is one of the defining characteristics of Western culture at the turn of the millennium. This heightens the anxiety people are feeling. They are puzzled about what is happening in the world; they cannot make sense of it; they are not sure of where things are going. For many, traditional beliefs and values do not provide the security and direction they appeared to give formerly. There is a need to understand how and why culture is moving from a period of apparent security and certainty in meaning towards one where there is more uncertainty and less security.

A first step in addressing the crisis of meaning is to acknowledge and articulate the naturally high levels of complexity and uncertainty in life across many domains that have resulted from cultural and technological progress – although the meaning of what constitutes ‘progress’ is part of the problem. Hence it may be unrealistic to expect that meanings should be absolutely certain or true, and that they should be totally secure; that is not the nature of human meanings. They always have some measure of inbuilt uncertainty, even though people may have been unwilling ever to acknowledge this; human meaning always involves interpretation, even if an interpretation of reality outside the person. In other words, there may be access to absolute truths outside the individual, but this access will always be partial as far as the individual’s knowing and meaning is concerned.

Then there is the question of how one can live constructively, comfortably and securely with partial meanings; and how one can accept a tolerable level of uncertainty that goes naturally with both the personal meaning-making process and a culture that is very critical and questioning. It is not a matter of being unable to know absolute truth, but of acknowledging that one cannot know all of the absolute truth, because it is too large and complex. This is not relativism, classic agnosticism or a pragmatic functionalism. Constructive, functional
meaning does not have to be perfect or absolute. Fidelity in commitments can be maintained while admitting natural uncertainties in the personal knowing and meaning-making processes. From this point of view, growth towards maturity in meaning involves replacing false certainties with true uncertainties.

**Some ideas about faith and revelation taken from Believing in a revealing God: The basis of the Christian life (2009) by Gabriel Moran**

For many Christians, the notion of faith means believing in a set of revealed truths given to the church by God through Jesus. Similarly, revelation was regarded as the deposit of revealed truths which became complete at the death of the last possible; and it has been the role of the church to promote and defend these truths ever since. The following are some quotations from Gabriel Moran’s recent book, *Believing in a revealing God*, which sets out to look at the notions of believing and revealing as active relational activities -- more in tune with new Testament Christianity.

“Believing in a revealing God,” is a simple idea: it is the relation between divine activity and human response. . . .It is not surprising that in Christian history faith and revelation have so often been treated as two separable things. They are taken to be essential building blocks in the foundation of Christian theology, church authority, and Christian instruction.

The choice is a simple one. Either faith is a thing directed to something in the past called revelation, or faith is an act directed toward what is revelatory in the present. In the first case faith is imagined as a “cognitive” question: that is, its concern is with assent to truths. In the second case faith engages the whole person and is concerned with today’s life. The first version of faith, as I have described it, no longer has many defenders, but if one really wishes to get free of it one has to be ready to live with the consequences of believing-revealing.

The phrase “the Christian revelation” was coined in the late sixteenth century and ever since then it has been a major obstacle to thinking about both faith and revelation. “Revelation” in a religious context is a claim of God acting: a revealing of the divine. Whatever can be put into human speech is not divine revelation. At best it is a human response to that divine activity.

“Believing in a revealing God” means thinking through some phrases and claims that surround the ideas of faith and revelation. Many of these phrases are assumed to be traditional when in fact they are recent accretions that distort the power of the tradition. The process of recovery is not best imagined as stripping off a cover to discover the pure kernel of faith.

That metaphor assumes that there is an unchanging core that holds answers for today. There are no fixed answers from the past; every formula needs to be critically examined. A truth from the past may need to be restated in the present simply to preserve the same truth.

No individual is wise enough to engage in such reformation by relying on his or her lights alone. The Christian church needs dialogue within itself as well as beyond itself with other religious institutions. Dialogue sometimes involves vigorous debate, which has not been a notable feature of the church.

“Believing in a revealing God” contains two distinct but inseparable poles: “believing in” and “revealing God.” In order to examine each of the elements it is necessary to break the relation into two parts. However, the reader should keep in mind that each side implies the other. Most of what I say about “believing in” makes sense only in its relation to “a revealing God.” The sequence cannot entirely avoid the danger that faith and revelation may be understood as two separable things instead of one relation composed of two actions.

The term “faith” is more commonly used than “revelation.” In secular writing, “faith” is regularly used for anything to do with religion; in church writing, faith is often used where revelation or doctrine would be a more accurate term. Not much progress in understanding is possible if the word is used so indiscriminately. The short, old words in the language—such as person, freedom, love, life, faith—are usually ambiguous. It is their ambiguity that makes them so rich in connotation.

(Selections from pp. 3-15)

*Graham Rossiter, Australian Catholic University*

There are few fields more open to distortion, often by politicians with particular interests, than those of multicultural and intercultural education. Thus, a substantial book setting out to explore these fields and to set an international agenda is particularly welcome. This extensive collection of 29 papers, with a foreword by Professor Jagdish Gundara, President of the International Association for Intercultural Education, is divided into three parts covering, respectively, theoretical perspectives, best practice and the relationship between the multicultural/intercultural field and issues of citizenship, human rights and social justice.

Both editors are experts in the intercultural field and their own contributions are especially pertinent. Palaiologou’s prologue provides an important agenda for scholars in this field, and, appropriately, given her own heritage, she links her remarks to the ancient Greek concepts of *demoi* and *paideia*, ideas about people and education followed up in her Epilogue. Her joint introductory chapter with Gunther Dietz, on finding common ground for the international discourses of multicultural and intercultural education, also sets the scene very well for the collection of papers that follow. Dietz himself personifies multiculturalism, as a child of German parents brought up in Chile, later becoming a professor at the University of Granada in Spain, and now working at the University of Veracruz in Mexico. The collection of chapters is rounded off with Conclusions from both the editors and an Epilogue by Palaiologou, returning to the theme of the ancient Greek origins democracy and citizenship.

It is not possible in a short review to encapsulate the diverse geographical and pedagogical character of the papers, but there are some key themes running through them. One is the idea of citizenship as a common educational field or topic for intercultural and multicultural education. Various contributions consider the impact of globalisation on policy both regionally and locally on citizenship and intercultural education. There is scope for international dialogue on both policy-making and ‘bottom up’ networking. Another theme is the challenge of nationalism. Often under economic pressures, nationalistic views can influence educational policy to the detriment of a broader perception of moral responsibility through human rights at an international level. There are clear and serious dangers in this, and it is well worth going back to the concept of human dignity as represented in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights to reaffirm a sense of moral responsibility that extends beyond the nation state. A further theme is related to language, namely drawing attention to the dangers of monolingualism and the importance of a plurilingual approach in facilitating students’ encounters with and experience of human diversity.

A few chapters deal with religion specifically. Chapter 14 deals with Christian Orthodox religion in Greek primary school, and presents a study of the choices and practices of parents who are themselves immigrants; Palaiologou and colleagues discuss new textbooks in civic and religious education from an intercultural perspective (chapter 21). However, many other chapters are relevant to thinking about the place of religious and worldviews education in relation to intercultural and citizenship education.

Contributors include practitioners and advisers as well as academics and are based in a wide range of countries including Greece, India, Mexico, UK, USA, Spain, the Netherlands, Australia, Germany, Portugal, Italy, Turkey, Finland and Taiwan. The wide range of international contributors includes some distinguished figures, such as Barry van Driel (Editor in Chief of the *Journal Intercultural Education*, and a long-standing and powerful advocate of the field), James A. Banks and Linda King. The book is highly recommended to anyone interested in communication through education internationally, and in issues of intercultural education and citizenship.

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Service leadership is a concept that is well used in discourse on leadership in Catholic schools. Cameron in this book presents a new perspective by looking at service leadership through the prism of the lives and works of three very prominent and influential female Catholic saints. Her thesis is that each model, in different ways, dimensions of service leadership and, moreover, that there are lessons to be learned here for those working in leadership in schools today.

Cameron’s definition of servant leadership is based on that of Spears. It is comprised of ten components; listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people and building community. In elaborating of these core elements she makes good use of Greenleaf’s notion of servant leadership as a journey. The central claim of the book is that the three saints are all exemplars of the kind of leadership model that is laid out here.

One of the strongest features of the book is that Cameron does not fall into the trap of plucking pearls of wisdom from the corpus of each saint’s life and work and then applying these without contextualization to current educational practice. Rather, she engages with each and draws from this reflective elements that model servant leadership. Teresa gives, perhaps, the most obvious example of servant leadership as she led not only a convent but also a significant reform of the Carmelites. For Teresa components like conceptualization were especially important. In her role in the order she had to be attentive, that is listen, to the various currents within the Church, society and also, specifically, to those related to religious life in Spain. On the basis of this she was able to craft a plan that provided both a vision for the Carmelites and also tackled the manifest practical problems that beset the order. This fits in well with Spears notion of conceptualization as applying to those leaders who are able to dream great dreams.

For Catherine, foresight was a particularly important servant leadership component. She was able to look ahead and see the contrasting futures that lay ahead for the Church if decisive decisions were not made. In this she was aided by her status as a woman with no recognized role in the Church. This outsider status made the leadership she was able to provide invaluable, as she was both fearless and insistent. In her correspondence with Gregory XI Catherine demonstrated both her persistence and the capacity of servant leaders to look for solutions and to anticipate problems before they grow too large. Therese is the most recent of the saints examined in the book. Her life as a cloistered nun in France around the turn of the twentieth century gives many illustration of servant leadership. Prominent amongst these is that of the importance of building community. One of her responsibilities at Carmel, despite her age, was to guide the novices into community life. For Therese the heart of community life, be it religious or lay, was to be attentive to the needs of others and to present to them the face of Christ. This translated into taking account of actions in the community and treating all tasks and interactions with others as events of enduring importance.

The book is recommended for those who wish to further their understanding of servant leadership and how this can be applied to schools.

**Professor Richard Rymarz**

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