Review of Religious Education for
The Catholic Education Office
Diocese of Parramatta

Literature Review

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Chapter 1

Catholic Education, Religious Education and Catechesis in the Documents of the Church since Vatican II

Introduction

This review has been prepared as a foundational theoretical framework for the review of Religious Education in the Diocese of Parramatta. This document surveys and categorises the teaching of the Catholic Church as set out in its official documents since the Second Vatican Council. A second component of the project will consist of a comprehensive literature review summarising the major lines of academic research in this field. The third aspect of the project will consist of a series of surveys among interested stakeholders in the Parramatta Diocese. These three instruments will be the basis for making recommendations in a final report to the Bishop of Parramatta, due in February, 2014.

The documents of the Catholic Church concerning Catholic Education (and in particular, Religious Education/Catechesis) appear to fall into four broad headings:

1. **The Essential Characteristics of a Catholic School.**
   This constitutes the context in which the religious education programme is to be delivered – its vision and mission. The documents identify the overall purpose of Catholic education in the evangelising mission of the Church – the mediation between faith and culture. The emphasis is placed on the central importance of the human person both as an individual and in relationship with others. A degree of religious freedom must be afforded to those in Catholic educational settings who are not Catholic, but this is not to impact on the right of the Catholic institution to present its teaching. Particular attention is paid to the role of the community in achieving the aims, as well as the role of parents as ‘first educators.’ The documents consistently assert that a distinguishing feature of Catholic education is that it has a particular concern for the poor and weakest in society.
2. **The Formation of Personnel**
   The documents make strong claims about the conduct and formation of those involved in the project of religious education. Those who work in this field are expected to be committed to the task as sincere believers. The work they do in this area is not under their own auspices, but is to be performed on the basis of a mandate (whether formal or implied) from the local Church authorities. They need to be well-formed, both professionally and personally, and be offered further formation and professional development as they proceed.

3. **The Organisation of the Curriculum**
   An important twofold distinction runs through many of the documents – the functions of religious education and catechesis. The former is seen as the systematic presentation of religious knowledge. There is an insistence upon systematic and rigorous religious education which attains the same academic status as other subjects pursued at school. On the other hand, catechesis is primarily about personal formation in the Christian life.

   The more recent documents also insist that any presentation of the Christian message be done in terms of a category described as Trinitarian Christocentrism – Christ is to be considered the centre of the proclamation, and this must ultimately be ordered to the Trinity, “...to the Father, *through* the Son, *by* the Holy Spirit.”

   Some documents issued prior to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* offer outlines of basic content. Those issued subsequent to the *Catechism* insist that this document be used as the basic standard for identifying the essential doctrinal content.

   Issues of methodology are also addressed, with the advice that the presentation needs to be adapted to suit the age and needs of the recipients. Beyond this, Church documents acknowledge that the choices of methodology need not be prescribed, and leave the choice to local authorities.

4. **The Australian Context**
Two documents have a particular significance for the Australian context – *Ecclesia in Oceania* and *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads*. The first of these has very little content that is not available through other documents; it is simply a focus on particular aspects of these documents that are especially important in the Australian context. *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads* is a programme of action issued by the Bishops of New South Wales. It is a brief but relatively comprehensive letter of pastoral direction. It touches on much of what is identified by other Church documents and applies it to specific pastoral circumstances.

1. The Essential Characteristics of a Catholic School

*Catholic Identity and Mission: An Overview*

The identity and mission of Catholic Education (and in particular, Catholic schools) can be classified under three categories: its nature and goals; its means of operation; and its distinguishing characteristics.

**Nature and Goals**

According to Pope Benedict XVI, the Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her threefold responsibility: proclaiming the word, celebrating the sacraments and exercising the ministry of charity.¹ The project of Catholic education necessarily embraces all three of those dimensions. The documents of the Church consistently locate the mission of Catholic education within the framework of its universal mission to evangelise – “Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.”² The Church has a deep conviction that it is only in the Christian message that people of our time can find answers to their questions and energy for their commitment to human solidarity.³ At its heart, the identity of the Catholic school is grounded in its role in the evangelising mission of the Church and directed to the complete formation of the students.⁴

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³ Ibid. 3
⁴ Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1997), 11. Available at:
The Catholic school is always to be seen as part of the Church’s mission because of its teaching activity, in which faith, culture, and life unite in harmony.\(^5\) A Catholic school is institutionally linked with the Bishop of the diocese, which guarantees that the education be grounded in the principles of the Catholic faith and imparted by teachers of right doctrine and probity of life.\(^6\)

The Catholic school is described as “…a place of integral education of the human person through a clear educational project of which Christ is the foundation, directed at creating a synthesis between faith, culture and life.”\(^7\) The purpose is to bring about a Christian vision of the world through the interweaving of reason and faith.\(^8\) It is the intention of the Church that those who have been baptised become ever more aware of their gift of faith, learn to worship God in spirit and in truth and conform their lives in the principles of justice and truth.\(^9\)

It is intended that the Catholic educational project be continually working towards its goal by a Christian vision of reality.\(^10\) To this end, Catholic schools attempt to create an atmosphere
animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity.\textsuperscript{11} The religious dimension of this school climate is expressed through celebration of Christian values in Word and Sacrament, individual behaviour and friendly interpersonal relationships.\textsuperscript{12} This should lead to a clear realisation of the identity of a Catholic school and the courage to follow all the consequences of its uniqueness.\textsuperscript{13} Moreover, the implementation of a real educational community, built on the foundation of shared projected values, represents a serious task that must be carried out by the Catholic school.\textsuperscript{14}

\textit{Means of Operation}

The integral formation of the human person determines the structure of the Church’s educational programmes, which must look to Christ himself as the fullness of humanity.\textsuperscript{15} Pope Benedict XVI, addressing Catholic Religion teachers in 2009, made it clear that Catholic education requires the enlargement of rationality to the deeper questions of what is true and good by linking theology, philosophy and science. While the autonomy of each discipline must be respected, it is necessary to be aware of the intrinsic unity that holds these together.\textsuperscript{16}

If the Catholic school is to be a means of education in the modern world, there are some fundamental characteristics regarding its identity which must be strengthened.\textsuperscript{17}

1. The centrality of the human person in the Catholic educational project, and the vital relationship with Christ in whose person the full truth about humanity is to be found.\textsuperscript{18}

2. Rejection of a pervading and enervating neutrality with regard to Christian values and a clear understanding of the Christian vision of life and what it means to be human.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. 9.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. 10.
Distinguishing Characteristics:
The documents identify a number of important features that need to be associated with Catholic education generally and Catholic schools in particular. Four distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school are specified: educational climate; personal development; relationship of Gospel and culture; illumination of all knowledge with light of faith.\(^\text{20}\) Each characteristic must be ordered toward the realisation of a Christian vision of life.

An important distinguishing feature of Catholic education ought to be that it is open to all, and attentive to the demands of justice, especially regarding the poor and weakest in society.\(^\text{21}\) Catholic schools also have an ecumenical dimension whereby the students are prepared for living in contact with non-Catholics, affirming their Catholic identity while respecting the faith of others.\(^\text{22}\)

Finally, there is an acknowledgement that Catholic education is a long-term project and consequently, the value of the efforts that go into it (particularly Catholic schools) cannot be measured by immediate efficiency.\(^\text{23}\)

The Nature and Goals of Catholic Schools – Summary of Key Points

- The Church has three primary responsibilities: proclaiming the word; celebrating the sacraments; and exercising the ministry of charity.\(^\text{24}\)
- The mission of the Catholic school embraces all three of these dimensions and is described as being part of the evangelising mission of the Church based on the Great Commission of Christ Himself: “Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.”\(^\text{25}\)


See also:


\(^{22}\) John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979), 32


\(^{24}\) See Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*. (2005), 25. Available at:

\(^{25}\) Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), 49, 72
• Catholic Schools are institutionally linked to the Bishop of the diocese who has the responsibility for their proper functioning.  

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• The Catholic school is a place of integral education of the human person and its particular project is directed at creating a synthesis between faith, culture and life. It works towards this role by a Christian vision of reality.  

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• The religious climate of the school is expressed through the celebration of Christian values in word and sacrament.  

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• The Catholic educational project seeks always to work in harmony with the nature of the human person as revealed in Christ.  

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• The Catholic school can never take a position of neutrality with regard to Christian values or what it means to be human.  

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• There are four distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school:
  
1. Its distinctive educational climate;

2. Its emphasis on the personal development of each student;

3. Its emphasis on the relationship between the Gospel and the culture;

4. Its illumination of all knowledge with light of faith.  

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• Catholic schools have a particular concern for the poor and the weak. They also have an ecumenical dimension.  

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• The project of Catholic education is long-term and so the value of Catholic schools cannot always be measured in terms of immediate efficiency.  

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The Human Person and the Mediation of Culture

Many of the documents of the Church regarding education draw attention to two complementary elements: the centrality of the human person as the subject of education, and the mediation of human and Christian culture as the essential object.

Human Person

The documents observe that any genuine educational philosophy must be based on the nature of the human person and account for both the physical and spiritual powers of each individual. As already noted in the overview, it is through her educational programmes that the Church seeks the integral formation of the human person, looking to Christ Himself as the fullness of humanity.

Culture

The Church sees the focus of her pastoral service in the field of education as mediating between faith and culture. This requires the twofold task of being faithful to the Gospel and at the same time respecting the autonomy and methods proper to human knowledge. Hence, the task of education is to guide students through a critical and systematic assimilation of culture.

In this matter, the Church’s role is not neutral. What is important is to evangelise culture and cultures; they have to be regenerated by an encounter with the Gospel. The Catholic school is based on an educational philosophy in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony. While it is acknowledged that human culture must be taught with scientific objectivity, nevertheless, faith cannot be divorced from culture; the points of contact are

established within the human person. Furthermore, in the view of the Church, “…the religious dimension is in fact intrinsic to culture. It contributes to the overall formation of the person and makes it possible to transform knowledge into wisdom of life.”

**The Human Person and the Mediation of Culture – Summary of Key Points**

- Any genuine educational philosophy must account for both the physical and spiritual powers of each individual human person, looking to Christ Himself as the fullness of humanity.
- The Catholic school aims to bring faith, culture and life into harmony and to guide students through a critical and systematic assimilation of culture.
- The religious dimension is intrinsic to culture and contributes to the formation of the person.

**Evangelisation**

As already noted, the Church locates the project of Catholic education within the overall mission of Evangelisation. For this reason, it will be useful to explore this in terms of its implications for Catholic education in general and for schools in particular.

The Church sees the purpose of its entire activity as an expression of the love that seeks the good of every human being, and this is brought about by means of evangelisation through word and sacrament. The 1975 Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* made the claim that the Church exists to evangelise; to preach and teach, to be the channel of grace, reconcile sinners with God and perpetuate Christ’s sacrifice in the Mass. The essential kernel is identified as the Good News of salvation proclaimed by Christ proclaims – liberation above all from sin and the evil one. Those who have been evangelised are in turn expected to evangelise others.

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The 1997 *General Directory of Catechesis* comprehensively sets out the characteristic features of the task of evangelisation. It identifies three broad socio-religious contexts requiring different pastoral approaches:

a. The mission *ad gentes* – to the pagans; to those who have never known the Christian message
   
   Main Tasks: conversion; developed within Baptismal catechumenate.

b. The mission to communities fervent in their faith and Christian living.
   
   Main Tasks: Processes of well-articulated Christian initiation for children and adolescents; further formation for adults.

c. The mission to entire communities which have lost a living sense of faith and live lives apart from the Church. This is properly called ‘the New Evangelisation’.
   
   Main Tasks: Primary proclamation; basic catechesis.49

The *General Directory* situates the tasks associated with evangelisation a continuum whereby one stage is followed by another in a more or less predictable pattern. The point of the continuum on which those being evangelised find themselves will determine the kind of activity to be pursued:

i. Christian witness, dialogue and presence in charity

ii. Proclamation of the Gospel and the call to conversion

iii. The catechumenate (*a time of learning through participation*) and Christian initiation

iv. The formation of Christian communities through and by means of the sacraments and their ministers.50

**Witness**

A persistent theme of the documents in terms of evangelisation is ‘witness.’ The word is used thirty-six times in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* alone. “The first means of evangelizing is the *witness* of an authentically Christian life.”51 “Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness.”52 Those who evangelise, then, must not preach themselves or their personal ideas in the name of the Church.53 The importance of the individual ‘person-to-person’ evangelist is described


52 Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), 21

53 Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), 15
as indispensable. Moreover, it is made clear that the evangelist should have a love of those being evangelised. Evangelisation will never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit.

The Catholic school is identified as playing an important role with those committed to their care and they are reminded that catechetical instruction must not be neglected as a means of evangelisation. It is made clear that while evangelisation begins with a “...presence in charity,” it must eventually result in the explicit presentation of the message itself. The faith must be preached since faith comes from what is heard and what is heard comes from the preaching of Christ. Evangelii Nuntiandi, however, looks beyond the teachers in the school. It proposes that young people well-trained in faith must become more and more the apostles of youth.

**Evangelisation – Summary of Key Points**

- The Church sees the purpose of its entire activity as an expression of the love that seeks the good of every human being, and this is brought about by means of evangelisation through word and sacrament.
- The Church exists to evangelise – to preach and teach and to be a channel of grace, reconciling sinners with God and perpetuating Christ’s sacrifice in the Mass.
- There are three broad socio-religious contexts for evangelisation:
  1. To those who have never known the Christian message
  2. To those fervent in their faith
  3. To those who have lost a living sense of their faith – New Evangelisation.
- Evangelisation proceeds according to a continuum of four successive stages:
  1. Christian witness, dialogue and presence in charity
  2. Proclamation of the Gospel and the call to conversion
  3. The catechumenate and Christian initiation

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54 Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975), 46
55 Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975), 79
56 Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975), 75
57 Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975), 44
58 Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975), 42
59 Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975), 72
61 Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975), 14.
4. The formation of Christian communities through and by means of the sacraments and their ministers.\textsuperscript{63}

- Catholic schools have an important role to play with those committed to their care and are reminded that catechetical instruction must not be neglected as a means of evangelisation.\textsuperscript{64}
- Those involved in evangelisation do so primarily by means of their Christian witness. The initial presence in charity, however, must eventually result in the explicit presentation of the Gospel message.\textsuperscript{65}

\textbf{The Community Dimension}

The documents strongly assert the importance of the role of the community in the project of Catholic education. The idea of a Catholic school as a community is theological rather than sociological.\textsuperscript{66} It is founded on the concept of \textit{communio}: the eternal mystery, revealed in Christ, of the communion of love that is the very life of God – Trinity. In practical terms, this means that as a community, the Church must practise love and it is necessary that this be organised if it is to be effective in serving the community.\textsuperscript{67}

\textit{Educating Together in Catholic Schools} goes so far as to say that, because its purpose is to make human beings more human, a Catholic education can only be carried out authentically in a relational community context.\textsuperscript{68} Furthermore, “...the Catholic school aims at forming the persons in the integral unity of their being. They must be involved in the dynamics of interpersonal relations that give life to a school community.”\textsuperscript{69} Human beings are seen as essentially relational and the communion to which they are called has two dimensions – communion with God and communion with other people.\textsuperscript{70} In other words, the educational

\textsuperscript{64} Paul VI, \textit{Evangelii Nuntiandi} (1975), 42
\textsuperscript{65} Paul VI, \textit{Evangelii Nuntiandi} (1975), 21
process is “...not simply a human activity but a genuine Christian journey; the will of God is found in the work and human relationships of each day.”

Consequently, “...because of its identity and its roots in the Church, the Catholic school community must aspire to being a community of faith. It must be able to form ever more profound relationships of communion – nourished by a living relationship with Christ and with the Church.” Only by giving witness to communion can a Catholic educational community educate for communion. One of the important purposes of a Catholic school is that the students should learn to overcome individualism by living in solidarity with Christ and with others. Catholic schools are also called on to build open communion – to share the fruits of their relationship with Christ and each other in the wider world.

Justice
There is a role that the Catholic Church must play in establishing justice, but, “The just ordering of society and the State is a central responsibility of politics.” A fundamental distinction exists in Christianity between what belongs to Caesar and to God, “...in other words, the distinction between Church and State, or, as the Second Vatican Council puts it, the autonomy of the temporal sphere.” In this sphere, lay Catholics in particular are encouraged to play their part. Even so, “...there is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love.” Establishing justice is one part of the mission and must be pursued in the context of the whole.

77 Ibid, 28.
79 Ibid, 28
The Community Dimension – Summary of Key Points

• The community dimension plays a very important role in the project of Catholic education. This is a theological concept: eternal mystery, revealed in Christ, of the communion of love that is the very life of God – the Holy Trinity. ⁸⁰

• A Catholic education can only be carried out authentically in a relational community context because its purpose is to make human beings more human. ⁸¹

• There are two dimensions to a genuine relational community – one with God and the other towards one another. ⁸²

• One of the important purposes of a Catholic school is that the students learn to overcome individualism by living in solidarity with Christ. ⁸³

• The Church, and, by extension, the Catholic school, has a role to play in promoting justice. This role must be placed in the overall context of its mission, which is multidimensional. ⁸⁴

Respect for Religious Freedom

In Catholic schools, the religious freedom of non-Catholic pupils must be respected. The Church’s responsibility of practical charity cannot be used as a means of making converts – love is free and cannot be practised as a means of achieving other ends. This does not mean, however, that God and Christ can be left aside, since often the deepest cause of suffering is the absence of God. ⁸⁵ Furthermore, those who carry out the Church’s ministry of charitable work must not be “...inspired by ideologies aimed at improving the world, but should rather be guided by faith which works through love.” ⁸⁶

In the context of a Catholic school, respect for religious freedom clearly does not affect the right/duty of the Church “...in [its] public teaching and witness to [its] faith, whether by the

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⁸⁶ Ibid, 33.
spoken or by the written word. A Catholic school cannot relinquish its own freedom to proclaim the Gospel; to offer is not to impose.

For students who are non-believers, religious education assumes the character of a missionary proclamation of the Gospel and is ordered to a decision of faith, which catechesis, in its turn, will nurture and mature. In dealing with students who come from different faiths or ideological backgrounds, evangelisation may not be possible, and attempts should be made at ‘pre-evangelisation’ – the development of a religious sense of life. The Church operates some schools in places where the overwhelming majority are not Catholic (e.g. in Thailand). In such circumstances, catechetical activity is necessarily limited and even religious education—when possible—accentuates its cultural character.

The Primary Role of the Family
The documents of the Church consistently and unequivocally assert the role of the family as critical and primary. The relationship is irreplaceable and inalienable. It is therefore incapable of being entirely delegated or usurped by others. It is the sacrament of marriage that gives to this educational role the dignity and vocation of being really and truly a ministry’ of the Church. The role of parents in the education of their children is held to be so decisive that “...scarcely anything can compensate for their failure in it.”

It is for these reasons that Catholic schools are bound by the principle of subsidiarity in respect of the role of parents in the education of their children. Consequently, schools need

to provide concrete support to parents to enable them to play their role as first educators.\textsuperscript{97} Furthermore, the partnership between a Catholic school and the families of the students is essential if the goals of the school are to be achieved. Schools should initiate meetings and other programmes which make parents conscious of this role.\textsuperscript{98}

\textbf{The Primary Role of the Family – Summary of Key Points}

- \textit{Parents are the primary educators and for this reason, the school is bound by the law of subsidiarity in respect of the education of their own children.}\textsuperscript{99}

- \textit{Schools need to provide concrete support to parents to enable them to fulfil this role – including meetings and programmes to help equip them for the task.}\textsuperscript{100}

\textbf{2. Formation of Personnel}

\textbf{Teachers and Catechists}

The documents of the Church have much to say on the subject of the teachers and catechists working in Catholic Education.

\textit{Professionally Trained}

In terms of their professional preparation for the task, those who work in Catholic education are required to have a solid professional formation, since inadequacy in this area undermines the formation of students and the teacher’s own capacity to witness.\textsuperscript{101} There is also a realistic awareness of the current demands of the teaching profession, where continuous rapid transformation leads to the premature aging of knowledge, requiring educators to constantly


update the content and methods of the subject area. This professional commitment also applies to religious education.\textsuperscript{102} Educators in Catholic schools are encouraged to be “...well-prepared interlocutors, able to awaken and direct the best energies of the students towards the search for truth and the meaning of existence. Real education is not possible without the light of truth.”\textsuperscript{103}

**Personal Witness**

During his address to Italian teachers of religious education, Pope Benedict XVI made these remarks concerning the qualities needed in Catholic teachers, “In him [St Paul] we recognize the humble and faithful disciple, the courageous herald, the gifted mediator of Revelation. These are characteristics to which I invite you to look to nourish your identity as educators and witnesses in the world of the school.”\textsuperscript{104} The documents of the Church consistently call for this kind of personal commitment and conviction from teachers, who are meant to carry out their task “...in communion with Christ.”\textsuperscript{105} Teachers, as witnesses, need to be willing to account for the hope that nourishes their own lives by living the truth they propose to their pupils.\textsuperscript{106} The effectiveness of religious education is closely tied to the personal witness given by the teacher.\textsuperscript{107} It depends primarily on the teachers whether or not the Catholic school achieves its purpose.\textsuperscript{108} Indeed, the project of the Catholic school is convincing only if carried out by people who are deeply motivated, because they witness to a living encounter with Christ.\textsuperscript{109}

The Catholic school should be able to count on the unity of purpose and conviction of all its members.\textsuperscript{110} The effectiveness of the Catholic school will be significantly enhanced if the


\textsuperscript{103} Ibid. 2. Op. cit.


students experience the love and care of committed educators.\textsuperscript{111} For this reason, those responsible for hiring teachers and administrators in Catholic schools are advised to take account of the faith-lives of those they are hiring.\textsuperscript{112} One further consequence is that “...the power of evangelization will find itself considerably diminished if those who proclaim the Gospel are divided among themselves.”\textsuperscript{113}

\textit{Opportunities for spreading the Gospel}

Not only should the teachers be personally and professionally committed, but they should also be “...sensitive to finding opportunities for allowing their students to see beyond the limited horizon of human reality.”\textsuperscript{114} Together with and in collaboration with the family, schools provide possibilities for catechesis that must not be neglected.\textsuperscript{115}

\textit{Spiritual Formation}

Given that they are acting on behalf of the Church in their school communities, Catholic educators need a formation of the heart as well as the mind if they are to contribute effectively to the project of religious education.\textsuperscript{116} “Educators must be willing to develop knowledge and be open to updating methodologies, but open also to spiritual and religious formation.”\textsuperscript{117}

\textit{The Mandate from the Church}

Teachers never act on their own behalf in offering religious teaching in a Catholic school; they are transmitting Christ’s teaching and not their own.\textsuperscript{118} When lay people work in this field, it is by way of invitation to cooperate more closely with the apostolate of the Bishops –

a mandate of an apostolic undertaking. The essential element of the mandate is union with those whom the Holy Spirit has assigned to lead and guide the Church.

**Teachers and Catechists – Summary of Key Points**

- The effectiveness of the religious education programme is closely tied to the personal witness given by teachers.

- Teachers must have a solid professional formation. Inadequacy in this area undermines the success of their work with students and their ability to witness to their faith.

- As in other subject areas, religious education teachers must continually update their professional qualifications.

- Religious education teachers should have a personal commitment to their role, enabling them to carry it out “...in communion with Christ.”

- Those responsible for hiring teachers and administrators in Catholic schools are advised to take account of the faith-lives of those they are hiring.

- All teachers in a Catholic school should be “...sensitive to finding opportunities for allowing students to see beyond the limited horizon of human reality.

- Catholic educators need a formation of the heart as well as the mind if they are to contribute effectively to the project of religious education.

- When lay people work in this field, it is by way of invitation to cooperate more closely with the apostolate of the Bishops – a mandate of an apostolic undertaking.

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3. The Organisation of the Curriculum

**Catechesis and Religious Education**

One of the key questions that theorists working in the field of Catholic Education have been grappling with since the Second Vatican Council is the relationship between catechesis and religious instruction (referred to more commonly in Australia as ‘religious education’).

**Catechesis**

In *Catechesi Tradendae*, catechesis is described as “...an orderly and systematic initiation into the revelation that God has given of Himself to humanity in Christ Jesus, a revelation stored in the depths of the Church's memory and in Sacred Scripture, and constantly communicated from one generation to the next by a living, active traditio.”

Its definitive aim is not simply the conveying of knowledge, but intimacy with Christ. It implies the ongoing communication of supernatural life which, in the words of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* “...finds its living expression in the seven sacraments and in the radiation of grace and holiness which they possess.”

**Religious Education**

It is quite clear that the Church insists on making a distinction between religious education and catechesis. In the context of a school, religious education needs to be seen as a subject with the same systematic demands and rigour as other disciplines. By the same token, other subjects in the curriculum should be taught according to their own methodologies – not mere adjuncts of faith.

Religious education is different from, and complementary to, catechesis, as it conveys knowledge on the identity of Christianity and Christian life.

In distinguishing the task of religious education from catechesis, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* gives this clarification:

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The aim of the school however, is knowledge. While it uses the same elements of the Gospel message, it tries to convey a sense of the nature of Christianity, and of how Christians are trying to live their lives. It is evident, of course, that religious instruction cannot help but strengthen the faith of a believing student, just as catechesis cannot help but increase one's knowledge of the Christian message.

Catechesis, however, is described by the same document in this way:

The distinction comes from the fact that, unlike religious instruction, catechesis presupposes that the hearer is receiving the Christian message as a salvific reality. Moreover, catechesis takes place within a community living out its faith at a level of space and time not available to a school: a whole lifetime.\textsuperscript{135}

Some have used these passages to argue that in the context of contemporary Catholic schools, only religious education and not catechesis is possible since many of the students are not receiving the message as a salvific reality. Moreover, the school is not capable of being present in the lives of students for a whole lifetime. This view has been strongly advocated and is now widely represented in Australian Catholic schools.

While the case for separating catechesis from religious education may be argued logically from the two passages quoted above, this can only be done by isolating these passages from their context. There is, in fact, no warrant from the actual documents of the Church for this approach. A distinction is proposed – not a complete separation of the two elements. In order to demonstrate this, it will be necessary to quote extensively from the relevant documents in order to clarify the context. The simplest example can be drawn from the quotation immediately above. By including the two sentences that immediately precede those quoted, it becomes clear that the connection between the two tasks is just as important as the distinction between the two.

\textit{There is a close connection, and at the same time a clear distinction, between religious instruction and catechesis, or the handing on of the Gospel message.}\textsuperscript{(61)}
\textit{The close connection makes it possible for a school to remain a school and still integrate culture with the message of Christianity.} The distinction comes from the fact

that, unlike religious instruction, catechesis presupposes that the hearer is receiving the Christian message as a salvific reality. Moreover, catechesis takes place within a community living out its faith at a level of space and time not available to a school: a whole lifetime.  

It is further evident from the very next paragraph that it is intended that the Catholic school continue to play a specific role in the domain of catechesis.

The distinction between religious instruction and catechesis does not change the fact that a school can and must play its specific role in the work of catechesis. Since its educational goals are rooted in Christian principles, the school as a whole is inserted into the evangelical function of the Church. It assists in and promotes faith education.

The relationship of catechesis and religious education is seen as complementary: “It is evident, of course, that religious instruction cannot help but strengthen the faith of a believing student, just as catechesis cannot help but increase one's knowledge of the Christian message.” The religious education offered in schools should also coordinate with the catechetical activities offered elsewhere: “religious instruction in the school needs to be coordinated with the catechesis offered in parishes, in the family, and in youth associations.”

Within the overall curriculum in a Catholic school, religious education is meant to play a role in influencing the development of religious values:

One important result of religious instruction is the development of religious values and religious motivation; these can be a great help in obtaining the willing participation of the students. But we must remember that religious values and motivation are cultivated in all subject areas and, indeed, in all of the various activities going on in the school. One way that teachers can encourage an

understanding of and commitment to religious values is by frequent references to God.\textsuperscript{139}

Even \textit{The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School} – the document which makes the clearest case for a distinction between catechesis and religious education – envisages that a religious education teacher will be forming students in religious truth and values using a Christological approach:

Teachers learn through experience how to help the students understand and appreciate the religious truths they are being taught, and this appreciation can easily develop into love. A truth which is loved by the teacher, and communicated in such a way that it is seen to be something valuable in itself, then becomes valuable to the student. One advantage of the Christological approach to religious instruction is that it can develop this love more easily in young people. The approach we have suggested concentrates on the person of Jesus. It is possible to love a person; it is rather difficult to love a formula. This love for Christ is then transferred to his message which, because it is loved, has value.

But every true educator knows that a further step is necessary: values must lead to action; they are the motivation for action. Finally, truth becomes fully alive through the supernatural dynamism of grace, which enlightens and leads to faith, to love, to action that is in accord with the will of God, through the Lord Jesus, in the Holy Spirit. The Christian process of formation is, therefore, the result of a constant interaction involving the expert labour of the teachers, the free cooperation of the students, and the help of grace.\textsuperscript{140}

Further reference to the documents only serves to underscore the relationship between catechesis and religious education, while at the same time affirming the legitimate distinction between the two.

Religious education and catechesis are at the same time distinct and complementary, and the Catholic school’s purpose is the students’ integral formation.\textsuperscript{141}

The essential task of education remains the formation of the human person in its totality, particularly as regards the religious and spiritual dimension.\textsuperscript{142}

There is a connection between scholastic teaching of religion and the essential deepening of faith. Catholic teachers gives witness in the classroom that God is the essential reference-point in their own lives.\textsuperscript{143}

The relationship between catechesis and religious education is one of distinction and complementarity; it is necessary to clearly distinguish between the two while ensuring that they continue to work in harmony.\textsuperscript{144}

While the specific aim of the school is knowledge, the Catholic school also has a catechetical role which is of great importance.\textsuperscript{145}

When given in the context of the Catholic school, religious education must be complemented by catechesis and other forms of ministry.\textsuperscript{146}

It may be useful to sum up this issue with an analogy. It would appear that what is being proposed in the documents is a distinction like the one between the left and right hands of the same person – both hands working on the same project. Nowhere is it envisaged that the tasks are so separate that the analogy for them would be two different people – one delivering catechesis and the other religious education.

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\textsuperscript{141} Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, \textit{The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School} (1988), 70.


Catechesis and Religious Education – Summary of Key Points

- The Church insists on making a distinction between religious education and catechesis. In the context of a school, religious education needs to be seen as a subject with the same systematic demands and rigour as other disciplines.  

- The definitive aim of catechesis, on the other hand, is intimacy with Christ and ongoing induction into the life of the Church.

- What is proposed here is a distinction, not a formal separation of the two tasks.

- In the Church’s view, the distinction between religious education and catechesis does not change the fact that a school can and must play its specific role in the work of catechesis.

- A suitable analogy for explaining the distinction would be the cooperation of the left and right hand – each one with a different role to play but working together.

Trinitarian Christocentrism

The documents of the Church insist that Christ be seen as the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school. Furthermore, in the view of the Church, Jesus Christ not only transmits the word of God: He is the Word of God. The project of educating in the Catholic faith is therefore completely tied to Him. This centrality of Christ is referred to as ‘Christocentricity’.

The Church teaches that Christ leads us to the innermost mystery of God – the mystery of the Holy Trinity, which is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. Hence by association, every authentic mode of presentation of the Christian message must always be christocentric-trinitarian: “Through Christ to the Father in the Holy Spirit … If catechesis lacks these three elements or neglects their close relationship, the Christian message can certainly lose its

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proper character.”  In fact, the Church views all of its charitable activities as a manifestation of Trinitarian love. “If you see charity, you see the Trinity,” wrote St Augustine.  

**Trinitarian Christocentrism – Summary of Key Points**

- *Jesus Christ not only transmits the word of God: he is the Word of God. The project of educating in the Catholic faith is therefore completely tied to him.*  
- *Christ leads us to the innermost mystery of God – the Holy Trinity, the central mystery of Christian faith and life.*  
- *Every authentic mode of presentation of the Christian message must always be christocentric-trinitarian: Through Christ to the Father in the communion of the Holy Spirit.*  
- *“If you see charity, you see the Trinity” – St Augustine.*  

**Source and Sources of Divine Revelation**

The documents of the Church insist that the Good News, first proclaimed by the witness of life, will sooner or later need to be proclaimed by the word of life. Hence, catechesis and religious education necessarily follow from the initial witness.

This subsequent proclamation draws its content from the Word of God transmitted in Tradition and Scriptures. The Second Vatican Council’s dogmatic constitution, *Dei Verbum* clarified the Church’s teaching about the sources of divine revelation by identifying Jesus Christ himself as the mediator and fullness of revelation, while Scripture and Tradition are to be seen as the authentic sources of our knowledge of Christ. For the purposes of religious education and catechesis, then, the basic data is to be found in the Scriptures and in the Creed (which is described as an exceptionally important expression of the living heritage of the Church.)  

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The Scriptures are given a particular emphasis in the project of Catholic education. Pope Benedict XVI has been especially insistent on this need to “...rediscover the centrality of God’s Word in Catechesis.” 165 He refers to the encounter of Jesus with the disciples on the road to Emmaus as a model of catechesis based on the explanation of the Scriptures – which Christ alone can give. 166 The Pope’s words to religious education teachers underscore the importance he places on the Scriptures. “One of the main aspects of your teaching is of course the communication of the truth and beauty of the word of God and knowledge of the Bible is an essential element of the curriculum for teaching the Catholic religion.”167

The Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini makes it clear that it is not just reading the Scriptures with an independent mindset that is envisaged here, but rather, “catechesis will be all the richer and more effective for reading the [Biblical] texts with the mind and the heart of the Church.” 168 The same document draws attention to the importance of the relationship between the Scriptures and Tradition as it is set forth in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. 169 Hence, to achieve what the Church has in mind, Religious Education teachers need to be given careful training in the Sacred Scriptures and in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. 170

Source and Sources of Divine Revelation – Summary of Key Points

- The proclamation of the Good News draws its content from the Word of God transmitted in Tradition and Scriptures. 171
- Jesus Christ Himself is the mediator and fullness of revelation, while Scripture and Tradition are to be seen as the authentic sources of our knowledge of Christ. 172
- The Scriptures, read with the mind of the Church, are given a particular emphasis in the project of Catholic education. 173

• There is a vital relationship between the Scriptures and Tradition as it is set forth in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, so teachers need careful training in both. 174

Essential Content

Benedict XVI draws attention to the connection between human and religious formation. Religious education cannot be considered as some optional extra that can be added to an existing secular programme – the whole curriculum of the Catholic school should be directed to the integral development of the human person, in which religious education is integrated organically. “The religious dimension is not some kind of superstructure, it is integral to being human; it makes the human person more human.”175 This concern is reflected in other documents as well. “Efforts must be made in putting together the school curriculum to avoid fragmentation by placing the human person – a material and spiritual being – at the centre.”176

In terms of the content of religious education and catechesis, a highly detailed programme is not specified by the Church, but some outlines are provided for overall guidance. In addition, the Catechism of the Catholic Church is mandated as the standard reference for doctrinal presentations. That said, there is an expectation that catechesis and religious education should must be “…systematic, deal with essentials, be integral and sufficiently complete.”177 It must convey the truth, which must never be hidden or betrayed if evangelisation is to be successful.178

There are three outlines of essential content to be found in the documents, The General Directory for Catechesis, Catechesi Tradendae, and The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School

In the General Directory of Catechesis, the following tasks are identified as fundamental. Further clarification of the meaning of each one can be gained from reading the document itself if this is required.

The fundamental tasks of catechesis:  

1. Promoting knowledge of the faith  
2. Liturgical education  
3. Moral formation  
4. Teaching to pray  
5. Education for Community Life  
6. Missionary initiation

In *Catechesi Tradendae*, John Paul II provides a brief list of basic essentials:

1. Humanity’s creation and sin;  
2. God’s plan of redemption and its long, loving preparation and realisation;  
3. the Incarnation of the Son of God;  
4. Mary Immaculate, Mother of God, ever-virgin, assumed into heaven;  
5. Mary’s role in the mystery of salvation;  
6. the mystery of lawlessness at work in our lives;  
7. the power of God freeing us from it;  
8. the need for penance and asceticism;  
9. the sacramental and liturgical actions;  
10. the reality of the Eucharistic Presence;  
11. participation in divine life here and hereafter.

The same document also identifies specific aspects of the Christian message that are regarded as so important that they should be committed to memory. “Far from being opposed to the dignity of young Christians, or constituting an obstacle to personal dialogue with the Lord, is a real need, as the synod fathers forcefully recalled.” These aspects are:

1. A certain memorisation of the words of Jesus,  
2. Important Bible passages, of the Ten Commandments,  
3. The formulae of professions of the faith,  
4. The liturgical texts, of the essential prayers,

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181 Bishop Geoffrey Jarrett (Diocese of Lismore) has responded to this request by identifying the specific details required proposed by this passage and has published them in a brief pamphlet titled *For Mind and Memory*.  
5. Key doctrinal ideas.\textsuperscript{183}

*The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* has an outline which is useful in identifying what needs to be included in a basic but comprehensive programme of religious education and catechesis. It is divided into two parts: ‘The Christ Event and the Christian Message’ and ‘The Christian Life’.

**The Christ Event and the Christian Message**

*Preliminary*

Vatican II advised that the task of the teacher is to summarise Christology and present it in everyday language.\textsuperscript{184} This should be preceded by:

1. some basic ideas about Scripture (especially the Gospels);
2. Divine Revelation and the Tradition that is alive in the Church.

*Outline*

- With this base, the class begins to learn about the Lord Jesus:
  1. His message
  2. His deeds
  3. the historical fact of His Resurrection
  4. the mystery of His divinity
     - for more mature students this can be expanded to include:
       i. Jesus as Saviour, Priest, Teacher, and Lord of the universe
       ii. At His side is Mary, His Mother, who cooperates in His mission.\textsuperscript{185}
- The reliable way to bring young people closer to the mystery God is the way indicated by the Saviour: "Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father."\textsuperscript{186}
- Students learn much about the human person from science, but science has nothing to say about mystery. Teachers should help students begin to discover the mystery within the human person.\textsuperscript{187}
- Human history unfolds within a divine history of salvation: from creation, through the first sin, the covenant with the ancient people of God, the long period of waiting until

\textsuperscript{183} Ibid. 55.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid. 74.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid.75.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid. 76.
finally Jesus our Saviour came, so that now we are the new People of God, pilgrims on earth journeying toward our eternal home.\textsuperscript{188}

- **Christian Anthropology.** The educational value of Christian anthropology is obvious, since, though it, the students will discover:
  - the true value of the human person: loved by God, with a mission on earth and a destiny that is immortal,
  - the virtues of self-respect and self-love, and of love for others
  - a willingness to embrace life,
  - their own unique vocations as a fulfilment of God's will.\textsuperscript{189}

- **Ecclesiology.** Ecclesiology has an extremely important educational value: the ideal of a universal human family is realised in the Church.\textsuperscript{190}

- **Sacraments and Sacramentality.** Teachers will help students to discover the real value of the Sacraments: they accompany the believer on his or her journey through life.\textsuperscript{191}

- **The Last Things.** Reflection on the Last Things using the story of Dives and Lazarus (Jn 11: 25-27).\textsuperscript{192}

- **The Communion of Saints.** Using the Creed as a pattern, the teacher can help students to learn about the Kingdom of Heaven and the Communion of Saints.\textsuperscript{193}

*The Christian Life*

Each truth of faith has ethical implications, but a systematic presentation of Christian ethics is also required.\textsuperscript{194}

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid. 76.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid. 76.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid. 76.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid. 76.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid. 78.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid. 80.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.81.
The First Christian Communities. This study of ethics can be introduced by looking at the first Christian communities where the Gospel message was accompanied by prayer and the celebration of the Sacraments.

Christian Perfection. The Christian perfection to which we are all called is a gift of Jesus through the mediation of the Spirit; but the gift requires our cooperation. \(^{195}\)

The Virtue of Faith. Students will begin to understand the meaning of the virtue of faith: helped by grace, to give complete, free, personal and affective loyalty to the God who reveals Himself through His Son. \(^{196}\)

A Gift of God. This commitment to Christian living is not automatic; it is itself a gift of God. We must ask for it and wait for it patiently. Students must be given time to grow and to mature. \(^{197}\)

Expressed in Acts of Religion. The life of faith is expressed in acts of religion. The teacher will help students to open their hearts in confidence to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through personal and liturgical prayer. \(^{198}\)

The Human Person. The human person is present in all the truths of faith: created in the image and likeness of God; elevated by God to the dignity of a child of God; unfaithful to God in original sin, but redeemed by Christ; a temple of the Holy Spirit; a member of the Church; destined to eternal life. \(^{199}\)

Christian Social Ethics. Christian social ethics must always be founded on faith. From this starting point it can shed light on related disciplines such as law, economics and political science, all of which study the human situation, and this is an obvious area for fruitful interdisciplinary study. \(^{200}\)

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\(^{195}\) Ibid. 95.
\(^{196}\) Ibid. 82.
\(^{197}\) Ibid. 82.
\(^{198}\) Ibid. 82.
\(^{199}\) Ibid. 82.
\(^{200}\) Ibid. 84.
Basic elements of a Christian social ethic:
- **the human person**, the central focus of the social order;
- **justice**, the recognition of the rights of each individual;
- **honesty**, the basic condition for all human relationships;
- **freedom**, the basic right of each individual and of society.
- **World peace** must then be founded on good order and the justice to which all men and women have a right as children of God;
- **The goods of the earth** are gifts of God, and are not the privilege of some individuals or groups while others are deprived of them. National and international well-being depend on the fact that the goods of the earth.
- **Misery and hunger** weigh on the conscience of humanity and cry out to God for justice.\(^\text{201}\)

**Essential Content – Summary of Key Points**
- *The curriculum of the Catholic School should not be fragmented; the religious dimension is not some kind of superstructure, it is integral to being human.*\(^\text{202}\)
- *The Catechism of the Catholic Church is mandated as the standard reference for doctrinal presentations.*\(^\text{203}\)
- *An outline of the essential content of a programme of religious education cannot be briefly summarised, and readers are referred to the main body of the text for details.*
- *The outlines provided make a two-fold division of content: the Christ Event and Message; and the Christian Life.*\(^\text{204}\)

**Methodology**

The documents of the Church do not directly specify a particular methodology for religious education or catechesis. On the contrary, a variety of methods are encouraged:

The plurality of methods in contemporary catechesis can be a sign of vitality and ingenuity. In any case, the method chosen must ultimately be referred to a law that is

\[^{201}\text{Ibid.89.}\]
\[^{204}\text{Ibid.82.}\]
fundamental for the whole of the Church's life: the law of fidelity to God and of fidelity to man in a single loving attitude.  

More emphasis is placed on the witnessing role of the teacher: “No methodology, however effective, can dispense with the part played by the teacher, whose own life must give witness to the message proclaimed.”

In general terms, it is noted that the role of any catechetical method is “...to fix in the memory, intelligence and the heart the essential truths that must impregnate the whole of life.” This emphasis on memory is reiterated strongly in both *Catechesis Tradendae* and the *General Directory for Catechesis*. It is acknowledged that memorisation, pursued in the wrong way presents certain difficulties, “...not the least of which is that it lends itself to insufficient or at times almost non-existent assimilation.” Even so, teachers are asked to “...put this faculty back into use in an intelligent and even an original way in catechesis, all the more since the celebration or ‘memorial’ of the great events of the history of salvation require a precise knowledge of them.”

The *General Directory for Catechesis* is even more direct on the subject, insisting that the use of memory forms a constitutive aspect of the pedagogy of the faith since the beginning of Christianity.”

Echoing the teaching of *Catechesis Tradendae*, the document goes on to make a strong case for appropriate memorisation:

The blossoms—if we may call them that—of faith and piety do not grow in the desert places of a memory-less catechesis. What is essential is that texts that are memorized must at the same time be taken in and gradually understood in depth, in order to become a source of Christian life on the personal level and on the community level.

One of the principal reasons for encouraging variety of methods is the obligation to account for the age, intellectual capacity and developmental stage of the students. The *General Directory of Catechesis* devotes eight articles to this, referring to differing needs for infants

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and children (including children who are not supported in their faith by family circumstances), for pre-adolescents, adolescents, young adults, the aged, the marginalised and those in various other groups.\textsuperscript{212}

\textit{The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School} makes a strong case for the use of discovery as an important pedagogical tool.\textsuperscript{213} Through the discovery process, “…the person of Jesus will come alive for the students. They will see again the example of his life, listen to his words, hear his invitation as addressed to them: ‘Come to me, all of you …’ Faith is thus based on knowing Jesus and following Him; its growth depends on each one's good will and cooperation with grace.” In highlighting the importance of discovery this document is locating authentic pedagogy for catechesis and religious education within the Catholic philosophical tradition of realism, which argues for the objective existence of things which human senses perceive. This is in contrast with many prevalent educational philosophies, which do not accept the existence of objective truth, and insert relativist and subjectivist interpretations in its place. The importance of a realist philosophy has been consistently insisted upon in the Catholic tradition, most recently in \textit{Fides et Ratio}, in which Pope John Paul II noted the spread of this phenomenon and contrasted it with a Catholic approach: “In brief, there are signs of a widespread distrust of universal and absolute statements, especially among those who think that truth is born of consensus and not of a consonance between intellect and objective reality.\textsuperscript{214}

Finally, it is worth noting that the Church recognises a role for the media of social communication in evangelisation, catechesis and religious education:

\begin{quote}
When they are put at the service of the Gospel, they are capable of increasing almost indefinitely the area in which the Word of God is heard; they enable the Good News to reach millions of people. The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect. It is through them that she proclaims "from the housetops" the message of which she is the
\end{quote}


depositary. In them she finds a modern and effective version of the pulpit. Thanks to them she succeeds in speaking to the multitudes.  

At the same time, it issues a caution that these media have limitations, in that they lack a personal dimension, and hence, cannot be used unreservedly:

In the long run, is there any other way of handing on the Gospel than by transmitting to another person one's personal experience of faith? It must not happen that the pressing need to proclaim the Good News to the multitudes should cause us to forget this form of proclamation whereby an individual's personal conscience is reached and touched by an entirely unique word that he receives from someone else.

**Methodology – Summary of Key Points**

- *The Church does not specify a particular methodology for religious education and catechesis; a variety of methods are encouraged.*
- *No methodology, however effective, can dispense with the part played by the teacher, whose own life must give witness to the message proclaimed.*
- *The purpose of any catechetical methodology is to fix in the memory, intelligence and the heart the essential truths that must impregnate the whole of life.*
- *Teachers are encouraged to ensure that certain basic ideas are committed to memory through appropriate educational means.*
- *The texts that are committed to memory should be gradually understood in depth, to become a source of Christian life on the personal and community levels.*
- *Methods selected should account for the differing ages and other needs of the students.*
- *Discovery is cited as an important pedagogical tool and one that is in accord with the realist philosophical view regarding the existence of objective reality, as opposed to subjectivist and relativist interpretations.*

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• Technology and the media of social communication should be incorporated into the programme. Nevertheless, there is a personal dimension which these media cannot replace, and this must be born in mind. 224

4. The Australian Context

• Ecclesia in Oceania
• Catholic Schools at a Crossroads

The Australian Context
There are two official documents relevant to the context of Catholic educational project in Australia: Ecclesia in Oceania (an apostolic exhortation of Pope John Paul II directed to the continents of Oceania) and Catholic Schools at a Crossroads (a pastoral letter of the New South Wales Bishops)

Ecclesia in Oceania
In general, this document simply focuses on particular aspects of the Church’s teaching deemed particularly relevant for Oceania. There appear to be only two items concerning Catholic education that have not already been referred to as part of other official documents.

One draws attention to the necessary cooperation between parish and school: “It is vital that school and parish cooperate, and that the school be integrated into the parish's pastoral programme, especially with regard to the Sacraments of Penance, Confirmation and Eucharist.” 225 The other reiterates the importance of the need for teachers to be witnesses to their faith: “Those responsible for hiring teachers and administrators in Catholic schools should take account of the faith life they are hiring.” 226

Catholic Schools at a Crossroads
The pastoral letter Catholic Schools at a Crossroads is a particularly well-constructed document, giving practical effect to many of the requirements identified above. It is not in

226 Ibid. 3.
any way inconsistent with these provisions, and makes serious efforts to implement these in
the pastoral circumstances of New South Wales. The document is not long, but it has a
particular pastoral significance which justifies making a thorough summary of its provisions.
It begins with an analysis of the current circumstances of Catholic schools in New South
Wales and then offers pastoral guidance on a number of key areas: Catholic identity; schools
as centres of the New Evangelisation; Catholic life, faith and culture; leading and staffing
Catholic schools and critical indicators of progress. It can be no accident that the topics
covered in this document reflect the major themes about Catholicism that can be found in the
overall documents of the Church. There is one exception – the document is not specific about
the essential content of religious education programmes and methodologies. This is itself
reflective of the documents of the official Church in their concern to ensure that a variety of
approaches is desirable. Presumably, this aspect of Catholic education has been left to each
local diocese to decide upon in the light of its own circumstances.

Analysis of the current context of Catholic Schools

- The Catholic school-aged population has grown considerably over the past two
decades, as has the number of students in Catholic schools.
- Demand for Catholic education keeps rising, though much faster in secondary than
  primary schools.
- Most of the additional students in our Catholic schools are not Catholics. That other-
than-Catholic families should entrust their children to Catholic schools reflects well
upon the standards and particular qualities of Catholic schools.
- However, there has been a fall in the number of Catholic students attending our
  schools during this period of growth.
- Half the students of Catholic families are enrolled in state schools, and a growing
  proportion go to non-Catholic independent schools. In the past two decades the
  proportion of children in schools from non-practising Catholic families has risen
  considerably.
- Other-than-Catholic enrolments have more than doubled from 9% to 20%, and may
  continue to rise.

227 See Bishops of New South Wales, Catholic Schools at a Crossroads (2007), 8. Available at:
• Decline in representation in our schools of students from both poorer and wealthier families. Put plainly: poorer Catholic children are increasingly attending State schools, while wealthier Catholic children go to non-Catholic non-government schools.

• Children from what-has-come-to-be-known as ‘middle Australia’ now predominate in our schools. This pattern is not uniform across rural, regional and urban communities or across diocesan (systemic) and Congregational schools.

• Recent studies suggest that fewer young people now identify themselves with churches or religions. Society-wide trends such as secularisation, consumerism, family dysfunction and values-disorientation also impact upon young people.

• Schools often have to pick up the pieces in the face of competing pressures from many directions.

• Some have proposed that we should resist the pressure of demand for Catholic schooling, and downsize our school system to a scale at which we can choose students and staff who readily embrace the mission of the Catholic school.

• Alternatively, we can reaffirm our commitment to the essential elements of the Catholic school while recognising, and even embracing, changing enrolment patterns as ‘signs of the times’ and of a new mission for Catholic education.

• The Bishops of NSW-ACT believe that this second course is the better way forward, and we commit ourselves to it.

**Identity of the Catholic School**

• The Catholic school is the principal educational arm of Catholic families, parishes and the wider Church for those generally aged under eighteen. It is there to assist parents and parishes in their educational, evangelical and catechetical missions, as well as to help the wider community in its educational and civic service.

• It is for this reason that the Church remains committed to ensuring that there is a ‘critical mass’ of Catholic students in our schools, even though we also readily welcome students from other religious backgrounds.

• We exhort our school leaders to re-examine how they might maximise enrolment of Catholic students, including those from socio-economic bands and ethnic and special-needs groups currently under-represented in their schools.

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228 Ibid. 10.
• Parish schools should continue to seek out and give preference to the children of their own parishioners, then to other Catholic children - especially from the surrounding districts - then to other Christian children, before offering any additional available places to children of other religious backgrounds.

• Regional secondary schools and Congregational schools should apply similar principles. However, much more is required for a genuinely Catholic school than just a preponderance of students from Catholic families.

• It is essential that:
  o leaders and staff understand and are committed to the Catholic identity of the school
  o the Religious Education (RE) curriculum is sound, attractive and professionally taught by teachers with appropriate RE qualifications
  o other disciplines also consider the Catholic dimension of their subject areas
  o schools are Eucharistic communities within the parish context where, as far as possible, students regularly take part in Mass and Reconciliation
  o schools continue to be places of prayer, including prayer at assemblies, in classes and in other staff and student meetings, and places where practices are encouraged such as Scripture reflections, the Angelus, Eucharistic adoration and prayerful silences
  o schools cultivate a Catholic imagination, wherein prayer and liturgy are supported by a Catholic visual culture, including crucifixes and pictures of Our Lady and the saints
  o schools are connected to their local parish(es) and diocese, through inviting the periodic presence of the bishop, clergy, religious and parents in the school, and through active collaboration with the wider Catholic community
  o families and parishes support their schools in these important endeavours.

Catholic Schools as Centres of the New Evangelisation

• In his encyclical on the Church’s mission, John Paul II wrote, “I sense that the moment has come to commit all the Church’s energies to a new evangelisation.” (Redemptoris Missio, 1990) This call was the antiphon of his pontificate as he called the Church to preach the Gospel anew in previously Christian communities which

\[^{229}\text{Ibid.12,13.}\]
were falling away from the Gospel in the face of secularisation and other cultural change.

- In his Apostolic Exhortation on Catechesis the Pope explained that the definitive aim of evangelisation “…is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.” *(Catechesi Tradendae, 1979)*

- In this John Paul II echoed his predecessors such as Paul VI, whose own encyclical, *On Evangelisation in the Modern World, Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), remains a classic on this topic.

- This emphasis on evangelisation and catechesis has been reiterated by Pope Benedict XVI and by Church leaders around the world. Evangelisation means proclaiming the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. Its goal is bringing people to faith through a personal encounter with Him. It is to be distinguished from *catechesis*, which involves deepening and instructing that faith already received.

- In his post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, ‘On Jesus Christ and the Peoples of Oceania’, John Paul II noted that:

  - *Living the life of Jesus Christ implies…a living spirituality and authentic morality, strengthened by the word of God in Scripture and celebrated in the Sacraments of the Church. When Christians live the life of Christ with deeper faith, their hope grows stronger and their charity more radiant.*

  - *That was the goal of the Synod, and it is the goal of the new evangelisation to which the Spirit is summoning the whole Church…The present generation of Christians is called and sent now to accomplish a new evangelisation among the peoples of Oceania, a fresh proclamation of the enduring truth evoked by the symbol of the Southern Cross. This call to mission poses great challenges, but it also opens new horizons, full of hope and even a sense of adventure. (Ecclesia in Oceania 2001, 8 and 13)*

- The ‘sense of adventure’ inspired by the New Evangelisation is all the more urgent in the context of growing numbers of non-practising Catholics, under-catechised Catholics and other-than-Catholic students in our schools. All Christians receive the gift of faith at Baptism, and many others carry ‘the seeds of faith’ within their hearts.

- But many of them need the Gospel to be proclaimed to them anew. This is not a matter of proselytising or forcing beliefs down students’ throats – quite the contrary.
Genuine faith cannot be imposed: it is freely received or rejected. If we are up-front about our educational and catechetical goals with any prospective student, teacher or parent, while encouraging students to engage with open hearts and reasoning minds, then we are fully justified in engaging in activities of witness, formation and service.

• If Catholic schools are to be centres of the New Evangelisation:
  o the life and activity in the school would be the context for a personal encounter with Christ and would promote, and never contradict, the teachings of the Church
  o all those involved in our schools would appreciate their roles in receiving and proclaiming the Good News by word and deed, and by the example of their lives
  o students would participate in RE classes, liturgies, retreats and prayers which are, as far as possible, tailored to their place in the journey of faith, addressing the core of our faith and inviting a response
  o special programmes would be developed for students who first enter a Catholic school later than Kindergarten (for instance in Year 7) and may not have received much prior religious education
  o schools would work with their local parish(es) to establish programmes for initiating children and young adults into the Church
  o other efforts would be pursued to integrate the activity of our primary and secondary schools with the life of the surrounding parish(es) and diocese, so that our young people are given a sense of belonging to a wider Church beyond their families and schools
  o consideration would be given to the desirability of establishing Catholic pre-schools, with catechesis appropriate to this crucial stage in faith formation
  o every effort would be made to engage our students and young teachers in preparations for, participation in and enrichment after major religious events such as World Youth Day
  o families and parishes would back up and support their schools in all these activities.
Catholic Life, Faith and Culture

• Evangelisation is crucial, but not enough. Faith, like a seed newly planted in the soil of the human heart, needs water and light. That is why our schools must deepen and instruct the faith once received. We call this catechesis.

• Faith must also be supported by the religious culture of the school so that it will be practised in worship, vocation and action in the world.

• It is sometimes observed that many young people emerge from our schools with insufficient knowledge of the Catholic faith or interest in practising it. Of course seeds of faith may have been planted that will only show forth fruit later in their lives.

• Nor is this solely the responsibility of the school: society, parishes, families and the young themselves also bear the burden of this trend. The Catholic school is well placed, however, to support young people, teachers and families to grow in their knowledge and love for the Catholic tradition.

• As some teachers have received limited faith formation themselves, they need particular support and professional development. We commit our Catholic Education Offices and parishes to providing this where possible.

• Young people in our schools and their families deserve no less than the fullness of “...the faith that comes to us from the apostles.” (Eucharistic Prayer I)

• Therefore enthusiasm for social justice, ecology, the charism of the founder or some particular school initiative must always be situated within the broader context of Catholic faith and morals. It must never eclipse the building of a relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church.

• No student should leave our Catholic schools without knowing the essentials of Catholic teaching as found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and its Compendium, and all catechetical programmes and RE texts should build upon these.

• If Catholic schools are to succeed in passing on the Catholic faith to the next generation:
  o schools will have as their goal the formation of Christian disciples, with appropriate worldview, character and behaviour
  o RE curricula, methodologies, texts and other resources will be chosen to ensure that by the end of their schooling students know the core teachings of

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230 Ibid.14.
our faith, our Scriptures, history and tradition (‘Catholic religious literacy’) and how these are to be lived in the world

- in particular, students will be brought to a knowledge and, as far as possible, love of the person, life and teachings of Christ and of the Trinitarian God of Love
- students will also be brought to a knowledge and love of the People of God, the Church, who join them in their pilgrimage through life and support them through the Word of God and the Sacraments
- students will be prepared for the challenges to their faith that may come while still at school or after they have left school
- RE classes will therefore be given priority with regard to the school curriculum, time and space allocation and the choice and recognition of staff
- there will be demonstrations of Catholic religious literacy through appropriate assessment and religious activities
- our schools will also seek to involve parents and families in the process of evangelising and catechising their children, seeking in the process also to educate those families in the faith.

**Leading and Staffing Catholic Schools**

- There are many reasons why the Church remains concerned to ensure that there is a ‘critical mass’ of Catholic leaders and staff in our schools – although we also welcome appropriately qualified staff who are committed Christians or followers of other religions.
- These staff members, though not Catholic, generously work to support our mission. No one doubts that the faith and practice of the leaders and staff in a Catholic school significantly affect the students and the character of the education offered.
- If Catholic schools are to succeed in the mission articulated above it will be essential that:
  - all those appointed as Principals, Assistant Principals and Religious Education Coordinators (RECs) are faithful Catholics who are ready to embrace the mission of the Catholic school today and to lead and inspire their staff and parents accordingly

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Ibid. 16.
o as far as possible only practising and knowledgeable Catholics are charged with the task of teaching RE in our schools

o all teachers are committed to the mission of the school and teach and live in accordance with the teachings of the Church

o while fully supporting existing leaders and staff in our Catholic schools, we identify and form a new generation of leaders and teachers who are deeply committed to the goals of Catholic education

o vocations to the priesthood, religious life and Christian marriage are actively promoted in our schools

o Catholic tertiary institutions and those providing inservice and other support are thoroughly informed of the identity and mission of the Catholic school and effective in providing our leaders and staff with the knowledge and skills they need.

o the formation of our Catholic school leaders and teachers is crucial for the achievement of the goals of this Pastoral Letter. We thank our present leaders and teachers for their professionalism and generous commitment to Catholic education and to our young people.

o we also look with great confidence to the next generation of staff; the challenge is how best to form them. Some will be prepared in secular institutions and will require additional formation when entering the Catholic system.

o many will be prepared in Catholic tertiary institutions. The Bishops of NSW-ACT propose to investigate the range of options for forming Catholic school leaders and teachers for the future, and to examine the ‘fit’ between the needs of our schools and the present programmes of teacher education, inservice and professional development.

o in particular, we will examine the means developed by these institutions to foster the Catholic faith, knowledge and practice of future teachers. In the meantime we invite all institutions engaged in the formation of Catholic teachers to examine their programmes in the light of the goals expressed in this Pastoral Letter.
Critical Indicators of Progress

How will we know if we have achieved - or are, at least, making progress towards - these goals? Indicators of progress might include:

- the Catholic purpose of the school is clearly stated in each school’s Mission Statement
- all Principals, Assistant Principals and RECs are practising Catholics who understand and profess the Catholic faith, model it in their own lives, and can teach it effectively
- progress towards an increase in the proportion of school staff – especially RE teachers - who are practising and knowledgeable Catholics
- upon application and appointment to a new position, and on other appropriate occasions, leaders and staff are reminded of the Catholic identity and mission of the school and of the expectation that they will commit themselves to that mission
- progress towards an increase in the proportion of students in our schools who are Catholic
- at application for enrolment, at admission, and on other appropriate occasions, parents and students are reminded of the Catholic identity and mission of the school and of the expectation that they will assist in that mission
- the presence of distinctively Catholic symbols and practices as part of the daily life of the school
- efforts to connect with Catholic families and to maximise their participation in Catholic schools
- the provision, in conjunction with local parish(es) and diocese, of programmes for students wishing to join the Catholic Church
- continued development and deployment of curriculum, methodologies and resources which promote high levels of Catholic religious literacy
- co-curricular activities aimed at further evangelising and catechising students and otherwise nourishing their spiritual life (eg retreats, Project Compassion, St Vincent de Paul groups)
- systematic external assessment of Catholic religious literacy

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232 Ibid.18.
- maximum involvement by students and younger staff in religious events such as World Youth Days
- progress toward significantly increased attendance at Sunday Mass, and deeper involvement in the life of the local Church by students and ex-students
- progress towards an increase in the proportion of students in our schools who are from poorer families.
Chapter 2

Catholic Identity and Mission

Introduction

The academic literature on Catholic Identity and Mission is extensive. This review presents the literature in outline from a variety of perspectives. This is followed, first, by an evaluation of each document and, second, by a synthesis of relevant considerations from the literature to inform the review of Religious Education for the Diocese of Parramatta. The documents surveyed include:

[Neil Ormerod holds the position of Professor of Theology and Director of the Institute of Theology, Philosophy and Religious Education at Australian Catholic University, Sydney.]

[Richard Rymarz holds the Peter and Doris Khule chair of Religious Education, Edmonton, Canada.]

Fisher, Anthony. “Every Child Counts” in *The Australasian Catholic Record*. 87.3 (July 2010)
[Anthony Fisher is the current Bishop of Parramatta.]

[Blessed John Henry Newman was a nineteenth century English Cardinal whose work was very influential at Vatican II.]

[Didier Pollefeyt is professor of Religious Education at the Katholic University of Leuven, Belgium. Jan Bouwens work at the Katholic University of Leuven.]

### 1. Survey of Representative Sources

**Identity and Mission in Catholic Organisations – Neil Ormerod**

Neil Ormerod makes a distinction between identity and mission and observes that different agencies of the Church will exhibit the features of both which are proper to their own characters. 233 According to his definition, “...mission concerns principles of operation or transformation in the life of the Church while identity concerns principles of integration.” 234 In other words, identity is about maintaining consistency with the Church as it has been founded by Christ, and mission is concerned with responding to the circumstances in which it currently finds itself by further development of its understanding.

Ormerod identifies four distinct dimensions of mission and identity: the religious, moral, cultural and social. 235 These different aspects can be summarised in the following table. 236

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<th>Identity</th>
<th>Mission</th>
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<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Prayer, liturgy, belief, sacraments</td>
<td>Christian conversion, public witness to faith</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>Moral expectations for community life</td>
<td>Moral witness, moral challenge</td>
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Cultural Theology, moral thought, artistic expression, Christian literature Cultural dialogue, challenge and critique

Social Christian community living, local parish, Christian groups Social justice, outreach to the needy, marginalised

In terms of these aspects of identity and mission, he makes some useful observations about Catholic primary and secondary schools. A Catholic primary school can be viewed as an extension of the local parish by seeking to form children in the basics of Catholic religious, moral, cultural and social identity.\(^{237}\) It makes a useful contribution in the parish sacramental life by “...assisting in the sacramental preparation of students, catechising them and so on.”\(^{238}\)

By contrast, a Catholic secondary school would try to engage its students in the social mission of the Church with some issues of social justice.\(^{239}\) It might also place more emphasis on the moral identity and mission of the Church in relation to sexuality as students enter adolescence.\(^{240}\) Some effort might also go into encouraging an appreciation of the Church’s cultural heritage and mission. Nevertheless, “...a focus on the cultural and social mission of the Church is more appropriate at the tertiary education stage.”\(^{241}\)

**Religious Quest and Secularization - Rymarz, Richard**

Rymarz identifies two alternate paradigms through which the current circumstances of Catholic practice can be viewed. He calls these the Spiritual Quest Paradigm (SQP) and the Modified Secularisation Theory Paradigm (MST). He provides a snapshot of SQP with reference to a public encounter he had with a parent who described the religious state of his own son who is referred to as ‘Tim’. Tim is described by his father as having a deep faith, but without significant connection to the institutional Church. He attends Mass at Christmas and

Easter and special family occasions. Tim is committed to a variety of moral causes which he pursues passionately.

Rymarz goes on to identify four distinguishing characteristics of the Spiritual Quest Paradigm.

1. It does not see the traditional markers of Catholic identity – participation in Mass and the sacraments – as important and fixation on them belongs to a bygone era.
2. As a consequence, a critical distinction is made between the institutional Church and an amorphous Church which is hard to define and makes few demands.
3. Individuals do not make a formal break with Catholicism, but they remain connected on their own terms.
4. Those in the institutional Church are encouraged to see these people as being on a spiritual quest, and should be given time to reconnect at some time in the future. 242

The Modified Secularisation Theory arises from a broad sociological perspective of the place of religious in contemporary culture, drawn mainly from the work of theorists such as Dobbelaere, Stark and Lambert. This theory provides a completely different perspective on the widespread disengagement of young Catholics from a religious world view. Classic secularisation theory had predicted the decline of religion in the face of a more sophisticated worldview, with religious faith taking a smaller role in both public and private lives. While notion of a decrease of influence in the public square has been vindicated, it is not matched as yet with a similar decline in the personal realm. 243

By this account, secularisation sees the disengagement of young Catholics from their religious heritage as a continuing, if gradual process, by which they become more and more secularised and unlikely to reconnect with their faith community in anything but a superficial and somewhat self-interested manner. 244 What has diminished is the power of religions to shape and direct personal behaviour and attitudes, with a consequent freedom for individuals to shape their own eclectic mixture of self-chosen beliefs. 245 The movement away from a religious to a secular perspective is not achieved instantly – it takes time – possibly even

242 See Rymarz, Richard, *The Australasian Catholic Record*. 87.3. (Jul 2010), 261
244 See Rymarz, Richard, *The Australasian Catholic Record*. 87.3. (Jul 2010), 262
245 See Rymarz, Richard, *The Australasian Catholic Record*. 87.3. (Jul 2010), 264
generations – to achieve. Lambert provides a nine-stage model. The process begins with an undermining of the transcendental aspect of religious faith, with a key aspect being a diminished sense of the importance of sin and of life after death. This lays the foundation for pragmatic and relativist ideas about the relevance of religion to the individual. The final stage of secularisation is where religion becomes entirely subject to the individual’s choice of what he or she wants to believe – often reflecting prevailing cultural understandings.

In analysing the contrasting accounts given by Spiritual Quest Paradigm and the Modified Secularisation Theory, Rymarz focuses on three indicative issues.

1. Participation in the Eucharist and other sacraments.

In the SQP paradigm, sacramental practice is a malleable aspect of religious identity and may not be important to individuals at any particular time. The fact that individuals may still participate on family occasions or at Christmas indicates that there may still be some connection. MST gives a completely different perspective. Movement from regular to infrequent participation is a decisive move which, over time, will result in a growing disassociation between the individual and the worshipping community. The decision is seen as coming at the end of a deliberate process of disengagement and reconnection at some stage in the future is seen as unlikely.

2. The uncoupling of morality from a religious worldview

SQP takes some comfort in the fact that while many younger Catholics no longer participate in the worshipping community, they do seem to retain a moral sensibility which indicates that they have not entirely lost connection with their religious faith. MST, on the other hand, would suggest that what is happening is that the individual has begun to detach moral action from its connection with a religious world view and its eternal consequences and to replace it with a worldly, humanistic theoretical reference point.


Rymarz, Richard. *The Australasian Catholic Record*. 87.3. (Jul 2010), 267
3. *The centrality of Catholic values as an indicator of Catholic identity.*

SQP downplays participation in the sacramental rituals as a characteristic form of religious affiliation and replaces them with other descriptors such as exploring a variety of options, but always within the framework of an ongoing connection with the faith tradition. On the other hand, MST simply sees this as yet another stage in the process of secularisation. The idea that certain forms of moral action are identifiably Catholic is difficult to argue if they are disconnected from a Catholic sacramental identity. “With the passage of years as the bulk of the population move further down the secularisation cycle the link between values and religious affiliation is irretrievably broken.”

Rymarz concludes by asking how the Church should respond to the challenge of secularisation – which account accurately portrays the reality? If the answer is the Spiritual Quest Paradigm, then the Church must at all costs maintain contact with those young people who are on various stages of a spiritual journey. If the Modified Secular Theory is used to guide reflection, the Church must face up to the reality that many young people are already in an advanced stage of secularisation, building on foundations already laid by their parents. This would require a renewed emphasis on the Mass and other communal rituals. The Church will also be challenged to provide attractive opportunities for young adults to deepen their faith and strengthen their identification and commitment.

**Every Child Counts – Bishop Anthony Fisher**

The unequivocal statements from Bishop Anthony Fisher regarding the central importance of the human person and in particular, the disabled and the weak in a Catholic school indicate the degree to which these matters lie at the heart, not only of the Catholic educational mission, but also of Catholic identity itself. Respect and support for the disabled child act as a mirror, it would seem, showing those involved about Catholic education something about themselves. If the disabled are not valued and cherished, could this mean that other children are also only welcomed conditionally? While this aspect of the Catholic school is not one that might be expected to be discussed under the heading of identity and mission, it

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252 Rymarz, Richard, *The Australasian Catholic Record.* 87.3 (Jul 2010), 269
253 Rymarz, Richard, *The Australasian Catholic Record.* 87.3 (Jul 2010), 270
254 Fisher, Anthony, *The Australasian Catholic Record.* 87.3 (July 2010), 297
255 Fisher, Anthony, *The Australasian Catholic Record.* 87.3 (July 2010), 299
would seem that the Catholic doctrine that every soul is made in the image and likeness of
God makes its own case. Indeed, if the school is Catholic in its identity, the part of its mission
is to ensure that “...every child counts.”

Faith and Reason in Catholic Education – John Henry Newman

John Henry Newman’s insights into the development of Catholic identity can be found in his
the source of supernatural faith cannot be found within ourselves; it comes from God. This
view resonates well with the recent encyclical of Pope Francis, Lumen Fidei.

The light of faith is unique, since it is capable of illuminating every aspect of human
existence. A light this powerful cannot come from ourselves but from a more
primordial source: in a word, it must come from God. Faith is born of an encounter
with the living God who calls us and reveals his love, a love which precedes us and
upon which we can lean for security and for building our lives.

Pope Benedict XVI likewise insisted that faith is essentially thinking with assent since the act
of faith comes about in a different way from the act of knowing:

… not through the degree of evidence bringing the process of thought to its
conclusion, but by an act of will, in connection with which the thought process
remains open and still under way. Here, the degree of evidence does not turn the
thought into assent; rather the will commands assent, even though the thought process
is still under way.

He recognised the difficulties in this approach, and acknowledged the accusations of the
German philosophers, Jaspers and Heidegger, that faith, by pre-supposing the answers, leaves
no room for questions. In answer, he cited Pascal’s observation: “The heart has its reasons
that reason does not know.” Benedict noted that we are able to give the assent of faith not
because of the depth of our own inquiries or the quality of our evidence, but:

256 Fisher, Anthony, The Australasian Catholic Record. 87.3 (July 2010), 306
258 Ratzinger, Joseph, Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2005), 21
… because the will – the heart – has been touched by God, affected by him. Through being touched in this way, the will knows that even what is not clear to the reason is true. Assent is produced by the will, not by the understanding’s own direct insight: the particular kind of freedom of choice involved in the decision of faith rests on this… The will (the heart), therefore, lights the way for the understanding and draws it with it into assent.259

In other words, the gift of faith is generally given to the will prior to its outworking in the mind. Nevertheless, the mind plays an indispensable role in the process, and it is this role that is so thoroughly described by Newman as the process of assent to faith. Newman acknowledges that human beings are simply acting according to their nature when they engage in mental acts: “We do but fulfil our nature in doubting, inferring and assenting; and our duty is not to abstain from the exercise of any function of our nature, but to do what is in itself right rightly.260

Newman identified six different kinds of assent which can be helpful in clarifying the relationship between faith and reason in religious education. His primary distinction is between notional assent (given to abstract propositions) and real assent (given to concrete objects of direct experience).

**Notional Assent**

Newman described five kinds of notional assent: profession, credence, opinion, presumption and speculation. Profession is an assent so feeble that it barely rises above the level of assertion. It involves little thought or reflection – such as a decision to follow a fashion or to accept information from an advertisement.261 Credence is a step beyond this, and expresses the fact that a person has no doubt about a proposition. It is readily given to information taken in by our senses or from books and results in spontaneous assent.262 In describing credence, Newman notes that theology is essentially notional, whereas religion should be real.263

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259 Ratzinger, Joseph, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith.* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2005), 24-25
Newman then describes *opinion*. Whereas credence is held to be true, opinion is *probably* true. An opinion is held independent of premises, because human beings claim the right to think whatever they wish, whether or not they have good reasons.\(^{264}\) *Presumption* is the kind of assent given to first principles – those propositions with which reasoning starts. While not as strong as real assent, presumption is a very strong kind of notional assent, drawn from our consciousness of self. Finally, there is *speculation* – a mental awareness of the reasoning process itself. This is attained by contemplating *mental* reasonings and their results, as distinct from the assent derived from experience or the senses.\(^{265}\) An awareness of the legitimate role of *speculation* has implications for religious education. Newman made it clear in his observations about *credence* that religion is primarily about the *real* and theology is essentially *notional*.

**Real Assent**

Real assent occurs when the mind is directed towards *things*, represented by the impressions they have left on the imagination.\(^{266}\) Newman noted that the Catholic practice of meditation on the Scriptures permits the believer to encounter a God who speaks of things, not notions: “...the facts which they relate stand out before our minds as objects such as may be appropriated by a faith as living as the imagination which apprehends them.”\(^{267}\) In company with Thomas Aquinas and Maria Montessori, Newman affirms that the concrete is more likely to affect human nature than the abstract.\(^{268}\) The implications for Religious Education and Catechesis are obvious. If students are to commit to the Faith as their own, they must be offered the *real* and the *concrete* prior to abstract propositions. Instruction in the Catholic faith which confines itself to intellectual dimensions will have very limited appeal. Moreover, Newman claimed that real assents are what make individual human beings unique, for these have a personal character. The particular experiences that each one has are what constitutes

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every human being’s unique condition in history and form the data of an unrepeatable personality.\textsuperscript{269}

In applying these insights to religious education, there are some quite significant points to be made. According to Newman, in the case of revealed religion, the way in which one holds certain propositions distinguishes the presence or absence of faith itself.

1. To take up a position of doubt makes one a sceptic.
2. To hold propositions as conditional (inference) indicates the position of the philosopher.
3. To offer unconditional acceptance (assent) is to be a believer.

Consequently, different strategies need to be applied, depending on the status of the students in relation to the gift of faith, which they may or may not have received.

1. Some will be baptised believers who, according to the \textit{Catechism}, have received the theological virtue of faith in Baptism.\textsuperscript{270} The presence of this faith as a theological virtue is not dependent on their assent to it, and it will be present, whether or not the students have exercised their minds on understanding its implications or assenting to its invitation.
2. There may be others in the class who have not received the gift of faith through Baptism and are therefore in the position of philosophers’, needing convincing reasons for belief while awaiting the conferral of the gift of faith. To paraphrase St Augustine, before receiving the gift of faith, one must understand in order to believe; after receiving faith, one must believe in order to understand.\textsuperscript{271}
3. The third stance, scepticism, would be a logical absurdity in a Catholic religious education class, since it would be a deliberate undermining of the purpose.

\textsuperscript{270} See \textit{Catechism of the Catholic Church}, (Sydney: St Pauls/ Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 1994), 1266
\textsuperscript{271} \textit{Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of John}, Tractate XXIX on John 7:14-18, §6.
Inquiry or Investigation?

Newman also distinguishes between inquiry and investigation, insisting that inquiry into revealed truth is inconsistent with faith. One who inquires is in doubt about where the truth lies, hence a believer cannot, at the same, time be an inquirer…

Thus it is sometimes spoken of as a hardship that a Catholic is not allowed to inquire into the truth of his creed; – of course he cannot, if he would retain the name of believer. He cannot be both inside and outside of the Church at once. It is merely common sense to tell him that, if he is seeking, he has not found. If seeking includes doubting, and doubting excludes believing, then the Catholic who sets about inquiring thereby declares that he is not a Catholic. He has already lost faith.272

While closing the door of believers to inquiry in matters of faith, Newman was no advocate of Fideism or anti-intellectualism. He simply made a distinction between the way in which believers and non-believers engage with the data of Revelation:

… inquiry implies doubt and investigation does not imply it; and that those who assent to a doctrine or fact may without inconsistency investigate its credibility, though they cannot literally inquire about its truth… in the case of educated minds, investigations into the argumentative proof of the things to which they have given their assent is an obligation or rather a necessity.273

The Leuven Project – Pollefeyt and Bouwens

Didier Pollefeyt and Jan Bouwens work out of the faculty of theology at the University of Leuven, Belgium, and have conducted Catholic identity research projects in Flanders and in Australia. They have called for the “…recontextualisation of Catholic identity, based on dialogue with plurality and a symbolic understanding of religion.”274

The Post-Critical Belief Scale

Pollefeyt and Bouwens describe the Australian context as “...detraditionalising and pluralising”275 In its pursuit of a recontextualising agenda, the Centre for Academic Teacher Training at the University of Leuven’s faculty of education have developed a methodology for determining Catholic identity issues in schools. They begin with a continuum called the post-critical belief scale, which describes four different ways that people deal with belief contents.276

1. Orthodoxy or literal belief – affirms doctrinal belief contents, literally, with the possibility of meeting God directly in words and rituals. In this description, faith may not become symbolised in a way that would undermine belief in the objective existence of God.277 Pollefeyt asserts also that the literal believer is afraid of complicated problems and desires absolute certainty on matters of faith.278

2. External Critique or literal unbelief involves a direct rejection of religious belief from an external point of view, standing at the end of the scale which might be described as the polar opposite of literal belief. Those who might operate out of this model would even reject the idea of the transcendent.279

3. Relativism or contingency awareness accepts a symbolic approach to religiosity, but rules out the transcendent dimension outside the human person. There is no room, in this model for a transcendent, personal God. Relativists stress the contingency of religious belief – all religions might, at the same time, be equally true or untrue. For them, God does not exist and consequently, religious belief amounts to nothing at all.280

4. Post-critical belief is essentially a symbolic rather than a real affirmation of the contents of faith. God is not literally present, but is represented symbolically. Belief is only possible after an individual has engaged in meaningful interpretation; here, critical reasoning must play its part, so that “...we don’t believe in nonsense against our better judgement.”

People relate to the transcendent reality through mediations only: through stories, rituals, traditions, institutions, churches, ministries, communities, social organisations and so forth. Faith is acquired through the active, creative and interpretative handling of these mediations.

Post-critical believers feel called “…to question constantly the religious contents and personal convictions from which they live.”

In expressing their own preference, Pollefeyt and Bouwens are quite clear:

We openly acknowledge that the Post-critical Belief type is the faith style promoted at the Centre for Academic Teacher Training of our Faculty of Theology (Lombaerts and Pollefeyt 2004). Based on theological arguments and on empirical research results, we defend that a symbolic style of faith is the most fruitful for the development of the identity of Catholic schools in a pluralising society, today and tomorrow (Pollefeyt 2009).

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Theological identity options in a pluralising cultural context.

Pollefeyt and Bouwers describe five possible models for Catholic promoting Catholic identity in schools.

1. ‘Traditional schools,’ in which the traditional identity has not yet broken down, despite a growing tension between contemporary culture and Catholicism. An old-style confessional identity continues merely through inertia.  

2. ‘Correlation schools,’ which embraced, from the 1960s onwards, the correlation project and introduced values education from a Christian perspective. In this model, ethics is the mediator between Catholic faith and culture. In so doing “...it is expected that students can recognise themselves (again) in the Catholic faith by this Christian values education.” Because its inspiration is seen as doing good such a school can appeal to a broad base of Catholics, post-Christians, and others. Pollefeyt and Bouwens recognise the failure of this approach.

In practice, this approach usually results in a post-Christian school environment in which it is good to sojourn but where little explicitly Catholic faith remains present. De facto, values education is an intermediate phase towards secularisation of school identity.

3. ‘Re-confessionalising schools,’ which attempt re-confessionalisation by bringing the culture of the school more into line with Catholic teaching. According to Boeve, it is presumed that substantial numbers of the students in such a school are practising Catholics. (This comment is not supported by evidence; early Catholic schools in Australia also confronted a hostile culture and a minimal number of practising Catholics.

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Catholics while maintaining a strong confessional identity.) Nevertheless, it is likely that such schools would adopt a critical-rejective stance towards the secularised and pluralist culture – a stance which the authors appear to consider unwise.

4. ‘Secularised schools,’ which have shed their Catholic identity and adopted institutional secularisation. Typically, this occurs through a gradual erosion until the school is virtually indistinguishable from a government school.291

5. ‘Recontextualised schools,’ which have reinvented the Catholic identity and embraced pluralism. This approach attempts to re-interpret Catholic identity in a way which values both pluralism and Catholic identity. “Young people are taught to relate to other religions and philosophies of life from a personal (whether or not Catholic) profile.”292 The argument is that by encountering ‘otherness’ one learns to know oneself and be willing to take responsibility for personal choices. In so doing, the Catholic faith is embraced as a preferential option.

It is not the intention that all students become Catholic believers per se, but that they let themselves be challenged and enriched by the offer of the Catholic narrative… to give shape to their personal identity in conversation with others, against the background of a dialogue and sometimes also a confrontation with the Catholic tradition.293

Pedagogical identity options
Pollefeyt and Bouwens describe four schools on a double continuum of pedagogical identity options – one axis called ‘maximal Christian identity’ and the other called ‘maximal solidarity’. Each of the schools stands at the extreme end of the continuum.

1. The Monologue School proposes maximum Christian identity and minimal solidarity with contemporary culture. The school is described as emphasising a strong Catholic identity and it promotes “…a traditionalist, non-emancipatory form of Catholicism in

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which the Catholic faith is interpreted as a ‘closed story’ with a resolute truth claim.”

In very emotive language which seems to reveal a lack of objectivity, the authors describe this kind of school as “…a walled Catholic ghetto.”

1) The Colourless School is constituted by a combination of minimal solidarity with contemporary culture and minimal Christian identity. The school is secularised in a pluralist environment and the Catholic ethos that may once have been present has been diluted to a degree at which religion is deemed to have no place in public life. There is little to no interest in issues of social justice and the school limits itself to minimal ethics.

2) The Colourful School is characterised by maximal solidarity and minimal Christian identity. It holds a position *apropos* social justice, but this is not informed by Catholic teaching. There is little or no room in this school for Christian proclamation.

3) The Dialogue School, according to the authors, combines maximal Christian identity with maximal solidarity. This school explicitly sets out to place itself in a situation of cultural and religious plurality. “Receptivity and openness to what is different is a chance to re-profile the Catholic faith amidst contemporary plurality (recontextualisation).”

There is a preference for the Catholic message and this sets the tone for dialogue. The obvious bias towards this option is so evident that it forfeits all claim to objectivity as an empirical instrument. Moreover, it takes very little account of what the Church actually has to say about Catholic education.

2. Assessment of Academic Literature.

The academic texts can be assessed on two levels – firstly, in terms of the insights offered by each one, and secondly, in terms of whether or not they operate within the guidelines of the Church’s magisterial teaching. Each document will now be examined in turn in order to identify its insights. If a document works within the broad parameters of Catholic teaching,


this will not be noted, but the areas in which there are difficulties will be identified. The key magisterial teachings regarding Catholic Identity and Mission are as follows:

- **The Church has three primary responsibilities: proclaiming the word; celebrating the sacraments; and exercising the ministry of charity.**

- **The mission of the Catholic school embraces all three of these dimensions and is described as being part of the evangelising mission of the Church based on the Great Commission of Christ himself: “Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.”**

- **Catholic Schools are institutionally linked to the Bishop of the diocese who has the responsibility for their proper functioning.**

- **The Catholic school is a place of integral education of the human person and its particular project is directed at creating a synthesis between faith, culture and life. It works towards this role by a Christian vision of reality.**

- **The religious climate of the school is expressed through the celebration of Christian values in word and sacrament.**

- **The Catholic educational project seeks always to work in harmony with the nature human person as revealed in Christ.**

- **The Catholic school can never take a position of neutrality with regard to Christian values or what it means to be human.**

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• There are four distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school:
  1. Its distinctive educational climate;
  2. Its emphasis on the personal development of each student;
  3. Its emphasis on the relationship between the Gospel and the culture;
  4. Its illumination of all knowledge with light of faith. \(^{304}\)

• Catholic schools have a particular concern for the poor and the weak. They also have an ecumenical dimension. \(^{305}\)

• The project of Catholic education is long-term and so the value of Catholic schools cannot always be measured in terms of immediate efficiency. \(^{306}\)

Clarifying the Nature of Mission and Identity

Neil Ormerod’s work provides useful clarifications about the way in which Catholic education might proceed in the area of identity and mission. Identity is seen as the integrating principle. It is about maintaining consistency with the Church founded by Christ and continuing to develop as reflection continues through the centuries on the full meaning of the revelation of God in Christ. Mission, on the other hand, concerns the response is concerned with responding to the circumstances in which it currently finds itself by further development of its understanding. His division of these into complementary but distinct features is very helpful in coming to understand the outlines of the issues at stake.

In terms of the project of Catholic education, the mission flows from a strong and consistent identity. If the identity is not clear, the mission will be little more that zealous action which, at best, will not contribute to the goal or at worst, actively undermines the project.

Ormerod’s work provides useful clarifications about the way in which Catholic education should proceed in the area of identity and mission in a way that is fully compatible with the official Church documents on religious education.


\(^{305}\) John Paul II, Catechesi Tradendae (1979), 32


Mission and Identity in a Secular Environment.

Richard Rymarz has offered a particularly useful analysis on the challenges of dealing with the clearly evident problem of secularisation in contemporary Australian culture. His description of the two possible paradigms through which this might be viewed resonate with the experience of those working in this field.

The Spiritual Quest Paradigm (SQP), which claims that there is no cause for concern in the current lack of engagement with the institutional Church has been widespread in Catholic circles for some time. It has been a consistent theme in a variety of research. Its central argument is that young people have not abandoned the Church, they are simply on a spiritual quest to search out religious meaning for themselves, and they will return to the practice of their faith at some time in the future. It is argued that they have not severed their connection with the Catholic Church as is evidenced by the fact that they still attend some Catholic liturgies and have a strong sense of social justice.

Rymarz has very effectively confronted this view with a reality check in the form of Modified Secularisation Theory. Far from holding that young non-participating Catholics are simply searching, the MST paradigm sounds an alarm – a kind of wake-up call that might prompt an urgent pastoral response to the reality. According to this view, the gradual disengagement of young Catholics from their religious heritage actually bears all the signs of secularisation described in detail by sociological theorists such as Dobbelaere, Rodney Stark and Lambert. Non-participation should not be seen as a spiritual quest, but a gradual move away from a religious to a secular perspective, beginning with a diminished sense of the sacred and its key indicator – an erosion of the sense of sin, life after death and the moral consequences of personal action. In its final stage, religion becomes entirely the subject of personal choice. Essentially, this means that there will be no return without a conversion based on the intervention of grace.

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See also McLaughlin, D, The Beliefs, Values and Practices of Student Teachers at the Australian Catholic University. (Brisbane: Australian Catholic University, Research Report. 1999)
See also McLaughlin, D, The Beliefs, Values and Practices of Student Teachers at the Australian Catholic University. (Brisbane: Australian Catholic University, Research Report. 1999), p. 32.
See also Angelico, T Taking stock: Revisioning the church in higher education. (Canberra: National Catholic Education Commission, (1997), 46.
This being the case, it should call for a re-evaluation (at the very least) of the kind of religious education programmes that may support SQP thinking, and a reconfiguration of the pastoral strategy. Rymarz’s prescription for responding to this pastoral problem, namely, a renewed emphasis on the Mass and other communal rituals and provide attractive opportunities for young adults to deepen their faith and strengthen their identification and commitment appear to be justified.

**Faith and Reason in Catholic Education – John Henry Newman**

Newman continues to offer important insights for contemporary religious education programmes. Foremost among these, perhaps, is his claim that religious faith must be based on real assent, while theology is essentially notional; theology builds on the foundation of an existing faith. Both aspects should receive attention in the religious education class, with the balance of this emphasis depending on the needs of the cohort of students.

1. Those with little knowledge or experience of Catholic faith should be offered more concrete experiences to which they can offer *real assent*. Some contemporary programmes have made the mistake of attempting to meet the needs of older students by confining their religious education presentation to the notional sphere without regard to the students’ individual situations. To put it in Newman’s terms: in cases where the students lack a sufficient religious foundation, theology has *replaced* religion rather than *supporting* it.

2. Those more firmly established in their faith could be offered a developmentally appropriate level of theological investigation, although a degree of caution needs to be exercised here too.

**Speculative Theology and Faith**

It is possible and indeed helpful to engage in speculation based on a foundation of faith in real things; this is merely an application of St Anselm’s definition of theology – *faith seeking understanding*. Yet speculation cannot *cause* faith; it is a gift. Moreover, there exists the possibility that speculation may overwhelm and destroy faith if one choses to give more credence to one’s own reasoning that to the gift of God. If inexperienced students are exposed too soon to speculative theology which does not rest on a foundation of real faith, there is a risk that they will mistake speculation for faith, and claim the right to be arbiters of revealed
truth. Newman discouraged those who were intellectually ill-equipped for assessing subtle arguments from placing themselves in danger by deliberate exposure to them.

[Some] who, though they be weak in faith … put themselves in the way of losing it by unnecessarily listening to objections. Moreover, there are minds, undoubtedly, with whom at all times to question a truth is to make it questionable, and to investigate is equivalent to inquiring; and again, there may be beliefs so sacred or so delicate that, if I may use the metaphor, they will not wash without shrinking and losing colour. 308

**Systematic Doubting**

It must be acknowledged that critical thinking plays an important role in some aspects of human knowing. Nevertheless, it was Newman’s view that if every religious belief is subjected to systematic doubting and a demand for empirical proof, it will undermine religious faith just as surely as it will undermine any other intellectual discipline. If the same process were applied to science, the scientific method itself would be undermined by endless questioning. Newman acknowledged that a host of imponderable questions which challenge the doctrines of faith must arise in every thoughtful mind. If, however, reason is unable to resolve the dilemma created, then such questions…

“… must be deliberately put aside, as beyond reason, as no-thoroughfares, which, having no outlet themselves, have no legitimate power to divert us from the King’s highway … A serious obstruction they will be now and then to particular minds, enfeebling the faith which they cannot destroy…” 309

Newman accepted the possibility that individual certitude may be proved mistaken. Nonetheless if one were to refuse to act unless absolutely certain, the result would be paralysis. In his *Essay on the Development of Doctrine*, he laid down conditions for what would constitute *due consideration*. These have found their way into settled Catholic teaching; most recently, they have been quoted in the encyclical, *Lumen Fidei*. 310 There may be times when the Church seeks to weigh arguments for and against particular doctrines.

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Once the matter has been settled, however, the faithful are called on to simply accept the conclusion as certain.

…it is our duty deliberately to take things for granted which our forefathers had a duty to doubt about; and unless we summarily put down disputation on points which have been already proved and ruled, we shall waste our time and make no advances.\textsuperscript{311}

The case for resting in such certitudes must be put clearly to students and argued in the face of its secular alternatives which are far from incontestable.

In summary, then, some of Newman’s insights remain particularly relevant to contemporary religious education classrooms.

1. Since religious faith requires, primarily, a real assent, students are more likely to need concrete experiences rather than abstract ones.
2. Even though older students may have reached a stage where they might be expected to deal with more complex theological issues in an abstract way, this should never be taken for granted. Unless, the faith has been concretely established, abstract speculations are more likely to undermine faith than promote it.
3. Newman had no problem with critical thinking, and insisted that human beings should exercise this talent as part of their humanity. What he did warn against was the application of critical thinking strategies to the gift of faith; faith is not a solely intellectual phenomenon, and to subject it to this process is to discount this reality.

The Leuven Project

The Leuven Project of Pollefeyt and Bouwens uses empirical instruments for determining the faith contents of Catholics, the theological identity of the schools and the pedagogical identity that might operate in a Catholic education system – all of these flow out of an underlying commitment to a theological framework known as Recontextualisation. It is arguable that the

instruments, although they may contain useful elements, can only be used effectively within this framework.

Underpinning the work of Pollefeyt and Bouwens is that of their colleague at the Leuven faculty of theology, Lieven Boeve. In terms of Catholic education, Boeve pleads for a recontextualization of the Christian narrative into an open narrative. In this, he follows the ideas of the French post-modern philosopher, Jean-Francois Lyotard, in claiming that reality is irreducibly plural and particular. “This leads to a paradoxical conclusion: while Christians must give up on pretensions to universality, they are nevertheless, or better, thereby enabled to more fully embrace the irreducible particularity of their own narrative.”312 By this account, “Catholic education does not consist in transmitting the basic convictions of the tradition to the next generation.313 Rather it consists of fostering ‘…a sort of refuge, a free and open space, a play or training ground for purposeful interpersonal existence in the plural society of tomorrow’”314. In discussing the Flemish Catholic religious education curriculum introduced in 2000, Boeve applauds the fact that this no longer assumes that there is any consensus and truth, and aims instead to carry out a “…tense conversation … respectfully and dedicatedly between a multiplicity of voices.”315

Boeve’s rationale for proposing this process of recontextualisation is based on his belief that the Church’s own narrative is valuable only to Christians.

In the post-modern context, Christianity as a master narrative has also lost much of its credibility – in spite of the fact that many see the fall of the modern master narrative as an opportunity for narrating a new Christian master narrative. Christianity, however, has no future as an all-encompassing meta-narrative, but only as a small narrative, or better still as an open narrative, as a narrative that offers orientation and

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integration without thereby being determined to integrate everything in its own narrative in a totalitarian way.  

Boeve’s appeal to adapt the presentation of the Christian message to the pluralist context of contemporary culture is a laudable and necessary task. But Christianity cannot draw back from its claim to be an all-encompassing narrative just because it is working in a pluralist environment. This is the mission given to it by Christ on the Mount of Olives, when he commissioned his disciples to go forth into the similarly pluralistic society of the Roman Empire and the world beyond it, impressing on them the comprehensiveness of their task: “Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation. He who believes and is baptised will be saved. He who does not believe will be condemned.” One might also compare Boeve’s position with that of Pope Benedict XVI, writing as Cardinal Ratzinger:

[T]he Church knows only one tradition: the tradition of Jesus, who lives his life from the Father and who receives himself from the Father and continually gives himself back to the Father. From this perspective, the Church is… critical of all other traditions, for it is from this perspective that the phenomenon known as ‘original sin’ – that is, the anti-human element of all traditions – makes itself known not just as a statistical but also as a fundamental fact.  

Boeve’s insights also stand in sharp contrast with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council’s document on the Church, Lumen Gentium:

The sole Church of Christ which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic… subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him. Nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and of truth are to be found outside its visible confines. 

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317 Mark 16:15-16.  
319 Lumen Gentium. 8.
While the official teaching of the Church accepts that there can be found elements of the truth in other narratives, there is an insistence that the mission of the Church itself is universal, and that “…all salvation comes from Christ through the Church.”

Didier Pollefeyt has applied this theology with this description of the kind of pupil it is aimed at forming:

> The end product of Catholic education is … a pupil who is able to inquire [into] everything and everyone positively and with an open mind, inspired by a profound sense of humanity and by a connection with old and new stories which can open alternative worlds which can grant the future a utopian orientation (= the promised land, Kingdom of God).

Hence, in the context of a pluralist society, the Catholic student is being asked to surrender the Catholic claim expressed by Christ: “No one comes to the Father except through me.” By this account, the Catholic mind is not one that seeks to be grounded in the message of Christ through investigation into established Catholic truths. Rather, it is one that remains continually open to possibilities. Such a mind does not regard itself as being the recipient of a supernatural faith enabling it to believe. Pollefeyt’s Catholic pupil has only an open mind, an understanding of its own humanity and a connection with old and new stories. It appears that this definition simply provides an accurate image of a rational human being of no particular religious persuasion at all; indeed, a secularised former Catholic who chooses which aspects of revealed truth he or she will accept.

In a 2012 doctoral dissertation presented to and accepted by the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome, Conor Sweeney provided a sophisticated critique of Boeve’s complex theology and arrived at the following conclusion:

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320 See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 836 – 856.


322 John 14:6
Boeve proposes an “…alternative form of inclusivism”\textsuperscript{323}, one that accepts that the impossibility of a universal point of view means that one cannot assert the primacy of any single religious claim, but that at the same time affirms that Christian particularity is, as particular, irreducibly unique.\textsuperscript{324} But what has effectively happened is that the scope and measure of Christianity’s truth claims in relation to the other religions have been radically neutralized.\textsuperscript{325}

In terms of the official teaching of the Church summarised as part of this review, schools adopting the underlying theology of the \textit{Leuven Project} (LP) would experience difficulty in complying with the requirements of the Catholic Church in the following areas.

\section{Nature and Goals of Catholic Education}

- \textit{The Church has three primary responsibilities: proclaiming the word; celebrating the sacraments; and exercising the ministry of charity}. \textsuperscript{326}

LP would be open to encouraging its students to be respectful of the Catholic view, but would not be promoting the proclaiming of the word or the celebrating the sacraments as central to its identity as a school.

- \textit{The mission of the Catholic school embraces all three of these dimensions and is described as being part of the evangelising mission of the Church based on the Great Commission of Christ himself: “Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.”} \textsuperscript{327}

LP explicitly renounces this universal approach implied by the Great Commission.

\textsuperscript{324} Boeve, Lieven, (2001) “God Interrupts History: Apocalypticism as an Indispensible Theological Conceptual Category”, in \textit{Louvain Studies} 26, 175.
\textsuperscript{326} See Benedict XVI, \textit{Deus Caritas Est}. (2005), 25. Available at: \url{http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est_en.html}
\textsuperscript{327} Paul VI, \textit{Evangelii Nuntiandi} (1975), 49, 72 \url{http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi_en.html}
• The Catholic school can never take a position of neutrality with regard to Christian values or what it means to be human.  

LP would insist that Catholic values are only for those who have chosen to be Catholic and have no universal application. This is an ambivalent position, and in many cases, amounts to moral neutrality.

• There are four distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school:
  i. Its distinctive educational climate;
  ii. Its emphasis on the personal development of each student;
  iii. Its emphasis on the relationship between the Gospel and the culture;
  iv. Its illumination of all knowledge with light of faith.  

LP would have difficulty in insisting that there is any universally applicable and necessary relationship between the Gospel and culture in dealing with all of its students. It would likewise avoid any attempt to illuminate all knowledge with the light of faith.

• Any genuine educational philosophy must account for both the physical and spiritual powers of each individual human person, looking to Christ himself as the fullness of humanity.  

LP would make a school reluctant to present Christ as the model for the fullness of humanity, as this would elevate Christian truth into a universal position in relation to other faith traditions.

2. Evangelisation

• The Church sees the purpose of its entire activity as an expression of the love that seeks the good of every human being, and this is brought about by means of evangelisation through word and sacrament.

• *The Church exists to evangelise – to preach and teach and to be a channel of grace, reconciling sinners with God and perpetuating Christ’s sacrifice in the Mass.* 332

LP would not consider its primary role to evangelise through word and sacrament. This would only be offered to those already committed. The implication of the Church being a channel of grace, reconciling sinners and perpetuating Christ’s sacrifice of the Mass would not be considered part of the school’s essential identity.

3. **Respect for Religious Freedom**

• *For students who are non-believers, religious education assumes the character of a missionary proclamation of the Gospel and is ordered to a decision of faith.* 333

• *A Catholic school cannot relinquish its own freedom to proclaim the Gospel; to offer is not to impose.* 334

LP would have difficulty in committing to this version of conditional religious freedom, which privileges the universal mission of the Church and commits the Catholic school to proclaiming the Gospel in a way that is ordered to a decision in faith.

4. **Trinitarian Christocentrism**

• *Jesus Christ not only transmits the word of God: he is the Word of God. The project of educating in the Catholic faith is therefore completely tied to him.* 335

The Church’s assertion of Trinitarian Christocentrism as foundational in the sense that the whole project explicitly and continually returns to this reality as an assertion of the universal mission of the Christian narrative which LP would not accept.

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5. Methodology

- The purpose of any catechetical methodology is to fix in the memory, intelligence and the heart the essential truths that must impregnate the whole of life. 336

LP would not accept that the role of education is to fix the central truths of the Catholic faith in mind and memory. This, again, would be tantamount to asserting a universal mission to Christianity.

In summary, while it may be possible for a school to use the instruments of the Leuven Project without accepting its underlying theological paradigm, this would be very difficult to achieve in practice. The instruments are based on an LP world view, and actively promote it.

Conclusions from Contemporary Academic Literature in the Field of Catholic Identity and Mission

- Identity is about maintaining consistency with the Church, and mission with responding to contemporary circumstances. Ormerod’s table can serve as a useful summary of the different dimensions and tasks of Identity and Mission.

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<tr>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Mission</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Prayer, liturgy, belief, sacraments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>Moral expectations for community life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Theology, moral thought, artistic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>expression, Christian literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Christian community living, local</td>
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<td></td>
<td>parish, Christian groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Christian conversion, public witness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Moral witness, moral challenge</td>
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<td>Cultural dialogue, challenge and</td>
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<td>critique</td>
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<td>Social justice, outreach to the needy,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>marginalised</td>
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</tbody>
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- The focus of identity and mission changes according to developmental levels:
  - Primary: Basics of Catholic religious, moral, cultural and social identity

Secondary: Some attention to Social mission of the Church; moral identity in relation to sexuality as they enter adolescence

Tertiary: Cultural and social mission of the Church

- The Church must face up to the reality of advanced secularisation and counter it by:
  - a renewed emphasis on the Mass and other communal rituals.
  - providing attractive opportunities for young adults to deepen their faith and strengthen their identification and commitment.

- If the disabled are not valued this may indicate that others are only welcomed conditionally also. If the school is Catholic in its identity, then part of its mission is to ensure that “...every child counts.”

- Since religious faith requires, primarily, a real assent, students are more likely to need concrete experiences rather than abstract ones.

- Unless, the faith has been concretely established, abstract speculations are more likely to undermine faith than promote it.

- Critical thinking has an important role in intellectual formation, but it cannot be fairly applied to the revealed data of faith.

- The identity of any authentic Catholic school requires three indispensable characteristics: proclaiming the word; celebrating the sacraments; and exercising the ministry of charity. 337 Failure to offer any of these dimensions fatally undermines the project.

- While a Catholic school must respect religious freedom, it cannot relinquish its own freedom to proclaim the Gospel; to offer is not to impose. 338 Nor can the Catholic school ever take a position of neutrality with regard to Christian values or what it means to be human. 339 The project of educating in the Catholic faith is completely tied to Christ. 340

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Chapter 3

Learning and Teaching in Religious Education

Incorporating an Evaluation of Theology and Educational Philosophy

Summary of Guidelines from Magisterial Documents

The review of magisterial documents relating to education and specifically, religious education since Vatican II has already been provided. The following summarises the key points regarding the field of Methodology and Trinitarian Christocentricity.

Methodology – Summary of Key Points

- The Church does not specify a particular methodology for religious education and catechesis; a variety of methods is encouraged. 341
- No methodology, however effective, can dispense with the part played by the teacher, whose own life must give witness to the message proclaimed. 342
- The purpose of any catechetical methodology is to fix in the memory, intelligence and the heart the essential truths that must impregnate the whole of life. 343
- Teachers are encouraged to ensure that certain basic ideas are committed to memory through appropriate educational means. 344
- The texts that are committed to memory should be gradually understood in depth, to become a source of Christian life on the personal and community levels. 345
- Methods selected should account for the differing ages and other needs of students. 346
- Discovery is cited as an important pedagogical tool and one that is in accord with the realist philosophical view regarding the existence of objective reality, as opposed to subjectivist and relativist interpretations. 347

• Technology and the media of social communication should be incorporated into the programme. Nevertheless, there is a personal dimension which these media cannot replace, and this must be born in mind. 348

**Trinitarian Christocentricity – Summary of Key Points**

• Jesus Christ not only transmits the word of God: he is the Word of God. The project of educating in the Catholic faith is therefore completely tied to him. 349

• Christ leads us to the innermost mystery of God – the Holy Trinity, the central mystery of Christian faith and life. 350

• Every authentic mode of presentation of the Christian message must always be **Trinitarian Christocentric**: Through Christ to the Father in the communion of the Holy Spirit. 351

**Introduction**

In terms of methodologies for teaching religious education, there are two principles which must be kept in mind. First, the Church does not specify a particular teaching method for religious education and catechesis; a variety of methods is encouraged. 352 The modern tendency to reduce human activity to a process – whereby a correct procedure leads to completely predictable outcome – cannot be fully applied to the Catholic faith, which is first and foremost a relationship – indeed an **intimate relationship** – with Christ. 353 The acquisition of a specific content follows from and draws its relevance from this relationship. The second principle is closely related to the first. No methodology, however effective, can dispense with the part played by the teacher, whose own life must give witness to the message proclaimed. 354 Not only is a programme taught; a faith is lived and witnessed-to in such a way that the students find it both challenging and attractive.

Religious education includes significant dimensions from philosophy and theology. Both disciplines seek the truth. Philosophy proceeds from what human reason can attain, while

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353 John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979), 5
Catholic theology draws its data from the revelation of God in Christ. While both of these disciplines make their own distinctive contributions, they are not so separated that they cannot influence one another in allowing human beings to reach the truth. In terms of the project of Catholic education, there are some lines of philosophical inquiry that reject revealed truth and even the possibility of attaining any truth at all. Contemporary expressions of these ideas include relativism and the view that the universe is unintelligible and void of meaning. Though people are free to follow these ideas if they so choose, they cannot form the basis of a Catholic education in any discipline.

1. Insights from Contemporary Learning Theory

In terms of a philosophy of religious education, contemporary learning theory has much to offer by way of professional insights into the skill of teaching. Indeed, educational professionals are encouraged to take this line by the *General Directory of Catechesis*:

> The Church “...assumes those methods not contrary to the Gospel and places them at its service… Catechetical methodology has the simple objective of education in the faith. It avails of the pedagogical sciences and of communication, as applied to catechesis…”

It seems that the best of modern contemporary learning theory is substantially compatible with the educational vision of the Church. There is an enormous variety of educational writing that could be cited, but this paper will confine itself to some of the best practices currently used in the field. It will be useful at this point to identify key, research-based teaching practices that would be helpful to incorporate into a religious education programme. The list cannot be exhaustive; there will be other effective approaches that could also be used, and the landscape of learning theory is ever-expanding – new and effective teaching and learning practices always coming to light.

**A Survey of Some Effective Contemporary Teaching and Learning Practices**

*Self-reported Grades*

This practice consists of asking the student’s advice about the current state of their own learning. Research indicates that students are quite good at understanding what they know

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and don’t know. A meta-analysis conducted on 209 studies by Kuncel, Crede and Thomas (2005) indicated that students had a very accurate understanding of their achievements levels – what they did and did not know – across a wide range of subjects.\(^{356}\) In his exposition of this phenomenon in his master classes, Hattie explains further that, when students present accurate information of this kind to the teacher, and the teacher then responds by providing incrementally appropriate learning materials which can be accessed independently by the student, highly effective learning takes place. The student is given the freedom to spend exactly the amount of time needed on each material to gain mastery, and then move on. The effect size which is 3.6 times the expected average is likely to be achieved because of this precise focus on the exact need of the individual.\(^{357}\)

**Developmentally-appropriate Programmes**

From studies conducted by Naglieri and Das (1997)\(^ {358}\) and Sweller (2008)\(^ {359}\) together with many studies that have preceded these, it is clear the when teachers know the typical way in which students think at their particular developmental stage is likely to be the most important determining factor which teachers exercise in their choice of material for students. In other words, the teaching/learning experiences will be far more effective if they are designed to meet the stage of development of the learner, and focus on their necessary developmental tasks. This will naturally capture their interest and attend to the pre-existing hard-wiring of the student. The *Early Years Report*\(^ {360}\) of the Canadian province of Ontario has made a good start in bringing together the research in relation to all of the major developmental needs of children up to the age of seven. There is also longstanding support for this practice in the educational method of Maria Montessori, whose work in this field began in 1907, and has continued to be developed through action research by the world wide Montessori education community up to the present. Hattie claims that the effect size of this practice is 1.2 – three times the expected average.\(^ {361}\)


Formative Evaluation

Teachers have a significant impact in the teaching/learning programme, and so it is essential that they be open to improving the programme through appropriate evaluation. One highly effective way of improving any system is through formative evaluation. Fuchs and Fuchs (1986)\textsuperscript{362} demonstrated the effectiveness of using an evidence based model of systematic formative data in place of simple teacher judgement. Hattie has cited a further thirty studies to corroborate this effect, yielding an effect size of 0.9.\textsuperscript{363}

Microteaching

Microteaching usually refers to the process whereby teachers deliver lessons to small groups of students, thus making them better able to gauge the responses of the students to the impact of what they are offering. Hattie identified over four hundred studies demonstrating the effectiveness of this teaching practice, and has identified its effect size as 0.88.\textsuperscript{364} It also has an impact on the future practice of teachers in training. Metcalf (1995)\textsuperscript{365} argued that when teachers engaged in this kind of teaching, it had significant impacts on the effectiveness of their teaching, and this did not diminish over time.

Reciprocal Teaching

One of the most effective ways of learning anything is to have to teach it to someone else. The research of Rosenshine and Meister (1994)\textsuperscript{366} has demonstrated this and there are a further thirty-eight studies quoted in Hattie’s meta-analysis that lend further weight to the practice giving it an effect size of 0.74.\textsuperscript{367} The need to do this will often provide a motivation to succeed at a particular task that would otherwise be lacking. The learning programme will be significantly enhanced if the students are challenged to take responsibility for teaching something to someone else.

A note of caution is needed here. Those who benefit most from this strategy are usually not those who are already highly competent; rather, it is those who have not yet struggled to a fully developed understanding who will be helped by this process. On another level, it is often the case that highly competent students do not succeed in teaching their peers. There are a number of reasons for this. The competent student, not seeing the difficulties that others experience, may move too quickly through the task; alternatively, competent students can have their own agenda – to demonstrate their intellectual superiority over those they are teaching.

**Teacher – Student Relationships**

A very large corpus of educational research has consistently found in favour of the effectiveness of building good student/teacher relationships, described in the literature – the so called ‘person-centred teacher’. Cornelius-White (2007) has identified 119 studies incorporating 2,439 schools, 14,851 teachers and 355,325 students in which 1,450 positive effects were based on this characteristic. Hattie cites “…agency, efficacy, respect by the teacher for what the student brings to the class… and allowing the experiences of the child to be recognized in the classroom.” He claims that these person-centred variables result in classrooms where there is more engagement, minimal resistant behaviours and respect for self and others and gives it an effect-size of 0.72.

**Spaced vs Massed Practice**

Much of current educational practice is based on what might be called the ‘unit model’ in which a large amount of time is devoted to mastering a particular set of skills and knowledge. Once this is finished, however, the field rarely, if ever, covered again. This approach is referred to as ‘massed practice’. Research findings have consistently called this practice into question, demonstrating that there is a better way of organising a programme, known as ‘spaced practice’. As the words imply, this requires the spreading out of the tasks over time. This does not mean simple repetitive drill and practise which can be monotonous and largely meaningless. It is about deliberative practice, by which students return to the same material in different and interesting ways – possibly even adapted to their own advancing age and growing confidence – thus deepening their understanding. (The model of the regular cycle of

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the Liturgical year, when used properly, would be an example of an effective use of spaced practice.) In Hattie’s words, “…it is the frequency of different opportunities rather than spending more time on a task that makes the difference to learning.” He suggests that the proper use of spaced practice will yield an effect size of 0.71.

The Impact of Movement on Learning and Cognition

In the early 1960s, Held and Hein published their classic research on the impact of moment on learning. Two kittens - one designated the leader and the other the follower - were only let out of a dark room for three hours a day. During this time, the leader-kitten was fitted with a harness, and needed to drag around a cart with the follower-kitten. After three months, both kittens were tested. The leader kitten had developed normal vision, the follower, despite being exposed to exactly the same visual stimuli, had serious vision problems. This work began a great deal of research in the impact of movement on learning. There is now a large body of research that indicates the importance of fine motor tactile activity. In the area of judgement, for example, Glenberg & Kaschak (2002), Ochs, Gozales & Jacoby, (1996), McNeill (1992), Kraus & Hadar (1999) demonstrate in a variety of ways that movement and cognition are closely aligned. Memory also, it seems, is significantly improved when connected with fine motor movement as demonstrated in the research of Cohen (1989), Engelkamp, Zimmer, Mohr, and Sellen (1994), Noice, Noice & Kennedy (2000) and Laird, Wagener, Halal & Szegda (1982). In summing up, Lillard writes: “…there is abundant research showing that movement and cognition are closely intertwined. People represent spaces and objects more accurately, make judgements faster and more accurately, remember information better and show superior social cognition when their movements are

aligned with what they are thinking about or learning.”

It seems then, that a programme that restricts movement too narrowly or does not permit tactile engagement with real objects also restricts learning significantly.

**Choice and Perceived Control**

Nowhere is it disputed freedom is a foundational, constitutive element of authentic human life and development. Even as children, human beings function best if they are given a degree of choice in order to manage their own circumstances. The capacity to use this freedom develops over time, and with very young children, choices must necessarily be limited. If the capacity to make simple choices is entirely absent, however, the learning process is significantly diminished. Recent research has affirmed the value of making limited choices available to students. Some examples include the studies of Ryan & Deci (2000)\(^3\), Iyengar & Lepper (1999)\(^4\), Markus & Kitayama (1991)\(^5\). While agreeing with this as a general principle, other research indicates that unlimited free choice will actually have a negative effect on learning, as per the studies of Iyengar & Lepper (2000)\(^6\) and Schwartz (2004)\(^7\).

Another benefit of limited choice is an increase in students’ capacity to concentrate deeply and for long periods of time; this is supported by the research of Ruff & Rothbart (1996)\(^8\), Cumberland-Li, Eisenberg, & Reiser, (2004)\(^9\), Carlson, Moses & Hicks (1998)\(^10\). It appears that some degree of limited choice dramatically enhances results at every level; this applies to a religious education classroom as much as to any other human learning activity.

**Inadequacy of Extrinsic Rewards and Motivation**

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During the early 1970s, educational psychology began to turn away from what had, up to that time, been a prevailing focus on Behaviourism, which is the notion the human beings are shaped primarily through reward and punishment. This idea was challenged by studies such as that of Lepper, Greene, & Nisbett (1973)\textsuperscript{391}, which began to indicate that this emphasis could actually result in less motivation among students. A large meta-study by Deci \textit{et.al.} (1999)\textsuperscript{392} provided clear evidence of the ultimately-negative impact of a reward-and-punishment-based system in sustaining motivation to learn. At the same time, other studies demonstrate that, where it is necessary to motivate students to complete very low interest tasks, some rewards can be helpful, as per the work of Cameron, Banko, & Pierce (2001).\textsuperscript{393} Nevertheless, it does seem that the use of extrinsic rewards undermines the most potent student motivator – success. Those who work only for reward will need to be offered ever greater rewards. Those who are encouraged by their own success are more likely to persist in the face of difficulties.

In terms of religious education, the application is clear – if the task is essentially intimacy with Christ, it should be seen as a free relationship aiming at mutual love. The idea that students should participate in this relationship to receive extrinsic rewards will actually undermine the notion of genuine love. Even in human relationships, the friend who uses another to gain reward is not regarded as a true friend at all. While there is always a place for spontaneous gift-giving, this should never be presented in terms of reward and punishment.

\textit{Learning from Peers}

Educational research identifies three different aspects of successful peer learning: imitative learning, peer tutoring and collaborative learning. Each one of these has a valuable contribution to make to learning. It seems that different developmental ages favour different peer learning models – or combinations of these models.


In the early 1960s, Bandura, Ross & Ross (1963)\(^{394}\) offered the now-classic research demonstrating the value of learning through observation and imitation of peers – simply watching the way others do things. Subsequent studies have consistently confirmed the value of this approach. These studies include those of Carpenter, Akhtar & Tomasello (1998)\(^{395}\), Chartrand & Bargh (1999)\(^{396}\), and Gergely, Bekkering and Kiraly (2002)\(^{397}\).

Results from peer-tutoring programmes, particularly those sessions adapted to the age of the students and tightly structured to achieve a particular purpose have a double effect. Such programmes not only benefit those receiving assistance, but also the tutors themselves. Studies demonstrating this include those of Gauvain & Rogoff (1989)\(^{398}\), Greenwood, Terrey, Utley, Montagna, & Walker (1993)\(^{399}\), Fantuzzo & Ginsburg-Block (1998)\(^{400}\) and Gauvain, (2001)\(^{401}\).

While peer-tutoring implies a one-to-one relationship, collaborative learning involves groups of students working together. A number of studies demonstrate that collaborative approaches can help people to learn better in certain circumstances; this goes beyond academic achievement, to include social development as well. Not all studies show this improvement, and there seem to be some limiting factors. For example, very young children do not seem to benefit from collaboration of this kind. Furthermore, if the material to be studies is especially unfamiliar, students seem to benefit more from observation and imitation before progressing to collaboration. It also seems that the success of collaborative learning can be considerably greater if students are allowed to work with friends. The studies demonstrating the

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effectiveness of the various aspects of collaborative learning include Flavell (1999)\textsuperscript{402}, Azmitia and Crowley (2001)\textsuperscript{403}, Rogoff, Bartlet & Turkanis (2001)\textsuperscript{404} and Aronson (2002)\textsuperscript{405}.

\textit{Inquiry/Project-based Learning}

Inquiry-based learning has become prominent in recent years. It attempts to harness the interest of the students and gives them the freedom to discover ever greater dimensions of knowledge. This approach has much to recommend it, especially its capacity to encourage independence in learning. Clearly, it comprises many of the abovementioned teaching practices and would serve as a very effective instrument in an overall teaching-and-learning strategy.

However, one \textit{caveat} must be addressed, especially in terms of religious education. Some of the more radical exponents of inquiry-learning can be dismissive of essential content; content is determined by the interests of the students.\textsuperscript{406} For religious education, content is not an irrelevant consideration. On the contrary, using educationally appropriate means, it is important to present at least a basic summary of the deposit of faith (\textit{depositum fidei}). Students must also remember this content.\textsuperscript{407} Expressions of this concern are not limited to the field of religious education. Kirschner, Sweller and Clark (2006) demonstrated the ineffectiveness of inquiry or problem-based learning strategies where students worked with new or complex material.\textsuperscript{408} Clark (1989) noted that even when students express preference for this approach, they do not learn as effectively as they would from direct instruction.\textsuperscript{409} Lundeberg (1987) and Pressley & Afflerbach (1995) indicated that mastery of a variety of

\begin{itemize}
\item Reggion Emilia is an example of an educational approach that takes this view of content.
\end{itemize}
learning strategies – not just inquiry based strategies – was necessary for developing
expertise across different domains.\textsuperscript{410} Samuelstuen & Braten (2007) confirmed that students
benefit more from using a variety of learning approaches.\textsuperscript{411} Small (2003) demonstrated the
fallacy of radical constructivism’s epistemology and pointed to the unhelpful confusion
between the legitimate and well-established learning process (by which human beings
construct knowledge by relating component parts) and the teaching strategy involved in
problem-based learning.\textsuperscript{412} Phillips (1995) concluded that the issue should be considered
from the learner’s perspective. The construction of knowledge by an individual benefits more
from direct instruction and does not need inquiry methods to achieve the best result.\textsuperscript{413} John
Hattie, the world’s most cited educational researcher, expresses the frustration of those who
have pointed out the shortcomings of radical constructivism and the over-dependence on
inquiry learning.

Every year I present lectures to teacher-education students and find that they are
already indoctrinated with the mantra “constructivism good, direct instruction bad.”
When I show them the results of these meta-analyses, they are stunned, and they often
become angry at having been given an agreed set of truths and commandments
against direct instruction.\textsuperscript{414}

In other words, while inquiry-based learning is an excellent tool for use in an existing
framework of knowledge, there are significant problems where it is used to establish that
basic framework. The cognitive load (the number and complexity of intellectual demands on
the learner) in establishing the data to be used is beyond the capacities of inexperienced
learners if they are left to establish this simply using their own inquiries. In terms of religious
education, this means that students need to be comfortable and proficient with the basic
content of their faith before they should be asked to undertake further inquiry. Inquiry

\textsuperscript{410} See Lundeberg, M.A, “Metacognitive aspects of reading comprehension: Studying understanding in legal
case analysis.” Reading Research Quarterly, 61 (1), 94-106.
students’ strategic processing.” British Journal of Educational Psychology, 77(2), 351-378.
483-502.
measurement and peer tutoring to help general educators provide adaptive education.” Learning Disabilities
Research and Practice, 8(3), 148-156.
\textsuperscript{414} Hattie, John, Visible Learning: A Synthesis Of Over 800 Meta-analyses Relating To Achievement. (New
York: Routledge, 2009), 204
learning has much to offer, but it cannot carry the whole load of teaching the essential content of the Catholic faith.

2. Trinitarian Christocentricity

Theological concerns are relevant to all areas of religious education, but there are some vital insights from theology which bear directly on teaching and learning. An enduring part of the Catholic tradition is the insistence that humanity is created in the image of God. This has implications not only for the dignity of the human person, but also for the way in which human beings might be taught to understand who they are. The General Directory of Catechesis is unequivocal in insisting that every authentic mode of presentation of the Christian message must always be Trinitarian Christocentric: through Christ to the Father in the communion of the Holy Spirit. The educational implication of this (somewhat obscure) expression carries implications for the Catholic educational project which require further exploration.

Religious Education and the Human Person

Trinitarian-Christocentricity is a complex expression which sums up the appropriate process for religious education, the goal of which is to bring human beings into a relationship with the Blessed Trinity. All analogies are inadequate (they involve some relevant similarities, but the differences outweigh the similarities). Nevertheless, there are three aspects of the Trinity that offer helpful analogical insights into human learning, particularly in the area of religious education.

1. The persons of the Trinity are traditionally linked with the classic transcendental properties of being: truth, beauty and goodness, in which the truth is associated with the Father, beauty with the Son and goodness with the Holy Spirit. The project of human education, then, consists explicitly in an integrated pursuit of truth, beauty and goodness, and is thereby implicitly linked with the Holy Trinity. Each of these transcendental properties also appears to correspond with an essential aspect of what it means

415 See Genesis 1:26-27
416 Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis (1997), 100.
417 These ideas have been explored in the following article to be published in Poland in December, 2013: O’Shea, Gerard. “Trinitarian Christocentricity: Six Implications for Religious Education” To be published in Studia Elckie, 15 (2013)
to be distinctively human – the human intellect seeks truth; human *sentience* (the senses) desires beauty and the human will seeks out what is good.

2. The transcendental properties have also been able to serve as a link with the supernatural dimensions of human existence. This is most noticeable in the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. None of these virtues can exist in complete isolation; they build on and complete a human nature which is already there. When the human intellect seeks truth, it also seeks a truth that is not fully available to the mind – it is only accessible through faith. The search for beauty has its supernatural purpose too – it is perfected with the virtue of hope; a hope that the glory of earthly things will not disappoint, but will lead to heavenly realities of unimaginable beauty and lasting joy. Finally, for human beings, the attraction of the good – of both justice and compassion – must ultimately demonstrate that we need something more if we are to achieve this great end. The search must lead to a higher love; the supernatural charity which takes us out of ourselves and is received as a gift of God.

3. It seems, then, that human learning and indeed all of human existence is implicitly Trinitarian and perhaps even *designed* to lead us to our final happiness in God. This is ultimately the message that Catholic education has to offer, the message that the world needs to hear - that every good thing in the whole educational enterprise prepares us for further spiritual realities.

How, then, does this work out in practice? How does it look? The liturgy might provide the clue. In the public worship of the Church, all prayers are offered through Jesus Christ, the Son, to the Father in the Holy Spirit. The liturgical order points also to a human order - the beauty of Christ, in the goodness of the Holy Spirit leading to the truth of the Father has a natural starting-point. Sensate, bodily experiences are the normal starting-point for human learning, the means by which we begin to understand reality *as it is*. Once we have experienced these sensed realities, the next phase of learning is to love what we have discovered. Finally, the concrete experiences and the love associated with these are compressed into thoughts by which can be represented mentally. What, then, does religious education look like when it is organised in accordance with this Trinitarian structure? Typically, it focuses on three aspects of human personhood, analogous to the creation of the human person in the image of the Trinity. These aspects are *body, heart and mind*. In more technical philosophical language, these may be called sentience, will and intellect.
Religious Education for the Body

In describing religious education for the body, one might consider the typical human development of an infant, whose major task appears to the direct gathering of data via the senses, for the purpose of constructing a personal view of the world. This concentration on concrete, real objects is driven by a sense of joy and wonder, an innate capacity which naturally directs human beings to a spiritual reality beyond themselves. In seeking an explanation for the origin of wonder, Sofia Cavalletti observed that wonder is evoked by “…an attentive gaze at reality.”418 For example, where students are not familiar with the sacraments, it is best to begin with an exploration of the rites’ material elements. Each of these, in its own way, draws the participant into a particular reality made present in the sacrament, and lays the foundation for its deeper spiritual meaning. Any number of instances can be cited in support of this process as the starting point, but a particularly poignant story can be found in The Religious Potential of the Child concerning the use of a simple set of cruets, used for pouring water and wine into a chalice.

We will never forget seven-year-old Massimo, who continued to repeat this exercise for so long a period of time. The catechist, thinking that he was doing it out of laziness, came up to him several times to introduce him to some other work; but Massimo’s facial expression was intent and rapt and he was trying to explain the meaning of what he was doing as he repeated the various actions… Finally – it was almost at the end of the year – he managed to say: ‘A few drops of water and a lot of wine, because we must lose ourselves in Jesus’… In the end Massimo had known how to express it with words worthy of a mystic.419

Religious Education for the Heart

There are two foundational strategies involved in ensuring that Religious Education reaches the heart. Teachers are well aware of the impossibility of forcing any kind of ‘heart response’ – it must be genuinely felt by the student, or it will fail. Before all else, human beings need to experience genuine love from someone in their lives if they are to understand what it is to love. Typically, this comes from parents – although this is not always so. Blessed Teresa of

Calcutta well understood the importance of this foundational experience, and made it an important part of her work to seek out those who had been deprived of this essential human experience and to make up for what was lacking. Many who observed her thought she wasted her time caring lovingly for dying outcasts. She was undeterred, and did all that she could to give these people at least one experience of love in their lives. Perhaps this does not need to be stated – but no religious education is possible if there is a complete absence of this kind of love.

Cavalletti, a Scripture scholar, noticed another particularly effective way of reaching the heart – allowing children to reflect on the Scriptures. This approach, of course, can never be used as a technique, by which students are compelled to listen to the Scriptures in order that their hearts might be won over! Rather, the attentive engagement Cavalletti describes is a means of encountering God in the inspired Word. This must be done without coercion or manipulation. When the Scriptures are offered as that by which we increase and understand our original sense-inspired wonder, they become invested with attractive power. It then becomes possible for the child to encounter there a person rather than a sequence of words. The Holy Spirit is able to complete the task of revealing Jesus to the reader. This recalls the words of St Jerome: “Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.”

In Cavalletti’s view, the actual words of the Scriptures – rather than the simplified versions of children’s Bibles – should be used even with the youngest children, as children seem to respond to these real words. This conclusion is drawn from the experience of those working in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd for over sixty years, but comes with one relevant caution – because this is rich food, there should not be too much of it. The words need to be savoured, little by little. Finally, it is observed that in trying to reach the heart through the Scriptures, the object is not to engage in a complex intellectual study of the Bible and its principles of interpretation, which is not a work for the heart, but for the mind. There is certainly a time for this kind of study, but not at this point.

*Religious Education for the Mind*

Religious education for the mind seems to have been a battleground in religious education for some years. It was arguable that this was deemed the starting-point of religious education in the pre-conciliar period, then tended to be neglected in the years immediately afterwards. Religious education of the mind has a proper – indeed, an essential place – in the overall
scheme of things. 420 As evident from the above survey, the best of modern educational theories are in accord with this approach – the idea of moving from the concrete to the abstract is a settled educational principle. In terms of religious education, there are two extremes to be avoided. One is the idea that the presentation of abstract principles in terms of catechism answers and propositions is the best and natural starting point for religious education; the other problem is believing that such formulations have no place in the process and the compressed meanings that are offered in such propositions need not be remembered.

On the contrary, the purpose of a religious education of the mind is to create a synthesis point for describing what the senses and the heart have already discovered. The words then lead us back to the original encounter and to any subsequent reflections we have. The words used to describe objects, events and reflections are a means of allowing us to participate mentally in those things; they connect us with our own memories and with a cultural tradition that we may not have personally experienced. Pope Benedict XVI noted that: “...human words, at any rate, the great fundamental words, always carry within them a whole history of human experiences, of human questioning, understanding and suffering of reality. The great theme words of the Bible bring with them into the process of revelation also, in acceptance and contradiction, the fundamental experiences of mankind.”421 Pope John Paul II, in Catechesis Tradendae, insisted on the need for a mental recollection of the truths of faith. “The blossoms, if we may call them that, of faith and piety do not grow in the desert places of a memory - less catechesis.”422

**Integrating the Insights**

Many teachers will agree with these contemporary insights regarding learning and teaching. The challenge, however, is to take this wide variety of good practices and make them work in a classroom without exhausting the teachers involved. Experience indicates that many educational changes fail, not because they are bad ideas, but because teachers have not been given the opportunity to gain sufficient mastery of them and have been allowed insufficient time to integrate the ideas into their classroom practice. Such an integration would need to incorporate all that it means to be truly Catholic, which is to say: authentically human, educationally effective, rigorously scientific, genuinely spiritual, anthropologically adequate,

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psychologically sound, philosophically true, aesthetically beautiful, socially and emotionally satisfying, unhesitatingly just and profoundly attractive to students. This is the challenge before those seeking to update teaching and learning practices in the religious education programme of the Diocese of Parramatta.
Chapter 4

Shared Christian Praxis, Thomas Groome and *Sharing Our Story*

The names of Thomas Groome and ‘Shared Christian Praxis’ (henceforth SCP) are inextricably linked. To understand the methodology properly, one needs a good grasp of the theoretical perspectives of Groome. In this chapter, SCP will be outlined – both as Groome described it and as *Sharing Our Story* has used it in practice. This survey will be followed by an evaluation of SCP and the thought of Thomas Groome in terms of magisterial teaching, theological anthropology and contemporary learning theory. The documents included in the survey of representative sources are as follows:

- *Sharing our Story. Core Document* (Parramatta, NSW: Diocese of Parramatta, 1999);
- Groome, Thomas. “Remembering and Imagining”, *Religious Education* Fall, 2003;

1. Review of Sources

**Brief Outline of Groome’s ‘Shared Christian Praxis’ Methodology**

- *Sharing our Story. Core Document* (Parramatta, NSW: Diocese of Parramatta, 1999)
This outline is drawn from Groome’s 1991 text *Sharing faith: A comprehensive approach to religious education and pastoral ministry*. It is used in the Diocese of Parramatta, where it has been used (together with other more contemporary teaching practices) as the basis of the religious education programme, *Sharing Our Story*. There will be no need to rehearse its stages here, as it will be very familiar to the teachers in the Diocese and is widely known as ‘Shared Christian Praxis’.

**Its Basic Methodology**

The best known practical application of Groome’s thought can be found in his methodology of religious education known as ‘Shared Christian Praxis’. It proceeds in five steps. As it is set out below, the first entry is from Groome’s published methodology; the second is from *Sharing Our Story* which attempts to establish links between this approach and aspects of the Emmaus Story. The two are substantially the same:

1. **Naming the Present Action**: To reflect on present events and make distinctions between what is really happening and what should be happening.
   
   *Naming Life Experience*: Talking with each other about these things that had happened…

2. **The Participants’ Stories and Visions**: The beginning of critical reflection on the factors that led to the present situation. It is concerned with the ‘why’ questions: for example: Why do we do as we do?
   
   *Reflection on Life Experience*: Jesus said to them. “What were you discussing with each other as you were walking along?”

3. **The Christian Community Story and Vision**: Aspects of the Christian story are remembered and told. Participants were provided with an opportunity to see their own experience in light of the Christian vision.
   
   *Christian Story and Vision*: Jesus interpreted to them the things about the Scriptures.”

4. **Dialogue between the Inspirational Story and Participants**: In light of remembering the Christian story the participant’s experience is examined in light of what ‘should be’ as well as what actually ‘is’.

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424 Catholic Education Office, Parramatta, *Sharing our Story: Core Document* (Parramatta, NSW: Diocese of Parramatta, 1999), 60
[Integration: “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the Scriptures to us?” Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him.]

5. **A Decision for Future Action:** Out of an understanding of the way it was and the way it should have been can emerge a decision to close the gap between the lived experience and the Christian vision. At this point praxis was considered to have developed.

[Response: “That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem… they told what had happened.”]

In summarising the methodology, a specific teaching process has been developed within *Sharing Our Story* which very closely follows Groome’s original document:

**Focusing** (F): “The focusing activity introduces, orientates and motivates students to the study of the unit. It introduces the focusing theme or symbol and facilitates students’ entry into the first movement.”\(^{425}\)

**Naming** (N): “Participants are invited to name or express in some form their own or other’s life experience.”\(^{426}\)

**Reflecting** (RF): “Participants are encouraged to reflect critically on what has already been expressed.”\(^{427}\)

**The Christian Story and Vision** (CSV): “Here the participants are given access to the Church’s Faith and Tradition relevant to the focusing theme and topic.”\(^{428}\)

**Integrating** (I): “Participants reflect on their own understandings, experience, views and questions in the light of the Christian Story and Vision; by placing the two in relationship, they deepen their understanding.”\(^{429}\)

**Responding** (R): “In response to this integration, participants are challenged to identify appropriate ways of living the Christian life.”\(^{430}\)

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\(^{425}\) Catholic Education Office, Parramatta, *Sharing our Story: Core Document* (Parramatta, NSW: Diocese of Parramatta, 1999), 62

\(^{426}\) Catholic Education Office, Parramatta, *Sharing our Story: Core Document* (Parramatta, NSW: Diocese of Parramatta, 1999), 62

\(^{427}\) Catholic Education Office, Parramatta, *Sharing our Story: Core Document* (Parramatta, NSW: Diocese of Parramatta, 1999), 62

\(^{428}\) Catholic Education Office, Parramatta, *Sharing our Story: Core Document* (Parramatta, NSW: Diocese of Parramatta, 1999), 62

\(^{429}\) Catholic Education Office, Parramatta, *Sharing our Story: Core Document* (Parramatta, NSW: Diocese of Parramatta, 1999), 62

\(^{430}\) Catholic Education Office, Parramatta, *Sharing our Story: Core Document* (Parramatta, NSW: Diocese of Parramatta, 1999), 62
These elements are not to be interpreted as discrete sequential steps; they can be used at any stage of the unfolding unit. “While a particular lesson or strategy might focus on one movement, the others also have some influence, overlapping and blending in a dynamic process that supports the learner’s deeper search for meaning.”

**Thomas Groome’s Reflections on His Own Work**

- Groome, Thomas. “Remembering and Imagining”, *Religious Education* Fall, 2003

In “Remembering and Imagining”, an autobiographical article written in 2003, Groome recalled a series of significant theorists who have influenced his work in Religious Education and the challenges faced by contemporary religious education. While he acknowledged that he does not necessarily accept everything that these theorists have proposed, it is useful to keep these in mind with a view to understanding particular aspects of Groome’s approach.

Groome cites the following theorists and their contributions to his work:

- Duane Huebner, who convinced him of “…the politics of all education and the need to craft a socially responsible pedagogy.”
- Beverly Harrison, who introduced him to feminist theology.
- Gustavo Guiterrez, who demonstrated that the liberation of humanity should shape our politics and our prayers, “…nurturing a spirituality that sustains the social responsibilities of Christian faith.”
- Jurgen Habermas, from whom he learned “…the importance of the interpretive role of critical reflection in and on life to uncover the interests that mediate our version of reality and ways of knowing it.” He also admits that Habermas left him so critical that he might easily have lost any place from which to make a stand from the grounds of commitment.

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430 Catholic Education Office, Parramatta, *Sharing our Story: Core Document* (Parramatta, NSW: Diocese of Parramatta, 1999), 62
431 Catholic Education Office, Parramatta, *Sharing our Story: Core Document* (Parramatta, NSW: Diocese of Parramatta, 1999), 62
432 Groome, Thomas, “Remembering and Imagining”, *Religious Education* Fall, 2003, 98, 4, 515
433 Groome, Thomas, “Remembering and Imagining”, *Religious Education* Fall, 2003, 98, 4, 515
434 Groome, Thomas, “Remembering and Imagining”, *Religious Education* Fall, 2003, 98, 4, 516
435 Groome, Thomas, “Remembering and Imagining”, *Religious Education* Fall, 2003, 98, 4, 516
436 Groome, Thomas. “Remembering and Imagining”, *Religious Education* Fall, 2003, 98, 4, 516
Georg Gadamer, who argued - against the views of Habermas regarding tradition - that it was rational to appreciate tradition and to interpret it in ways that mediate a “...fusion of horizons between the texts of tradition and our own.”

As part of these reflections on his career, Groome identifies four challenges.

1. The challenge of pluralism - religious education should ground people in their own identity, but in a way that they can appreciate other people’s faith.

2. The problem of what may be described as a form of religious education that adheres too closely to one pole or the other - to Fideism or Rationalism.

“Truthfully, I’m worried about faith education that simply socializes people into religious identity, without any kind of critical education and consciousness, and equally chagrined by religious education that pretends to be objective, value free – those old enlightenment myths – and without formative intent.”

3. Religious education should “...enable people to bring their lives to their faith and their faith to their lives.” To this end, claims Groome, “we must employ pedagogies that are likely to actively engage participants in conversation and to mediate a critical correlation between life and faith.”

4. There is a mistaken idea that the task of religious education can be achieved merely by formal programmes. On the contrary, “...around, beneath and beyond them, there simply must be a community and family of faith.” He makes it clear what is the most crucial factor:

And if forced to prioritize between family or parish, without hesitation, I would place the family first... Everything about the ethos of a home educates – or “mis-educates” – in faith... This makes it imperative that the faith community nurtures its nurturers – its parents and adults.

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437 Groome, Thomas, “Remembering and Imagining”, Religious Education Fall, 2003, 98, 4, 516
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443 Groome, Thomas, “Remembering and Imagining”, Religious Education Fall, 2003, 98, 4, 519
Thomas Groome’s Theological Anthropology


In 2005, Tom Beaudoin, Associate Professor of Theology at Fordham University, wrote, “The Theological Anthropology of Thomas Groome.” This is a carefully nuanced and sympathetic analysis of Thomas Groome’s theological anthropology. He said, in summary, that Groome’s understanding of subjectivity and knowledge is rooted in a “…critically existential liberation theological pedagogy.” Groome believes that the elements of the knowing subject are as follows: existential, pedagogical, liberational, theological and critical.

Existential:
In “Sharing Faith” Groome describes three aspects of human being – corporeal, mental and volitional (body, mind and will). The corporeal aspect relates to a “sensuous wisdom” – the body has its own dynamism towards aesthetic activity. Mental capacities incorporate remembering, reasoning, intention and critical reflection. Volition is characterised by inheriting, relating and committing. These tasks of knowing and being, for Groome, are found in the social-cultural systems that distort and control human values as well as serving the common good.

Pedagogical:
Human beings cannot know unless they are continually reconstructing their own experience, which proceeds in developmental stages. Yet, in his view, this knowing is “…not likely to

446 See Beaudoin, Tom, “The Theological Anthropology of Thomas Groome” Religious Education, Spring 2005; 100, 2. P. 131
448 See Beaudoin, Tom, “The Theological Anthropology of Thomas Groome” Religious Education, Spring 2005; 100, 2. P. 131
449 See Beaudoin, Tom, “The Theological Anthropology of Thomas Groome” Religious Education, Spring 2005; 100, 2. P. 131
happen unless education is consciously and intentionally critical and liberating.”  

In Groome’s view, “…epistemology and ontology, ‘knowing’ and ‘being’ should be united in the philosophical foundations of Christian religious education.”

**Liberational:**

Liberational - the knowing subject is freedom-seeking. Faith is more than believing, it is also doing – and knowing what we are doing. Groome agrees with Habermas that every conversation carries with it “…an immanent desire for freedom.”

**Theological:**

The influence of Karl Rahner has also made itself felt in Groome’s later work by giving significant attention to ‘everyday revelation’, focusing on God’s continual self-communication and the human ability to appropriate it, in his terms, in “…conative rather than simply informative ways.”

**Critical: Knowing the Subject as Active Social Questioner and Imaginer**

Drawing on the critical theory of Habermas, “Groome’s knowing subject has the capacity for ideology critique… for both naming reality as a particular human social arrangement and for searching out imaginatively those arrangements that limit or distort fundamental human potentials.” In Groome’s view, there is no such thing as a pure knowledge from above; following Habermas, he believes that each person brings “…a basic orientation of the knowing subject that shapes the outcome of what is known.”

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Thomas Groome’s Advice to Beginning Teachers of Religious Education


In 2007, Groome offered some advice to those starting out as teachers of religious education, and reflexively applied the same advice to himself. His article was titled, “Advice to Beginners and Myself.” He made the following key points:

- Educators should “...attend to our own growth toward holiness of life,” since, he says, you cannot share what you don’t have. 459
- “Be clear about our purposes as religious educators.” We must “...form, inform and transform,” in a way that allows people to become disciples of Christ. 461
- There are some truth claims that stand at the core, and these “...must be re-presented faithfully and persuasively by its religious educators.” 462
- Even so, “...we must never present our particular faith in ways that disparage other traditions” 463
- “We need to know the culture of the people with whom we work and get to know them personally, including their names.” 464
- If we want them to learn from- and ground their spiritual identity in- the tradition, “...faith communities and families, proactively engaging their shared life as curriculum.” 465
- “We must constantly reflect upon and try to improve our approach to doing religious education.” This is described as a “life to Faith to life” approach. 467


1. Groome’s Advice Regarding Current Challenges in Religious Education

In terms of the current challenges facing religious education, Groome offers valuable insights, including the following:

• In responding to the challenges of contemporary pluralism, we must make efforts to ground people in their own tradition without disrespecting the views of others. 469
• We need to strike a balance between two inauthentic extremes in religious education programmes – Rationalism (which attempts to confine religion to the domain of empirical experimentation and rationalistic argument) and Fideism (which insists on blind faith alone and denigrates any kind of questioning or intellectual engagement). 470
• Using pedagogies that allow participants to seek a correlation between faith and life. 471
• Ensuring that families and communities are vitally involved in the religious education process. Nothing is more important; to use Groome’s words, “...everything about the ethos of a home educates – or “mis-educates” – in faith.” 472
• Groome has been a vocal advocate for the Catechism of the Catholic Church, insisting that it “...is inspiring creators of religious education curricula to tell ‘the whole story’ of Catholicism rather than remain mired in their favourite parts.” 473

469 See Groome, Thomas, “Remembering and Imagining”, Religious Education Fall, 2003, 98, 4, 518
470 Groome, Thomas, “Remembering and Imagining”, Religious Education Fall, 2003, 98, 4, 518
471 Groome, Thomas, “Remembering and Imagining”, Religious Education Fall, 2003, 98, 4, 519
472 Groome, Thomas, “Remembering and Imagining”, Religious Education Fall, 2003, 98, 4, 519
Likewise, Groome’s advice to religious educators touches some very important issues which could be profitably be used as a simple checklist:

- Educators should “...attend to our own growth toward holiness of life,” since, he says, you cannot share what you don’t have.  

- “Be clear about our purposes as religious educators.” We must “...form, inform and transform,” in a way that allows people to become disciples of Christ.

- There are some truth claims that stand at the core, and it is these that “...must be represented faithfully and persuasively by its religious educators.” Even so “...we must never present our particular faith in ways that disparage other traditions”

- “We need to know the culture of the people with whom we work and get to know them personally, including their names.”

- If we want them to learn from- and ground their spiritual identity in- the tradition, we need to support “…faith communities and families, proactively engaging their shared life as curriculum.”

- “We must constantly reflect upon and try to improve our approach to doing religious education.” This is described as a “life to Faith to life” approach.

- We should not burden ourselves with the responsibility for achieving our goals, but “balance our own best efforts with the memory of God’s grace.”

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2. An Assessment of Groome’s Theological Anthropology

Beaudoin’s presentation of Groome’s anthropology raises important questions which need to be addressed in terms of the way theological anthropology plays out in religious education. Clearly, most of these insights are valuable and can take their place without controversy in the field of education. There are some ideas, however, which need further exploration.

To begin with, according to Groome, “…faith is more than believing, it is also doing – and knowing what we are doing.” This view, as stated, is correct, but there is a missing dimension. Not only is faith more than believing, it is also more than knowing and acting. In the teaching of the Catholic Church, faith is both a gift received from God and an assent given by the person to the truth received. Groome seems to emphasise the latter without saying how faith’s other dimension is to be incorporated into the learning process. It appears that the gift of faith, (as expressed in core doctrinal propositions) can readily be set aside if it does not conform to an individual’s present understanding. There seems to be no tolerance for the idea of living with a mystery until it becomes clear.

G.K. Chesterton insightfully described a key paradox in Christian thought and practice: “Paganism declared that virtue was in a balance; Christianity declared it was in a conflict: the collision of two passions apparently opposite. Of course they were not really inconsistent; but they were such that it was hard to hold simultaneously.” One manifestation of the conflict is the way in which faith must be held, since it necessarily involves two apparently contradictory characteristics held in dynamic tension. On the one hand, faith is an undeserved gift of God - a theological virtue conferred in the Sacrament of Baptism. These issues have been more thoroughly explored in the foregoing chapter on Catholic identity, through John Henry Newman’s articulation of the relationship between faith and reason.

In the current circumstances pertaining to religious education classrooms – particularly in secondary schools – religious truths such as these constitute a challenge. In any field of study, each particular domain has its own proper methodology by which the advancement of knowledge proceeds. In science, for example, a hypothesis must be proved empirically; it is

484 See Beaudoin, Tom, “The Theological Anthropology of Thomas Groome” Religious Education, Spring 2005; 100, 2. P. 133
entirely appropriate for a scientist to be sceptical regarding a particular view until it can be demonstrated. In Catholic religious education, however, such an approach would be entirely inappropriate. There are some revealed truths that can never be proved in this way; they can only be discerned through the light of faith. In the hands of an inexperienced teacher, SCP methodology can fall into the trap of applying reason alone in investigating religious truth, setting aside any role for the truths known by faith. Far from contributing to the religious education of the students, this approach could potentially undermine and denigrate their Catholic faith by trying to evaluate it using inadequate criteria.

The second matter of interest concerns Groome’s tendency to give significant attention to ‘everyday revelation’, focusing on God’s continual self-communication and the human ability to appropriate it, in ‘…conative rather than simply informative ways’.” In the works of other theorists of religious education, in the recent past, this view has led to the promotion of a theory of ongoing public revelation. This possibility has been definitively ruled out both in Dei Verbum and by the Catechism of the Catholic Church. In his own later writings, Karl Rahner also distanced himself from this position, since it is highly problematic in terms of presenting an authentic Catholic view of Divine Revelation. The difficulty is, to use von Balthasar’s phrase: ‘…the belief that a transcendental philosophy can anticipate the distinctive content of Christian revelation.’ In other words, some advance the view that human beings can rely solely on their own reason to discover the truth about God and his plans for us; they suggest that we do not require Divine Revelation or the guidance of the faith community. This notion is decisively ruled out by the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Finally, Groome believes that each person brings “…a basic orientation of the knowing subject that shapes the outcome of what is known.” Furthermore, the subject has the capacity for ideology critique, “…for both naming reality as a particular human social arrangement and for searching out imaginatively those arrangements that limit or distort

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487 See Dei Verbum. 4. Catechism of the Catholic Church. 66.
489 See Catechism of the Catholic Church, 37-38.
fundamental human potentials.”491 While this view contains a limited truth, it simultaneously carries unhelpful associations which must be identified and rejected. Specifically, some claim that the human understanding of reality is not just achieved through specific engagement with the particular circumstances of time and space, but it is also bound to these circumstances. Reality is thus culturally and temporally determined. This is in fact a variant of the Kantian position: we do not know what reality is in itself; we can only know our own experience of reality. This inevitably leads in the direction of making all knowledge, including the settled doctrinal positions of divine revelation, subjective and relative – open to rejection according to different cultural and historical circumstances. In the end, the truth itself, as expressed in the Deposit of Faith is considered merely relative. (Of course, doctrinal positions can develop and be clarified over time. The Catechism of the Catholic Church provides for this492 while John Henry Newman, in his Essay on the Development of Doctrine, set out the conditions under which such development could be evaluated.)

3. The Shared Christian Praxis Methodology.
The SCP methodology is widely used, since it has been one of the few in recent times to insist that religious education – particularly at secondary school level – needs to incorporate a catechetical/affective dimension. Its popularity suggests that teachers understand the need to address the whole person in religious education. The use of this methodology has some clear advantages:

- It can encourage those committed to their faith to live thoroughly the challenges of the Gospel in their own lives.
- It makes an attempt to engage the whole personality, incorporating cognitive, affective and volitional within an embodied existence.
- It encourages practical reflection on one’s circumstances.

The method can also involve significant problems if not handled in the right way:

492 See Catechism of the Catholic Church. 66
From Magisterial Teaching

“The Catholic school can never take a position of neutrality with regard to Christian values or what it means to be human.” 493

Critical reflection, as described in the SCP process, can be misunderstood, so that the student becomes the arbiter of what is true, based on personal preferences. 494 While it is appropriate to critically evaluate some aspects of Christian practice, Sharing Our Story appears to encourage the use of this approach as a blanket strategy covering all aspects of the religious education programme. This is not always appropriate; for example, it cannot be applied to the data of revealed truth or settled dogmatic positions. To do so would undermine faith itself, as pointed out above in chapter on Catholic Identity, citing the works of John Henry Newman.

“Every authentic mode of presentation of the Christian message must always be christocentric-trinitarian: Through Christ to the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit.” 495

Both Trinitarian anthropology and contemporary educational theory agree that the starting point should be some concrete experience. In SCP, however, the initial focus appears to be too abstract for most uninitiated learners: “It introduces the focusing theme or symbol and facilitates students’ entry into the first movement.” 496 Contemporary learning theory has moved beyond this point.

In terms of the religious education of the human person, there seems to be very little attention given to the anthropology of the human person. It is not clear from the documentation that any explicit attention is given to the needs of each of the key dimensions of human personhood: sentience, will and intellect.

“The purpose of any catechetical methodology is to fix in the memory, intelligence and the heart the essential truths that must impregnate the whole of life.” 497

494 See Catholic Education Office, Parramatta, Sharing our Story. Core Document (Parramatta, NSW: Diocese of Parramatta, 1999), 62
496 Catholic Education Office, Parramatta, Sharing our Story. Core Document (Parramatta, NSW: Diocese of Parramatta, 1999), 62
“Teachers are encouraged to ensure that certain basic ideas are committed to memory through appropriate educational means.” 498

“The texts that are committed to memory should be gradually understood in depth, to become a source of Christian life on the personal and community levels.” 499

While SCP includes some laudable aims – such as advancing students’ understandings and responding by living in a more Christian way – there seems to no specific guidance offered regarding the acquisition of actual content to be remembered.

Methods selected should account for the differing ages and other needs of the students. 500

The same method is proposed for every level from kindergarten to Yr 12. Contemporary learning theory has pointed to the value of adapting both content and methodology to the developmental needs of the students.

Pope Francis I, in Lumen Fidei, identifies a key component of a religious education programme, by which it must pass on the Catholic faith:

There is a special means for passing down this fullness, a means capable of engaging the entire person, body and spirit, interior life and relationships with others. It is the sacraments, celebrated in the Church’s liturgy. The sacraments communicate an incarnate memory, linked to the times and places of our lives, linked to all our senses; in them the whole person is engaged as a member of a living subject and part of a network of communitarian relationships. 501

SCP and Sharing Our Story appear to be deeply classroom based and do not give sufficient weight to preparation for and participation in what Pope Francis has identified as the pre-eminently effective way of passing on the faith.

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501 Lumen Fidei (2013), 40
From Contemporary Educational Practice

Self-Reported Grades
There seems to be little provision within the SCP methodology for treating students as individuals with different learning needs, for all students work on the same unit at the same time. Educational strategies have been developed for dealing with this challenge, but it would be difficult to apply them to a whole-class unit-based programme such as Sharing Our Story.

Formative Evaluation
The programme appears quite inflexible and prescriptive. There does not seem to be an openness to making significant changes if it does not appear to be working well.

Spaced vs massed practice
The programme is arranged in lock-step units that have been prescribed for each year of the programme. There seems to be little provision for spaced practice - returning regularly and briefly to important themes. Neither is there sufficient provision for those who enter Catholic schools and the religious education programme at different grade levels and stages of development. Other contemporary learning and teaching strategies have accounted for this – religious education seems to be lagging in this important educational field.

The existing scope and sequence, whereby elements of the programme are treated as discrete and independent units, does not fit well with what is known about human learning. A spiralled organisation would be much more effective; that is a return to the same themes at deeper and deeper levels at spaced intervals. The Church’s Liturgical cycle would more readily lend itself to this kind of curriculum organisation. There is some attempt at spaced practice apropos Lent and Advent, but this could be developed to a much higher level of sophistication and could embrace the whole programme.

502 The following items (rendered in italics) have already been described and footnoted in the chapter on learning and teaching. An account of each one of them, then, will be taken as read and will not be repeated here.
Choice and perceived control

Students seem to have little choice within the programme, which appears to be heavily teacher directed. The individualisation of education in other fields does not seem to have been reflected in the religious education programme. Strategies for dealing with this have been developed for other disciplines and could be readily adapted for RE purposes.

Incorporation of Contemporary Perspectives

While Sharing Our Story was reviewed locally in 1999, it is evident from the comparisons made above that its fundamental methodological strategy has remained unchanged since it was articulated by Thomas Groome in 1991. Contemporary learning theory has identified many new and effective teaching and learning strategies since then, and these have not been accounted for in the pedagogical practice of SCP.
Chapter 5
The Primary Role of the Family and Community-Building

From the Documents of the Church

The relationship between the Catholic school and its parents and families is founded upon two principles. First, parents are acknowledged as the primary educators of children; therefore, the school is bound by the law of subsidiarity in respect of the education of their own children. Subsidiarity means that a higher or less local authority should not take responsibility for something that can be handled effectively at the more local level.) Second, schools must help equip parents for the work of education. The Church teaches that without respect for the family it is impossible to promote the dignity of the person. A school manifests that respect by the help and support it offers its families, by its promotion of family life, and by accommodating the family’s irreplaceable contribution to community life. “The family is a divine institution that stands at the foundation of life of the human person as the prototype of every social order.” The school, though it is a valuable institution, cannot lay claim to this same dignity; it is there to meet the needs of families rather than the other way around.

However, while it is true that parents are the first educators of their children, they are not the only educators of their children. Families are responsible for close and vigilant cooperation.

with both civil and Church authorities in this important area of education.\textsuperscript{507} Equally important is the insistence that “…in the education of children, the role of the father and that of the mother are equally necessary.”\textsuperscript{508} This is not to denigrate the efforts of single parents; it is simply to affirm an ideal.

The Church proposes the concept \textit{communio} – it lacks a precise equivalent in English, but expresses the spirit by which we build a community. The Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the nature of the Church, \textit{Lumen Gentium}, – taught that, “...the children of God constitute one family in Christ,” characterised by mutual charity and oneness in praise of the Trinity. Through this, they fulfil their vocation within the Church.\textsuperscript{509}

\textbf{The Australian Context: Catholic Schools at a Crossroads}

\textit{Catholic schools at a Crossroads} discusses the relationship between families and Catholic schools, and makes some noteworthy points. The document notes that Catholic schooling comprises both responsibilities and rights and that it may be necessary to articulate those rights at times. For example, the Catholic school may reasonably expect families to preserve the Catholic identity of the school, which may not be undermined by the invocation of the principle of subsidiarity. Families may also be asked to support their schools as centres of the New Evangelisation.\textsuperscript{510} In turn, families have a right to expect the school to support families. \textit{Catholic Schools at a Crossroads} notes that Catholic schools should be well-placed to support all the members of its community, staff, students and families to grow in the knowledge and love of the Catholic tradition.\textsuperscript{511} Effective Catholic schools will encourage parents to be their children’s primary educators, and will ask them to evangelise and catechise their own children. Parents will also be encouraged to participate in many school activities. Finally, in view of the recent writings of Pope Francis I, Catholic schools and

\textsuperscript{509} \textit{Lumen Gentium}, 51. Available at: \url{http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html}
\textsuperscript{510} \textit{Ibid.}, 12,13.
\textsuperscript{511} \textit{Ibid.}, 14.
Diocesan authorities should try to increase the participation of students from poorer families.

Sample Research Literature Related to the Role of Families and Community-Building

A vast corpus of research on the contribution of families to education exists. Three representative studies will be examined here, understanding, of course, that in this ever-expanding field, more studies could be quoted. The three sources quoted are: *The Grant Longitudinal Study of Adult Development* (Vaillant, 1977; Vaillant, 2002; Vaillant, 2013); *Disappearing Fathers, Destabilized Families* (Anatrella, 2009); *School Community Leadership: The Perspective of Primary School Principal* (Spry and Graham, 2007).

**The Grant Study of Adult Development**

The *Grant Study of Adult Development* may be the best known longitudinal study ever undertaken; it charted the development of 268 sophomore men at Harvard University over seven decades; its breadth and depth is, at present, unequalled. Participants were evaluated every two years through surveys and medical records. Originally intended to study healthy aging, it eventually also provided researchers with a wealth of data apropos emotional health. Much of this data reveals the long-term effects of the quality of family life in the individual’s early years. The relevant findings are summarised as follows:

1. The levels of warmth and love in the childhood relationship with both the father and the mother were extremely important, but each affected the child differently. Father-son relationships tended to affect overall life-satisfaction. For example, men at age 75 who had had warm childhood relationships with their fathers were less anxious, enjoyed vacations more and had higher life-satisfaction levels than those who had not. Mother-son relationships, however, were found to affect career success. Men who had had warm childhood relationships with their mothers earned $87,000 on average per year more than those who had not. They were also significantly less likely to develop Alzheimer’s disease.

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2. Sibling relationships mattered. Men who had had good sibling relationships when they were young made $51,000 per year more on average than those with poor relationships.

3. Though a basic level of childhood financial security was necessary for long-term prosperity, it remained true that IQ and socio-economic status influenced success less than did relationships with parents.

4. The good was more influential than the bad. Men who had close, warm relationships with a small number of people in an otherwise dysfunctional family, often coped relatively well in the long term.

5. Increasing the number of social connections (i.e. building community) increased longevity, decreased stress and increased happiness.

6. Dramatic change was possible and happiness could be found at any time. For example, that one of the study’s unhappiest candidates became one of the happiest, largely because he pursued a determined and thoughtful quest for authentic love.

7. Happiness increased when individuals committed to caring for others. (This is not without its challenges; to genuinely care for others one has to find ways to cope with disappointments in relationships.)

Obviously, this study restricted itself to the apparently non-religious aspects of happiness, yet its findings are compatible with the Church’s teaching about the value and importance of families. For schools, the lesson is clear. Families help children to achieve happiness in adult life, and to educate children without reference to the family is to ignore one of the most significant aspects of human development.

**Disappearing Fathers, Destabilized Families**

Msgr Tony Anatrella, the author of this article, is a priest and an academic psychoanalyst who specialises in social psychiatry. His article examines the roles of both mother and father in the formation of a family. Anatrella argues that the mother role and father role – which is available to persons other than biological mothers and fathers – are the two poles of operation in a family. The father role helps the child to adjust to the present reality; the mother role opens children to possibilities. The roles do not need to be absolutely fixed, and will vary

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according to the talents and personalities of the parents; nonetheless, children are best served where both poles of activity exist in healthy tension.

Legitimate variations notwithstanding, the essence of the father role is to provide stability, and to be the measure against whom a child works out his or her own identity. The father role is directed at helping the child face the world as it is, rather than creating an artificially safe environment. Thus, the person who exercises the father role should not just be a second mother. Conversely, the essence of the mother role is to surround the child with a relatively self-contained, pleasant and happy role. The mother protects children from the fear of abandonment and offers a sense of well-being. The mothers role tends to emphasise the closeness – the father role, ‘otherness.’

*The Apparent Contradictions in Mother/Father Dimensions of Parenting*

The apparent paradox between the father role and the mother role is, at its deepest level, no paradox at all. There are innumerable examples of apparent paradoxes in Christian virtue – consider, for example, the tension between justice and mercy. Christian virtue consists of the right exercise of both virtues, not the erasure of one for the sake of the other. The same holds true for the roles of father and mother within the family.

*Cultural Challenges: Consequences of the Retreat of Fatherhood*

Anatrella identifies the retreat from the fatherly role as the core of contemporary social problems, for it is the father who must liberate the child from the sense of omnipotence that he or she can develop in the security of the maternal influence. The father teaches the child that he is not the master of the house and limits the demands the child can place upon the mother.

Anatrella argues that some fathers, though physically present, are absent from their real role. They may have absented themselves through lack of confidence, through selfishness, or as a result of their own poor formation. They may also have absented themselves because of a mistaken belief that all parenting must be maternal; perceiving correctly that they cannot do what the mother does, they retreat from parenting altogether, not realising that they have a complementary talent to offer.
A certain contemporary television portrayal of fathers seems to celebrate this retreat. Television fathers – consider Homer Simpson or Raymond Barone – are portrayed as incompetent in matters to do with education, teenagers, or relationships, and are almost always placed in odious contrast with mothers. In accepting the denigration of their proper adult role, their status is reduced to that of a child – yet another of the competent mother’s children. Through these portrayals, children are then encouraged to look on fathers as weak and ineffectual, dominated by the mother, or overwhelmed by circumstances.

Consequences of the Retreat from the Father Role
Anatrella states that those who lack fatherly parenting are more prone to drug and alcohol abuse and lack respect for social conventions and the law; he offers the example of an out-of-control teenager who has stolen a car and caused significant damage. An exaggerated exercise of the mother role falsely protects the child from facing the consequences of his choice, preferring instead to defend the antisocial behaviour and teenager. The extension of the safe, enclosed and protective environment of childhood does in fact diminish independence and responsibility in adulthood.

School Community Leadership: The Perspective of Primary School Principal
Spry and Graham examined the dimension of school leadership which encouraged the development of the community. In using the word, ‘community’ they draw attention to the work of a number of theorists, from Dewey onwards, who, in the early twentieth century expressed the view that schools should be seen as genuine communities. More recently, Sergiovanni (1994) proposed the replacement of the idea of a school as a formal organisation with the idea of the school as a community with a network of “felt inter-dependencies.” Spry and Graham noted that the idea of community has found its way into the policy documents of most Australian Catholic schools, but in general, principals are unclear about what this implies, and competing views of community are found in educational literature.

Spry and Graham reviewed some of these ideas using the foundational insights of the German sociologist, Ferdinand Tönnies, who distinguishes organisation and community. In the Tönnies model, a community is “…a real social relationship of obligation or mutual dependence.” The organisation, by contrast, is an “…artificial collective of human beings … they are essentially separated in spite of all the unifying factors… each person is competitively working towards a personal agenda, rather than cooperating with others for the common good.”

Both models have their limitations when applied to the modern school, and so a third possibility is proposed, informed by the moral philosophy of personalism and characterised by themes such as subjectivity, autonomy, human dignity, community, participation and solidarity. (Such terms will be familiar to students of the writings of Pope John Paul II, who enlisted many personalist concepts to express the Catholic understanding of Trinitarian Christocentricity.) According to this view, “It is only in relation to others that we exist as persons; we are invested with significance by others who have need of us.”

Spry and Graham also refer to ‘servant leadership’, which focuses on altruism, simplicity and self-awareness, but they note that this can be manipulated by followers. Another model, ‘transforming leadership’– in which leaders influence others by inspirational motivation – has also been part of the contemporary discussion, but this too, where the appearance of cooperation masks resentment, is open to manipulation. The two research questions were as follows: How do principals conceptualise the Catholic primary school as community? How do principals describe their leadership role in building the Catholic primary school as community?

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In response to the first question – *the concept of the school as a community* – the primary school principals involved in the study identified four characteristics and one observation that marked a Catholic school community:

1. *Unity and common ground.* Those involved in a Catholic school community needed to be working together in pursuit of the same ends. This, according to the principals, is not easy to achieve.

2. *Care and compassion.* Catholic school communities should be marked by an emphasis on care and compassion. This was not found easy in an individualistic society.

3. *Parental partnership.* Catholic school communities accept the important role to be played by parents in the school. At the same time, the principals involved were concerned that parents should not overstep the mark and attempt to impose their own personal agendas on the community.

4. *Embedded in the parish and in Catholic practice.* The relationship with the Catholic Church is considered integral to the development of the community. The principals identified two levels. Firstly, religious practice needs to be expressed in prayer, ritual and worship. Second, it is necessary to have a strong connection between the school and the parish. The school was seen as participating in the mission of the Church by offering spiritual support to the members of the school community.

5. *Observation.* In reflecting on these four themes, the principals saw these concepts as ideal rather than reality.

Principals were optimistic about their roles, but they believed it required intense effort. They suggested the following strategies: facilitating communication; developing a strong people-focus in relationships; openness to the place of families and family life; making efforts to link the parish and school; and supporting the needy. The consensus of this group was that conversation, communication and dialogue were the most important tools for building community leadership.

The principals’ responses suggested that they preferred to conceptualise their schools according to the real-social-relationships-model rather than to the organisation-model. Their focuses were on “…mutual binding to a common goal, shared values, and shared conception
of being” (Sergiovanni, 1994, p.6). At the same time, the actual research data showed that principals were confronted with the opposite reality – an emerging culture of the Catholic school built according to the organisation-model. Personally committed to the social-relationships model of community and to the language of personalism, they were constrained by a context which dragged them continually to the organisation model.

Three recommendations were made:

1. Development of policy at Diocesan and school levels in respect to the Catholic school as community.

2. A role-making process to clarify the role of the principal as school community leader.

3. Professional development in respect to contemporary models of community and leadership.

Discussion

In summary, contemporary research affirms the Church’s official teaching about families and communities. The Church adds to this research her own spiritual wisdom; She recognises the value of the philosophy and sociology, but draws us beyond community to communio, a family of God united by mutual charity and made one through the worship of the Trinity.

Communio arises, not from business models and skills, but from every aspect of the Christian endeavour, every aspect of the school life that promotes what is true, beautiful and good; every act of faith, hope and love; every moment spent in prayer, worship and acts of kindness towards others. The pastoral letter of the NSW Bishops has already given clear guidance in these areas.

The Grant Study makes an incomparable contribution to our understanding of the impact of families of the future success and happiness of children. By following a cohort for seven

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decades, it leads researchers to conclusions that no other study has been able to imitate. It allows us to put the impact of the school into perspective, and to understand the importance of family relations in the area of education. Its conclusions are compatible with Catholic teaching regarding the family. These are areas in which schools can genuinely assist families in coming to understand what they have to offer to their children. Specific areas of parenting can be addressed as part of the school’s education role in helping parents to help their own children.

Tony Anatrella’s findings are representative of many studies which the importance of the distinct roles of mothers and fathers, and he specifies ‘roles’ rather than ‘persons’ in this important parenting mix. Here, too the school is able to help those who care for children with these important, but very simple insights. Catholic schools can be at the forefront of encouraging the fruitful contribution of both roles in the educational process.

There is much that can be learned from research studies such as the one undertaken by Spry and Graham. Schools must take seriously their role as communities, rather than mere functional organisations. Specific practical measures for community-building can be drawn from these studies; nevertheless, the Catholic school, like the entire Church, is directed towards building communio. All aspects of its life – its teaching, pastoral care, promotion of beauty, worship – contribute something indispensable to this project. The task will never be finished; neither can it be pursued separately from any other aspect of the school’s life.