JOURNAL OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION is a refereed publication for the academic exploration of the task of religious education in modern society. The journal helps disseminate original writings and research in religious education and catechesis -- and in related areas such as spirituality, theology, moral and faith development, cultural contexts, ministry and schooling. It includes a variety of feature sections -- on contemporary educational issues, book reviews, conferences, resources and practical hints for teachers. Articles for publication on religious education in various contexts and on the related areas noted above, as well as on any of the feature sections are welcome. See the inside back cover for details.

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The beginning of 2008 witnessed the hosting of the 8th International Conference for Children’s Spirituality by Australian Catholic University, Ballarat. The conference brought together an international gathering of scholars and practitioners from a variety of disciplines for a common purpose – to present and discuss innovative research and practices that explore the role of spirituality in education and health. Participants found time to make connections with like-minded souls; to exchange ideas that were both scholarly and related to professional practice; and which enhanced their own thinking and learning. A response from one delegate echoed the sentiments of many:

I LOVED the conference! I have returned to the U.S. renewed personally and professionally which is good since my schedule this term will be very demanding. Thank you all for all you did to host such a thoughtful and enjoyable gathering. It felt like a “homecoming” for me. After sojourning for years in the spaces between church, academy and community, I found an oasis of deep thinking, passionate soul mates. Truly a gift.

Some of the topics covered in the seventy odd papers that were delivered during the four days of the conference are quite relevant to the theory and practice of religious education, for instance, topics such as the theories on the spiritual development of children and adolescents; the shadow side of spirituality; eco-spirituality; a professional healthcare response to disconnectedness amongst asylum seekers; pedagogical applications for spirituality in education; the challenge of technology to physo-social well-being; holistic education and transformation; nurturing spirituality through children’s literature; the importance of silence, stillness and calmness in children’s lives; and working with traumatized children.

It is without a doubt that there is a need to raise an awareness of different perspectives and studies on children’s and adolescent’s spirituality where it may inform and enhance the practice of religious education. In a modern world that is consumed with materialism, which moves at a frantic pace, and which is frayed by cultural, racial and religious divisiveness, the yearning of the human spirit to connect and find meaning is sometimes overlooked. Addressing the relational dimension of children and adolescents through programs that allow them to engage with and find connectedness to Self and everything that is other than Self should, I believe, be a priority in religious education.

The articles contained in this issue explore some of these possibilities. Moving from the past to the present, they present glimpse of the spirit and passion that has continued to generate, enhance and inform the practice of religious education and suggest possibilities for the future.

Marian de Souza
Editor
Religion by Post
Religious Education as Ministry: Pastoral Initiative in Provision of Religious Education for Catholic Children outside Catholic Schools

Abstract:
Religion by Post was a practical and successful scheme developed by Rev J. T. McMahon to provide religious education to isolated Catholic children in remote areas of outback Western Australia.

Working in the role of Diocesan Inspector of Catholic Schools in Western Australia in the 1920s, McMahon discovered that many Catholic children lived in isolated country regions with no access to a school of any form – Catholic or State. These children were experiencing the positive results from the practical response of the State Education Department of Western Australia in 1918 to provide secular instruction through correspondence lessons. Their parents requested from their Church a similar program for Religious Instruction.

The organisation of ‘Catholic Bush Mission’ was established in 1924. Developed in the Archdiocese of Perth, religious education was provided by means of correspondence programs known as Religion by Post.

The paper describes the development of this uniquely Australian pastoral response in the provision of religious education for Catholic children in isolated rural areas. It explores its innovative applications and extensions drawing extensively on primary source material, particularly the publications of Rev J.T. McMahon.

Background
In a pastoral letter of 1896, the Archbishops and Bishops of Australia in 2nd Plenary Council, encouraged clergy in remote and thinly populated areas that could not support a Catholic school to provide catechists to teach the Catholic children. In these cases it will be incumbent on the clergy to arrange with parents and others who are competent to impart religious instruction, to gather the children together on Sundays or other convenient times, and set them their tasks and explain the Catechism to them... the priest should in every case make frequent visits to those Christian Doctrine classes. ("Pastoral Letter," 1896, p. 21)

At the beginning of the 20th century three significant groups of Catholic children were not receiving religious education – those who were attending state schools in the cities and large towns; those attending state schools in country towns where there was no Catholic school; and students living in the remote rural locations with no access to any schools (Whenman, 2004).

McMahon (1928) recalled how he first became aware of the need of isolated families.

My duty as Diocesan Inspector of Schools in the Archdiocese of Perth brought me to a small town in the wheat belt during the month of October, 1922. Walking along the street on the afternoon, I met a man whom I had known in Perth. ... He had taken a block in this new wheat area, about sixty miles inland from the small township. ... There was no school for his family, as they were the only children within miles. Knowing my purpose in the little town he asked: “Do you intend doing anything for the children in the Bush? Can it be nothing to you that the children of our country are growing up a godless race? Are the years of youth to pass by without any religious foundation being laid?” (p. 6)

One month later following a visit to the Group Settlements in the south-west of Western Australia, McMahon (1928) described the conditions of families in these settlements set aside for newcomers to the State.

The newcomer is supplied with a cheerless and comfortless shack... of Hessian, supported by wooden posts... roofed with galvanized iron... a home for a mother and fourteen children, the youngest of which was born that month. The mother had been educated at an English convent...
in the Bush, a mother was faced with the upbringing of that large family (p. 7)

Mass among the new settlers was at rare intervals and could not reach the most isolated. The Catholics were spread across the Group Settlements over vast distance with no transport available.

McMahon’s travels across the vast state of Western Australia as Diocesan Inspector of Schools led to a heightened awareness of the harshness of the country, the isolation endured by the Catholic families who lived there and the physical challenges these conditions presented for the parents of the many Catholic children living in such circumstances. McMahon resolved to respond the needs of this ‘home mission’.

Describing his ‘conversion’ to the cause of the “Bushies” following these experiences McMahon (1928) wrote

I thought of the enthusiasm for China and the Far East, and the laudable missionary spirit that is alive in our midst. Yet, I could not refrain from the thought that we have a “Near West” at home, calling for our help. (p. 7)

In February, 1923, one hundred and sixty teachers from Catholic schools gathered for their Annual Teachers’ Conference in Perth. McMahon appealed for volunteers to assist in responding the need of the “Bushies”, in particular three Religious Sisters to commence the work of setting up a correspondence school to provide lessons in Christian Doctrine for isolated Catholic children. Three Religious Sisters responded: Mother Augustine (Loreto Convent, Swanbourne); Sister Mary Liguori Convent of Mercy, Victoria Square, Perth) and Sister Mary Ignatius (St Brigid’s Convent, West Perth).

Thus the organisation of the ‘Catholic Bush Mission’, better known as “The Bushies’ Scheme”, was established in the Archdiocese of Perth.

The founding group of four set about planning the introduction of the promotion and implementation of a scheme aimed at teaching religious doctrine by correspondence programs developed for the Catholic children unable to attend Catholic schools due to the vast distances between the outback communities of the state. This became known as “The Perth Plan” (McMahon, 1928). A description of the scheme was given in the Diocesan Journal, made known to country pastors, boarding schools and through the Society of St Vincent de Paul. As McMahon travelled to the remote outback areas of Western Australia in his role as Diocesan Inspector he took every opportunity to make the scheme known explaining the plan to the people of the bush.

From the initial planning a practical and successful scheme was developed by Rev J. T. McMahon for the teaching of religious doctrine to isolated Catholic children by correspondence lessons. The scheme became known as ‘Religion by Post’. McMahon (1928) described the response to the scheme as “immediate and general” (p. 8). Table 1 summarises the growth of the scheme during the first four years of its operation in Western Australia.

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Enrolment</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
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<td>1923</td>
<td>270</td>
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<td>1924</td>
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<td>1926</td>
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Following initial contact by the families expressing interest in the correspondence scheme every effort was made to ensure that all interested were adequately catered for. An Information Circular was sent to parents in an attempt to gain a profile of each child to be enrolled in the Religion by Post Scheme – their age, the standard of schooling achieved, and religious knowledge. In each district where the scheme operated, attempts were made to visit the parents in their homes to ascertain the home conditions. This permitted the instructional material and pattern of delivery to be adapted for the individual child and their learning environment. All material was provided to the child free of charge so that the financial circumstances of the family would not be a barrier to the religious instruction of their children.

The “Bushies” Scheme initially consisted of correspondence classes which became known as Religion by Post. The development of two significant initiatives during the first three years of the scheme enhanced the effectiveness of the provision of religious instruction by correspondence. The first initiative, established at the outset of the Religion by Post Scheme, was the “Adoption Movement”. Through this initiative Western Australian Catholics were invited to adopt a “Bushie”, providing personal support for bush children and there families and funding for the resources and postage cost necessary in the Religion by Post scheme. The second initiative developed from McMahon’s assessment of the scheme’s progress in 1925. This became known as the Religious Holiday School and its associated Country Boarding School Scholarships.

In July 1924, at the request of Archbishop Sheehan (Archdiocese of Sydney) editor of the Australasian Catholic Record (1924-1935), an article on the bush mission in Western Australia, written by Rev. J. T. McMahon, was published in the journal. In this publication entitled, Religion by Post, McMahon (1924) made “known to the clergy of Australasia a scheme of teaching Religious Doctrine by means of correspondence” (p. 17) to the Catholic children in the
bush in the Archdiocese of Perth. In 1931 another article authored by McMahon, *Solving the Bush Problem in Australia* was published in the Australasian Catholic Record. This article outlined in greater details the “four divisions” into which the Bushies’ Scheme was organised in Western Australia (McMahon, 1931) – *Religion by Post*; the Adoption Movement; the Summer School Camp and Country Boarding School Scholarships. McMahon described for the clerical and religious readership of the journal at that time, the merits of the scheme, the similarities to developments in the USA and some proposal for a tentative program of national action. It was not until the mid 1930s that any of the elements of the Scheme were considered for adoption by other dioceses across Australia and New Zealand.

It is worthwhile to reflect on the history of the development of the scheme in Western Australia as its adoption in the eastern States of Australia, particularly New South Wales, was greatly influenced by these developments.

**Correspondence Lessons: Religion by Post**

In 1924 the *Religion by Post* Scheme relied entirely on correspondence material consisting of a personal letter to the child written by a Religious Sister assigned to them and lesson material for Religious Instruction.

McMahon (1924) described the personal communication with the child as the ‘root principle’ (p. 18) of the scheme. The success of the Scheme relied on the informality and personal focus of the ‘chatty, affectionate, intimate, friendly’ note (McMahon, 1928, p. 10) that accompanied the monthly delivery of lesson material to each child through the post.

Each month a letter is written to each child on the rolls. . . It is a child’s letter and receives a child’s response. A bond of affection is created between Sister and the child through that personal note. Religious Instruction is no longer a task. The effect of this relationship has been marked on the children. (McMahon, 1924, p. 19)

This personal communication between the child and the teacher created a connection between the two allowing the teacher to become a spiritual parent or guardian (McMahon, 1924).

In some cases, particularly where parental support was lacking due to ignorance or disinterest, it was the companionship experienced from the personal letter that kept the child connected to the program. McMahon (1936) reflected that this personal communication was important in three ways: the child received a letter addressed to themselves to which they felt duty bound to reply; the reply written by the child indicated to the teacher the progress of the student better than the responses to set questions in the lesson material; and finally, the parents needed to assist their children in reading and responding to the correspondence received and by doing so often moved from indifference and ignorance to support of the program and a better understanding of and commitment to their own faith. The cooperation in the home was an essential element to the success of any form of correspondence teaching.

The letters, received with great joy and excitement by the child, were taken in to the family home. The personal communication and the instructions were read aloud in the family circle. Prayers were learnt and practiced by the entire family. Children too young to participate in the program waited anxiously for their turn to become involved. The Catholic faith of the entire family was enriched by the pastoral and educational experiences of the *Religion by Post* Scheme. The *Religion by Post* lessons were most successful when the parents were aware of and acted upon their responsibility for the religious education of their children.

In a favourable assessment of the results of the first years of the *Religion by Post* Scheme McMahon (1928) draws on comments received from parents. One parent wrote in appreciation

> The children are very interested in the Catechism lessons. It is a great relief to me to get someone to take up their religious instructions, as it has often worried me to see them growing up here in the Bush, without any knowledge of their Holy Faith. (p. 24)

It was often the effect of the letters written by the Sister to their child that drew the parent into the teaching process and ultimately to renew their own faith commitment. This was exemplified in extracts from correspondence received by McMahon (1936) from families involved in the Scheme. One mother reflected

> I can truthfully say, dear Sister, that since you became my friend through the correspondence lessons, I am a new woman. I feel happy to think that I am like the old Catholic I used to be. (p. 79)

The introductory note was accompanied by the instructional material. During the first years of operation of the *Religion by Post* Scheme, there were no printed leaflets or uniform lessons. The Sisters working with McMahon wrote their own lessons each being individually tailored to the child and their particular circumstances. Exercises that focused on Prayers, Catechism, Bible History Stories and the Mass book were set monthly.

When on a tour of bush-homes in the early years of the Scheme, McMahon found that the initial assumption on which lesson preparation was based was unfounded. Many parents, whether due to their own ignorance or as a result of disinterest, had not given their children a basic instruction in their Catholic Faith. Lessons, prepared for the Catholic children in the bush, which were based on the presumption of a certain fundamental level of knowledge of their faith proved ineffective. It became necessary to begin the preparation of the material from the perspective that the children knew nothing about their faith.
McMahon also discovered that the centralized approach adopted in the early years led to inconsistencies in the Scheme. The original approach of conducting all correspondence classes from Perth with lessons for individual children written by a Religious Sister assigned to that child led to confusion when local families were able to compare lesson material. The development of Religious Holiday Schools from 1926 provided the opportunity for the establishment of a system of religious instruction by correspondence based on parochial centres which proved to be more successful many enduring into the 1970s.

The Adoption Movement

The Adoption Movement was another aspect of the “Bushies” Scheme which proved ‘invaluable in winning public appreciation of the scheme and providing material help’ (McMahon, 1924, p. 19). From the outset of the Religion by Post Scheme appeals were made to Catholic laity in the Archdiocese to adopt a child in the bush. This captured the imagination of the Catholic community of Western Australia and was embraced with great enthusiasm. The Adoption Movement was a pastoral initiative that appealed to the Catholic laity’s sense of mission. It was founded on the principles of Christian charity as evident in the practical action of the community and the processes of networking and mentoring. It was formative both for the giver, Catholic laity in towns and cities, and those who received, the child in the bush and their family. The movement became clearly identified as an activity defining the work of the Lay Apostle. McMahon (1928) reflected ‘the Adoption Movement has opened up an avenue for the exercise of these practical acts of charity which the lay apostolate demands and expects from a Christian people’ (p. 40).

The rapid growth of the Adoption Movement was characterized by its flexibility as evidenced in the diversity of its applications. McMahon (1928) recorded that by 1928 there were several distinct elements in its organisation. These elements included the adoption of individual “Bushies” and their families by member of the Catholic community living in towns and cities sending them Catholic literature. On the completion of their use in their own home, individuals and families were encouraged to forward their Catholic periodicals to their adopted child and/or their family in the bush accompanied by a letter expressing the support and best wishes of the sender. Another application involved a town school adopting a group of “Bushies” living in the same district. This could be the support of individual children or the support of a catechist’s work where several children were gathered together in town where there was no Catholic School. Sodalities adopted a correspondence class district and supplied the Sister in charge with writing materials, postage and books. They also sent the children and their families a plentiful supply of Catholic literature. Catholic Women’s Organisations were involved in fundraising to support the Scheme. And finally, through the donations from individuals and parish communities scholarships could be offered for “Bushies” to attend country boarding schools for Summer School Camps.

The success of the Adoption Movement was recognised by the Education Departments of Western Australia and South Australia who developed schemes whereby State Schools in the city adopted less well equipped country schools. McMahon (1931) reported that two centres of the Correspondence Classes had been adopted internationally; one by a school in Dublin, Ireland and another by a school in the USA.

Religious Holiday Schools

The Religion by Post Scheme of correspondence lessons supported by the Adoption Movement had been in operation for three years. McMahon, on his regular visits to the bush, met with the children enrolled in the Scheme, talked with their parents and tested the work of the correspondence classes. His greatest concern became the Catholic children in homes where parents were not mindful of their responsibility in the religious formation of their children. In these cases the impact of the correspondence lesson on the children was greatly diminished. He looked for a way to awaken the ‘indifferent home from its lethargy’ (McMahon, 1928, p. 46). There were still districts where McMahon travelled in rural Western Australia that were unaware of the scheme. He realised the need to find other ways of advertising the work. Three years into the operation of the Religion by Post Scheme McMahon (1928) acknowledged that ‘we had barely touched the edge of the problem’ (p. 46).

McMahon was a visionary Australian Religious Educator. His capacity for reflective and innovative leadership is evident in the response he proposed to the reality of the problems he saw for the Catholic families in the bush, in particular their children. Although the Religion by Post Scheme had achieved much good in the three years since it was established in the provision of Religious Education for the isolated Catholic children in the bush, McMahon realised something more was needed. McMahon put a proposal to the Archbishop for approval to conduct a pilot residential school, a Summer School Camp, in the summer of 1925 - 1926.

On the evening of December 22nd, 1925, 100 boys, aged 8 to 17, from rural areas across the state of Western Australia arrived at the Brighton Hotel, Cottesloe (half way between Fremantle and Perth). The three week Religious School Camp that followed became known as the “Cottesloe Experiment” (McMahon, 1936a, p. 81). The program involved mornings and evening that were devoted to “teaching and practice of religion” (McMahon, 1936b, p. 332) and afternoon for recreational activities such as cricket and swimming.

Fourteen Sisters devoted their holidays to the work of preparing the boys for the Sacraments, each Sister taking a few boys. It was a period of intensive preparation. There was morning Mass in the camp, during which another priest explained the ceremonies. . . Each evening we said the Rosary before the grotto of Lourdes. . . We had a public
procession of the Blessed Sacrament. . . an Oblate Father gave the boys a day retreat. . . the Archbishop administered confirmation to the “Bushies” in the Cathedral. . . We brought the boys around Catholic Perth, visiting all the religious institution, inspecting charities which the church assumes. . . we had Mass on the open at the Lourdes Grotto for First Communion Day. . The boys learned to sing the Benediction service in a few days. The hymn sing was a delight to all. . . our “Bushies” faced teams from the Christian Brothers’ schools, and our “eleven” was victorious in the three matches. (McMahon, 1928, p. 49)

The transformation in the boys who attended the camp was evident. McMahon (1928) noted

Many came to us unable to bless themselves, and they left us confirmed Christians with a foundation upon which future lessons by post could be built. (p. 47)

and that

The “Bushies” left us apostles, eager to bring not merely to their religious families but all others to share with them in the blessings of “Religion by Post”. (p. 50)

Identifying the Summer School Camp as one of the four key features of the “Bushies Scheme” at work in Western Australia, McMahon (1931) reflected on broader pastoral impact of the activity.

The enduring fruit of the Cottesloe School-camp was to awaken in our people a consciousness of their obligation to help the spiritually needy. It had a good effect on the bush parents, some of whom were indifferent about the religious instruction of their children, and the others, who were over-anxious, were greatly relieved to see our scheme in action. (p. 44)

McMahon (1936b) described the impact of the experience on the Religion by Post Scheme during a presentation of a paper at the Australian Catholic Education Congress in Adelaide in 1936.

It was an experiment, the first of its kind in this land. We who lived with the boys during these busy, happy weeks learned much. At Cottesloe the Sisters conducting the correspondence lessons were present as teachers. This personal contact with real live Bushies was invaluable to them. . . When the boys had left us for their distant homes, we teachers discussed the three weeks experience, and the correspondence lessons, and unanimously agree that teaching by correspondence needs some foundation to build upon. (p. 332)

McMahon proceeded to restructure the Religion by Post Scheme in 1926 confident in the prediction that the correspondence lessons will work best when they follow the experience of a Religious Holiday School. The changes to the scheme involved the establishment of parochial centres of correspondence classes in religion. The centralized organisation of the scheme from Perth was abandoned.

The new centres for Religion by Post correspondence lessons were to be in country towns. Their establishment followed the Religious Holiday School held in that centre. The development of these schools became a focal point of the Religion by Post Scheme. In order conduct these schools country convents were converted into boarding schools during school vacation periods. Religious Sisters provided accommodation for the children below cost and voluntarily gave their holiday time to teach the children and prepare them for the Sacraments. McMahon used the financial resources available through a Country Boarding Scholarships, developed as part of the Adoption Movement to cover the costs of the Religious Holiday Schools. Thus McMahon was able to ensure that every child had access to the school regardless of their family’s financial resources. The schools were coeducational as many parents wished siblings to remain together when away from the family home. Whilst this presented further challenges to the running of the holiday program the Sisters proved extremely resourceful in meeting that challenge.

By 1931 there were nine centres – three in Perth and six in the country (McMahon, 1931). In 1936, McMahon (1936b) described the extent to which the practice had evolved

Today our policy is to form a centre of the correspondence classes in every country parish, beginning with the enrolment of the first Religious Holiday School there. . . A parochial unit under a Parish Priest enables him, on his visits to the scattered homes of his district, to check up on the classes, to see whether they are suitable or not, and to speak words of encouragement to parents and children. (p. 341)

The introduction of Religious Holiday Schools had maintained and strengthened the key element of the personal communication to the child receiving their Religious Instruction by correspondence. From the Religious Holiday School, held in convents and Boarding Schools in rural areas, the teacher and the pupil had come to know each other. This personal knowledge strengthened the bond between the teacher and their remote student. The local centres for the correspondence school, usually located in the convent in the town, meant not only could the priest visit the families but more regular contact with the teacher, a Religious Sister from that convent, was possible.

Whilst in residence at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., in 1927, McMahon became aware of the problems in rural America and the similarity of the issues arising from the isolation of rural Catholic families and the religious education of their children.

From the American experience, McMahon was inspired by the rapid growth of the Religious Vacation School scheme in many dioceses across America and realised the National potential of the system for the Catholic Church in Australia. In an article published in the
Australasian Catholic Record in 1931, McMahon (1931) gave a detailed account of the “Bushies” Scheme in Western Australia and the developments in the USA, estimating - based on statistical information from 1921 - that across Australia “one-third of Catholic children were receiving no systematic instruction in their religion” (p. 47). He argued “It is foolishness to wait for at time when we shall have all Catholic children in Catholic schools; What shall we do for this one-third now?” (McMahon, 1931, p. 47) In reply to his rhetorical question McMahon (1931) urged the clergy and religious of the Catholic Church in Australia to think nationally in facing the challenge of providing religious instruction to these children. City and country dioceses should share the responsibility. McMahon (1931) proposed a tentative program based on the following six points:

1. The formation of a Rural Confraternity of Christian Doctrine . . . in every diocese under a national director. . . . A national executive could do for the “bush problem” what the Rural Life Conference is doing in the USA.
2. Give the financing of the scheme to whatever organisation of women that already exists in the diocese, and make it an important part of their social programme as it is for the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women in the USA.
3. Organize the teaching supply in each diocese among the Sisters. Offer training opportunities for lay people who are willing to conduct classes in the country. Propose to the presidents of Australian seminaries the American plan for adoption as part of the ordinary studies pursued by seminarians.
4. To hold, as soon as possible, a national conference, to discuss the child in the bush, and to take national action on the matter.
5. Our Catholic papers should assist by giving the “adoption-movement” the same publicity that the English papers give the “Forwarding-Scheme”.
6. Some follow-up is necessary whether the W.A. plan or the American plan is used. Correspondence teaching of religion is useful, and it can easily be organized on the same lines as W.A. (p. 54)

It was not until a general meeting of the of Hierarchy of Australia on Monday November 18th, 1935, in Melbourne that the Bishops resolved unanimously to give their official blessing and support to all Correspondence schemes. Some of the schemes were already in operation – the Western Australian Religion by Post for nearly twelve years!

At the Australian Catholic Education Congress, Adelaide, in November 1936, three papers were presented in the Education Sessions on the subject of correspondence lessons for Catholic children in isolated areas. One paper was presented by Rev. J. T. McMahon (1936b), outlining the features of the “Bushies Scheme” in Western Australia.

A second paper, presented by Rev. J. Hannan (1936) described “The National Catholic Correspondence Course”. Citing the success of correspondence schemes in the Archdiocese of Perth and some other local initiatives in other parts of Australia, Father J Hannan, Director of the Societies and Manager of the Missions Office, Melbourne, outlined the launching of a correspondence course to operate on a larger scale than the Western Australian one.

In July, 1935, the first lessons were despatched from the Melbourne based office to 7000 children in the five founding dioceses – the Victorian dioceses and Goulburn in NSW. Hannan (1936) described the rapid growth that occurred in the months that followed:

By December, 1935, the numbers had risen to over 14,000 children, with the addition of further parishes in the diocese mentioned and the participation in the course of diocese of Port Augusta (July, 1935), Adelaide (August), Hobart and Toowoomba (September). During this year, the diocese of Rockhampton, Lismore and the Northern Territory have been included in the operation of the national course, and the number actually receiving lessons on November 1st, was 23,926. (p. 345-346)

The third paper on correspondence lessons was presented by “a Dominican Sister, Maitland, NSW” (1936) on the use of Archbishop Sheehan’s Letters as the foundation Religious Instruction by correspondence in New South Wales. Dr. Sheehan, the Coadjutor Archbishop of Sydney, as editor of the Australasian Catholic Record, had encouraged Rev. J. T McMahon to publish an article in the journal in 1924 on Religion by Post in Western Australian. Although aware of the scheme of correspondence lessons operating in the Archdiocese of Perth, it was not until 1935 that the Archbishop launched a similar scheme in the Archdiocese of Sydney. This scheme became known as Religion by Letter. By December 1936 over 22,000 children from six of the eight dioceses in NSW were enrolled in the scheme.

The provision of Religious Education for Catholic children in isolated rural areas through correspondence schemes continued across Australia for over fifty years in a variety of modified forms adapted to the local conditions. With the improvement of transportation networks, from the 1950s the correspondence lessons were supported by another uniquely Australian pastoral response in the form of the “Motor Missions”. The correspondence lessons were to provide the foundation material for the development of teaching programs for the catechists who were recruited to teach in the State schools during the 1960s.

The Religion by Post scheme, developed as a local pastoral response, provided the foundation for the provision of religious education to Catholic children beyond the Catholic School system in Australia in the later half of the 20th century.

In his autobiography, McMahon (1969) reflected on his experience as the founder of the “Bushies Scheme”

In 1923 I was a young priest, and undoubtedly simple, but I had the daring of youth to cherish a
dream. In spite of buckets of official cold water and a chorus of derision from my confreres, I persisted and the dream came true (McMahon, 1969, p. 86).

References


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THE ENDURING FRUIT OF THE COTTESLOE SCHOOL-CAMP WAS TO AWAKEN IN OUR PEOPLE A CONSCIOUSNESS OF THEIR OBLIGATION TO HELP THE SPIRITUALLY NEEDY. IT HAD A GOOD EFFECT ON THE BUSH PARENTS, SOME OF WHOM WERE INDIFFERENT ABOUT THE RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION OF THEIR CHILDREN, AND THE OTHERS, WHO WERE OVER-ANXIOUS, WERE GREATLY RELIEVED TO SEE OUR SCHEME IN ACTION.
The evolution of religious pedagogics in the second half of the 20th century in Europe

A pendulum motion
The understanding of ‘Tradition’ has played an important role in Catholic religious pedagogics since early times. Its meaning and content have undergone several evolutions however, in the future it will have to continue being rethought (Wiederkehr, 1991). We will set out to analyse the different ways in which religious Tradition were perceived within the visions of Catholic religious education in the last decades and at the same time formulate our own vision of how religious education should interact with ‘Tradition’ in the future. Our area of emphasis will be the education of the Roman Catholic faith in (higher) secondary schools.

How Tradition in religious education takes shape is closely connected with, among other things, developments regarding the object of religious education, didactics, theology, socio-economic context, and the manner in which the subject, ‘religion’, is identified in schools (Feifel & Kasper, 1987). Religious education has undergone quite a number of developments in this area during the second half of 20th Century. We present a survey of the trends in Catholic religious pedagogics in Europe since the 1960s.

The Italian religious educationalist Flavio Pajer views the recent history of religious pedagogics as a pendulum motion between the three poles of education namely, ‘object’, ‘subject’ and institution, or religion, student and school respectively (Pajer, 1993, pp. 31-57). If ‘Tradition’ is taken to mean an historically developed and clearly defined set of beliefs, then we can reasonably consider ‘Tradition’ and ‘religion’ as synonyms for the first pole of Pajer’s analysis. We will however demonstrate that depending on which phase of the pendulum swing in religious pedagogics it finds itself in, ‘Tradition’ can also assume another interpretation and meaning. At the end of this contribution we will examine the need for a new outlook on ‘Tradition’ for the future of religious pedagogics (Haers, 1999).

There has been a noticeable evolution in religious pedagogics: in terms of its object – religion, ‘Tradition’ and faith content; with respect to the subject – the student; and, in relation to the institution – the school context. In the 80’s the pendulum swung in the direction of the objective pole. During the 90’s we discern a return to an evolution in terms of the subject. The direction in which the pendulum will swing in the future is hardly certain. We would however like to put forward what, from our viewpoint, could be a desirable development.

The following table presents an overview of the major developments in Catholic religious pedagogics and didactics during the second half of the 20th Century.
School catechesis: ontologisation of Tradition
Throughout the post-war period up to the 1960s religious education was characterised by a stress upon doctrine and dogma. Religious education was defined in terms of Church and belief: religious education in school was a form of Church catechesis. The school lent its infrastructure but in fact had little to say in terms of religious education (Pajer, 1993, p. 34).

The content of religious education was well and clearly defined. It was the Catholic teaching that was being taught. This was coupled with an extremely deductive approach, a top-down model in which the teacher, servant of the Church, imparted the Catholic faith to students. The teacher in this instance was primarily an instructor engaged in transmitting the faith. He or she fulfilled the role of believing witness to a monoreligious and monolithic Tradition.

In this framework, Tradition refers to a fixed set of doctrinal truths, dogmas, rituals and ethical convictions which were handed down as the Catholic teaching. There was little room here for questioning, change, difference or (subjective) interpretation of Tradition. It was concerned with ‘ontological truth’, credal statements that expressed the nature of religious reality. Such an approach to religious education as ‘school catechesis’ and ‘instruction in the Tradition’ was possible during this period because of the prevailing cultural climate. There was not yet talk of secularisation: cultural Christianity was at its zenith, and the aggiornamento of Vatican II was brewing but had still to take place. The students formed an almost homogeneous group of Catholic practising believers. The lessons, thus, also took for granted the believing status of the students being taught (Pajer, 1993, p. 35).

Antropological experience didactics and correlative Tradition approach
At the end of the sixties groundbreaking evolutions had taken place both within the Church (Vatican II) and society (May ’68). In theology and religious pedagogics
we find an ‘antropological turn’. Human experience, the social sciences and the ‘signs of the times’ (Fossion, 1990, pp. 100-116) received more and more attention. This had important consequences for both religious pedagogics and the interpretation of ‘Tradition’. It was not so much the objective Catholic teaching but rather the subjective experience of the human person, in this case the pupils, that now took central place. Religious education was presented in terms of the interests of the students and not so much of the Church as in the previous approach. At a time when Church and Tradition were coming under increasing pressure it was necessary to search for a justification of religious education in schools that was in keeping with the prevailing pedagogical views. Religious education in schools was maintained because it contributed to the personal development of the students themselves. It was no longer frameworked primarily within the kerygmatic mission of the Church but rather fitted in with its didactical function, namely, service to the students. This implied that it was no longer exclusively Tradition that enjoyed the spotlight but it had to contend with the social environment and lifeworld of young people as well. Pajer speaks of the ‘hermeneutics of experience’, or ‘unraveling’, ‘interpreting’, ‘discussing’ human experiences, in the light of and in correlation with the Christian Tradition. Religious education was characterised by an inductive approach. In this the teacher carried out the task of animator and in a certain sense the class assumed the character of a discussion group (Pajer, 1993, p. 35).

Within the subject of ‘religion’ this experience was then linked up with the Christian Tradition. In this framework one speaks of ‘correlation didactics’ (Baudler, 2002, pp. 446-450). Generally speaking this entailed proceeding from a general human experience that consequently arrived at the Christian Tradition. A lesson would begin with a reading of a secular text or dealt with students’ experiences, for instance, connected to the theme of ‘listening’. Following this, they would read a biblical text which treated the same theme, e.g. the call of Samuel (Bulckens, 1994, pp. 186-187). It is striking that during this phase biblical texts enjoyed greater use. Tradition no longer received primacy of place in the interpretation of a ‘systematic set of beliefs’ or ‘doctrines’. The biblical Tradition stood central and with this there also came more room for the interpretation of Tradition from the vantage point of experience.

The attempt to seek a relatedness between ‘experience’ and ‘biblical Tradition’ out of this correlation theory sometimes led to a somewhat forced approach in which the distinctness of human experience as much as that of (biblical) Tradition were reduced in terms of the (presupposed) similarities to be found between the two. This approach was aimed at harmony, not at difference. In particular, it wanted to prove that the religious Tradition was capable of answering existential ‘human’ questions.

Religious education as school subject

From the mid-seventies onwards through to the eighties religious pedagogics proceeded strongly along the lines of general didactics and religious education was primarily formulated in terms of the school domain. It was thereby not so much a service to the Church or the student but rather a school subject just like any other curriculum contributing to the general formation of students. In terms of objectives, methods and evaluations, religious education increasingly resembled other curricula. The distinction between (school) religious education and (Church) catechesis was now clearly emphasised (Warren, 2001, 125-144). Secularisation and deTradionalisation in society played a large role in this evolution. The teacher could no longer presume that the students were ‘believers’. The subject of ‘religion’ could no longer be aimed at deepening the faith as had been the case in previous approaches. Religious education was now important because of its cultural function, learning to understand the references to religion in socio-cultural life (art, feastdays, history, etc.). In this way religious education contributed to the cultural formation of the students.

The teacher was seen foremost as an expert who provided objective information about the Christian Tradition. It was not desirable that the teacher’s own religious or ideological convictions played a strong role in religious education.

The phenomenon of religion in this environment tended to be approached from a more cultural and objectifying stance. The cultural worth of (one’s own) religion had centrestage. The experiential and perceptual component of a religious Tradition no longer played any role in this concept of religious education.

As with the previous two approaches, this approach was still confessionally oriented. It was concerned with the Catholic faith. Different religious perspectives or interpretations did not even come into play. This changed towards the end of the eighties when we start to speak about religious education as religious studies.

Religious education as religious studies

Pajer sees the pendulum of religious education swing back in the direction of the ‘object’ – religion itself – at the end of the eighties. The socio-cultural climate no longer allowed for religious education to be considered purely on confessional grounds. The pluralisation of society reflected itself in the student population and Catholic schools were no exception. The classes became heterogeneous: aside from a few staunch Catholic students, most classes consisted of students who either had doubts about their faith or rejected religious belief; often there were some with another religion, in most cases Islam. The personal belief of a number of students also began to incline more towards other religious movements, such as New Age, Wicca, Eastern religions, etc. Religious education could no longer keep pace with this evolution. Whereas in previous phases it had clearly been about monoreligious education it was now evolving into multireligious education. The subject of ‘religion’ in schools no longer had to deal with the
Religious education had to treat all religions in like manner without allowing for subjective preferences. It was now concerned with a cultural and objective study of religions, the phenomenon of religion being treated from the perspective of the various Traditions. The role of Christian Tradition was relatively small here compared to the previous phases. In its place one could now employ the word ‘Tradition’ in plural: religious education treated different (religious and non-religious) Traditions. These Traditions, however, were seen as objective entities that could be treated side by side one another in equal ways. The cultural rethinking, reformulation and interpretation of Tradition had not yet been raised. The model of ‘learning from religion’ or ‘interreligious learning’ was still in the offing (Ziebertz, 1994, pp. 328-337). In this multireligious phase the teacher, just as in previous phases, was generally views as a specialist providing clear objective information (Pollefeyt, De Vlieger, & Smit, 2003).

**Religious education as search for meaning**

In the last decade of the 20th century one can distinguish a fifth phase in the evolution of religious pedagogics. The subject once again took centrestage. Religious education was no longer seen as informing about one or more religious Traditions in all their facets. The teacher now approached religious education as a search for meaning. The terms ‘fundamental life options’ (life philosophies) or ‘ethics’ were employed in conjunction with, and even in place of, religious education. Sometimes a ‘fundamental life options’ (life philosophies) curriculum was created in which the confessional dimension disappeared into the background. The specific religious aspect was no longer that important, what mattered was how students could find meaning in a fundamental life option (life philosophy), in a religion, or more accurately: in fragments thereof and in the combination of different elements. The teacher here fulfilled the task of moderator. He or she had to ensure that the various fundamental life options (life philosophies) were adequately presented and allowed sufficient opportunities towards deepening. In all this, the teacher’s own convictions played a lesser role.

On the societal level there had slowly come about in the nineties a renewed openness towards the phenomenon of ‘fundamental life options’ (life philosophies). Less attention was paid to the specifically religious or institutional trappings of a Church or systematic Tradition; society was more concerned with one’s personal vision and attitude to life. In a period when grand narratives were crumbling (postmodernism), people had to rely first and foremost on themselves in searching for fundamental life options (life philosophies). Subjective interpretations formed the kernel of the ‘search for meaning’. Religious education thus reflected in a certain way the ‘bricolage’ culture.

In such a scenario of dealing with fundamental life options (life philosophies) and religion what mattered most was that each one felt good about their individual choice and, indeed, had the possibility of coming to such a choice; yet only the individual decided what exactly that choice should be. Herein lies an important difference from ‘experience didactics’ where the framework in which the subjective experience was interpreted was clearly described and specified in advance. Experience and Tradition were strongly geared towards each other within correlation didactics and the possibilities of interpretation were (more) restrictive. It was also still concerned with the ‘better understanding and more conscious practice of the Catholic faith’. Once religious education became a ‘search for meaning’, however, the freedom and multiplicity of interpretations became greater. The reasons for entering into conversation with a person who had another viewpoint ceased to matter since now the point of departure was that fundamental life options (life philosophies) were primarily a private choice, which at the same time should and could not be criticised by others. At this juncture, a warning of the ‘danger’ of relativism and possibly even indifference is fitting. The freedom of ‘religion as search for meaning’ also presents a challenge to formulate a new model of religious education, one that avoids the danger of relativism but that is, also, not characterised by objectivism, be it the neutrality or dogmatism of the earlier phases. In the following we will unfold such an approach as the ‘hermeneutical-communicative model of religious education’.

**Some critical remarks**

Two comments need to be made concerning the above mentioned evolutions. First, we must remark that even today elements from the different historical trends still play a role in religious education. Correlation theory, the objective approach to religion [as study object], the multireligious approach, and religion as search for meaning do not mutually exclude one another and in fact operate with a certain complementarity in the actual approach of religious education today. We can perhaps speak here of a certain ‘non-simultaneous simultaneity’.

The correlation model, however, can be considered as the dominant model of religious education in preceding decades. This model continued to be further developed and elaborated upon. Even today one still speaks much about correlation didactics albeit in a more nuanced and complex form than the correlation didactics of the seventies. A new model, however, presents itself at this moment in time. We will elaborate upon the ‘hermeneutical-communicative model’ that we would like to advocate as the new model for religious education in the coming future (Maex, 2003, pp. 67-80).

A second comment concerns the role of the teacher in the evolution of religious pedagogics. With the description of the evolutions in religious pedagogics in
terms of the three poles of religion, student and school, we must be careful not to underestimate the role of the teacher. The determinants of religious pedagogics are not limited to merely these three poles. Will not religious education become still more specific in the future through the position that the teacher takes, and shall not a greater responsibility come to rest with the actual contact of the religious educator with Tradition, with the students and with the subject of ‘religion’ as school subject? In the hermeneutical-communicative model that we set out below we will expressly address the role of the teacher.

**Religious pedagogics and Tradition in the future: towards a hermeneutical-communicative vision**

We have so far sketched five evolutions in post-war European religious pedagogics. How religious education will turn out in future we are hard-pressed to say with any certainty. There are however a number of reasons to advocate a hermeneutical-communicative vision of religious education and Tradition as the model for the future. We will explain this model and the approach to Tradition in the following.

**Critique upon correlation didactics**

The end of the nineties was characterised by a radicalisation of the awareness of the plurality of religious and/or ideological reality (Ziebertz, 2001, pp. 67-87). Hermeneutics enters into this context as a means to deal theologically (Geffre, 2001) and religio-pedagogically (Lombaerts & Pollefeyt, 2005) with this multiplicity of religious and/or ideological perspectives and Traditions. Whereas from the ’70s hermeneutics functioned against the background of correlation didactics in particular, from the ’90s it began functioning against the backdrop of pluralistic theology. The significance of this shift is not incidental. It is our contention that a hidden ontological agenda was still at work in original correlation didactics. By this we mean that during the ’70s and ’80s ‘experience’ and ‘Tradition’ tried to connect with each other in such a way that it was via experience that one sought to uncover the true meaning of the Tradition. The reverse was also assumed: that via Tradition the deeper, true significance of experience could be brought to light.

The underlying idea here is that Tradition and experience not only point to one another but also share a deepest connection. That such a positive attitude towards correlation didactics was possible owed itself to the fact that the Christian Tradition still formed the underlying, albeit slowly eroding, general cultural-historical background to western culture and hence Roman Catholic religious education. Thus, at that time the correlation still succeeded to a considerable degree even though its success was gradually decreasing. This was not so much because the ontological presupposition was correct in assuming that experience and Tradition were geared towards each other intrinsically and, if correctly understood, referred almost exclusively to one another (Topf-Deckel Korrelationsdidaktik) (Grümme, 2002, p. 22), but rather that the generally accepted Christian background of culture and society was still implicitly and far-reaching in evidence. However, the more society pluralized and ‘difference’ entered and challenged Christian culture, the more one had to conclude that correlation didactics no longer worked (Englert, 1993, pp. 97-110).

Religious educators gradually came to realise that correlation didactics, although a hard-fought asset of religious pedagogics against doctrinal catechetics, was no longer working (Hilger & Kropac, 2002, p. 62). In other words, one discovered that anthropology no longer guaranteed an automatic shortcut to theology and that a proper experiential analysis of reality no longer led to the automatic acknowledgement of the relevance, and consequent existential and believing endorsement, of the Christian Tradition. How much one started off with young people and children from their own experience, and how great their initial enthusiasm, many still began to pull out once the interpretation of the (Christian) Tradition was coupled to the analysis of experience.

What is more, this correlation strategy even proved itself counter-productive in the long run. Students were aware of the hidden ontological agenda of the religious educator who was working with this correlative methodology. Accordingly, the students were extremely allergic to the exclusive interpretive coupling of human experience with the Christian Tradition to which it is repeatedly linked. Also, from a theological perspective, this kind of ‘mono-correlation’ was problematic. It reduced the Christian Tradition to what was understandable from the perspective of general human experience. Not only was the complexity of human experience not recognised, but also the specificity, the alterity, the exteriority and multidimensionality of the Christian Tradition self was underestimated.

Another religious pedagogical approach therefore came upon the scene. This approach is still correlative but is particularly characterised by correlative plurality and a more modest correlative didactics. This new, multi-correlational approach is not criticizing correlation as such, but a certain didactical use of correlation theology (Pollefeyt, 2005). Correlation as a theological principle still remains important in the new approach but no longer determines everything, certainly not in religious didactic practice. At the basis of the new hermeneutical model of religious pedagogics lies a optimistic anthropological departure point, characteristic of Catholic religious pedagogics, that the human being is essentially a hermeneutical being. Or, put differently, the notion that everyone’s nature, is in principle, receptive to Tradition as an accessible and communicable reality still remains important for the future of Catholic religious pedagogics. However, one now realises, more so than previously, that human experience is a multifaceted interpretable reality, which although it can be correlated with the Christian Tradition does not automatically and exclusively needs to be. In other words, the ontological premise behind the old correlation didactics is hereby abandoned. In this way the link between ‘experience’ and ‘Tradition’ is, as it were, made looser yet not cut loose altogether.
The concept of Tradition also functions differently in this context. ‘Tradition’ itself becomes a much more internally and externally plural notion. It is now acknowledged, both inside and outside the Christian Tradition, that there are many Traditions, be it large or small, that all have something to say on human experience. A hermeneutical religious pedagogics will therefore seek to draw up and support processes and methods that stimulate the multiplicity of possible correlations between human experience and religious/ideological Traditions to help serving the identity formation of the learning subject, the class group, the school, the Church and/or society.

Hermeneutical intersections
The points of departure for the above mentioned approach are the so-called hermeneutical intersections (Lombaerts, 2000, pp. 2-7). One no longer starts with the Christian Tradition as such but instead with classroom tensions and their conflicting interpretations of reality that in turn refer back to a plurality of presuppositions underlying the class discussion of a certain subject. These lines of conflicting interpretation on a certain subject spark an illumination into the existing different religious or ideological presuppositions existing in the class room. These hermeneutical intersections are intrinsically linked to a certain religious or ideological issue. They surface in a class group where different interpretations on a certain topic or issue exist (whether between teacher and student(s) or among students themselves). They refer back to a multiplicity of experiences, contexts, narratives, Traditions, etc. to which students and teachers are often invisibly loyal (Dillen, 2000, pp. 262-265). In this model of faith communication the hermeneutical intersections are traced, laid bare and unravelled in a communicative process in the class room. This interpretive way of teaching and learning is the result of a confrontation with influxes from various sources, namely the prevailing culture, one’s own life story, and the existing narrative religious/ideological Traditions (www.godsdiensstonderwijs.be).

The purpose of such a form of hermeneutical religious education is to allow students to discover their own and others’ religious/ideological presuppositions and to reinforce such awareness. In this way students can become receptive to the wonderment and multifaceted interpretable character of reality. As a result, they obtain building blocks hewn from a multiplicity of religious or ideological Traditions and the particular perspectives of meaning connected thereto. They learn to deal with the freedom of choice generated by this plural supply of meaning. Some religious/ideological perspectives and Traditions need to be deconstructed, yet there must also be room for the (re)construction of one’s life story with the newly added building materials from Traditions and experiences. Ultimately, students must be able to communicate their choices to themselves and to others in words, deeds, signs and symbols.

In this way religious education helps to serve the formation of the students on a cognitive and affective level and as such can also fall under the school’s domain because through such a religious education the school provides young people the space to become full and engaged human beings. Certainly for Catholic schools this reaches back to impact upon one’s own identity, in which the diaconal mission, plays a very important role. As can be expected, historical developments in religious pedagogics have shown that there is little room nowadays for a (compulsory) religious education approached kerygmatically and exclusively in terms of Church and Catholic faith (which does not mean that kērōgma is not an important dimension in pastoral work at school).

The religious educator as hermeneut: witness, specialist and moderator
The advantage of such a hermeneutical religious pedagogics is that difference is taken seriously. The diversity of opinions, attitudes, Traditions, etc. is not dismissed but on the contrary is made explicit. As with correlation didactics the point of departure is human experience and the actual events surrounding children and young people’s lives. For religious educators it can signify a real liberation when they have not always automatically and exclusively to correlate human experience with Christian Tradition per se. The hermeneutic approach leaves more room for diversity, and also conflict, than in the anthropological turn previously. In a certain sense, it also becomes easier to bring the Christian perspective into the religious education class, but in a non-ontological correlative style. A concrete example of this would be that religious educators need no longer say, ‘Christ is the Son of God analogous to the relation of a student to his/her father’ but instead, ‘Christians believe that Christ is God’s Son, analogous to the way in which Christians experience their relation to their fathers/mothers.’

This does not mean that we have once again ended up in the neutral and multireligious model. Our model involves more than just the objective reproduction of the fundamental life options of a certain group of people – i.e. believers. The student is invited to take her/his own position. The different Traditions of fundamental life options are not simply placed indifferently next to each other but instead are now treated from a dialogical perspective. Involvement is the key. One can also speak here of interreligious learning (learning from religion). From the teacher’s perspective this means that it is still possible and even preferable, that the teacher identifies her/himself with a particular religious/ideological perspective and Tradition. In this model students can expect that the religious educator has constructed his/her own religious or ideological identity in critical and creative dialogue with religious and ideological Traditions. Fundamental life options and religion are here seen as engaged attitudes that are likewise best communicated in an engaged manner. For a teacher on ‘Roman Catholic faith’ the faith synthesis is primarily made in dialogue with the Catholic Tradition. This means that the Christian Tradition is ‘confessionally
constitutive’ for the religious educator’s own identity (Pollefeyt, 1997, pp. 10-37). In other words, the religious educator is someone who can and must bear witness to the Traditions to which s/he has derived her/his own religious/ideological identity. But at the same time the religious educator is also a moderator. S/he realises that her/his confessionally constitutive identity is not the only meaningful correlation that can be developed from human experience and that human experience itself is a multi-interpretable reality. S/he accepts and confirms that also other valuable representations exist of the human search for meaning in life. And s/he is ready to moderate and steer students along the process of complex and multifaceted correlations that they develop between their own experiences and religious and non-religious Traditions. In other words, the teacher has a confessional but not ontologically constitutive identity. S/he knows, accepts, and is positively open towards other religious or ideological identities developing from the same group of experiences.

That does not mean that in such a model (moral and existential) truth is no longer of any account and that everyone can arbitrarily construct their own moral, religious or ideological identity without being accountable to one’s reason, Traditions and human experience. The religious educator is also an authority in this model, an expert, a specialist who provides a properly documented and scientifically and morally solid background to the various life philosophies and religions. In this way s/he can also critically evaluate and/or deconstruct certain aspects of the religious/ideological Traditions, both within and without Christianity.

The threefold function of religious educator as witness, specialist and moderator forms the kernel of the profile for the religious educator in the hermeneutical-communicative model (Erkende Instantie, 1999, p. 39). In this perspective the hermeneutical religious educator is someone who is at the same time rooted in his/her own Tradition yet open towards other religious or ideological Traditions and young people’s search for their own identity.

A utopian truth concept

The truth concept that a hermeneutical religious educator employs is open and plural, beyond both ontology and relativism. In the hermeneutical-communicative model truth presents itself in terms of plurality and always against an eschatological background. In other words, truth in a hermeneutical-communicative model lies in the future. It is a u-topia in the double sense of the word (Cornu & Pollefeyt, 2003, pp. 45-65; 56-58). On the one hand it is an unreachable place (a-topos), i.e. a reality that no one possesses totally, on the other hand it is also a good place (eu-topos), which means that it is still the orientation of religious pedagogical activity. From this perspective, all religions are aimed at truth, but no religion posits the full truth. The question is not if all religions are equally truth, but how we should deal with religions that are all confronted with not possessing the full truth. For the teacher, this means that he or she takes the students on a communal search for truth, goodness and beauty but the ultimate finality of that search lies in the future, hidden behind the horizon of all religions and world view. With this must also be said that truth cannot simply be found in the mere appropriation of Traditions from the past or that today no one can make this truth their own. Instead, Traditions supply instruments and building blocks to either break open certain religious/ideological constructions or direct students towards new religious/ideological syntheses that bode promise, individually and communally. In this way experiences, bible passages, Traditions, community narratives, theologies and magisterium can be brought together in a non-ontological, or better, multi-correlative way, so that in a non-coercive but inviting manner they can offer real support to the students drafting their own religious or ideological biography. In the following we will show how the Tradition itself receives and develops a promising future.

Religious didactical consequences

The consequences for religious interaction from a didactical point of view in a hermeneutical-communicative understanding of religious pedagogics are not minor. The Christian Tradition is neither the starting nor the end point of such an approach. Instead, one begins by taking seriously the initial situation of the students, not just the individual biography of the student but the society and class as well. This does not mean joining in trends or being carried away by the currents of the day. Rather, it involves being continually bent on a sort of in-depth reading of reality, being attentive to the surrounding reality wherein religious or ideological questions, challenges and perceptions present themselves and are found. Once students are made religiously or ideologically aware of the questions and different interpretations that evoke their initial situation and response, openness is created to illuminate and interpret these experiences of reality from different religious and/or ideological frameworks. At this point it is important not to introduce the Christian Tradition monolithically or mono-correlatively. On the contrary, we wish to plead for a sort of non-correlative phasing within the didactical interaction of the religious education classes. Specifically, this means that every time the temptation occurs to correlate ‘experience’ and ‘Tradition’, the teacher consciously chooses not to succumb to it. S/he will then allow new questions to arise from experience and/or Tradition that once again challenge the (nearly) given correlative answer, this from the belief in a truth that is always greater than the human answers we try to construe.

An open Tradition concept with multiple meanings

A hermeneutical-communicative religious pedagogics thus treats the Christian Tradition in a very specific manner. On the one hand, the Christian Tradition is seen as an internally pluralistic and particular Tradition that cannot be reduced to merely one uniform message; still less so be communicated or translated into universal categories (such that everyone would have to concur
with it). On the other hand, neither is the Christian Tradition viewed as so deeply engaged in its own particularity that a conversation with the world and the creation of links with present-day reality has become impossible. On the contrary, it is precisely the recognition of the plural and particular character of the Christian Tradition that makes it possible to indicate particular human experiences as containing multiple meanings and to, in turn, recognise them in their particularity.

At the same time, a hermeneutical-communicative religious pedagogics approaches the Christian Tradition as an open Tradition, i.e. not as a Tradition that has been, once and for all, sealed off but one in which one actively participates and learns to write out oneself.

What is more, it is precisely through the confrontation of manifold meanings and creative hermeneutics with this Tradition that ‘revelation’ can occur today, increasing the Tradition’s ambit and making ready for the future of human being and world. This also means that all interpretations brought into this communication process which threaten the future of humans and world can and must be questioned.

**Conclusion**

How can religious education prepare pupils for a culturally and religiously diverse society and still hold on to its denominational (especially Christian) identity? In the hermeneutic-communicative model of religious education, difference itself becomes the matter, not just because of external circumstances, such as a growing multicultural and multi-religious context, but in the name of the identity of Christian education itself. In this approach, the tension between difference and identity is made the locus of religious education. Standing in this tension is preparing the next generations for life and is also the place where - in the Jewish and Christian Tradition - God reveals himself. Teacher-training should first and foremost prepare future teachers to deal with this tension and to mobilize it as the engine of the communicative religious learning process (Pollefeyt et al., 2004). The class of religion then becomes the place of exercise for dealing with difference and for learning to respect and to integrate in a dialogical and communicative way different perspectives into the development of one’s own life story and world view.

The confessional character of Christian schools and of the courses in Christian religious education understand themselves here to a service (diakonia) to children and young people to assist them into the discovery of the meaning of life in the name of a truth that is greater than the easily assumed truths of the world. Therefore, an option is made for a model aimed at existential and religious growth rather than an educational learning process aimed at initiation into the Tradition as such. The starting and end point of religious education for students is that they learn to take a personal critical and well-informed position so as to arrive at one’s own well-considered conclusion with respect to belief and learning. It is in this process that the Christian Tradition is brought into play – incarnated by a believing teacher with his own engaged faith synthesis - so that the students’ own development of convictions can be confronted with the interpretation of meaning according to the faith Tradition. Involvement implies that one does not treat one’s own Christian Tradition as a museum piece. On the contrary, it is something that must be learnt, discussed and recontextualised in a living manner and which can arouse experiences and questions. Tradition in this sense can be described as the ‘ imparting of life’ (Erkende Instantie, 1999, p. 159). It is better to speak of ‘Traditions’ in the plural referring equally to the internal pluralism within the Christian Tradition as to the other religious and ideological Traditions. Yet despite the existence of a plurality of Traditions in Christian religious education there is still an expressed preferential option for the Christian Tradition as a ‘proven Tradition’ that must be explicitly and consciously fostered. The Christian Tradition cannot be described in terms of truth but rather religious/ideological ‘plausibility’. Situating the Christian faith Tradition(s) within a wider supply of other religions and fundamental life options is not only seen as a chance to bring greater awareness of religious issues or stimulate interreligious dialogue, but also as a way to better arrive at Christianity’s identity and to anchor Christians more deeply in their own Tradition and community. It is precisely by situating the Christian narrative within a multiplicity of religions and fundamental life options that one can bring the awareness and importance of the particular Christian Tradition to life.

In religious education of the 21st Century the class room is characterised by plurality, openness and a multiplicity of meanings. Today’s Catholic religious pedagogics retains both a commitment to the Christian Tradition(s) as well as a readiness to explore things further, to question and even, where necessary, to renew in view of one’s own religious life, be it the religious educator or the students. With this development, the evolution process of the previous decades is set forward and the present challenges of pluralism and postmodernity are taken seriously, enriching the Christian Tradition itself.

[Translation from Dutch to English by Emmanuel Nathan]

**References**


**Geloofscommunicatie in een wereld van verschil.**
Leuven: Acco.


Hilger, G., & Reilly (Eds.) (1988). *Didier Pollefeyt teaches at the Centre for Academic Teacher Training Faculty of Theology, K.U.Leuven, Belgium*


Catholic Secondary Students Perception of the Church’s Mission: 
Some Preliminary Findings

Abstract
This research explored ways in which students in Catholic secondary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand engage with the Church’s mission in the world. Three aspects of the Church’s mission were identified from the papal encyclical *God is love* (2005) and informed by New Zealand Council of Proprietors of Catholic Schools statement on Catholic schools: The Declaration (1997). Students strongly identified as Catholic and showed apparent interest in being actively involved in the mission of the Church. However, this involvement may not follow the patterns of previous generations. One aim of the research was to scope some issues for a more detailed study of the relationship between Catholic secondary schools and the Parish. Some implications for Religious Education in Catholic secondary schools are also identified.

Introduction
On any given Sunday looking around during Eucharist in a Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand you could well wonder where the adolescents have gone. While there may be a sprinkling of young people between the ages of 15 – 19 years, the numbers present do not reflect attendance at Catholic secondary schools. One question this raises is the involvement of young people in the mission of the Church. This research explored how students perceive the mission of the Church, their identification with it and ways to encourage their active participation in their parishes and at Sunday Eucharist. The aim of this research was to scope some of the issues as the basis for a more detailed study of the relationship between Catholic secondary schools and the Parish.

The Church’s Mission
The mission of the Church is to proclaim the reign of God, centred on the message written by Isaiah and proclaimed by Jesus in the Synagogue at Nazareth,

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour…Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing (Luke 4:18-19, 21).

In his encyclical *God is love: Deus caritas est* (2005), Pope Benedict XVI takes up this message proclaimed by Jesus to explore the unity of love in creation, salvation history and the nature of the Church, as a community of love.

> The Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (kerygma-martyria), celebrating the sacraments (leitourgia), and exercising the ministry of charity (diakonia). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable (par. 25).

Catholic schools exist as part of the mission of the Church and have played and continue to play, an important role in the life of the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The role of the Catholic school within the mission of the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand was identified through an analysis of The Declaration (1997). This document was developed as part of the New Zealand Council of Proprietors of Catholic Integrated Schools, Strategic Plan: *Light New Fires* and aimed to set out ‘the essential characteristics of authentic Catholic education’.

The Declaration provides information for Boards of Trustees and to all teaching and support staff, about the nature and purpose of Catholic education in Aotearoa New Zealand as it approached the new millennium and beyond. By citing well established Church documents on Catholic education, The Declaration states that a Catholic school should:

- provide a Catholic education
- strive for educational excellence
- contribute to society, and
- contribute to the Church’s mission.

Within each strand, principles that underpin Catholic education and the vision of the Catholic school are developed. This research focussed on the section:

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1 The Private Schools’ Conditional Integration Act (1975), integrated Catholic schools into the State education system creating a partnership between the Church and the State, whereby the State assumes the day-to-day operational cost of running and maintaining Catholic schools. The Church is responsible for maintaining the ‘Special Character’, which included the provision for the teaching of Religious Education within the curriculum, and the cost of capital development. Following the Tomorrow Schools reforms in 1990, each school is governed by its own independent Board of Trustees.
Catholic school contributes to the Church’s mission, which states that:

- The Catholic school does not operate alone but works in partnership with the parish and the wider Church community. It collaborates particularly with parents whom it acknowledges as "the first and foremost educators of their children" (Declaration on Christian Schools, 1965, par. 3).
- The education provided in a Catholic school "offers an alternative which is in conformity with the wishes of the members of the community of the Church" and "performs an essential and unique service for the Church herself" (The Catholic School, 1977, pars. 20 and 15).
- "The Catholic school is one of the Church's pastoral instruments" and, as such, is "ever more effective in proclaiming the Gospel and promoting total human formation". It accepts a responsibility for the spiritual guidance of members of the school community. (Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, par. 31).
- "Formation and education in a Catholic school must be based on the principles of Catholic doctrine" (Code of Cannon Law, 1983, par. 803.2).
- In helping to fulfil the mission of the Church, Catholic school education includes evangelisation but avoids proselytising (The Catholic School, 1977, pars. 7 and 9).
- In its teaching and in its practices the Catholic school develops students' ability to critique society and promotes social justice for all, especially for the poor, regardless of colour, race, creed, sex or socio-economic status, and in accordance with Church teaching.
- Teachers and other adults in a Catholic school are models of Christianity for the students or pupils. "It is in this context that the witness of the lay teacher becomes especially important" (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, 1982, par. 32). Students will see in the adult members of the school community Christian attitudes and behaviours which reflect explicitly the example and teaching of Jesus Christ.
- A Catholic school education recognises and respects the uniqueness of every individual within the school community as made in the image and likeness of God, while also contributing to the formation of community, especially that community which gathers on the Lord's Day to be nurtured by Word and sacrament. (The Declaration, 1997, p.4).

Process:
Three Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Auckland were approached to participate in this research. These schools were chosen as they reflect the multicultural nature of Catholic schools: a co-educational school (Year 11 class), a single sex boy’s school (Year 13 class) and a single sex girl’s school (Year 13 class). One senior Religious Education class per school was selected at random; each class comprised approximately 20 students.

In a one-hour session, students were initially asked three questions relating to the mission of the Church:
- How can you proclaim the Word of God?
- How can you celebrate the Sacraments?
- How can you exercise the Ministry of Charity?

The students discussed these questions in small groups and their thoughts and suggestions were provided in written form. These written responses were then used as the basis for a class discussion. The written responses are presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3. During the feedback from groups, students were asked what the Church should be doing in the future to encourage young people to attend Sunday Eucharist. The three groups came up with very similar answers and are summarized in Table 4.
Table 1: How can you proclaim the Word of God?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 11 Co-Ed</th>
<th>Year 13 Girls</th>
<th>Year 13 Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✤ Organise a youth group</td>
<td>✤ By talking to people</td>
<td>✤ A mini series by ‘Ladybird’ books – that has practical scenarios that portray the Word of God for different age groups. Eg: Resurrection/ Salvation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✤ Tell people/students about God (forgiving)</td>
<td>✤ Going to Church &amp; encouraging others to go</td>
<td>✤ Jesus action figures – which proclaim a message when a string is pulled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✤ Youth masses with youth only. Need to be fun. 20-30 minutes maximum. Modern worship / bring in a band. Updated versions of scripture (easy to understand and relate to)</td>
<td>✤ Reading the Bible</td>
<td>✤ Through the media – religious shows like a soap opera tackling issues on a religious theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✤ Get more young people into the priesthood by making it more appealing eg: better pay &amp; allow marriage.</td>
<td>✤ Attending Bible study groups</td>
<td>✤ Music &amp; songs being more modern. Christian rock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✤ Must have retreats! Great for team building &amp; getting to know our classmates better.</td>
<td>✤ Advertising</td>
<td>✤ Through words &amp; actions – such as teaching the Word of God &amp; setting a good example. What you do would show you were a Catholic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✤ In homilies priests should say ‘stuff’ that relates to teenagers.</td>
<td>✤ Putting on group events like a quiz night / plays dances / art with Catholic theme</td>
<td>✤ By acting justly, loving tenderly &amp; walking humbly with our God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✤ Preaching</td>
<td>✤ Giving a speech or lecture</td>
<td>✤ Raising awareness, motivating through the media eg: internet, advertise the social aspects of the Church – as a place to meet people. Propaganda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✤ Mail pamphlets</td>
<td>✤ Youth groups (Logos)</td>
<td>✤ Showing compassion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✤ Bill boards</td>
<td>✤ Word of mouth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✤ Attend mass</td>
<td>✤ Through your actions &amp; speech</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✤ Read the bible</td>
<td>✤ Through prayer &amp; contemplation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✤ Through acceptance of others</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✤ Through discussions &amp; expressing your views</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✤ Through volunteer work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✤ Music &amp; dance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✤ By the way you live your life!! 10 Commandments / Beatitudes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✤ Participating in liturgies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✤ Sharing the Word of God in your community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✤ Be part of ministry in &amp; around your community</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✤ Have a clear understanding of the Word yourself &amp; then help others to apply it in their lives as well as helping them understand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✤ Give the message of God as appealing to the age group; fun for youth &amp; more serious for mature adults.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✤ Wear T-shirt’s with I love JC.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✤ By being open</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✤ Special character leadership roles in school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✤ Pamphlets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✤ Appropriate language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: How can you celebrate the Sacraments?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 11 Co-Ed</th>
<th>Year 13 Girls</th>
<th>Year 13 Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ In homilies priests should say ‘stuff’ that relates to teenagers.</td>
<td>☐ By choosing to take part in them</td>
<td>☐ At a gathering to share with other people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Celebrating reconciliation in Rite II as a group.</td>
<td>☐ Making it a family tradition</td>
<td>☐ Mini – series of books showing the celebratory nature of the sacraments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Youth masses; with a youth choir; music targeted at a younger audience</td>
<td>☐ By getting married rather than living together</td>
<td>☐ The action figures could have catchy quote from the service or scripture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Retreats</td>
<td>☐ Regularly going to confession.</td>
<td>☐ Music needs to be younger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Going to Church regularly</td>
<td>☐ By encouraging more religion in families e.g.: families celebrating Eucharist around a table as a family meal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Receiving them</td>
<td>☐ Make it more exciting / fun, drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ With an open mind</td>
<td>☐ Making sure you have a party to celebrate the receiving of the sacrament.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Retreats</td>
<td>☐ Youth groups need to be more aware of sacraments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Honestly &amp; truthfully</td>
<td>☐ Advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Encouraging others to celebrate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Discussing the sacraments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Using the sacraments to determine actions that you take in life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Gaining knowledge about them to fully understand them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ At a gathering to share with other people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Mini – series of books showing the celebratory nature of the sacraments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Music needs to be younger.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ By encouraging more religion in families e.g.: families celebrating Eucharist around a table as a family meal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Make it more exciting / fun, drama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Making sure you have a party to celebrate the receiving of the sacrament.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Youth groups need to be more aware of sacraments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Advertising</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: How can you exercise the Ministry of Charity?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 11 Co-Ed</th>
<th>Year 13 Girls</th>
<th>Year 13 Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Participate in the 40 hour famine</td>
<td>☐ Word of mouth</td>
<td>☐ Books that show different charities &amp; their work throughout the world &amp; why you should donate to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Mufti days to raise money</td>
<td>☐ St Vinnies</td>
<td>☐ A Jesus action figure money box for your favourite charity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Fundraising for hospitals &amp; non-profit organisations eg St Vincent de Paul / Caritas</td>
<td>☐ Volunteer work – in school with students who need help / literacy / numeracy tutors – outside school – coaching/ baby sitting</td>
<td>☐ Donating 10% - 30% of income progressively depending on how much you earn to St Vinnies or other Catholic charity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Food bank collections</td>
<td>☐ Being selfless – thinking of elders / common courtesy</td>
<td>☐ Promoting Catholic organisations &amp; charities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Easter egg collections</td>
<td>☐ Helping around the house “charity begins at home”</td>
<td>☐ By sharing wealth &amp; time to charities &amp; charitable work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Volunteering for things eg: concerts for fundraising for non profit organisations</td>
<td>☐ Logos Youth group – youth supporting youth</td>
<td>☐ Helping the unemployed get jobs through mentoring &amp; using the skills they have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Door to door collections</td>
<td>☐ Assisting someone in need</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Donations</td>
<td>☐ Through the Beatitudes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Raffles</td>
<td>☐ Being aware of those who need our help (support)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Gala</td>
<td>☐ Putting the needs of others before our own</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Cultural fundraisers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: Suggestions for encouraging young people to attend Sunday Eucharist

- Needs to be youth orientated – youth days.
- John Paul II was very popular and his style needs to be followed.
- Need to spread, important to proclaim the word, to have more believers.
- Need to involve all ages, especially the young.
- Building needs to be colourful, inviting with comfy seats.
- Need simple songs and happy ones.
- Less talking.
- Needs to be less boring.
- More charismatic priests.
- Listen to us.
- Sharing some of money it has in the Vatican with those who need it.
- We have other communities we belong to like work, sport etc and so the Church has to compete with them.

Discussion of Results and Implications

Formation of Religious Identity

For previous generations of Catholics in Aotearoa New Zealand, religion was an important dimension in the formation of their personal and cultural identity, particularly in more sectarian times. A number of indications suggest that for younger Catholics, religion may not be as central to their identity as it once was, in particular regular attendance at Sunday Eucharist. The reduced importance of religion as a dimension in identity formation may in part be the result of external cultural factors such as secularism, consumerism, and postmodern relativism. Some commentators have described a trend towards the privatization of religion in many Western countries. Crawford and Rossiter (2006) suggest that,

“If for many young people, their faith is evolving in a secularized direction. They are still spiritual and are still believers, and they retain a Catholic identification, but religion itself has a different function for them” (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 432).

The student’s responses indicate that at least some of their religious identity continues to be derived from the Church and that internal factors such as spirituality and making meaning, may be operative. They appeared to value the role that Catholicism plays in forming their personal identity. From the class discussions, it was apparent that students’ appear to be deriving their Catholic identity from the ‘practical’ side of the faith rather than what they perceived as the rules and regulations of the institutional Church. This may indicate that contemporary adolescents might retain connections with the faith community through active social engagement that links into their concerns for justice and fairness.

The identification with the ‘practical’ side of the faith has implications for Religious Education in the senior secondary school. One implication may be a need to provide a number of pathways for students to assist them to develop their religious identity. One pathway could involve social engagement, critical reflection on the experience and on the social teachings of the Church.

The students strongly identified as Catholic, appreciated what the Church did in the community and wanted the Church to continue. They had many lively, interesting and innovative suggestions to offer to the Church about how they could evangelise. While there were some expected responses such as organising a youth group, a number of students suggested the need for sophisticated advertising. Interestingly, they seemed prepared to be part of a marketing push and saw the need for the Church to proclaim its message in the market place. This may reflect their experience as Catholics among their non-religious friends and colleagues as well as the pervasive influence of advertising in their lives, as well as their Christian friends who attend churches within the evangelical tradition who are very good at self promotion through radio, television and the newspapers here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Sunday Eucharist Attendance

The persistent trend in adolescence for declining attitudes towards religion and church attendance has been well documented internationally (for instance, see Greeley, McCready & McCourt, 1976; Francis, 1987; Kay & Francis, 1996; Flynn & Mok, 2002).

In a study of Year 9 and Year 12 students in four Catholic secondary schools in Auckland, Walker, Tuck and O’Brien (2006) found that 39.8% of Catholic students reported attending Sunday Eucharist “each Sunday at least”, while 36.4% attended “a few times a year” or “rarely or never” (Walker, Tuck, & O’Brien, 2006, p. 42). The responses of the students in this research indicated that attendance levels were similar to Walker, Tuck & O’Brien (2006). However, despite their non-attendance at Sunday Eucharist, students explicitly and strongly stated that they considered themselves to be Catholic, they valued the Church, considered themselves to be loyal members of the Church and identified themselves as Catholic. They are
really proud to be Catholic and are happy to tell people they are Catholic. However, many of these students did not see attendance at Sunday Eucharist as a benchmark for being identified as Catholic.

In a recent Australian study, Engebretson (2007) has noted that while students may have “high levels of a sense of being a Catholic” this does not necessarily translate into “regular Catholic practice” (p. 206). This presents a challenge for the whole Catholic community: parents, school and parish to find ways to assist young people to operationalise their sense of being Catholic.

Another related finding is that students appear to have multiple communities from which they construct meaning and identity and develop relationships. These multiple communities may be built around family, school, sport, work and Church depending on their particular priorities. As apriority, church attendance came after the major adolescent concerns of work, sport and sleep. This was partly an issue of prioritising, with church attendance fitting last, not first in the list of priorities, rather than any disaffection with the institutional Church. It is not that the Church is irrelevant, at one level they want to be involved, but it is not of pressing importance in their immediate lives. One implication is that later non-attendance as young adults may be the result of drift rather than push factors. It would be interesting to see if developing engaging liturgies at appropriate times on a regional rather than parish basis has any effect on attendance. In Auckland, the Logos Project run in association with the Society of Mary (Marist Fathers), has no problem in attracting 300 plus adolescents to a late afternoon-early evening event on Saturdays four times a year. The young people gather for reflection, activities, music and drama, culminating in the celebration of Eucharist together.

Students also commented on the image of Eucharist as ‘meal’ in Religious Education programmes. Many found it hard to relate to the concept of gathering together as a meal as they rarely did this as a family. Since their family experience was to only gather as a family for a meal on special occasions, this experience may be being applied to Eucharist.

**Liturgy**

Students made it very clear that the liturgies they experience at school and Church were less than engaging. A number felt that schools liturgies were too long, had too many time fillers, with liturgical dance coming in for particular criticism, and that homilies could be more relevant to their concerns. While acknowledging that large school liturgies are complex, schools may need to adopt a minimalist approach that centres on a relevant theme form the readings of the day (Birch & Wanden, 2006). Issues concerning the length of liturgies could be influenced by the attention span of students. A related issue is the need to provide students with the opportunities to develop the skills of silence and reflection.

**Relationship between the Catholic Schools and the Parish**

This research sought to scope some ideas regarding how students engage with the mission of the Church. Traditionally, this has been through a Parish structure. However, many students appear to have less regular involvement with Parish than previous generations. Students identified a willingness to be involved, especially with social justice initiatives. Further research is needed to identify ways to connect students with the Parish.

**Conclusion**

While many students in Catholic secondary schools may identify as Catholic, the traditional defining characteristic of weekly attendance at Sunday Eucharist does not appear to be critical to their identity as young Catholics. The students who participated in this research indicated that the social justice dimension of Catholicism had a more significant influence on their faith development. This would suggest that schools and parishes may need to actively engage students in Christian service as one way to strengthen the relationship between parish and school. Students indicated that although the Church is relevant, they want to be part of a lively and life giving community. Religious Educators and Diocesan authorities need to listen carefully to the signs of our times and to develop mechanisms which allow students to participate in the Catholic parish community. One implication for Religious Educators is the need to ensure that the classroom experience provides opportunities for students to reflect on their personal experience and presents the Gospel in an engaging and relevant manner.

**References:**


NSW: Catholic Education Commission. 0958019606


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Kevin Wanden FMS is the Director of the National Centre for Religious Studies, Wellington, New Zealand.
The Perceptions of Recently Assigned Secondary Religious Education Teachers

Abstract
This article focuses on survey responses from newly appointed secondary Religious Education teachers from the first phase of a longitudinal study. The study was conducted in Catholic schools in three dioceses of Western Australia over two school years, from 1998 to 1999. The study focused on the teachers’ perceptions of implementing the Perth Archdiocesan Religious Education Units of Work. The article outlines briefly the demographic and professional backgrounds of recently appointed RE (RARE) teachers. Next, it reports upon how these teachers perceived their use of the instructional resources and teaching approach in the RE Units. The article then describes what RARE teachers believed were the key underlying principles to be followed in implementing the RE Units. Finally, a synopsis summarises the key findings to emerge from the survey responses. The responses suggest that teaching experience and ongoing formation are required for successful curriculum implementation among recently assigned RE teachers.

The Perceptions of Recently Assigned Secondary Religious Education Teachers
Religious Education (RE) in Western Australia has been undergoing a process of reform over the past fifteen years. In the Archdiocese of Perth and the dioceses of Bunbury and Broome, Catholic secondary RE teachers have implemented units of work developed by the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia. The term-length units contain content, teaching programs and resources for the teachers to use. RE teachers are required to follow the sequence of the teaching programs while using their professional discretion in choice of strategies and resources. During the late 1990s, the units underwent a series of trials with a particular focus on catering for the needs of recently assigned RE teachers because of the significant link between quality teaching and student performance (Ladwig & Gore, 2005, p. 121). Concerns about how and why teachers use mandated curriculum materials in RE has been the subject of study over the past few years (Ivers, 2004). This article reports on a survey of the initial perceptions of recently assigned RE teachers about implementing these units of work into their classroom teaching.

Recently Assigned RE (RARE) Teachers
The term ‘recently assigned’ RE teachers includes teachers in their early teaching careers who were teaching RE; and, teachers who were experienced in another specialist learning area but were novices in teaching RE. This group of teachers comprised a significant proportion (46%) of teachers teaching Religious Education in Catholic secondary schools (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 1997). However, for the purposes of the survey, teachers needed to have completed at least one year of RE teaching. The survey incorporated a model of curriculum implementation developed by Fullan (2001); namely, possible changes in the use of instructional resources, changes in the use of teaching approach, and the adoption of new beliefs about the curriculum. The survey relied upon teachers completing a series of Likert and ranking items along with open-ended questions. Letters of invitation to be a part of the survey were sent to schools that were fully implementing the Units. In response, 34 (89%) out of 38 Catholic secondary schools from the Archdiocese of Perth and the Dioceses of Bunbury and Geraldton agreed to be involved in the survey. Of the 168 surveys sent out to RARE teachers in their second to sixth year of teaching RE, 122 (73%) were returned. Table 1 identifies the key demographic and professional backgrounds of these teachers.
Table 1

Key Background Features of RARE Teachers

Demographic Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>69% of respondents were female lay teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only one person from a religious congregation teaching RE involved in the survey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of age groups represented with most respondents (66%), between 21-30 years of age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male/female teacher ratio was consistent across the age groups.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Training Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very few (6%) RARE teachers taught RE as their main subject area.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RARE teachers trained initially within a specific learning area:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (26%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society and Environment (14%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology and Enterprise (13%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science (11%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Physical Education (9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Arts (7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths (7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages Other Than English or LOTE (3%).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cohort comprised a mixture of mostly recent graduates and some experienced teachers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 89% of teachers were trained in tertiary institutions within Western Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accreditation to teach Religious Education in a Catholic School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>77% of teachers responded that they did not have a tertiary qualification in RE:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19% stated that it was incorporated within their undergraduate (Education) degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2% recorded that it was a part of their postgraduate degree in Education.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers with tertiary RE qualifications came from:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of Notre Dame Australia (18%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith Cowan University (4%) through the Catholic Institute of Western Australia (CIWA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an Overseas Tertiary Institution (1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study component of Accreditation to Teach RE:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55% of teachers had completed tertiary studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38% were in the process of completing it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7% had not begun the study component.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inservice or teaching methods component of Accreditation to Teach RE:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76% had completed this component</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9% were in the process of completing it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13% had not begun the inservice component.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teaching Experience in Religious Education

- Most (80%) teachers had between one and four years of teaching experience in Religious Education.
  - 31% were in the second year of teaching RE
  - 28% in their third year
  - 21% in their fourth year
  - 11% in their fifth year
  - 10% in their sixth year.
- RE teaching experience as a proportion of teaching load:
  - 62% stated that teaching RE represented less than a quarter of their class contact time
  - 26% with RE representing between a quarter to a half of their teaching load
  - 5% with RE representing more than half to three quarters of their teaching load
  - 6% with RE representing more than three quarters of their teaching load.

Whether teachers were younger or older, accredited or not, the responses suggested that they seemed to share similar experiences. They were teaching a learning area with which they were unfamiliar and experienced challenges like beginning teachers in other fields (Bezzina, Stanyer & Bezzina, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; McCormack & Thomas, 2003). Most teachers were female and in their early teaching career. The majority had trained locally in a specialist learning area but not in Religious Education. However, half of the RARE teachers had completed Accreditation to teach Religious Education (a mandatory professional requirement required by the WA Catholic Education Commission to teach RE in WA Catholic schools). The responses also indicated that the actual length of RE teaching experience for RARE teachers was considerably less than what they would experience in their own major learning area. Furthermore, these teachers seemed to teach predominantly lower secondary classes and had a class in more than one Year level. The implication here is that these teachers were stretching their preparation time over more than one RE Unit at a time. With almost two-thirds of the teachers having a reduced contact time with their RE classes, it was possible that the classroom experience of teaching RE took longer to develop. Such a feature about RE teaching has been commented also by Buchanan and Hyde (2006, pp. 24-25).

In the open-ended questions part of the survey, RARE teachers were asked what they considered to be of importance in acquiring sufficient professional background to teach RE confidently. A small majority (51%) of 178 comments recommended that gaining professional qualifications in RE was important. Of this number, 30% advised that tertiary qualifications or its equivalent (such as the Content of RE Courses offered by the Catholic Education Office of WA) be gained as early as possible. These studies were to be done during either teacher training or the first years of teaching. Furthermore, 14% recommended the need to acquire Accreditation to Teach RE as a means of teaching RE confidently. The responses suggested that just over half of the RARE teachers recognised the professional status of Religious Education as a learning area. Nonetheless, the respondents saw themselves as professionally trained teachers of another major learning area and that teaching RE was an additional responsibility.

Use of Instructional Resources

In the survey, RARE teachers were asked about the use of instructional resources provided by the RE Units of Work. The survey explored three issues: the accessibility of the resources, the frequency of use of these resources and the attitudes of RARE teachers towards the use of these resources. Teachers were invited to consider their attitude towards the accessibility of the instructional resources in the RE Units (Table Two). A Likert scale with five levels of agreement was used: Strongly Agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. When the categories ‘Strongly Agree’ and ‘Agree’ were combined, the responses indicated widespread agreement that the instructional resources were ‘easy to follow’ (86%), ‘useful in my classroom teaching’ (83%), ‘reduce lesson preparation time’ (82%), and provided ‘sufficient background material’ (63%). The skewed distribution towards the modal (most frequent) ‘Agree’ response in the Likert items and the small dispersion of scores from the mean indicated that RARE teachers generally held similar perceptions to one another about the accessibility of the instructional resources.
Teachers were asked to rank five stipulated instructional resources on a scale from (1) to (5), with (5) being least frequently used. The respondents had the flexibility to consider the merits of the five stipulated items and had the option to include another item (Volunteered Item) that they felt was important. A rank score was calculated from the rankings given by each teacher. The item with the lowest total rank score was considered to be the most frequently used and so forth for the other items. Volunteered items were counted then given a rank from (6) to (16), with (16) being the least frequent, to distinguish them from the previous five stipulated items. The highest ranked items are shown in Table 3.

Brendan Hyde identifies four characteristics of children's spirituality: the felt sense, integrating awareness, weaving the threads of meaning, and spiritual questing. These characteristics can be observed in children if those who work with them know what to look for and are alert to the time, place and space in which children find themselves.

This book provides ways in which schoolteachers and parents can nurture and foster these particular characteristics of children's spirituality. It also considers two factors, material pursuit and trivialising, which may inhibit children's expression of their spirituality. *Children and Spirituality* will be of great interest to educators, policy makers, parents, and others who work with and seek to nurture the spirituality of children.
Table 3: Ranking of Frequency of Use of Instructional Resources

A. Stipulated Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Mastersheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Student Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Resources created by the teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Resources from the Coordinator of RE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Texts cited in the RE Units</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Volunteered Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Videos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Print materials from magazines and newspapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Own resources collected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Applying ideas from the Teacher’s Manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Using resources from the school’s RE department</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RARE teachers indicated that they used resources such as the Mastersheets from the Teacher’s Manual and the Student Book the most frequently. These curriculum materials were supplemented by resources created by the teachers themselves or from the RE Coordinator. Teachers augmented these resources with their own or the resources of their school as well as using resources such as videos and print media materials.

Teachers were asked to give a comment about what best reflected their experience in using the Teacher’s Manuals and Student Books. The advice from RARE teachers about using the instructional resources was consistent across the cohort and seemed to focus on using them as a mainstay for teaching. The advice included comments relating to ‘planning for and reviewing the resources’ (23%) and ‘using the resources as a guide’ (16%) and ‘follow the teaching and learning program’ (7%). These comments were juxtaposed with statements about drawing on other resources that were suited to the needs of students. The teachers made comments such as: ‘be creative, explore alternatives, provide variety’ (18%), ‘match or modify curriculum materials to student needs’ (13%) and ‘supervise the use of Mastersheets and the Student Book because language is not readily accessible to the students’ (8%).

Use of Teaching Approach

RARE teachers were asked about their experiences in using the teaching approach as recommended by the RE Units (Figure One). Three issues were explored: teaching process, preferred learning strategies and the attitudes of RARE teachers towards the prescribed teaching approach (Table Four). As was the case with the accessibility of resources, the data reflected a positively skewed distribution and narrow standard deviations suggesting widespread agreement on items about teaching approach. The exception to this trend was the Likert item dealing with organising liturgies in the classroom, which will be discussed later.
A majority of RARE teachers (87%) agreed that it was useful to begin with student experiences about a topic. In addition, 80% of teachers indicated it was useful to use a process of sincere and patient dialogue with their students. The majority of teachers (71%) also indicated that journal work was easy to include as a part of their teaching. Also, 71% indicated it was useful to follow the sequence of objectives in the RE Units.
Table Four  Experience of the RE Teaching Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As a RARE teacher, I tend to find…</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Omit</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mean Value¹</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Presenting content as outcomes of learning useful.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Following the sequence of objectives in the RE Units useful.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Beginning with students’ experiences about a topic useful.</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. A process of sincere and patient dialogue with students useful.</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Linking students’ experiences with the Gospels difficult.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Including learning strategies suited to the faith stances of all students difficult.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Organising class liturgies difficult.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Journal work is easy to include as part of my teaching.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Formal assessments are easy to include as part of my teaching.</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
1. The Mean Value represents the average of numerical values scored after each category was given a numerical value. SA = Strongly Agree (1); A = Agree (2); U = uncertain (3); D = Disagree (4) and SD = Strongly Disagree (5). Omit indicates that no response was given.
3. Numbers in parentheses indicate percentages and rounded to the nearest whole numbers.
4. Shaded scores represent the Mode (most frequent response) for that item.

Respondents agreed less strongly with each other on the difficulties they experienced with the teaching approach employed in the Units. Most teachers (59%) felt they had difficulty in including learning...
strategies suited to the faith stances of their students and 52% had difficulty with linking student experiences with the Gospels. Respondents also seemed divided about organising class liturgies with 38% agreeing they had difficulty doing so, 42% disagreeing they had difficulty and 16% indicating they were uncertain. One item in particular returned responses that suggested a range of perceptions about the educational focus of Religious Education. While 47% of teachers agreed that presenting content as outcomes of learning was useful, 43% were uncertain about this.

Teachers were asked to rank stipulated learning strategies (Table Five). The most preferred learning strategies were those that teachers felt 'stimulate active participation and creativity within students'. This preference suggested that RARE teachers were focused on student-centred learning. Teachers also seemed to prefer strategies that assisted in interpreting significant human experiences in the light of the Gospels. Interestingly, 'making links between experiences of the students and the Gospels' was a strategy teachers had difficulty in using.
Table Five

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Stimulate active participation and creativity within students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Interpret significant human experiences in the light of the Gospels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Describe and explain information about Catholic beliefs and practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Reinforce student understanding of Catholic beliefs and practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Reveal the deeper religious meanings behind Catholic beliefs and practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Volunteered Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Provide students with experiences of God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Promote personal development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Identify moral arguments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Promote interconnectedness and group discussion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, the responses from the survey indicated that teachers were very much in tune with the advocated teaching approach. The volunteered items appear to highlight an emphasis on catechetical formation. The highest ranked volunteered item was ‘providing students with experiences of God’. Teachers who taught 51-75% of their teaching load in RE were the most inclined towards this item. Furthermore, teachers with a >75% teaching load in RE ranked promoting prayer experiences more highly than did teachers with a lower teaching load. The suggestion here reinforces the notion that teachers with more RE classes are more experienced and familiar with teaching approaches in tune with a catechetical rather than just an educational orientation towards Religious Education.

The most important advice RARE teachers gave others about applying the teaching approach was not limited to any one particular sub-group of teachers. The responses reinforced the view that teachers wanted to use a student-centred approach to their RE teaching. The highest response (27%) highlighted the need for teachers to be ‘student-centred, to suit the students, to work from student experiences and background’ or to ‘provide experiences or substance for students’. In addition, teachers believed they needed to ‘be dynamic and flexible, to encourage creativity and active participation’ (12%) and to ‘discuss views and content with students, have open dialogue with them, create an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect’ (9%). Perhaps RARE teachers were keen to engage their students in learning by providing meaningful and relevant lessons.

The role of facilitating learning was suggested further by comments about the need to ‘link students’ experiences with the teachings of Christ in the Gospels or to Catholic beliefs and practices’ (5%). The facilitating learning approach was supported by a perceived confidence in using the Units as a foundation or springboard as evidenced by comments such as: ‘use the Unit as a guide; be selective of objectives, simplify or vary’ (13%) and, ‘become comfortable with the teaching approach, balance strategies between the “head” (cognitive) and the “heart” (affective)” (5%). An important aspect to using the Units as a foundation seemed to be for teachers to ‘know and understand the Units, the background information and sequence of objectives’ (7%). The responses from the teachers suggested there was a tension between addressing the personal developmental needs of students and addressing their own professional needs. Recently assigned teachers wanted their students to be engaged in learning about RE but the teachers needed the reassurance of knowing how to manage the content presented in the RE Units.

Underlying Curriculum Principles

The teachers were asked about their understanding of the underlying principles in teaching RE, that is, their knowledge and understanding of the role of the RE teacher; the aims of Religious Education; and, about being involved in the religious dimension of a Catholic school (Table Six). Four key areas were available for comment: awareness raising activities of the Church’s missionary work, formal liturgies, formal prayers, and school retreats or RE seminar days. Again, the mean values, modes, and low standard deviations across the Likert items in the survey suggested a high degree of agreement among the teachers.
Table Six  
Participation in the Religious Dimension of a Catholic school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As a RARE teacher, I want to assist in organising...</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Omit</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mean Value</th>
<th>Stand. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18. School or class Masses.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>(57)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation at school.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>(49)</td>
<td>(20)</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. School retreats or RE seminar days.</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(25)</td>
<td>(56)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(7 )</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Celebrations for key feast days or liturgical seasons at school.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>(43)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. The inclusion of prayers at school assemblies or events.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(20)</td>
<td>(60)</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(4 )</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Activities that raise awareness of the Church’s missionary work.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(28)</td>
<td>(55)</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
1. The Mean Value represents the average of numerical values scored after each category was given a numerical value. SA = Strongly Agree (1); A = Agree (2); U = uncertain (3); D = Disagree (4) and SD = Strongly Disagree (5). Omit indicates that no response was given.
3. Numbers in parentheses indicate percentages and rounded to the nearest whole numbers.
4. Shaded scores represent the Mode (most frequent response) for that item.

A large number of teachers (83%) responded that they would agree with assisting in the organisation of activities that ‘raise awareness of the Church’s missionary work’. RARE teachers also seemed eager to assist in organising the inclusion of prayers at school assemblies or events (80%) and to take part in assisting in the organisation of school retreats or seminar days (78%). It was in the area of assisting in organising formal liturgies that some reservations were expressed.

Teachers agreed with wanting to assist in organising school or class Masses (76%); celebrations for key feast days or liturgical seasons (62%); and, the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation at school (60%). However, some teachers expressed uncertainty or disagreement with involvement in the organisation of formal liturgies. For school or class Masses, 12% were uncertain about being involved and 12% disagreed with being involved. For celebrations for key feast days or liturgical seasons, 21% were uncertain about being involved and 16% disagreed with being involved. With the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation at school, 20% were uncertain about being involved and 20% disagreed with being involved. One wonders whether such responses might reflect the general Catholic lack of ease with Reconciliation and loss of connection with the liturgical year, especially feast days of saints.

Such nervousness among RARE teachers to be involved in organising liturgies may be related to a lack of professional confidence due to limited training and experience rather than only a lack of faith formation. Responses on an earlier item regarding the difficulty of organising class liturgies indicated that 38% agreed it was difficult and 16% were uncertain about this. In contrast, teachers...
ranked the stipulated item, ‘provide students with experiences of God’ as their highest preferred learning strategy.

RARE teachers were asked to indicate the category that best reflected their attitudes towards teaching RE. Again, there was a high degree of agreement among the respondents and notably, the dispersion of responses was narrow as indicated by the standard deviations. The overwhelming positive response by teachers was to the items, ‘foster an atmosphere of Christian love and respect’ (90%) and, ‘foster positive relationships with my students’ (95%). These responses seemed to re-emphasise earlier responses regarding the importance of being student-centred and the creation of a learning culture that exhibits and promotes the values of the RE Units. Other items indicated how in-tune recently assigned teachers were with the teaching process of the Units. In ‘presenting Catholic beliefs and practices’, 77% felt confident in doing so and 73% believed they were confident in being able to relate ‘students’ experiences to Catholic beliefs and practices’. As to issues relating to adequate faith formation, 74% of teachers in the survey agreed they felt confident enough in ‘managing the demands made on their own faith stance’. This response seemed to reinforce again the trend that RARE teachers mostly lacked sufficient professional training in organising liturgies and other religious opportunities for students.

Teachers were asked to rank stipulated aims of Religious Education (Table Seven). The highest priority for RARE teachers was to develop social justice and tolerance for others in the students. However, ‘Understand God’s intervention in human history’ was ranked last on the stipulated items list. The highest volunteered item response was to ‘integrate faith and life’. The rankings seemed to complement an approach with a ‘missionary or humanitarian nature’ (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 185).

Table Seven  Ranking of Aims of Religious Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>Stipulated Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Develop social justice and tolerance for others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Develop a closer relationship with God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Relate the Gospel example of Jesus to their lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Participate fully in formal prayers and liturgy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Understand God’s intervention in human history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>Volunteered Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Integrate faith and life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>To be able to share their (students’) faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Learn about the history of the Church, its policies and Sacraments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>See self-worth in themselves (students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Understand and listen to their (students’) consciences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers were asked also to rank stipulated emphases on the content of RE (Table Eight). Interestingly, the rankings on emphasis reflected closely the teaching process of the RE Units and reinforced this ‘humanitarian nature’ of faith development. Content that emphasised reaching ‘full human potential’, ‘actions for transforming society’ and ‘consequences on human nature’ seemed to be more desirable than emphasising how ‘Gospels relate to significant life experiences’ and ‘knowledge about Catholic beliefs and practices’.
Table Eight  Ranking of emphasis on the Content of Religious Education

A.  Stipulated Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>What helps a person to reach full human potential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Actions for transforming society for the common good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Consequences of social issues and trends on human nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>How the Gospels relate to significant life experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Knowledge about Catholic beliefs and practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B.  Volunteered Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Relationship with Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Focus on Church teachings, solid apologetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Relationship with God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Practical ways to live like Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Student relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RARE teachers did want to emphasise the faith aspects in their teaching. In the Volunteered Items, teachers felt an emphasis on content dealing with the faith formation of their students such as ‘the relationship with Jesus’, ‘apologetics’, ‘relationship with God’ and ‘practical ways to live like Christ’ were important. Overall, the findings suggested that teachers with a professional background in RE were more likely to emphasise the catechetical aspects of the Units rather than remain focused on secular humanist aspects (Benson and Guerra, 1985).

Teachers were asked to comment upon the most important advice they would give others about what was crucial for students to learn. Some teachers answered the question by giving advice to others about what they should do to help students learn (‘become very familiar with each Unit taught’, 11%). Nonetheless, a number of teachers (14%) believed it was crucial to ‘offer a vision of a positive self-image, self love and personal development’, to deepen the ‘understanding of Catholic beliefs and practices’ of students (12%) and to ‘link Catholic beliefs and practices to the daily challenges faced by students’ (9%). This deepening appreciation for integration of life and faith was complemented by comments that recommended promoting the love of God as part of their faith development (10%), the transformation of society (9%), the relationships between Gospels and real life, society and lives of the students (9%) and an understanding of Jesus as a perfect role model (7%).

Synopsis

The responses from RARE teachers were very positive and consistent towards the use of instructional resources in the RE Units. This positive response suggested that the Units satisfied one of the major concerns raised by Religious Educators about the implementation of RE curricula, the ease of access to resources for RARE teachers. The ease of accessibility of the instructional resources in the Units was indicated further by the high frequency of use of the Mastersheets and the Students Books. The notion of ‘hands on’ activities seemed to be very much the focus here. However, the lower response for ‘sufficient background material’ may warrant further investigation into links between these content materials and the extent of professional formation these teachers possessed. The differences between groups of teachers seemed to depend upon the familiarity and confidence of teachers in using materials other than the Mastersheets and Student Book. The responses indicated that RARE teachers used the materials as a foundation or as a ‘springboard’ for other activities to be used in their classroom teaching (Rymarz, & Engebretson, 2005).

RARE teachers seemed to interpret the teaching approach advocated in the RE Units from the perspective of their expertise as specialist subject teachers and their pre-conceived catechetical notions of Religious Education. Objectives and content in the Units were to be covered in ways they thought were interesting and relevant to their students. Their confidence in applying the teaching approach
seemed to be linked to their perceived competence in using student-centred approaches in their classroom teaching. However, while their confidence appeared to be tied closely to following the Unit Objectives, when they had to make links between the life experiences of students and the Gospels or other related themes, then there was some uncertainty and apprehension. The impression was that these teachers were responding to how they think they should use the teaching approach according to training in their own learning areas rather than readily indicate a deeper critical understanding of the pedagogy used in Religious Education. As a result, the religious dimensions of RE teaching seemed to be widely advocated but inadequately understood by these teachers (Engebretson, 1997). Furthermore, there seemed to be a tension between focusing on the personal developmental needs of students and their own needs to become familiar with the content and strategies presented in the RE Units. The confidence of RARE teachers also appeared to be related to what they were doing in the classroom rather than why they were teaching in a particular way. RARE teachers prided themselves upon being practitioners rather than manipulators or innovators in implementing the RE curriculum (Malone, 1997).

The depth of understanding about the principles and purposes of RE among recently assigned teachers was ambiguous but this is not surprising (Ivers, 2004, p. 29). At this stage, they seemed to recognise what they should understand but lacked the professional formation or experience to assimilate their understanding as a part of their teaching practice. As found by Buchanan (2006, p. 22), there were significant gaps of understanding in implementing a content focused curriculum. RARE teachers wanted to portray a commitment towards involvement in the religious dimensions of the school but were uncertain about how they should implement these dimensions themselves (such as, organising Masses and the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation). In many ways they seem to reflect novice teachers struggling for confidence in a climate of pressure and uncertainty (Onafowora, 2004). They expressed an agreeable attitude towards teaching RE but seemed divided as to what were the aims of Religious Education. Formation and experience seemed to be two important ingredients of how well RARE teachers understood the aims of RE and what content needed to be emphasised to students.

References

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The Arts in Religious Education – a focus for ‘Deep Seeing’, Silence and Contemplation (Part Two)

Abstract
This is part two of a paper that seeks to examine the essential role of the arts (e.g. visual arts, dance, poetry) in religious education as an authentic focus for the cultivation of ‘deep seeing’, silence and contemplation among teachers and students. Part One in the previous issue dealt with the topics of attentiveness and ‘deep seeing’. This final part of the article deals with the related links between attentiveness, silence and contemplation. The paper argues across both parts, principally from the perspective of painting, that the cultivation of these approaches helps to create a slower, more meditative approach to religious education, spirituality, and life. In addition, both stances assist those involved to ‘see’ more clearly or ‘be attentive’ at a deeper level to self, others, society, and God, and to respond more effectively to each.

To contemplate reality more deeply

‘Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible’
(Paul Klee, in Copeland, 2004, p.28)

In the context of this paper, ‘contemplation’ is understood as a simple, prayerful gazing upon the presence of God. One of the common meanings of ‘contemplation’ throughout the history of spirituality is the pre-rational, intuitive ‘awareness of the presence of God apprehended not by thought but by love’ (Shannon, 1993, p.209). Furthermore, contemplation is often associated with ‘mysticism’, which some authors associate not with rarefied experiences, but with the ordinary apprehensions of God’s presence in the living out of daily life. Contemplation refers to any number of ways of making oneself aware of the presence of God who is always first present to us. This awareness, mindfulness, or ‘paying attention’ (see above) is central to contemplation, tends towards the intuitive, and is not to be confused with thinking or ‘acts of the presence of God’. Contemplation is the desire and commitment to become more unified with the presence of God (Shannon, 1993, p.209).

‘Contemplation’ is derived from the Latin templum, translated as ‘time’, but more accurately referring to ‘a division or section of time’. Through various mutations, ‘contemplation’ came to refer to a sacred space, marked off from other space, where Roman augurs would examine the entrails of birds. It then came to be associated with temple practice where designated sacred persons looked at the ‘insides of things’ (animals) to discern divine meanings, purposes, and directions. Like the finger pointing at the moon, contemplation began to refer to the process of ‘looking at’ the insides of reality, rather than ‘finding’ an actual sacred place or state. By looking at these insides of reality, the person given to contemplation eventually finds themselves ‘looking at God’ (Shannon, 1993, pp.209-210).

Complementing and extending this understanding of ‘contemplation’ is the Greek equivalent of the Latin contemplatio, which is theoria. Theoria means ‘to look at something intently and for a purpose’. This derivation of ‘contemplation’ discerns traces of God in created things, and implies ‘direct and total awareness of God, in which there is immediate experience of oneness with God’ (Shannon, 1993, p.210).

The modern Catholic and Christian approach to contemplation holds that there can no longer be any dualistic dichotomies drawn between sacred and profane, and that all people are called to holiness and contemplation in the midst of their ordinary lives – hence the designation ‘ordinary mysticism’ (cf. Vatican II documents especially Gaudium et Spes, Egan and other contemporary writers on spirituality).

Thomas Merton’s writings are emblematic of this contemporary approach in his call for the Christian contemplative to move beyond concepts and descriptions of God in order to truly encounter the divine Presence. In doing so, he is consonant with the spirituality of the arts outlined above, particularly in his orientation towards the apophatic way:

Now, while the Christian contemplative must certainly develop by study the theological understanding of concepts about God, [they] are called mainly to penetrate the wordless darkness and apophatic light of an experience beyond the concepts…Relinquishing every attempt to grasp God in limited human concepts, the contemplatives’ act of submission and faith attains to [God’s] presence as the ground of every human experience and [God’s] reality as the ground of being itself (Merton, 1973, p.183).
To contemplate a work of art – noticing, connecting, seizing, lingering, savouring

‘A symbol or work of art is not exhausted by ‘seeing it’ or by some final successful grasp via knowledge. The power of the symbol and the work of art is to give or humiliate itself without abandoning or exhausting itself. For it is only in this way – where each truly gives or reveals itself – that both are revealed as the holy mystery, the Logos, the Christ’ (Mudge, 2007, a personal interpretation based on Splett, 1986, p.1657)

Philosopher John Armstrong suggests that this process of paying attention and contemplation is integral to engaging a work of art. Once again, what Armstrong says in relation to a painting could be equally applied to a piece of music, sculpture, craftwork, dance, opera, or other works of art. He argues that teachers and students not only need information or data about the arts. They also need the powers of reverie and imagination because they provide such a major way in which we uncover the internal structure of works of art and develop personal relations with them (2000, p.80). In addition, and perhaps most importantly, viewers of art works require the skills of contemplation. This section concludes with Armstrong’s five aspects of contemplation that, with fidelity and persistence, could be learned and practised by teachers and students – animadversion, concursus, hololepsis, the lingering caress, and catalapsis.

My reading of Armstrong’s aspects is that they are not mutually exclusive phases but continually overlap, interpenetrate, and interrogate each other. Furthermore they could be applied in any situation, not just in religious education or within a classroom context. Armstrong notes in passing that this ‘process of perceptual contemplation of an object…is similar to the route by which many people fall in love’ (2000, p.81). One might add ‘fall in love with a work of art, with the cosmos, or with the whole of existence’.

Animadversion is the initial aspect of contemplation and involves spending time noticing details about the work. It follows an initial acquaintance with a work of art in which one might become present or attentive to it, or even collect information about it. Animadversion is the art of becoming visually aware of those parts of the picture or art work which our habitual rapid scanning tends to gloss over. This is the process which sometimes requires conscious effort, we feel we are literally turning our attention on to different parts of the canvas and saying to ourselves: Well now, what is actually there? (2000, p.83).

The second aspect, concursus, is seeing relations or relationships between the parts of an art work. To continue the line of questioning from the animadversion phase, the viewer asks: ‘Why is that there?’ Every aspect of a painting is normally related to the whole work so that the sum of the parts is greater than the whole. Concursus involves, for example, noticing formally ‘insignificant’ or ‘peripheral’ details of a work and interrogating their relationship to the whole, and their pattern of meaning in relation to other aspects of the work.

In any work of art, this might include the significance of and contrast and relationship between various elements such as – colours, symbols, gestures, curves and lines, facial expressions, animals, plants and humans, objects, the direction of figures’ gazes, light and dark regions, and even physical measurements between people and objects. When the viewer ‘sees together’ all these various elements, the possible result is ‘an enrichment of visual significance, of meaning. Scrutiny of a work of art frequently involves a rhythm of attention to individual parts and to the relations between those parts. This rhythm is required by art and it is also native to the perceiving mind’ (2000, p.91).

The third aspect, hololepsis, is seizing the whole work as the whole – the ‘connected knowing’ phase of looking at an art work. It addresses the viewer’s question: ‘How are the parts I have noticed related to the whole work?’ Armstrong notes: ‘To seize a work as a whole – as a single complete entity – is an achievement of contemplation which stands at the opposite end of the spectrum from fastening upon it detail by detail (2000, p.92). Clearly, this is a different type of knowing, implying a different type of spirituality, to that to which we are accustomed. Factual, informative or empirical knowing is different from and yet complementary to contemplative, holistic or hololeptic knowing.

Each type of knowing ‘attends to’ different aspects of an art work. Both are distinct types of knowing, and yet absolutely necessary. To sum up this aspect: ‘Hololepsis yields an archetype of completeness and coherent explanation – thus responding to two of the great aims of mental activity’. Armstrong adds: ‘Hololeptic contemplation…links the experience of art to the wider demands of reflective life and suggests how, to a certain kind of person, the experience of art could be of prime private importance’ (2000, pp.94-95).

The fourth aspect, the lingering caress, is that aspect of engaging an art work that addresses the questions: Why do we return to works of art? Why look again at something you have already seen? Haven’t we already ‘seen’ what a work has to offer during the first encounter? Armstrong observes: ‘Contemplation is an open-ended process; it can get broken off but it can’t be completed. When we savour something we hold our attention upon it; and that holding can be extended as long as we wish, or until we become jaded’ (2000, p.98). However, the phase or ‘art’ of lingering has not been enthusiastically applauded by Western society throughout history. It has been pilloried by some as ‘wasted time’. Nothing visible gets achieved, produced or finalised.

Nevertheless, the lingering caress is absolutely necessary to the practice of contemplation (some would call it ‘hovering near’ or ‘spending time with’ an art work). Lingerence before an art work, similar to lingering
with a loved one, is absolutely essential if one is to develop skills such as listening, attentiveness, drawing close, happiness, and meaningfulness.

The fifth and final aspect of Armstrong’s taxonomy, catalepsis, is the ongoing process of mutual absorption with an art work. It interrogates the viewer with the question: ‘Why do some works of art not only fix or demand our attention, but absorb us into them so that they in turn get absorbed into us?’ This takes the viewer one step further along from ‘the lingering caress’. The viewer not only returns to the work of art but begins to somehow absorb/get changed by the work of art in a mysterious morphing process of symbiosis. Catalepsis is the phase or experience resulting from contemplation of an art work, which draws the viewer out of self-centredness in his or her contemplation of the ‘other’, the ‘stranger’, or the ‘different’.

For Armstrong, ‘contemplation is the spiritual analogue of eating’ (2000, p.100). It is a two way process where the art work absorbs the viewer and the viewer in turn absorbs the art work. This absorption is not just another quick and easy process in our driven, ‘do it now’ world. It takes time, pondering, sustained attention, and commitment to a work of art. As Armstrong himself has ventured, it is akin to the relationship with a loved one. One pledges to be present to the art work to savour its wisdom and to deepen this precious relationship. The value of Armstrong’s approach is that – like lateral thinking, cooperative learning, or slow thinking – it provides a systematic way, even ‘permission’, for those who view works of art to actually spend time with them, notice what they are saying, and respond to them in various ways. This is akin to a process of deep seeing, listening and contemplation which changes the way we look at things as well as the way we understand and engage the world.

Armstrong’s five pronged approach represents an ongoing process of contemplation, hololepsis and catalepsis. The five parts are continually moving and in a state of flux. They could be compared to a living and breathing organism. The organism itself is hololeptic – the moving parts are always greater than the sum of its moving whole. In addition, it is enduringly cataleptic – engagement with a work of art continually engages all five aspects: we are repeatedly drawn back to ‘great’ works of art like the nails to the magnet or the moth to the candle. When this transpires, we are irrevocably caught up in a process of metamorphosis where the artwork morphs, we change the way we look at the art work and, as a result, this changes ways in which we see and interact with the world.

Conclusions

Practical strategies for the cultivation of attentiveness as ‘deep seeing’ and contemplation

‘The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious’ (Albert Einstein)

To adapt a famous saying by G. K. Chesterton about Christianity: ‘It is not so much that the arts have been tried and found wanting, they have simply not been tried’. The decision by teachers and others to incorporate the arts into their teaching and reflection has the capacity to open up whole new worlds of ‘deep seeing’, attentiveness, and contemplation. Andrew Fuller is one who has noted the peculiar power of the arts to open up these new worlds:

It’s surprising the amount of information that can be extracted out of a song lyric or favourite film. The art seems to be to use [students’] own diversion strategies as an entrée to their world. Also, it allows them to educate you about something, which often places them in a different position from being misunderstood or not listened to (1998, p.12, my italics).

In the final analysis, incorporating the arts into religious education involves a deliberate choice to meditate upon (look deeply into, chew over) various aspects of nature, creation or the cosmos. By engaging students in this process, the teacher would be hopeful that their charges would begin to perceive the universe reflected in its smallest part – the macro within the micro, a Pandora’s box of fractals. In this sense, for example, teachers and students as artists and contemplatives would also begin to see a whole galaxy ‘glimpsed’ within the middle of a poppy or grevillea, or perhaps within atomic structures revealed through an electron microscope.

Many vehicles can open up these ‘faces’ of Mystery or the Transcendent to humanity. Nature can achieve this, for example, through a simple walk in a national park, or by viewing a sunset or sunrise. However, the arts are unique in maintaining the relationship between the trinity of image, idea, and reality. The arts preserves and promotes the symbolic and the metaphorical, and calls forth a concrete response from its viewers. As Balan points out, if this tripartite relationship is ever severed, communication between the human and Divine can be rendered mute. He continues:

But humanity needs art only so long as it preserves this relationship. In so doing, art reflects what makes us distinctly human – creations (image) with souls (idea) made in the image of God (reality). And so art continues to be a means of conveying clues in our search for meaning (2006, p.1).

The following resources, ideas and strategies represent a good starting point for opening a ‘conversation’ about a spirituality of the arts based on ‘deep seeing’, paying attention, and contemplation. Many of these provide practical examples for what has already been outlined in theory above. The vast majority of these ideas also assume that teachers and students can become creators or art and active meaning-makers as artists in their own right.

- St. Luke’s resources provide a good general basis for developing personal, staff, student, and other group spirituality, based on the arts, photography, and symbol. See especially
Signposts, exploring everyday spirituality (Deal & Masman, 2004), Shadows and deeper shadows, seeing the darkness, looking for light (Deal, Gardner & Holton, 2005), and deepspeak, the world according to you (Deal, 2006).

- Mindful or reflective walking in the midst of nature – the bush, forest or nature trail (Hearn, 2005, p.5).
- Use art as a source for exploring key questions in the search for meaning (cf. Balan, 2006, passim).
- Contemplation and breathing exercises such as Nekashum, Stillness, Silence, and Non-conceptual mind (Edrid, 2006).
- Meditation using ‘vehicles’ that promote deep seeing, such as stained glass, installations of religious art, and icons.
- Communicating using different media from usual – e.g. photography, digital media, installation, collage, scrap booking, glass painting, sand mandalas.
- Explore the implications of art characterised by an apophatic spirituality – e.g. expressing one’s spirituality via images, colours, symbols, textures, collage, or fragments of childhood events.
- Practise silence and contemplation within nature and other similar environments.
- Study selected parables and then reflect on and discuss what a ‘parabolic spirituality’ might involve. Some commentators have compared parables to the literary genre of poetry – it is a different way of seeing and imag[in]ing the world.
- Many artist have stated that they seek through their works to elicit an emotional (affective) or visceral response, rather than a cognitive or cerebral response. Look at art works that draw forth these type of responses and journal the results.
- Employ a range of responses that challenge students to ‘wake up’ or ‘pay attention’ – reflective walking, drawing, journalling, doing without technology, for a few days or even a week.
- Practise the disciplines of ‘paying attention’ and ‘deep seeing’ – endeavour to look more closely at something and notice what you have not seen before – e.g. whilst walking in nature, in the city, with a person you love, observing strangers, journalling at day’s end.
- Aim to develop what Ruskin called ‘heart-sight [as] deep as eyesight’ by looking more deeply at the ‘surfaces’ of things – earth, air, clouds, water, fire – then attempt to translate these material surfaces onto the surface of a canvas, or via another art form.
- Cultivate the disciplines of silence and contemplation – allow a period of quiet time for at least twenty minutes each day. Use a method such as meditative breathing or a mantra to still the mind.
- Utilise a range of resources suggested in the ‘References’ below, including Brussat and Brussat, the ‘Spirituality and Practice’ website, and many other books and sites.

These and comparable strategies affirm that there is significant value in incorporating the arts into religious education and other disciplines. The arts provide a vehicle which enable teachers and students to pay attention to what is of greatest value, to ‘see deeply’ into the core issues and questions of existence, and to employ the oft-neglected tools of silence and contemplation to activate this ability to see more deeply.
Diagram 1 – the Process of ‘Deep Seeing’ and Paying Attention

‘Deep Seeing’, Paying Attention, Attentive-ness

- Being present
- Paying attention
- Mindfulness or ‘coming into the present’ or ‘waking up’
- Openness to grace, the Spirit, epiphanies, great insights, Mystery
- Becoming present to God as ‘the sacrament of the present moment’
- To wait upon the Mystery via the vehicle of art
- Jesus’ challenge to stop, hear, listen, be alert
- Contemplation as the mind’s attention directed towards God
- Contemplation as ‘gazing into the face of God’
- Lonergan’s ‘be attentive’ question – what is it?
- ‘Deep seeing’ to levels, patterns, ambiguity, to see the many levels on the canvas of creation
- Heart sight as deep as eye sight (Ruskin)
Diagram 2 – some key elements of Spirituality & Practice

‘deep seeing’ and paying attention leads to:

The cultivation of ATTITUDES such as:
- compassion
- listening
- reverence
- enthusiasm
- imagination
- silence
- openness

Leads to a GREATER AWARENESS of and RESPONSE to:
- beauty
- gratitude
- hospitality
- wonder
- kindness
- openness
- trust
- nurturing
References


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Harry Potter, the Hero Journey and Religious Education

Abstract
This article supplements the previous article regarding the series entitled “The use of the Harry Potter series in teaching values in Religious Education”, which was published in the Journal of Religious Education (55:4 2007). This article focuses specifically on the importance of the Hero Journey motif in the Harry Potter books and how this motif connects with young people.

In the previous article it was demonstrated how Rowling’s main characters reflect key values while this companion article makes mention of the effectiveness of hero narratives, especially the Harry Potter series, in teaching values. This article enlarges on how the hero journey motif is present in the Harry Potter series and how this motif particularly connects with our young people. It concludes that Hero Journey stories are effective resources for teaching especially in the area of Christian values.

Harry Potter, the Hero Journey and Religious Education

“Heroes summarize individual and collective desires, and support the idea of the eternal personal achievement which is therefore, the guide for the greatest advances of human race”
(Michelle Roche, 2003, pp. 24-25).

Harry Potter and the Hero Journey

In my previous article, “The use of the Harry Potter series (Rowling, 1997; 1998; 1999; 2000; 2003; 2005; 2007) in teaching values in Religious Education”, mention was made of the relationship of the Harry Potter series to the hero journey or monomyth. The connection between the Harry Potter series and the hero journey is an important one because it helps us to understand one of the reasons that the books have been so successful in engaging with our youth and how our youth can learn from the books and other hero journeys, including that of Jesus Christ.

The monomyth or hero journey is a term used by mythologist Joseph Campbell in his famous book, The hero with a thousand faces (1949/1993). This book built on the work of German anthropologist Adolp Bastian (1826-1905) (see Campbell, 1993, p. 18), who had proposed the idea that myths from various parts of the world contained elementary ideas that derive from the human psyche (Brennan, 1999, Booker, 2004). Campbell was also influenced by Arnold van Gennep’s (1909/1961) work on rites of passage (Campbell, 1993, p. 10). Renowned Swiss psychologist, Carl Jung, called these elementary ideas, “archetypes” which he saw as the inherited, unconscious ideas and images that are the components of the collective unconscious (Doty, 1986, pp. 148-158). Jung felt that while we could not see the archetype we could see how the force had shown itself (Doty, p. 151). Jung claimed that we needed mythical stories to help us:

make sense of the confusion of our society and our psyches. Myths voice the truths of our unconscious selves, . . . the gods, goddesses, and heroes of myth embody aspects of creativity, cleverness, grief, joy, aggression, and ecstasy. The monsters of myth are really monsters of the mind (Mythology: Myths, legends. and fantasies, 2003, pp.12-13).

Campbell’s work took Jung’s theory of “archetypes” and looked for the common underlying structure in the world’s myths and religions (Campbell, 1993, p. 18). He called this common story pattern a “monomyth” (a term taken from James Joyce’s work Finnegan’s Wake, 1939/1992, p. 581), yet it is now usually referred to as a hero journey. This story pattern refers to the standard adventure path of mythological heroes, which Campbell divides into three parts: departure (or separation), initiation and return. He saw these stages as a magnification of the traditional rites of passage, which are separation, initiation and return:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man (Campbell, 1993, p. 30).

In his research Campbell found that heroic adventure myths had similar stages even though they came from all over the world. While others had noticed these story patterns too (Segal, 1999, pp. 117-118) Campbell published a more thorough analysis of these patterns than had previously been produced. He divided each of the three parts of the heroic adventure myths into a number of stages. They are:

Departure:
1) The call to adventure
2) Refusal of the call
3) Supernatural Aid
4) The crossing of the first threshold
5) The belly of the whale.

Initiation:
1) The road of trials,
2) The meeting with the Goddess
3) Woman as the temptress
4) Atonement with the father
5) Apotheosis
6) The ultimate boon.

Return:
1) Refusal of the return
2) The magic flight
3) Rescue from without
4) The crossing of the return threshold
5) Master of the two worlds
6) Freedom to live (Campbell, 1993, pp. 49-243).

Campbell did not state that each monomyth followed these stages exactly but he did argue that there is little variation from this adventure path in most hero journey myths (Campbell, 1993, p. 38).

The hero journey occurs in some of the great stories of our world including that of Moses, Jesus and Gautama Buddha (Campbell, 1993, pp. 30-40). A key structural stage of any hero journey is when the hero has to face a number of trials. These can involve a hero undertaking trips to the underworld, labyrinths, caves, over seas, deserts, through the sky as well as encounters with dragons (beasts, Satan) and confrontations with their opposite (Campbell, 1993, pp. 97-109).

The “Hero Journey” and its relevance to our youth
Research undertaken by Campbell, Christopher Vogler (1992/1999) and others indicate that people relate to the hero journey in its varied forms. Vogler’s book, *The writer journey: Mythic structure for writers* (1992), and subsequent revised editions, outline how the hero journey pattern, as disclosed by Campbell (1949/1993), has been used in many successful films. Our young people also view films in which the hero journey has been used and many of those films have been highly successful with the youth audience. Examples are *The Lion King, Beauty and the Beast, E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial, The Wizard of Oz* and the *Star Wars* films (Vogler, 1999). More contemporary examples would be *Finding Nemo* and *Shrek*. Therefore our youth have been exposed to the hero journey through films as well as through other forms of narrative including traditional myths.

The most recent Angus and Robertson survey of Australian children between the ages of five and seventeen, in which 60,000 children voted for their favourite book, indicated that young readers chose adaptations of the hero journey in all of their top ten choices (Angus & Robertson, 2006). These books included the *Harry Potter* series as equal first choice, the *Narnia* chronicles (Lewis, 1950; 1951; 1952; 1953; 1954; 1955; 1956), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Dahl, 1964) and *Eragon* (Paolini, 2003). Due to this enculturation of the hero journey in our young people, particularly through our popular film culture, it is reasonable to assume that they are comfortable with this form of narrative and that they find it relevant because it continues to attract both young viewers and readers. This connection with the hero journey is important because by using this concept in the education of our youth we are providing a greater chance for the learning to be more effective as students personally relate to the learning process (White, 2004, p. 130, p.168).

Modern Australian based research also supports the relevancy of the hero journey to our youth. In a limited research project, undertaken with a Grade Six Co-educational school class in the Wollongong area, Kori Nemme and Phil Fitzsimmons (2004), published results that indicated that the hero journey does connect with our youth.

. . . when class members were asked during an interview what they learnt from the text other than the actual pattern, students described aspects of personal growth and identity.

Chan Always show yourself, like don’t ever be someone you’re not . . . always be yourself, don’t change for anybody just to fit in.

Zona Just be yourself. Don’t be like Marley, who always kept her distance.

Alex The Dragon thing . . . the things inside you that stop you from doing something

Gianna Not to be scared, but be brave.

Heidi The book is about facing your fears and to show and prove you can achieve what you set out to achieve.

(Nemme & Fitzsimmons, 2004, pp. 16-17)

They based their study on Campbell’s views about how a person’s interaction with a hero journey causes a natural response as they relate that story to their own lives (Nemme & Fitzsimmons, 2004, pp. 5-7). In their research project they introduced students to the concept and structure of the hero journey, and immersed students in the novel *Rowan of Rin* by Emily Rodda (1993/2003). Importantly, the study undertaken showed how the hero journey narrative could be used in a co-educational class with a varied range of abilities and culture backgrounds. The class contained seven children out of the class of twenty-eight who were undertaking a reading-recovery programme and the class had a wide range of language abilities with students mainly coming from Anglo-Saxon, Lebanese and Portuguese backgrounds, including some with little use of English at home (Nemme & Fitzsimmons, 2004, p. 9).

Through a shared book experience and set tasks, students were encouraged to apply their understanding of the text to their own life journey. Without
inducement from the researchers students frequently responded with their personal experiences in relation to the text (Nemme & Fitzsimmons, 2004, pp. 9-18). The results of the study indicate the suitability of the hero journey narrative as an educational tool with contemporary students because students connected with it (pp. 9-10).

The second relevance of the hero journey is in the way it relates to our mind, whether consciously or subconsciously. While a hero journey describes a physical journey to its reader, which often involves adventure and suspense, it is also an inward journey that relates to its reader’s psyche. The reason this occurs, as Campbell perceives it, is because all hero journeys are actually about us. He speculated that people related naturally with the narrative form, particularly the hero journey narrative, because we are aware that our own lives are a narrative (1993). People also respond to the archetypes present in hero journeys. The hero’s search connects with modern readers because it is a reflection of their own search, through their unconscious, for self-knowledge (Segal, 1999, p. 135). The hero journey also connects with people on the conscious level of our emotions. As Vogler (1999) states:

In any good story the hero grows and changes, making a journey from one way of being to the next: from despair to hope, weakness to strength, folly to wisdom, love to hate, and back again. It’s these emotional journeys that hook an audience and make a story worth watching (p. 13).

If we accept Campbell’s view then all myths are relevant to us and speak to us because they are about us:

In the end we are all of us in a sense experts on stories, because nothing is closer to us than to see the world in the form of stories. Not only are our heads full of stories all the time; we are each of us acting out our own story throughout our lives. Outwardly male or female, we are each of us, like David Copperfield, cast as the hero of the story of our own life – just as we are equally its heroine. And the aim of our life, as we see from stories, is that those two should become one, to ‘live happily ever after’ (Booker, 2004, p. 701).

Lastly, myths, including the hero journey, speak to us about our values. Whilst various critics interpret myths in different ways most recognise them as a valuable instrument in the reinforcing of cultural values including renowned mythologist, Bronislaw Malinowski and Jung. Malinowski followed the socio-functional or structural-functional approach to myths, which studied them “in terms of their functional ability to provide social solidarity, to transmit cultural values” (Doty, 1986, p. 46). Jung felt that myth had a social function because he saw the archetypes as models of how man [sic] should behave (Segal, 1999, p. 79). This supports the view that stories are seen as an important means through which societal values, including Christian values, are taught.

**Harry Potter as a “Hero Journey”**

If a hero journey is attractive to us, speaks to us and teaches us values, it is necessary to ask if the *Harry Potter* series is a hero journey. A number of critics feel that it is a hero journey (Applebaum, 2003, Nikolajeva, 2003, Schafer, 2002, et al.). Schafer (2002) states that Harry fulfils many of the criteria required to be called a mythical hero including that he acquires self-knowledge, matures during his ordeal and that readers are able to “identify with Harry’s experiences and recognize parallels in their own lives” (p. 130). Pharr (2002) sees Harry as a hero in progress, a potential representative of Campbell’s monomyth (p. 54).

**Harry Potter and the “Hero Journey” form**

There is no great surprise that the *Harry Potter* series draws from the hero journey form because a large number of popular stories, both in the written media and other media, draw on this pattern; it speaks to us psychologically as we are connected to this pattern through our collective unconscious (Segal, 1999, p. 135). Campbell felt that a new set of hero journey narratives was needed that drew on the world as we knew it, that allowed us to enjoy the great stories of mythology in a new setting. “...mythology shows itself to be as amenable as life itself to the obsessions and requirements of the individual, the race, the age” (Campbell, 1993, p. 382). Some critics see the *Harry Potter* series and other works, such as *Star Wars* (1977), as examples of these new narratives (Milum, 2003).

Throughout the *Harry Potter* series it is easy to connect events in the stories with the hero journey or monomyth pattern as described by Campbell and others. Written below is a depiction of the hero journey in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* (PS) (Rowling, 1997). The structural outline and terminology used is taken from Vogler (1999, p. 12).

**Ordinary World**

Harry lives at the residence of Mr and Mrs Dursley, 4 Privet Drive, Little Whinging, Surrey. The creation of this address by Rowling indicates her desire to portray the Dursley family as comical and distasteful early in the series. Privet refers to a shrub, which is frequently planted in some numbers to be turned into hedges that are trimmed into uniformity. Vernon and Petunia Dursley wish to be seen as conventional, in uniformity with the rest of their neighbours (PS, p. 7), not connected with anything strange or mysterious, especially witchcraft. They tend to be boring people rather than excitement seekers. The term “whinging” is commonly used in the English language to describe the action of constant complaining which is one of the characteristics of Dursley family especially in regard to Harry (PS, pp. 19-27). Harry is an orphan, small and skinny, with wild hair and a lightning bolt scar. He is given old clothes to wear, requires glasses and is forced to live in the cupboard under the stairs. Mr and Mrs Dursley reluctantly look after him and he has to put up with his spoiled cousin Dudley, who is a bully. Both Vernon and Petunia do not wish Harry to know about

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his origins as they lie to him about how his parents died (PS, pp. 19-27).

Call to Adventure
Harry is called to his adventure, initially a life of wizardry, through strange occurrences. His hair grows back almost instantly after it is cut, one of Dudley’s large jumpers refuses to fit over Harry’s head and he strangely ends up on the school roof when he was only seeking to jump behind some bins. He has a dream about a flying motorbike then, on the visit to the Zoo for his cousin Dudley’s birthday, Harry gets physical responses from a snake he is talking to, the glass on the snake’s enclosure vanishes and while the snake escapes Harry swears he heard it talk to him (PS, pp. 23-26).

Refusal of the Call
Harry then receives strange letters that he is not allowed to open. On behalf of Harry, but without his consent, Uncle Vernon refuses the call to wizardry by trying to stop the letters arriving even though they now number in the hundreds. The Dursleys try to avoid the call by fleeing with Harry to an old house on an isolated rock in the sea but Hagrid arrives and the call is taken up (PS, pp. 30-51).

Meeting with the Mentor
Harry has met one of his mentors, Hagrid, but he is yet to formally meet his dominant mentor, Dumbledore. However, Dumbledore has already been involved in mentoring Harry’s life as he was responsible for Harry’s placement in the Dursley household when his parents were slain. This action was undertaken to protect Harry (PS, pp. 15-16).

Crossing the First Threshold
In PS Harry must pass a number of thresholds rather than just one, to enter his new wizarding world. These thresholds are not the dramatic episodes that occur in many hero journeys but they do show Harry’s commitment to a new life. In London Harry is assisted by Hagrid to get into Diagon Alley, a wizarding world shopping area, which is hidden away from the muggle world. He is also assisted by Hagrid to get some of money left to him by his parents from Gringotts, a bank run by goblins that is positioned in the Alley, which will help him break the shackles of poverty and enter a world of economic independence. He purchases items that will assist him to live effectively in the wizarding world. These include a wand and an owl. At King's Cross he is taught how to get through the protective barrier at Platform 9 ¾, so that he can get the Hogwarts train, the formal means of entering his new world/life. Here he meets Ron Weasley and many of the Weasley family. On the train Draco Malfoy threatens him with the same fate as his parents. Draco may be seen here as a Threshold Guardian (Vogler, 1999, p. 129). Harry then has to travel over water, a common symbolic threshold, to arrive at his new home, Hogwarts. Finally Harry must pass the Sorting Hat ceremony. This hat takes some time in deciding whether Harry will go in the Gryffindor or the Slytherin house. With his acceptance into the Gryffindor House Harry has now crossed from the Dursley family into a new surrogate family (PS, pp. 55-97).

Trials, Allies and Enemies
Harry's trials had begun when he was a baby and Voldemort tried to kill him. However his conscious trials begin on the train to Hogwarts when he overcomes Malfoy’s threats. Soon Malfoy and Snape are his perceived enemies. He also learns of Voldemort’s attempts to kill him, which establishes Voldemort as a perceived enemy. In retrieving Neville’s Rememberall, a trial, Harry’s abilities on a broomstick are discovered. He has become friends with Ron on the Hogwarts train and he soon welcomes Hermione as an ally after helping to save her from the trial of the troublesome Mountain Troll. These two young wizards offer their own talents to assist Harry in his trials. Hermione helps discover information about the Philosopher’s Stone and inadvertently helps save Harry when Quirrell tries to kill him during a Quidditch match. Harry shows his talents in Quidditch by recovering the golden snitch. By this stage Harry has begun to work out how his new world operates (PS, pp. 101-141).

Approach to the Inmost Cave
Harry learns more about himself through the Mirror of Erised (Desire), which he discovers in a darkened room. The Mirror of Erised will later be a key part of Voldemort’s quest for immortality. Through this object Harry is able to see his parents. As with many quest stories there is rescue of loved ones because Harry has now achieved a link with his parents. There is also the harbouring of a potential monster, which is another element common to many quest stories, as Harry, through the desires he views in the mirror, could be driven to madness. With the help of Dumbledore Harry is able to overcome the temptation of the mirror, a minor ordeal. Dumbledore has now become Harry’s primary mentor. He has provided Harry with sound advice and with the elixir of the invisibility cloak (PS, pp. 148-157).

Ordeal
As stated above, the Mirror of Erised is a minor ordeal while the main ordeal for Harry, in the PS quest story, is located further than indicated in Vogler’s general hero journey structure. Vogler places the main ordeal after the Approach to the Inmost Cave (1999, p. 12) but in PS the main ordeal occurs after the structural point entitled The Road Back. Such variations in the hero journey are not unusual.

Reward
Harry has received the gift of the invisibility cloak earlier so that he can access the mirror. It is a gift from the grave as it was his father’s. It assists Harry in sneaking around Hogwarts to gather information and in providing cover for Hermione, Harry and Ron in their final adventure in PS. He has also received Dumbledore’s advice regarding the Mirror of Erised, which will later assist him in his confrontation with Voldemort/Quirrell. This is where Dumbledore properly shows his mentoring role. Harry learns that desire can...
be one’s worst enemy as it can literally destroy your humanity. This notion is demonstrated in Voldemort’s quest for immortality and power that derives him of his humanity (PS, pp. 148-157).

The Road Back
Through the detention he receives Harry gains information that will help him on his quest. During the trip to the forbidden forest with Malfoy, they find a hooded creature feeding off the blood of a slain unicorn. The centaur Frieze saves Harry and also provides information that explains why the Philosopher’s Stone is at risk (PS, pp. 181-189).

Ordeal
Harry’s main mentor, Dumbledore, is away so Harry must face the main ordeal alone. However, Harry starts this ordeal with his friends Ron and Hermione. Initially Harry and his friends must overcome those who would restrict them. Harry must risk expulsion from Hogwarts as he needs to break school rules to stop the rebirth of Lord Voldemort. Then Harry and Hermione suffer the ordeal of stopping their friend Neville from threatening their quest. Using their respective talents the trio must overcome a number of minor ordeals until Harry faces the ultimate one. They descend past the three-headed dog, Fluffy (a reminder of Cerberus, the guardian dog of the Underworld in Greek mythology) and then the Devil’s Snare plant. They then retrieve a specific flying key, compete against a group of huge animated chess pieces, solve a riddle to avoid poisoning and complete a task. Ron and Harry will suffer physically from these ordeals (PS, pp. 195-208).

Harry, now the lone hero, faces his key test/ordeal. He meets Voldemort/Quirrell alone. He must then look past the desire to use the Philosopher’s Stone for himself in order to stop Voldemort/Quirrell getting the Stone to provide Voldemort with eternal life. Dumbledore’s advice is instrumental here because he told Harry that in the mirror you are able to see what you most desire, which in this case is the Philosopher’s Stone (PS, p. 157). By looking in the mirror Harry sees the Philosopher’s Stone placed in his pocket, which is where it suddenly appears. Harry then overcomes Voldemort through the death of Quirrel (PS, pp. 195-214).

Resurrection
After struggling with Quirrell/Voldemort, Harry falls into darkness. He returns to consciousness in the hospital wing. Order has been temporarily restored to the wizarding world and Harry has shown himself to be a real hero in his own right. Some people may read this episode as a literal ‘resurrection’ in that Harry may have died and Dumbledore brought him back to life. This type of resurrection is found commonly in heroic myths (Vogler, 1999, p. 22). Ironically, Harry has temporarily hindered Voldemort’s chance of being resurrected to full life (PS, p. 214).

Return with the Elixir
The actions of Harry, Ron, Hermione and Neville provide Gryffindor with the points that give them the house cup when all had seemed lost. Hagrid passes Harry a book with animated photos of his parents in it that will provide a life-long connection to them. He returns to his old world, the Dursleys residence, with memories of his parents, new confidence, new wealth and new magical abilities which increase his manoeuvring power in the Dursley household (PS, pp. 220-223).

From these critics’ comments and the author’s own analysis of the books it is clear that Rowling draws on the hero journey in her Harry Potter series whether consciously or sub-consciously. Harry is a hero in all senses of the word. He crosses from the threshold of the ordinary world into the magical world at the beginning of each book and in that magical world he undertakes trials that reflect back to many of those undertaken in the great myths, including contact with creatures such as dragons, giant spiders, a basilisk, a three headed giant dog, and giants. Harry undertakes adventures in underground caverns, flying cars, attacking trees, dark forests, dungeons and other places that are also reflections of scenes in familiar heroic adventures. Most importantly it is through these trials that we discover the personal values of the boy wizard.

Conclusion
The hero journey has been central to human history throughout the centuries. Humankind is attracted to such narratives because of the archetypes that occur in them and because each one is about us, about the struggles and triumphs that are part of our every day existence. We have become immersed in this type of narrative through the stories we read and the movies we watch. Our young people are not immune to this hero journey influence as shown by the popularity of books and films that exhibit the characteristics common to hero journeys. It is this connection that provides a key to their use in teaching. If students are engaged in their learning then they will learn more and the Harry Potter series, and other suitable hero journeys, offer themselves as attractive, accessible and worthwhile teaching tools that will engage students in their learning. With careful teacher selection hero journeys, both fictional and non-fictional, can be a resource that can be used to teach Christian values. Harry Potter and his friends, as well as many other hero journey characters, exhibit predominantly Christian values. The values displayed are principally the same values that are found in that great Christian hero journey, the Gospels: "... using the hero journey in the classroom encouraged students to move beyond the literal levels of meaning in narrative to initiate responses that were more personal and relevant to their own personal journey and understanding” (Kori Nemme & Phil Fitzsimmons, 2004, p. 10)

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CHILDREN’S EXPERIENCE OF TIME, AND HOW IT MAY SHAPE THEIR PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL NARRATIVE

Abstract
Children’s concepts and experiences of time are investigated using interview data from research into the spirituality of children in Victorian State Primary Schools. Children’s spirituality has been described through such concepts as *lifeworld existentials*, (Hyde, 2003; van Manen, 1990) or *modes of being* (Champagne 2003). The analysis of this research is based on Champagne’s *modes of being*: Sensitive, Relational, and Existential. This paper demonstrates that time is a key to children’s *existential mode of being*. The analysis of the interviews is guided by the hermeneutics of Ricoeur (1985) and Merleau-Ponty (1967). Ricoeur’s categories of time, and concepts of historical narrative and narrative identity are used to demonstrate that children’s experiences in time can shape their sense of identity and the process of making meaning in their lives. The findings of this study can be applied to assisting children’s spiritual development.

Introduction
The aims of my research are to investigate the spiritual experiences of children in some Victorian state primary schools, and in the light of this research, to make some recommendations for the children’s spiritual development. The theoretical foundation of the research is hermeneutic phenomenology, which allows for exploration of the meaning of texts, in this case, verbal and visual material obtained from videotaped interviews. The method was to hold a combination of one individual and two group interviews with 28 children in grades 3 and 4 in three Victorian state schools: one coastal, one provincial school, one rural, and one metropolitan. Each child is identified by a pseudonym. The researcher explored children’s spirituality through four dimensions: *consciousness, relationality, identity*, and “*roadmap*”, which is a combination of concepts from recent research. The main contributors to this model of spirituality include Hay and Nye’s (2006) concept of “*relational consciousness*” (consciousness of self, others, the world, and God) and Hart’s (2003) five capacities of spirituality, (“*listening to wisdom, wonder, between you and me, wondering, and seeing the invisible*”). These contribute to the dimension of *sensitivity and relationality*. The work of authors such as Erricker (1997), Hart (2003), and Champagne (2003) have contributed to the meaning-making dimensions of “*identity*”, and “*roadmap*” (or “*worldview*”). During the process of organizing the data into a personal profile of each child, using these spiritual dimensions, the recurrence of the existential theme of time was observed. This was the stimulus for this paper.

Literature Review
My interest is in discovering how the existential mode (Champagne, 2003) of time reflects or is reflected in children’s spirituality. I am confronted with the conceptual difficulty of the topic in that time cannot be perceived directly, like space. Time must be represented, or as Merleau-Ponty says “Time presupposes a view of time” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 411). This can be by a metaphor like the flow of water in a fountain (1962, p. 421). Time may also be conceived as a point or a line (Donaldson, 1992). We are accustomed to representing and measuring time visually on a calendar, or by hearing the chiming of a clock but our perception of time itself is of a second order. Philosophers have argued for centuries about whether time is an objective reality or a construct of the human mind.

In preparing this paper various disciplines have been explored. Augustine states that time had a beginning, in creation, in the mind of God (Augustine, book XI chapter 13). The physicist Stephen Hawking writes that “The theory of (general) relativity gets rid of absolute time...Space and time are now dynamic qualities” (Hawking, 1988, pp. 35, 36). The novelist Peter Hoeg in *Borderliners* explores the possibility of controlling people by controlling time. In this novel Katarina commented that her parents had lived in two different times: her terminally ill mother tried to stop time by mental effort, and her father tried to shorten it. And because Katarina was so unhappy at school “moments (became) like eternity” (Hoeg, 1994, p. 18). Psychologists’ study of children’s development of time concepts is relevant to understanding what the children in the present study are capable of perceiving. For instance, Friedman has studied children’s understanding of conventional time and temporal ordering at different ages (Friedman, 1982, 2000). Harmer has studied the tools, such as language, used in developing time concepts, and children’s understanding of the dual concepts of the present both as a reference point between past and future, and a category of experience (Harmer, 1982). Friedman’s research indicates that children aged 8 to 10 (as in the present study) are able to mentally move forward or backward from different points in the time cycles (Friedman, 2000).

This paper will discuss the relevance of the experience of three children to two of Ricoeur’s theories of time. Ricoeur in *Time and Narrative* (Ricoeur, 1985) reviews the way philosophers over the centuries have espoused either an objective or a subjective theory of time. He compares Aristotle’s Time of Physics with Augustine’s...
Time of the Soul, Husserl’s Intuitive Time with Kant’s Invisible Time, and Heidegger’s “Within-Time-Ness” with the “ordinary” concept of time. Ricoeur posits three categories of time: phenomenological, mortal or subjective time; the endless, anonymous cosmic time (scientific/objective time); and historical time “which reinscribes lived time (mortal time) on cosmic time through ‘procedures of connection’”, namely, the calendar, succession of generations, archives, documents and other such traces” (Muldoon, 2002, pp. 64, 65).

The writings of Ricoeur, particularly his *Time and Narrative* (1985), contribute to this study of the phenomenology of time. The book’s main thesis is about how our experience of time is embedded in the texuality of our existence. Such a strategy will not provide a speculative resolution to the inscrutability of time. Without suppressing either mortal time or cosmic time, it will preserve the paradox of time and pursue a ‘poetic’ resolution to the aporetics of temporality. (Muldoon, 2002, p. 65, citing Ricoeur, 1985, Book 1, p. 4)

Ricoeur also maintains that the writing of history is possible because in the passage of time traces or vestiges of that past are left. These may be documents or collective memories, which can give us physical links with the past through which causal links may be explored, or they can give us a sense of the human significance of the past event, what Heidegger describes as “having-been-there” (Ricoeur, 1985, pp. 120, 121). The writing of historical narrative, or historical fiction, involves “the re-figuration (or re-inscription) of time” (Ricoeur, p. 99) by the narrative process of “emplotment” (p. 100). Emplotment, as explained in Book 1 of *Time and Narrative* is part of a cycle of mimesis, or representation of human action through poem or narrative. “Emplotment (mimesis 2), the most important, mediates between our pre-understanding of the world of practical action and events (mimesis 1) and the reception of the plot by a reader (mimesis 3). Emplotment is the process of organising disparate events of two dimensions of time, the episodic (chronological) dimension and the configurational (non-chronological) dimension, into a whole narrative” (Muldoon, 2002, pp. 66,67). The narrative reconstruction of the life of a person, or a historical era also becomes part of a dialectic, the end of which is narrative identity. Just as historical actions are re-figured by the author of a text, so also the reader interacts with the character in the text, and the world of the text, so “(the world of the text and the world of the reader interpenetrate one another as a ‘fusion of horizons’)” (Muldoon, p. 75). The narrative identity of a person or a cultural group is both constant and changing over time, as the group reads the texts of its heritage, or an individual tells or writes his or her autobiography (Ricoeur, pp. 246-248).

This paper attempts to demonstrate how three of the children in the study, and significant others in their lives, re-figure their history through narrative. The children’s narratives are in a sense “read” by them, as they develop their personal identities. It is also the case that the researcher’s emplotment of the children’s narratives, during the process of analysis, gives her greater insight into the children’s spirituality: their sensitivity, relationships, sense of identity and vision for their future.

Merleau-Ponty’s contribution to this discussion of the phenomenology of time is in describing phenomenology as a disclosure of the world, providing its own foundation. Conscious experience, such as visual perception, is grounded in the objective world in that we interpret what we see, not as some transcendent idea, but by some innate ability as part of our “phenomenal field”. For example, the colour red is not an element of sensation, but the property of the object, which we see as red within a field of patterns, light and shadows (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 4). For Merleau-Ponty, perception of time is also grounded in our perception of the world, or field of experience. We understand time, not by direct perception, like the colour red, but as a kind of second order perception, “by seeking it at the interception of its dimensions” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 411), of past, present and future. The phenomenon of time is “not an object of our knowledge, but a dimension of our being” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 415).

Merleau-Ponty also argues that time presents us with the prime model of permanent acquisition of our inner world. “To say that an event takes place is to say that it will always be true that it has taken place.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, pp. 392-393) “Existence always carries forward its past, whether it be by accepting or disclaiming it” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 393). This idea is consistent with Ricoeur’s concept of historical trace. This has application to the study of children, in that, even in their short lives, experiences in the past continue as indelible marks on their present world-view. Just as human beings are creatures of space, we are also grounded in a temporal world. Merleau-Ponty believes that “we experience, not a genuine eternity and a participation in the One, but concrete acts of taking up and carrying forward by which, through time’s accidents, we are linked in relationship with ourselves and others”. In short, we experience a participation in the world, and ‘being in truth’ is indistinguishable from ‘being in the world’” (Merleau-Ponty, pp. 394-395). This experience accords with the experience of many of the children in this research. The concrete acts of their lives link them in relationship with the environment, themselves and others. Ryan’s perception of the picture of the pelican flying into the sunrise becomes part of his worldview of a beautiful, but threatened environment. He has a sense of a creator in this event, but his prime experience is of relatedness to the bird, the sea, and others who share this experience. This appears to be the core of Ryan’s spirituality.

Van Manen (1990) demonstrates how to apply the methodology of Hermeneutic Phenomenological Reflection to specific phenomenology, such as the experience of time, through the explorations of “the
structure of the human lifeworld, the lived world as experienced in everyday situations and relations” (van Manen, 1990, p. 101). Van Manen recommends the study of four “lifeworld existentials”: lived space, lived body, lived time, and lived human relation. (p. 101). These existentials “can be differentiated but not separated” (van Manen, p. 105). In exploring the phenomenology of lived time, or temporality, Van Manen explains that, as time is experienced subjectively, it can be speeded up or slowed down (Hoeg, 1994), and that the temporal dimension of the past can leave traces which shape a person’s present life and future expectations (Ricoeur, 1985). Hyde (2003) tested Van Manen’s lifeworld existentials on an experience with his young son. In Thomas’s experience of being absorbed in the examination of a small rock, Hyde sees an example of what is referred to as point mode (Donaldson, 1992). Champagné (2001, 2003) explores lifeworld existentials in her research, under the term of spiritual modes of being. She names these modes: sensitive, relational, and existential. Existential mode of being refers to “the relation to time and space, and to the relation to existence itself through daily activities” (2003). Like the pre-schoolers in Champagné’s study, the children in the present study confront the mystery of “unseizable” time, and their place in its flow.

Research Findings and Analysis
In applying the hermeneutics of Ricoeur and Merleau Ponty one gains insight into the significance of time for some of the children in the study, in particular their historical narratives. This paper will explore the narrative of three children with respect to the employment of their stories. The model for this analysis is in Muldoon’s (2002, pp.66, 67) summary of Ricoeur’s cycle of mimesis, where mimesis 1 is significant events in the child’s life, mimesis 2 is employment by the child or his family, and mimesis 3 is reception by the “reader”, or development of narrative identity by the child. Each cycle of mimesis begins with a perception of an objective phenomenon, like a wave in the sea, or a historical event, like birth or death, which provides a field for experiencing time (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Ricoeur’s (1985, p. 119) concept of trace is illustrated in Luke’s story. Standing up on his boogie board at age 3, has had the lasting effect of defining him as exceptionally athletic.

Luke
Luke lives on a farm with his parents and twin sister, Lizzy. For the purposes of this analysis, Luke’s birth was significant, as mimesis 1, in that Lizzy was born “10 seconds” before him. The employment (mimesis 2) of the event of the birth of the twins by the researcher, and to some extent the twins, is as follows. Lizzy dominates their relationship. Her role is the clever one and Luke’s is the sportsman. This is illustrated in an interview with the two siblings together. Lizzy holds a rather light-hearted conversation with the interviewer about the beginning of the world, as she understands the Biblical story. Luke, on the other hand, wants to talk about death, but his voice is not being heard; that is, until he adopts his given role of sportsman.

W: (interviewer) How do you think the world began?
Lizzie: It popped up (hand gesture upwards).
Luke: I wonder what it would feel like to be dead.
W: ….have you got some ideas?
Lizzie: (chants, smiles and waves arms) Going in heaven, going in heaven!
W: Yes. What’s heaven?
Lizzie: Heaven is a place where all the good people go, and hell is where all the bad people go.
W: I see. And what are they like?
Lizzie: Um, like the leader of hell might be demons and the leader of heaven might be a really good person, like Jesus, God.
W: (Luke) what do you think about heaven and hell?
Luke: I don’t know. About the same thing.
W: Don’t you think about it much? Does Lizzie do most of the thinking, out of you two?
Luke: Um, no (looks defiantly at Lizzy).
Lizzie: Yes, probably.
W: (points at Luke) and you do most of the playing?

Luke says he has to look after his mother, who has a medical condition. He is also solicitous towards his sister, who is much smaller than him, less co-ordinated, and she has had a number of accidents and operations. He explains that a motor bike is too hard for her to hold on rough ground and that she has only started playing netball. This demonstrates another aspect of their differentiated roles, where Luke is the care-giver. It is not clear how much Luke would conceptualise this as his narrative identity (mimesis 3).

A “mimesis 1” event for Luke is that aged only 3 he was able to stand up on his boogie board in the surf. He is presently a keen surfer, and wants to be a professional surfer when he grows up. Luke’s feat at age 3 appears to be a family narrative. While Luke seems to have a mental picture of the event, which may be a genuine memory, it is unlikely that he remembered the significance of the event without it being recited over time by his parents. A more obvious example of family employment in his life is the story of Luke climbing up to a cupboard, and swallowing a near lethal dose of medicine when he was one year old. During the interview Lizzy and Luke enacted the event of Luke rushing about frantically, bumping into furniture and walls because he was temporally blinded by his overdose of the medicine. This was a gleeful production, not a horrifying spectacle. This would appear to be an “emplotment” of the event by the family, to re-figure a potential tragedy as a comedy. Luke’s narrative identity (mimesis 3) arising out of his surfing, and other physical exploits is to see himself as
physically strong and a good sportsperson. His present experience in the surf has a spiritual quality. I asked him what he thinks about when he is out in the surf. He said, “It looks good when they (the other surfers) are inside a wave”. When asked how he feels when he is inside a wave he said “It’s like paradise”. When I asked for clarification he agreed that he felt like he was in another world, which he came out of when he emerged from the wave. This seems to be an example of “point time” (Donaldson, 1962), or passing out of time as well as space.

A third significant event for Luke was the death of his grandfather, a few months before the interview. Luke’s emplotment of this event was to try to deal with his grief and loss. In the final interview Luke was “offered” three wishes. His first wish was “I wish my pop was still alive”. He described the day of his grandfather’s death a few months before, after a long illness. He used to spend a lot of time with his grandfather, and he misses him.

I asked “What do you think has happened to him now?” Luke put his head on the table and whispered “I don’t know”. His grandfather’s death has not only left him grieving, but has faced him with the mystery of mortality. The indications are that Luke’s spiritual resources are in his relationships with his family and the natural world of the sea. As the earlier transcript indicated, he does not accept conventional religious beliefs. He rejects heaven and hell as “made up”, and God has no relevance for him. He does not yet have a narrative that gives meaning to his grandfather’s death.

Kelly

For Kelly the most significant event in her life was the death of one of her step-fathers, Pete. Kelly’s life is marred by problematic relationships with her family and her peers. In the interviews she alternated between confidential approaches and aggression toward the other children, and the interviewer. She complains that “mostly all the class” are mean to her. Her attitude to her family is ambivalent. She said “I like my family”, and is pleased with the sneakers her “Mummy” has just bought her, and the family outings to McDonalds. But she said, with a smile “I hurt Mummy a lot when I was born”, and said “My father left me when I was a baby”. She fights physically with her older sister, and her younger brothers are “mean” to her. On the other hand Pete was “like a father to her”, who cared for her when she was sick. But Pete got sick and died of “sun cancer”. On two occasions she described his illness, and how she used to visit him in hospital and give him drinks.

The above account shows that Kelly tries to re-figure the story of her life and make sense of her relationships. She tries to make sense of Pete’s death by describing how the hospital changed his “good” medication to “bad” medication when he was making good progress, so he died. She believes that Pete is in heaven, but somehow still nearby “keeping watch over us wherever we go”. She summed up her life-situation as follows: “I’d rather be in heaven with Pete right now, in heaven and have a family, and see my great, great aunty, than be down here and get picked on”. She also has fantasies about being like Princess Mary, or “God’s daughter”, to be bowed to and to have lots of servants.

However, Kelly has established a narrative identity which is not all negative and escapist, and has links with the transcendent. She thinks a lot about heaven, which she associates with Pete and with God. “Heaven is actually the whole sky, everywhere, all the time. God is watching everyone, like all the relatives”. She wonders what heaven is like, “Do you really see it? Do you walk around it?” God, for Kelly, is a benevolent being, who created the universe, and is “really, really good at it”. This gives her a sense of personal destiny, in which God “created the whole world, and our mums and dads, because he made Mummy’s mum to have a mum. If my mum wasn’t born I wouldn’t be here right now”.

Aimee

A number of children in the study think about the more remote past and future. One group had a lively discussion about the origin of the universe, how dinosaurs evolved, and how the aborigines came to Australia. A number of children in each school associate God with creation, but a few believe that the universe happened by chance, “like a bomb” as Jordan said. Aimee, who lives in a coastal town, has a view of past and future time which connects her with being Australian. An object of significance for her is Uluru. As she studied a photograph she commented that the rock is “huge, really old... and has been there many years.” She said “I always wonder how it got there because it’s so big. And you can see spear marks. Yes, you can tell it’s got tracks over it. Ages ago aborigines have been there.” Aimee commented that the coastal landmarks where she lives are also very old, and “could be where aborigines came and lived”. Besides a connection with the land, Aimee also indicated a sense of our European history.

Aimee: I like imagining things that happened in literature... like I imagine how people would have felt in the war, when they found out that someone might have got killed or something. And in the future something that could happen, to me and stuff.

Interviewer: Why do you think about bad things that happen in wars and things?

Aimee: Because I think it’s quite sad that they do this for Australia and they got killed doing it.

Aimee had two grandfathers who served in the Second World War, which may be a source of oral tradition for her. Aimee has re-figured these icons and stories from the past to fashion a spiritual connection with the land, and its history as an important part of her identity as an Australian.

Champagne (2001, pp. 78-80) explores the conversation of a small child, Arielle, about family birthdays. Champagne discusses the way the existential mode of time is experienced in relationships and in rituals, and in the flow of time itself. The stories of Luke and Kelly
demonstrate how they experience their relationships to their families, and to the Transcendent in key events in their lives. Events like birth and death, and milestones in a child’s growth are experienced as rituals which “celebrate a commemorative event made present in time” (Champagne, p. 80). In Aimee’s story her relationships with her family and her country are marked by rituals such as Anzac Day, and by icons like Uluru. In these ways their spirituality is being shaped by the flow of time.

Impact on Children’s Spirituality
This exploration of children’s attempts to refigure their personal stories has led the researcher to consider the role of narrative in spiritual development: that is, the dialogue between the children’s stories and the stories of faith tradition. The curriculum focus of Christian Religious Education in state primary schools is Bible stories. A teacher’s handbook states that Christians believe that the Bible reveals God’s character and purposes and records the experiences of many people who encountered God… All sessions are based on biblical teaching and each has a reference to the Bible or a story from the Bible. (Search 1, (CCES) 2006, p.4).

Religious educators in these schools can introduce a meta-narrative which may provide meaning for children to re-figure their personal stories. Yust (2003) quotes from Walter Brueggeman’s book Belonging and Growing in the Christian Community, that “Our nurturing task is to find ways of linking the big picture of (the church’s) redemptive history with the immediate experiences of the child’s daily life” (Brueggemann, 1979, p. 31, cited in Yust, 2003).

In this research, it is at the extremities of their experience of time, the mysteries of creation and death, that some of these children encounter the Transcendent. How helpful the Christian narrative is in helping them re-figure their story can depend on how a Biblical story, such as creation, is presented to them. Because Luke rejects a literal story of Adam and Eve, God as creator is not meaningful to him. Caleb, from another school, has a sense of a purposeful creator. He says:

I reckon God probably made (Uluru), on a certain spot, so the first people in Australia, the Australian aborigines could have it to themselves…I reckon we should care for birds because God created them to make us respect all living creatures and animals.

Death and suffering are a mystery faced by most of the children, sometimes without a sense of a God who cares for them. They have a popular idea of heaven and hell, but heaven is not necessarily a place where God is present for them. While death will always be time’s ultimate mystery (Ricoeur, 1985, p. 261), the resurrection narrative may play a pivotal part in re-figuring their personal stories with hope.

In spite of the limitations of the Religious Education program in state schools, it is my experience that one can help the children examine their existential questions. It is possible to enhance children’s experiences of each of Ricoeur’s modes of time: lived, cosmic and historical (Muldoon, 2002). The children fairly readily relate to a creator of cosmic time, but often find it difficult to see any relevance of a Transcendent being to their present lives. For example, Billy believes in God as creator, and thinks God is “important”, but he is much too busy “being a kid” to think about God now. Ricoeur’s concept of “the historical third-time”, “the re-inscription of lived time on cosmic time” makes possible the rediscovery of a “real” past (Ricoeur, 1985, p. 100). Presenting stories about Jesus, and other appropriate stories, in a variety of ways, through oral presentation, drama, song, film etc, “can illustrate the ways others make meaning from experience, (and) can be affirming and supporting of personal experience or …challenge that experience” (Liddy, 2006, p. 1373). When story telling is followed by periods of silence children may possibly reach a state of “flow” (Csikentmihalyi, 1975) through perceiving, thinking, feeling and intuiting the story (de Souza, 2005, 2006). Thus, children are given an opportunity to relate God’s time in the cosmos and in history, to significant moments in their own past, present and future lives.

Some authors (Champagne, 2003, Hyde, 2005, Yust 2003) suggest how a connection between children’s own mode of time and the Christian story can be achieved. Yust (2003, p. 136) believes that by receiving, hearing, celebrating and telling a religious story young children become “history-makers” in bringing “their personal story and their faith community’s story into a dialogical and coactive relationship”. I will conclude with a recent account of the re-figuring of a young person’s life. A teenage girl approached me in the street. She told me how she began to explore meaning of the Christian story for her life in my Religious Education class (in grade 3 or 4). At age 11 she “became a Christian”, and has since been baptised and now regularly attends church.

This paper attempts to show how an aspect of some children’s experience of time, an existential mode of being, is seen in their re-figuring of significant events and experiences in their lives into a meaningful “narrative identity”. Religious educators can provide the meta-narrative of the Biblical and community story which may give children greater access to transcendent meaning for the mysteries of their lives, such as birth, death, personal identity and the wonder of creation.

References


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Talking about revolutions in education: there was one great opportunity for a revolution in Australian education when in September 2002 Dr Brendan Nelson published a letter in *The Age* announcing the National Values Education Study. It had the potential to go down in history as a significant turning point in Australian schooling. But unfortunately the opportunity seems to have been lost.

What happened? The project had just scratched the surface. After promising action research that looked into school best practice, there was a need for a long term commitment to the values area if it was to make an enduring contribution; that is, something comparable to the developments in “spiritual, moral and cultural education” in British schools since their Reform Act in 1988. But the project seems to have gone off the radar. No doubt it had its shortcomings. Some felt it was just a vehicle for Nelson’s pious preaching about values and Australian flag waving.

All too often federal education initiatives, sometimes good ones, have sprung from the special, personal interests of the incumbent minister. Then the new minister, apparently wanting to make his/her own mark, embarks on further new initiatives, leaving earlier ones in the doldrums or simply discarded. It gives the impression that improving their personal political standing is more important than attending to the real educational needs.

In 2006 and 2007, Minister Julie Bishop was intent on making her mark on Australian education through driving towards a National Curriculum, and through introducing merit-based teacher salaries linked with student outcomes.

Her opposite number, Shadow Minister Smith, seemed preoccupied with keeping up with, or perhaps a few paces in front of Ms Bishop rather than trying to articulate any new educational vision – until he was offered a more important portfolio.

And now in 2008, Julia Gillard is probably so busy with her mega-portfolio that she has had little time to get much beyond telling us that the revolution starts when all secondary students get their hands on computer keyboards and mouses. However, there are early signs that the Government is beginning to realise that the links between computer access and good education are complex – and even expensive. Australia desperately needs education ministers (at both federal and state levels) who can separate the educational from the political agendas; ministers who show they are in touch with the issues of fundamental importance for schooling. Unfortunately, the election campaign has shown up the shallowness of politicians’ understanding of education – apart from its potential for electoral point scoring.

The 07 election education debate was a non-event. It is not surprising that national associations of school principals gave both major parties a poor report card for their educational provisions.

Come the education revolution

What the Government and the Minister for Education need to do is listen carefully to the educators who know what the real issues are; and to learn something of the complexities of the problems; and to get beyond mouthing pious educational cliches. For example: it is informative to ask why Mr Rudd thinks that giving every pupil a computer constitutes a ‘revolution’ in education. Just imagine, if he had promised to buy them all Blackberries! It seems to hearken back to the simplistic view that technology will increase your leisure time, uncomplicate your life, make you more productive etc. etc. Having your own computer will be like waving a magic wand across the educative process making it more productive – and adding more value to the economy.
Good student use of computers at school depends on many factors like the development of content, skilled teachers, IT infrastructure – and even on the extent of air conditioning.

Of course students need good access to computers at school and home. But there are other important issues: Dependence on computers also creates its own educational problems; so one aspect of a good education is to ‘compensate’ for computers; the recent drop in levels of reading and writing skills is a concern. Also a worry is anecdotal evidence that some of the teachers who most frequently get their pupils to do ‘computer based’ research in labs or library are in fact the laziest and most ill prepared of the staff.

Access to mountains of information does not make it ‘meaningful’. Lots of data transfer does not necessarily make good ‘communication’. Any number of computers is no substitute for good teaching. And any policy that further reduces quality, face-to-face contact between teacher and pupils is not likely, in the long term, to enhance education.

Sometimes the simplest policies can be very effective. But it requires vision and courage to take such a path. For example, smaller class sizes almost always bring about dramatic improvements in the teaching and learning process. For the future of education, the recently publicised recommendation by business leader Michael Chaney to increase teacher salaries would enhance the status of the teaching profession, in keeping with the important contribution it makes to social capital.

There is a long list of issues that might profitably be raised with education ministers and senior policy makers. But here mention will be made only of two.

Firstly, forget about politics and ask: What about the future of the revolution that Dr Nelson might have started? Why not ensure continuity and further development of the Values Education agenda so that it can become an important milestone for Australian education. Working out how the school curriculum can best promote the personal and moral development of young people is a complicated task; substantial progress cannot be made through a quick, one-off burst of action research funding with no follow up in both theory and practice.

What is needed for the curriculum is a modest, but realistic understanding of how the classroom can inform young people about values-related issues in a way that helps them learn how to think critically about that dimension to life. They can be helped to identify and evaluate the many cultural influences on their thinking, values and behaviour. As Professor Brian Hill from Western Australia would put it, “helping them interrogate their cultural conditioning”.

We need more specific, but not excessive, attention to teaching that helps young people in their task of constructing a healthy meaning and purpose in life; to develop wisdom in discerning what is valuable in life, and critical evaluative skills to inform decision making.

So, please Minister, more power and a longer life to the National Values Education Study.

The other plea is to address the growing problem in schools called “cannibalising the curriculum”. The ever increasing managerialism and bureaucratisation of education, in schools as well as universities, has come to take over so much time and emotional energy from the country’s teachers, that it is their students who inevitably suffer; teachers’ time and energy resources that should be going into the classroom are being diverted to paperwork, control procedures, measuring outcomes, benchmarking etc. etc. that is ‘choking’ the educational process rather then achieving quality assurance. Now, minimising this problem is where vision and courage are needed. Unfortunately, bureaucrats are usually closed to the suggestion that it is the very mechanisms of their bureaucracy that can be oppressive and wasteful.

So, please give our teachers more scope to do their prime job rather than spend excessive time generating reports and checks whose principal purpose seems to be maintaining a paper flow to keep managers occupied.

Ultimately, this means directing the money to where it really counts: achieving excellence in teaching young Australians in the classroom. Now that would be the education revolution we needed to have.

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当《儿童弥撒指示》于1973年公布时，它包含了三个重要的原则，旨在引导儿童弥撒的发展。首先，它并不创造一项新的授理，而是将现有的仪式与习俗进行适应，以便儿童能够理解并从弥撒中获得精神上的好处。因此，适应、参与和礼仪的形成这三个原则，旨在帮助儿童发展“那种通过爱而工作”的信仰(DMC #55)，并引导他们朝着更富有成效的参与每周的聚会。

为了培养和发展这种内部参与，弥撒礼仪中发展了一个儿童弥撒礼仪用书(儿童弥撒经文)，其中包含了三个儿童弥撒祈祷文。其中，祈祷文的结构根据普通弥撒祈祷文的组成。每个祈祷文都以主教与会众的对话开始。由于弥撒祈祷文是总统的祈祷文，所以将由主教提出，而会众将通过颂唱适当的赞颂来参与。

The actual text of the prayers were to provide the content for a liturgical catechesis which would open the children to the meaning of the eucharistic prayer and the power of the prayer. There was the need for formation so that the children could reflect through a catechesis on the meaning of the paschal mystery and its relevance to their daily life. Sadly the “formal catechesis” envisaged by Ryan has never materialised and the community has failed to explore the rich eucharistic formation in the prayers.

The Texts of the Three Children’s Prayers

The prayers are structured according to the composition of the ordinary eucharistic prayers. Each prayer begins with the dialogue between the priest and the congregation. Since the eucharistic prayer is a presidential prayer, it will be offered by the priest and the congregation will participate through singing the appropriate acclamation.

The dialogue leads into the thanksgiving. The thanksgiving is an integral part of the whole fabric of the prayer. Usually the reason for thanking and praising God is for his two great gifts of creation and salvation. These are the enduring works by which God has revealed his loving kindness (chen) to the people. In CEP II, there is a slight variation on these themes as God is praised for the attitude behind God’s dealings with the people namely “God’s love for human beings.” Through the acclamation of the Holy, holy, holy, the whole community use the cosmic prayer of the prophet Isaiah (Is 6:3) to express the greatness of God in creation and in the work of Jesus (Ps118:).

When God’s saving work in Jesus is praised the community requests that the Holy Spirit be sent upon the gifts of bread and wine “to change them into the body and blood of Jesus”. In the narrative of institution, Jesus’ words over the bread and wine are recalled. In the CEP’s, the
phrase “Then he said to them” is inserted to separate Jesus’ words over the bread and wine from his command of repetition. “Do this in memory of me.” Now the community acclaim the mystery of faith or the paschal mystery. The mystery is contained in the memorial or anamnesis prayer, through the power of the Holy Spirit, God transforms the gathered community. God does now in the community what God has achieved in Jesus. Notice in CEP II, the community’s acclamation is “We praise you, we bless you, we thank you.” Who is the “we?” The whole body head and members.

After the memorial, there is another invocation of the Spirit and the transformed community and gifts are offered to the Father. Intercessions are for the whole church: Pope, bishops living and dead and for a breath taking moment, the celebrating community becomes before God the saints united in the holy things of God. The community is held by the vision of their inheritance, to share the table in the Kingdom with those who have reached the fullness of the paschal mystery.

The prayer ends with the doxology or the acclamation of God’s glory (kabod Yahweh) which has been seen in God’s mighty works of creation and salvation. The community has experienced these events anew

Dan Donovan

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1 John Barry Ryan, “The children’s eucharistic prayers,” in Frank Senn (Ed) The Eucharistic Prayer

2 Presidential Prayer is a prayer which is offered by the priest in the name of the whole people (DMC#50-52). This group of prayers includes: the Opening Prayer, the Prayer over the Gifts, the eucharistic prayer, and the prayer after communion. The text for these prayers will be found in the Sacramentary which is used by the priest during the liturgy.

3 The thanksgiving is sometimes called the preface since it opened the eucharistic prayer and named the aspect of salvation for which the community’s offered God thanks and praise.


5 Note in the CEP’s the verb “to change” is used so that the children will realise that there is a real change in the bread and wine. In the ordinary eucharistic prayers 1-1V (1968) the word “become” is used.
ISBN 9781 921333019

Subtitled “Principles and Practice of the New Evangelisation” this latest contribution from Australian Catholic university religious educators is a timely reference for undergraduate and postgraduate students. It also promises to be particularly useful for Religious Education teachers. It is an appropriate book for an REC to provide as a staff resource for professional development. The focus is to provide an accessible guide for those teaching religious education in Catholic secondary schools.

There are three major sections opening with ‘Theoretical Foundations in Catholic secondary religious education’. Specific chapters offer a historical overview of approaches to RE in Australia and perspectives on contemporary culture, youth and religion. de Souza’s chapter dealing with the nature and purpose of RE in Catholic secondary schools opens up some interesting discussion on the concept of faith and locates both faith and educational perspectives in current practice. Her chapter on adolescent development, in a concise way, reviews the work of Erikson, Maslow, Kohlberg, Fowler and Flynn and comments on contemporary youth spirituality.

The second major section ‘Principles of practice’ allows for an introduction (or revision) of key topics such as planning an RE lesson, assessment in religious education and planning a unit of work. Specific chapters address the cognitive, affective and spiritual dimensions of religious education. Engebretson’s chapter on ‘Teaching scripture in the Catholic secondary school’ is a gem. It articulates the central place of scripture in religious education because the Bible is foundational in a Catholic view of revelation. Engebretson affirms the need for RE teachers to engage in continual professional development to strengthen their skills in interpreting scripture. Citing papal pronouncements, she details the historical critical method as the tool for uncovering the meaning of the biblical text as the author intended it. Engebretson provides a sound outline of key terms such as Textual, Source, Form and Redaction criticism. The chapter addresses ideas like ‘inspiration’ and ‘fundamentalism’, and clearly states the Church’s position “that this approach to Scripture has no place in a Catholic school” (p138). Under the heading ‘Exploring the Bible’ there is a comprehensive overview of the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. There is a concrete example of applying the historical critical method to Mark’s account of Jesus calming the storm (Mark 4:35-41). This chapter concludes with hints for analysing a parable. Questions and examples that can be of immediate use in a classroom abound in this book. It is a rich resource for both students and practising RE teachers.

Rymarz’s discussion of ‘Teaching hard topics in RE’ and ‘The Professional responsibilities of Religious Education Teachers’ forms a bridge to the third section ‘Foundations of Content for Catholic Religious Educators’. There are chapters which give an accessible overview of Church history, including the East–West Schism (p 206). ‘The Reformation and Catholic Reform’ chapter spans the Middle Ages to the twenty-first century and offers a concise explanation of difficult areas like purgatory and indulgences. The chapter on Sacraments, defined as rituals “which mediate the saving presence and activity of God through human words and actions” (p219), is particularly useful for the discussion of the history, structure and meaning of individual sacraments.

In addition there are chapters that focus on Catholic moral theology and Catholic spirituality. The strength of this book lies in the scope and clarity of its treatment of key topics and issues relevant to any RE teacher in a Catholic secondary school.

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ISBN 978-0-281-05888-4

At the centre of the Christian faith is the person of Jesus, the Christ child, who grew through childhood, gained wisdom and God’s favour, and who as an adult radically challenged societal attitudes towards the marginalised of his society, which included children. By his words and actions, he showed that he was an advocate for vulnerable children. Yet in the Christian Churches today, the importance of children, and their pastoral care, is often overlooked.

In this insightful and practical book, Marian Carter explores the pastoral care and nurture of children within the Church. Arising from a clear commitment to children, this book is written for all those who work and engage with children in the Church context. Although written from an Anglican perspective (Marian Carter is a priest in the Anglican tradition who
has also taught at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education), there is much to offer and challenge those who educate and offer pastoral care to students in the Catholic tradition, including teachers and religious education coordinators.

Beginning with an exploration of the development of the concept of childhood and the contexts into which children are born and socialised, Carter goes on to present insights from child development (drawing upon the disciplines of human biology, psychology, linguistics and sociology), insights from the spiritual and religious development of children, as well as insights from Scripture concerning children. These chapters provide the resources from both the human sciences and the biblical which assist the reader in understanding what it is to be a child, and provide the backdrop against which the following chapters, which explore the practical issues concerning pastoral care for children in the faith community context, are set.

While these initial chapters are most valuable, it is disappointing to note, particularly in relation to the religious and spiritual development of children, the scarcity of reference to more recent and current research. Given the increasing body of research which now informs the field of children’s spirituality, it is unfortunate that references are limited to a narrow field of writers, many of whose work has been expanded upon and developed in recent times (not to mention new and innovative work which as been published in this field).

Following these chapters, Carter discusses and explores some of the practical issues related to pastoral care with children in faith community contexts. One particular chapter in which the author raises some highly pertinent and challenging issues is titled “Pastoral Care within Worship and Sacraments”. Here, the author explicitly raises the question as to why young children are excluded from the Table of the Eucharist. While acknowledging the challenge this may present for many, Carter draws upon the biblical insights to argue that Jesus himself was particularly inclusive of children, rebuking those who put stumbling-blocks in the way of “little ones” by discouraging, misleading, or despising them (cf Mark 9:42; Luke 17:1-2; Matt 18:6). The author recounts the anecdote of Rebecca, who was baptised when she was two weeks old, and had attended Sunday worship with her family ever since. At three years of age she realised the Church is called to be an advocate for children who cannot always speak out for themselves. This is one way in which adults affirm and offer pastoral care to all children.

This book is very well written and the language accessible to a wide audience, including both those who may work with children in Church settings in a professional capacity, and those who volunteer their services. It makes a valuable contribution to the field of pastoral care of children within the faith community, and to addressing the many issues with which educators in faith contexts may be presented.

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Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus
Bishop Geoffrey Robinson

Despite the initial media hype, Bishop Geoffrey Robinson’s book is not really about sex, it’s about power, specifically papal power. From Irenaeus, to Stephen to Leo the Great and John Paul II, theologians and popes have gradually but persistently asserted the supremacy of the Roman Church on the basis that it was established by the apostles Peter and Paul. In Robinson’s opinion, this special status has metamorphosed into an insistence on the authority to intervene in the affairs of other bishops and override local traditions that is designed to ensure Rome’s ongoing dominance at the expense of the well-being of the church as a whole. Robinson states candidly that he has been moved to write this book out of love; love of god and love of the church of which he has been a bishop for more than twenty years.

The book itself takes the form of a pastoral letter to the faithful; those who were expecting a polemic against the church or the pope are going to be disappointed. This is clearly Robinson the bishop speaking out of loving concern over what he regards as the church’s unwillingness to deal with its greatest flaw, love of power. Love of power prevented the church from dealing honestly with Martin Luther’s complaints of corruption until it was too late, love of power prompted the Council of Trent to respond with edicts promoting obedience to orthodoxy forcing some of the most brilliant minds of the time to seek answers outside the church, love of power caused the church to oppose democracy because it seemed to threaten its position and love of power continues to pit the most senior levels of church hierarchy against the people of the church including its priests and bishops.

Sexual abuse by the clergy also stems from a love of power. Robinson argues that a mistrust of the body inherited from classical Greek philosophy not Christ’s
teachings, combined with a hardening belief in their own authority has led some members of the clergy to abuse vulnerable members of the community, especially children. Secluded in seminaries during their training and encouraged to think of themselves as separate from ordinary people by virtue of their ordination, many priests have had little opportunity to observe healthy sexual relationships. Unable to form or even understand them they have, in many cases, interpreted sexual relationships in Foucaultian terms of power and the result has been devastating for all concerned. However, his real anger is reserved for the church leaders who have avoided dealing with the existence of deeply unhealthy attitudes among the clergy as well as the abusive practices that they have produced. Make no mistake, Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus, is asking for nothing less than a new reformation, but the final part of the books title contains a vital clue as to the form that reformation should take. Robinson is not interested in dividing the church, or establishing a personal following, he is asking, even pleading with the church he loves to use its established practices for admitting that it has made an error and to ensure justice prevails. The key, he asserts in his closing statement, is to recall that Christ came not to rule or be served, but to serve.

[This is an edited version of an essay that first appeared in the Marist education journal, Champagnat in December 2007].

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Manar Chelebi has produced a useful text book that introduces non-Muslim students to the world of Islam. The chapter titles provide an accurate overview of what follows and there is a fine balance between the presentation of traditional content and the voices of Australian Muslims. The former promotes knowledge while the latter involves affective and spiritual learning as the reader is drawn into the stories and experiences of other young people.

The first chapter which presents an introduction to Islam covers the beliefs and practices of the religion and also discusses the relationship of Islam to other religions which is an interesting perspective for non-Muslim Australians. The writing style is clear and accessible and the presentation of content is divided into segments of information followed by activities to reinforce the learning. Between chunks of information are poems, songs, stories and images, all designed to engage the reader, thereby making it a textbook that could be used effectively to promote learning for both adults and children.

Other chapters are, indeed, a valuable addition since they are responsive to social and political contexts of today. In particular, the chapters which focus on the ongoing impact of 9/11 on Muslims in Australia as well as identifying some of the misconceptions about Islam and Muslims that are portrayed from time to time are important inclusions. The voices that highlight the experiences of Muslims who became victims of violence in the aftermath of 9/11 just because they were Muslim is a sobering reflection for non-Muslim Australian students who believe they live in society that values the concept of tolerance and giving everyone a fair go. Further, the chapter that discusses the similarities of Islam and Christianity provides cultural and religious perspectives which reflect the pluralist nature of modern Australia and offers a glimpse into experiences that are different from the lives of so many young people who come from mainstream Christian backgrounds and cultures. These topics have been handled sensitively so that the student is invited to enter another world in order to come to an understanding of a people and culture who are both, different and yet, the same. Therein lies the spiritual dimension of learning which is an important feature of this book.

The teacher who is interested in promoting cultural and religious harmony and understanding alongside the respecting of diversity will welcome this text as an informative and practical addition to current educational resources on teaching about Islam and Muslims. In particular, the later chapters contain a range of learning activities for primary and secondary students which are supplemented with pages that contain images and activities that may be photocopied for use in the classroom. As well, there is a handy glossary and list of resources which include books for adults and children; videos and DVDs; games and websites. In the introduction, the author expresses her desire that her children will ‘grow up in a safe and peaceful world, free from injustice and proud of their heritage’. This textbook is one way through which she has striven to make this happen.

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**Notes for Contributors**

*Journal of Religious Education* is an academic refereed journal subject to peer review. It is published by the School of Religious Education, Faculty of Education of Australian Catholic University four times each year.

**Articles** on the following are welcomed:
- religious education in various contexts;
- the religious needs of young adults in the immediate post-school period;
- various models of faith communities in which evangelisation and catechesis may take place besides the Catholic school;
- religious education of children and adolescents;
- continuing religious education for adults;
- family ministry and youth ministry.

All articles submitted should be between 300-5000 words in length and prefaced, on a separate page by an abstract of no more than 150 words. Please submit your article electronically as a Word attachment in Font Times New Roman to the Editor JRE@aquinas.acu.edu.au. A COVER sheet should contain the title of the paper, author's name, brief biographical details, institutional affiliation, postal address, phone, fax, email address, where available. Please include all tables or diagrams on separate sheets at the end of the article with the appropriate reference within the article indicating where it should be inserted. Authors will receive a copy of the issue of the journal in which their contribution appears.

**Contributions** on the following are welcomed:
- Ideas for Practitioners
- Internet Resources
- Research
- Conferences
- Notes on Resources
- Correspondence
- Current Issues

**Referencing Style**
The journal uses the American Psychological Association (5th ed.) system of referencing this acknowledges the author, date and page, if applicable, of the work cited in the text (http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html). Great care should be taken to ensure referencing is accurate.

The views of the contributors are not necessarily those of the editorial advisory committee of *Journal of Religious Education*.

An annual index is included in issue four of each volume. The journal is currently indexed in: APAIS, AUSTROM, Australasian Religion Index, Journals in Religious Education and DEST Register of Refereed Journals.

*JOURNAL OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION* is published four times each year by:

**AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY** PO BOX 256 DICKSON ACT 2602 AUSTRALIA

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION: $45.00 (Aust.) $50 (Overseas) ABN 15 050 192 660

ISSN 1442–018X

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Print Post Approved: PP2141613/00105