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# Networking

Catholic Education Today

[www.networkingcet.co.uk](http://www.networkingcet.co.uk)



Ursuline Preparatory School Warley  
Wins the Sunday Times, Independent Preparatory  
School of the Year Award  
*See page 34*





# Moving Forward in 2021

**The last calendar year was perhaps the strangest and challenging that schools in the UK have ever experienced. How has this shaped CAFOD's support for Catholic schools in England and Wales?**

When lockdown started, we adapted to new ways of working. We continue to listen to teachers, chaplains, and pupils and respond to these needs.

## 1. Virtual Visits

**Did you know that CAFOD can offer your school a virtual visit?** While at present it is not possible for our visitors to physically go to schools to deliver sessions, we can offer a virtual visit over the internet. Our fully trained and DBS-checked volunteers can offer sessions using Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Google Classroom. The sessions are completely free of charge and last

about 30 to 60 minutes, cover a variety of topics and are tailored to different age groups. These sessions would provide students with a deeper understanding of global issues and would also be a great springboard to start any CAFOD Lenten fundraising that you have planned. If you would like to experience one of these popular visits, email [schools@cafod.org.uk](mailto:schools@cafod.org.uk)

## 2. School Volunteer Recruitment

Do you have a thirst for Global Justice? Are you wanting to inspire the next generation to feel the same? Are you looking for a volunteer role which can fit in with other commitments? CAFOD has a team of Schools Volunteers who visit schools across England and Wales to deliver assemblies and interactive workshops.

We are currently recruiting more people to join our team. You do not have to be a teacher to do this role. Full induction and regular termly training is provided, along with all the resources you need to deliver the sessions.

To find out more email [dbrinn@cafod.org.uk](mailto:dbrinn@cafod.org.uk)

## 3. New Resources for Prayer and Collective Worship

We have reorganised our website to make prayer and worship resources easier to find, retaining the most popular and adding lots of new ones. You will find alphabetically arranged prayers and illustrated scripture, ideal for slotting into an assembly or liturgy. We also have complete liturgies, as well as assemblies for different occasions and musical videos for reflective prayer times. We will add more new resources in the coming months. Please let us know how you use them! [cafod.org.uk/youngpeopleprayers](http://cafod.org.uk/youngpeopleprayers)

## 4. Keen to Support CAFOD in a New Way?

Do your students already campaign and fund raise with CAFOD? Already using our prayer and educational resources? Keen to do more? Your school can help us inspire others to support their global neighbours too. We try to involve schools from around England and Wales in our resources as much as possible. We regularly need:

- Readers and MCs for national assemblies
- Quality photos of global learning, prayer, fundraising or campaigning, with permission to share in our Thank You films and webpages
- Students willing to be filmed in school for Lent or Harvest promotional videos
- Good readers able to do voiceovers
- Permission to do a photoshoot in school
- Schools to comment on drafts or to trial our resources
- Teachers willing to test our website navigation and give feedback to us.

If you are willing to help with any of the above please email: [schools@cafod.org.uk](mailto:schools@cafod.org.uk)

Thank you!



## 5. Take action in 2021

The eyes of the world will be on the UK in 2021 as we host two major international meetings - the G7 and the UN Climate talks (COP26). This year, we will come together to ask the government to stand up for our global neighbours and our shared planet.

Join us from April to show the government that the eyes of the world are on us and we ask the UK to show global leadership in tackling the world's social and ecological crises. We hope all Catholic schools will join us in responding to Pope Francis' call to listen to the 'cry of the earth and the cry of the poor' Laudato Si'.

## 6. "Everything is Connected": CAFOD schools free CPD now available online

**Inspire the Catholic life of the school and put faith into action through embedding global learning into Catholic schools.**

We have never been more aware of our interconnectedness, with each other, and with our common home, Earth. CAFOD's online CPD course "Everything is connected: Enrich school life through global learning" is supporting teachers to bring to life a commitment to the common good, through the inspiration of Laudato Si' and an exploration of our interdependence.

The course, supported by the British Council, explores human relationships, rooted in human dignity, and the challenges of differing perspectives. It will also enhance staff wellbeing through the inspirational and uplifting message of Catholic Social Teaching and the common plan of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

CAFOD's Primary Continuous Professional Development (CPD) co-ordinator, Bethany Friery, said: "We developed the course to help staff deepen their own knowledge, to give activities, strategies and techniques that can be used directly in the classroom, and to support their students to grow as active global citizens. That joy of putting faith into action is what makes the Catholic curriculum so distinctive.

CAFOD's Secondary CPD co-ordinator, Susan Kambalu, said: "We recognise how busy teachers are and how difficult school life is, particularly in this academic year. We have received incredibly positive feedback from the sessions and have seen that this is something that can give them some time out and something really positive to concentrate on, something that gives them a sense that hope is possible."

The courses supply participants with a wealth of resources and ongoing support to implement their learning. Each session provides opportunities to learn, reflect, and plan for learning activities with an inspirational global outlook.

Sarah Smith, Executive Head Teacher of Christ the King and St Cuthbert's Catholic Academies in Blackpool (part of the Blessed Edward Bamber Multi Academy Trust) organised a course for BEBCMAT schools and those schools in the cluster. She said, "We joined together for our biannual Catholic INSET day. The CAFOD course provided us with an excellent focus for joint learning and supported our shared Catholic mission. We didn't just want a day that would give a flash of lightning, where everyone remembered the day but did little with it. We were striving for thunder over time! Without a doubt the noise has rumbled on afterwards. We would recommend the course to others."

Christine Smith, from St Mary's Blackpool, whose school hosted the course with other schools, said, "It was great! There was something for everyone. For example, the IT department were able to make links with their curriculum, Science, English and so on... And the primary schools all got a lot out of it too. There were lots of resources for each department."

Available online, and face to face when possible, the training is suitable for whole school groups. There are also places available for individual teachers on our public courses, which take place over three sessions.

To find out more and register for a course please visit:  
[cafod.org.uk/connectingclassrooms](https://cafod.org.uk/connectingclassrooms).

To enquire about booking a course for your school or MAT, please email:  
[schools@cafod.org.uk](mailto:schools@cafod.org.uk)

Find out more at:  
<https://cafod.org.uk/Education/For-teachers/Connecting-Classrooms-CPD/Everything-is-connected>

## Why book this course for your school?

- Bring your school together around a shared experience to deepen the Catholic life and mission of your school partnership.
- Support staff wellbeing through the life affirming and uplifting message of Catholic Social Teaching, including Laudato Si' and Fratelli Tutti.
- Inspire your pupils to put their faith into action for the common good.
- Enrich your broad and rich curriculum with activities, strategies and resources that support global learning and the big issues that connect us all.
- Enhance the confidence of your staff and aspiring leaders in supporting the Catholic life of an outward facing school.
- A focus on implementation supports working towards the Live Simply Award, Oscar Romero Award, Eco-Schools Award or International Schools Award.
- Support school's reflection on the new school inspection requirements for an ambitious curriculum.



## 7. Lent 2021: Walk for Water



This year has been a year like no other. In a time where it would have been easy to give up hope, young people have instead committed themselves to inspiring and leading us all to a brighter future. Not only were we faced, as ever, with the ongoing challenges of poverty, injustice and climate change, but we were also confronted with a global pandemic.



### Walking for Water: a daily journey in Ethiopia

This Lent we are sharing the story of a community who live in Afar, Ethiopia. This region is one of the hottest places on Earth, with temperatures reaching over 40°C. Changes in the climate have made water even more scarce, and some members of the community have to make a daily five hour journey just to find enough water to drink, cook and clean.

Abdella is 23. He dreams one day of starting a small business. But at the moment he leaves his village daily while it is still dark to make a treacherous climb into the mountains to find water. It is hard and tiring, and Abdella feels like he is wasting his life. His cousins, Abdul and Mohammed, hope to be a doctor or a teacher when they grow up – they need our support to realise their dreams.





## How to Walk for Water

Walk for Water is a fun, active and flexible fundraiser that can transform the lives of people who lack access to clean water.

- Organise a class or school walk – pay to enter or hold a collection at the end
- Sponsored walk – fundraise either by the distance or for completing your challenge
- The 40 day walking challenge – 10,000 steps a day, every day, for 40 days

Our online resources can support you, however you choose to get involved. Find sponsorship forms, posters, assemblies and links to the Walk for Water JustGiving site at [cafod.org.uk/schools](https://cafod.org.uk/schools)

## More Lent opportunities

However you raise money this Lent can help to support people in the poorest communities around the world. Whether it is holding a non-uniform day, eating a simple meal and donating what you save or another creative fundraiser, your money can help a family have access to clean water, nourishing food or a safe place to live.

- Join our Lent national assembly on 25 February at 9.30am (Primary schools) or 10am (Secondary schools)
- Book a virtual visit from one of our trained schools volunteers: get in touch [schools@cafod.org.uk](mailto:schools@cafod.org.uk)
- Use our daily reflective calendars throughout Lent, with scripture, prayers and more [cafod.org.uk/schools](https://cafod.org.uk/schools)
- Lent Fast Day 2021 is Friday 26h February. Invite your school to take part in a nationwide walk for water in solidarity with those who must do this daily.



## What your money can buy

- £33 - could buy water for a family
- £66 - could buy a bike for a water engineer to travel to a remote community's water pump
- £750 - could bring water to an entire community



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## Be a Contributor to Networking Catholic Education Today

Our mission is to serve as a forum where Catholic heads, teachers and other interested parties can exchange opinions, experiences, and insights about innovative teaching ideas, strategies, and tactics. We welcome—and regularly publish—articles written by members of the Catholic teaching community.

Here are answers to some basic questions about writing for **Networking - Catholic Education Today**.

### How long should articles be?

Usually it seems to work out best if contributors simply say what they have to say and let us worry about finding a spot for it in the journal. **As a rough guideline we ask for articles of 1000/2000 words and school news of about 300/400 words.**

### What is the submission procedure?

Please send as a Microsoft Word file attached to an e-mail. To submit articles for publication, contact John Clawson by email at [editor@networkingcet.co.uk](mailto:editor@networkingcet.co.uk)

### How should manuscripts be submitted?

We prefer Microsoft Word files submitted via e-mail. Try to avoid complex formatting in the article. Charts, graphs, and photos should be submitted as separate PDFs. Electronic photos should not be embedded into a Word document as this reduces their quality.

Photographs and Illustrations which should relate to the article and not be used for advertising nor self-promotion, should be supplied electronically as high resolution TIFF (\*.TIF) or JPEG (\*.JPG) files. They should be sent in colour with a resolution of 300 dpi and a minimum size of 100 mm x 100 mm when printed (approx. 1200 pixels wide on-screen). Hard-copy photographs are acceptable provided they have good contrast and intensity, and are submitted as sharp, glossy copies or as 35 mm slides or as scanned high resolution digital images (eg. a 300 dpi 1800 x 1200 pixel \*.JPG).

- Computer print-outs are not acceptable.
- Screen captures are not ideal as they are usually not very high quality.

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### Who owns copyright to the article?

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### What are some hints for success?

As much as possible, talk about your experience rather than pure theory (unless discussed in advance) Use specific examples to illustrate your points. Write the way you'd talk, with a minimum of jargon. Near the beginning of the article, include a paragraph that states your intentions. Don't be subtle about it: "This article will..." is fine.

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## welcome

The last 12 months have been an unusual and difficult time for all teaching staff and, as I write this, even with vaccinations on the horizon, it appears that it may be some considerable time before schools can function normally. The seemingly ever changing responses by our political leaders to the pandemic have emphasised the fact that our Catholic schools have much to celebrate.

Whilst teachers have worked hard to keep their students safe they have also striven to continue to challenge and engage them either in face to face or in a virtual environment. It has necessitated a lot of planning, hard work and time to achieve this. Pupils themselves have stepped up to the mark and joined in many charitable activities, not least in delivering food to vulnerable people. However it seems to many that leadership from our Catholic hierarchy has been sadly lacking. Jim Foley, in our lead article (page 8) asks 'Is the Catholic Education System fit for Purpose?' and Dr Sean Whittle in his response (page 10) highlights the 'sense of disappointment over the lack of presence from our own 'Church' leadership and diocesan structures'.

Networking journal would welcome contributions from headteachers and teaching staff, with a view to publication, on this important question or any other issue raised in this journal.



John Clawson  
Editor



**Q.** Are you following a full or part-time higher education course?  
Answer - There is a special individual rate for you at £10.00 for three copies.



# Is the Catholic Education System Fit For Purpose?



by Jim Foley

*Retired Catholic Secondary School Headteacher, founding Co-ordinator of the Catholic Partnership in Birmingham and Chair of the Holy Spirit MAC in North Warwickshire since 2015*

## The Covid-19 Pandemic

2020 is the year very few in the world will ever forget. Covid-19 has profoundly changed our lives in a way that was unimaginable a year ago and its impact will be felt for many years to come. The pandemic has had a profound effect on the lives of young people and on the work of schools everywhere. In the UK schools were closed nationally on 20 March to all but the children of key workers and those classified as vulnerable. Remarkably, whilst the closure of schools in March was perceived as one of the essential first steps in the national lockdown, it is now seen as imperative that they remain open come what may as the second wave of the pandemic engulfs the UK.

It is quite clear that while millions work from home and many more are shielding from the pandemic those who work in schools have joined the emergency services on the front line. Every day teachers and support staff work heroically to provide an education to children and young people often in the face of considerable adversity. Inevitably, they face constant interruptions as classes and year groups are sent home to isolate following an outbreak. Those facing public examinations in 2021 do so with no idea of what form they will take. The stress on school leaders and their staff as they struggle against the odds is unparalleled and the impact on adults and young people is unknown and incalculable.

So how has Covid-19 impacted on the way schools work and how they will operate in the future? Catholic schools have always proclaimed a special 'option for the poor' and understood long before it became a government policy that 'every child matters'. It is at the heart of our mission and no Catholic school could truly live up to its name without a passionate and active commitment to the most

vulnerable. Never has there been such an opportunity to demonstrate that our mission is a living reality in the daily life of our Catholic schools.

## The Holy Spirit MAC

The Holy Spirit Multi-Academy Company in North Warwickshire is a group of five Catholic schools, one secondary and four primaries. As Chair of the MAC I have had the privilege of witnessing a remarkable response to the pandemic from every school. Led by Senior Executive Principal, Sinead Smith the MAC was already deeply committed to delivering the 'Holy Spirit Experience' which was a comprehensive six-part curriculum beyond the school day including 'Catholic Life' and 'Social Action'. It applied to all children and young people from the age of three in the nursery to the age of eighteen in the sixth form. It was warmly supported by the whole community but little did we know how crucial the 'Holy Spirit Experience' was about to become in the daily lives of many of our pupils and their families.

When the MAC schools were closed to normal operation at the end of March it quickly became apparent that, like countless communities everywhere, many of our pupils and their families were facing difficult times. A detailed assessment of every child and young person across the MAC was made in three key areas – safeguarding, learning and social needs. Any pupil deemed vulnerable was called every day and those who were a safeguarding concern were visited in their home. Every senior member of staff was issued with a dedicated mobile phone and was available to families 24/7. They responded in huge numbers.

The MAC Foodbank quickly ran out of donations so a Just Giving page was established which raised £5,000 in 72 hours and went on to exceed £10,000.

2,500 meals were delivered to families in addition to food parcels and vouchers. The work of the MAC extended way beyond the local community reaching 50,000 people on Facebook. Out of adversity the relationships between the schools and their families developed as never before. There were no judgements but a simple desire on the part of the MAC to live out its mission as a Catholic community. It went way beyond the teaching and learning agenda. There was a clear need and the first response had to be to extend the hand of Christian love to every child and family.

In September, Ofsted visited the MAC secondary school, St Thomas More as part of a national survey to establish how schools had managed the return to full operation after five months of lockdown. The lead inspector declared himself 'humbled' by everything he saw and heard on the visit. There was no evidence that the pupils had suffered a deficit in their learning and an attendance of over 98% spoke for itself.

## The Need for a National Response

The kind of response the Holy Spirit MAC has made in facing the pandemic will undoubtedly be replicated by many Catholic schools and MATs around the country. They will not be known at national level but they will be deeply appreciated by their local communities. They will be led by brilliant headteachers supported by wonderful staff and fantastic pupils. They deserve to be identified, thanked and celebrated in truly living out their mission as Catholic schools.

Whilst we cannot know of the countless examples of heroic responses by

Catholic schools and MATs to the pandemic we do know there has been a limited response from the Church nationally. Since March we have become familiar with the campaigns of celebrities like Captain Tom Moore, Marcus Rashford and Joe Wicks and the work of the Trussell Trust in managing foodbanks. The response of the Catholic Church, however, along with others, has been limited to the call to keep places of worship open.

In the meantime the streaming of online Masses has been treasured by many thousands who have been shielding since March. Whilst the right to worship is a vital issue so too is the common good. The voice of the Church in speaking to the government about the protection of the most vulnerable has not been heard. It is a problem that existed long before Covid-19.

## The Academy Revolution

Following the 2010 General Election, Michael Gove was appointed Secretary of State for Education. He and his key adviser, Dominic Cummings immediately embarked on a two pronged policy. The first was to free schools from what they perceived to be the malign control of LEAs and the second to raise standards through the new freedoms that would be achieved by schools becoming academies.

Today over four million pupils in England, almost half of the total, are taught in academies and over two thirds of secondary schools have academised. After ten years the evidence is quite clear. Michael Gove was very successful in destroying LEAs. Today they are a shadow of their former selves. However, his second objective of raising standards via the academy programme has clearly failed. After ten years, billions of pounds and unprecedented turmoil in the education system there is no evidence that academies have raised overall standards at all. The failure of the academy project is not measured in domestic outcomes alone. International comparisons suggest that the UK continues to lag far behind the best education systems in the world. And equally worrying is increasing evidence that over the past ten years the health and well being of young people in the UK has deteriorated significantly.

## A Momentous Decision

Six months after the 2010 Academies Act became law the Bishop of Nottingham, Malcolm McMahon, made a historic announcement. In his capacity as Chairman of the CES he declared that subject to the approval of the diocesan bishop, any Catholic school could become an academy. In 2011, Bishop McMahon led the way when the Becket School in Nottingham and three of its primary partner schools formed the first Catholic MAT in the country. The following year the Archdiocese of Birmingham followed suit and in 2014, Plymouth Diocese became the first in the country to academise all its schools with the formation of the Catholic Academies Schools Trust (CAST). The decision of the Bishops' Conference in 2011 to accept the academisation of Catholic schools allowed each diocese to make its own decision but it effectively ended the dual system which had been the cornerstone of Catholic education since the Second World War. It was to have far reaching consequences.

Today about 700 Catholic schools are academies which accounts for a third of the total provision, almost identical to the level of academisation in the state sector. There are nineteen dioceses in England of which two, Plymouth and Nottingham, have academised all their schools. Up to now the Archdiocese of Liverpool has resisted academisation. The remaining sixteen dioceses follow a mixed economy of voluntary aided schools and academies with a huge diversity of approach. In some dioceses such as Salford (1%) and Lancaster (4%) academies have barely registered whilst in others such as Birmingham (53%), Hallam (52%) and Middlesbrough (59%) they account for the majority of provision. What is abundantly clear is that after a brutal decade the dual system is shattered beyond repair and the Church's position on academies nationally is mired in incoherence and confusion.

## The Common Good in Education

Shortly before the 1997 General Election the Bishops' Conference published a 22 page booklet which set out its position on education. It introduced

two key theological principles declaring: "Subsidiarity means decisions being taken as close to the grass roots as good government allows. Solidarity means we are all responsible for each other." The booklet attracted considerable attention and was widely praised far beyond the Catholic community. It was a clear example of the Church speaking to its people and society as a whole with one authoritative voice. The Common Good in Education was published over twenty years ago but it has stood the test of time. It was the Bishops' Conference at its best. It is hard to imagine a comparable statement of such unity and clarity today.

## One Church, One Voice

The past decade has been devastating for the national education system. LEAs were not perfect but their wholesale destruction has been a policy of state sanctioned vandalism. In the process the dual system has been shattered and diocesan education services have been asked to fulfil functions for which they were never intended. They do not have the capacity, funding, expertise or experience to protect and improve their schools as demanded by a relentless and punitive national accountability regime. It is essential that the Church is able to respond vigorously to the challenges our schools face. It will only do that if it responds as a national Church and is able to do so with a single voice. Back in 1997, the Church did precisely that in publishing The Common Good in Education. We must do so again. The Church must speak with clarity and authority on Covid-19, academies and other important issues that affect our schools and our society. Is the Catholic education system fit for purpose? In my view it is clear that currently it is not. If we continue on the present path there will be no Catholic education system to speak of in another decade. But all is not lost. It will take determined leadership from the Bishops' Conference and from many others but a much better future is possible. In the next edition of Networking I hope to share some ideas of what a very different Catholic education system might look like. A more detailed paper on this theme can be found on <https://www.emmausleadership.me/blog.aspx>

Jim Foley  
Chair of Holy Spirit MAC



# Academies and the future of Catholic education: an increasingly challenging debate

## A response to Jim Foley's article:

### 'Is the Catholic Education System Fit for Purpose?'



by Dr Sean Whittle  
Research Associate at the CRDCE  
with Professor Gerald Grace

When the first national conference on Catholic Education and Academies was convened in December 2019 there was no inkling of what was to lie ahead of us in 2020. The hopes for an ongoing discussion, through the publication of the conference papers in March 2020, coincided with the great lockdown, as we grappled to respond to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Dealing with this unprecedented situation has absorbed so much of our attention and this has inevitably made it difficult to return to the concerns and issues that motivated the conference. Perhaps this is why the article by Jim Foley (published in this edition of *Networking*) was received as a welcome opportunity to return to the debates around Catholic education and academies.

The reflections offered by Jim Foley raised the provocative question about whether or not the Church (as in our leaders and diocesan structures) are fit for the purpose of guiding and directing Catholic education now that academies and academisation has become almost ubiquitous across our educational landscape. Such was the force of this provocative question that it spurred a number of readers of *Networking* to come together for a webinar towards the end of November 2020. Most of the attendees were serving headteachers from both secondary and primary schools. The meeting was hosted by the Network for Researchers in Catholic Education.

Naturally the webinar was a convivial gathering, but more importantly it took an intriguing turn of direction. Although the webinar was built around the issues raised by Jim Foley's article, the discussion quickly took on a different one than had been expected. The participants quickly began to reflect on the issues in the light of their experiences throughout the pandemic. As we have discovered time and again with Covid-19, it puts a sharp spotlight on already existing issues, such as poverty or digital inequality, emphasising rather than directly causing them. The head teachers at

the webinar talked about their experience of leading and managing their school communities through the long months of the lockdown.

There were numerous accounts of how these school leaders did so much to practically support their children and the families connected with their schools. It was very much a matter of putting faith into action on very practical levels. The repeated examples of individual Catholic schools going above and beyond their normal function, chime powerfully with what Pope Francis declared in his latest encyclical about what the Church needs to be like.

He is emphatic that:  
'The Church is a home with open doors because she is a mother. And in imitation of Mary, the mother of Jesus, we want to be a Church that serves, that leaves home and goes forth from its places of worship, goes forth from its sacristies, in order to accompany life, to sustain hope, to be the sign of unity, to build bridges, to break down walls, to sow seeds of reconciliation.' (Fratelli Tutti par. 276).

Like so many other Catholic school leaders, the participants shared how they and their schools opened their doors and were genuine signs of hope throughout the lockdown. As such they were being the kind of Church that is being called for by our pope. However, what is intriguing about the discussions at the webinar was that these positive reflections quickly led onto a palpable sense of disappointment over the lack of presence from our own 'Church' leadership and diocesan structures. Whilst a few of the participants were full of praise for the support from their local parish priest, others expressed a growing sense of dismay over the lack of either informal or formal support from the Church. At the same time as individual Catholic schools were ensuring every student and family was being contacted and supported week-in and week-out of the lockdown, these school

leaders were getting no contact, let alone support or guidance, from their diocese or Church leaders.

Most of the participants at the webinar were deeply puzzled by the silence from the Church throughout the pandemic. When the hierarchy's silence was eventually broken, it was to raise concerns, not about covid-19's link with poverty and social injustice (such as BLM), but their unhappiness about not being able to resume public acts of worship. The support and vision of the Church (as in our leaders and diocesan structures) that is described in *Fratelli tutti* was just not there for too many school leaders during the pandemic. It is difficult to know what to make of the sense of disappointment, and perhaps even pain, at the silence of the Church throughout the trauma of the pandemic. One positive analysis of the situation might be that the whole experience could be a work of the Holy Spirit which is in the midst of this adversity, forcing Catholic schools and their leaders to see themselves not primarily as educational establishments, but as embodiments of the Church. Rather than equating 'The Church' with diocesan structures and Bishops, it is our Catholic schools which need to be the living Church caring for individual children and their wider community. This mandate for Catholic schools to be the Church has in the context of the pandemic become a reality. Perhaps what needs to happen now is for diocesan structures and the Church leaders to catch up and affirm where the Holy Spirit has brought us to.

Whilst this positive reading of the situation has much to commend it, there are some nagging questions, and it is these which resonate with both Jim Foley's article and the conference back in December 2019. These questions are focusing around whether or not the Church (in terms of diocesan structures and leadership) is actually fit for purpose. During the long months of the pandemic there was an

inability to support and affirm the work that Catholic schools were undertaking. Moreover, there was a lack of capacity to speak out about Covid and poverty, about social justice, about the political decisions around managing the pandemic. All of these issues had a direct bearing on Catholic schools and the silence from the Church meant that Catholic schools and their leaders were left alone to paddle their own canoes. Whilst many did so in a remarkable way, there is now a serious question about the relationship between diocesan structures (inclusive of episcopal oversight) and the Catholic schools in England and Wales.

The same issues about a lack of capacity and an unwillingness to engage with the realities of academies and academisation have been at play, stifling the Church's ability to support and guide Catholic education in our country as it faces the on-going effects of the pandemic and equips itself to convincingly join the debate about what 'the new normal' will look like.

One of the resounding themes from the webinar is the urgent need for Church leaders to develop the capacity to support, guide and where necessary challenge Catholic schools. Perhaps the first step is for an honest acknowledgement that diocesan

structures and leadership have, because of their silence throughout the pandemic, failed in both their pastoral care and their governorship of Catholic education. Beyond that there is an urgent need to work out how we can make the Church fit for purpose at both national and diocesan levels when it comes to Catholic education. Our hope is that subsequent articles from Jim Foley and others will help us work out some solutions over the way forward.

If there are other headteachers who would be like to participate in subsequent webinars on this issue, please contact Willie Slavin (willieslavin@aol.com).

## Ratcliffe College student stars in Sky One Christmas movie with David Walliams

Ratcliffe College always encourages big ideas and what bigger idea can a young person have than to be on National television at Christmas? This year, Ratcliffe student Eddie Karanja will appear alongside David Walliams and Sheridan Smith in Jack & The Beanstalk After Ever After on Sky One.



Eddie takes the lead role as Jack in this original family tale, which is told in the style of Walliams' best-selling children's books and deals with the events following the 'happily ever after' ending of the original story. The fairy-tale features an interesting twist: when Jack (Eddie) discovers the Giant (David Walliams) is not dead, merely concussed and suffering memory loss, Jack pretends they're friends to avoid being eaten. During the adventure, Jack and the Giant discover they have more in common than they thought and learn to work together.

Eddie said: "I've always enjoyed singing, dancing and acting and it was an amazing experience - so much fun!"

He commented: "It was so good to actually see behind the scenes of the production and understand more about how these shows are created."

Eddie is no stranger to the spotlight as he has recently been cast as Michael Darling in the Leicester DeMontfort Hall production of Peter Pan as well as Kurt Von Trapp in The Sound of Music at the Little Theatre.

Eddie's Parents, John and Maggie said: "Eddie went for another audition in London and got a part to be in Motown the Musical, UK tour to play the role young Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson and Berry Gordie." They added: "Ratcliffe College have provided Eddie with opportunities from the start, including; Drama Club, Musical Theatre, School Choir and LAMDA. The school, family and friends have all fully supported and encouraged him in everything he has done so far; we are all so very proud of him."

Eddie really is a credit to the school and an inspiration to others, a sentiment shared by Ratcliffe College Headmaster, Mr Jonathan Reddin, who said: "Here at Ratcliffe we really do encourage big ideas and Eddie's story is an example of how we nurture the God-given talent in all of our students, we are excited about his future."

Jack and the Beanstalk: After Ever After will premiere over the festive period on Sky One. To find out more about Ratcliffe College visit [www.ratcliffecollege.com](http://www.ratcliffecollege.com)





# On Becoming 'Practitioner Researchers' And 'Student Researchers' In Catholic Schools:

## An Agenda For Change



by Professor Gerald Grace  
R and D Editor of Networking

### 1. Introduction

For many decades distinguished writers in the field of Sociology of Knowledge, such as Basil Bernstein in the UK and Pierre Bourdieu in France have pointed out the historically strong distinctions between teachers and senior school students and researchers in education. The former have been characterised as 'reproducers' of existing knowledge (specified by the Church, the State and Examination Board agencies) The latter have been regarded as the creators and new generators of 'knowledge and interpretations' arising from the applications of various forms of research methodology to the actual practice of education and of changing government policies. It has also been noted that researchers as opposed to teachers have been in general assigned more social status and socio-political influence on policy and practise although this varies by subjects e.g. science and medical being higher rated than social science and education!<sup>[1]</sup> Another crucial distinction between teachers and researchers is that the latter have available cultural, social and technical resources generally not available to most teachers. These include time!<sup>[2]</sup>, a command of valid research methods and models of analysis, finance and access to publication agencies. In the case of education in particular, researchers are External Observers and analysts of the constant busyness of the life of schools and their 'externality' is preserved even in classroom observation studies, i.e. they are not a part of the culture of the school. in the same way as the teachers and students are. The externalities of researchers (and we could say of OFSTED inspectors) can have good outcomes i.e. they see features of school life which those Internal to the culture do not see. However, there can be bad outcomes i.e. research reports (or OFSTED reports) can be published which give accounts of school life which are not regarded as valid by those internal to the schools.

### 2. How can we begin to change this situation?

There are a number of ways in which some changes could be made to improve upon these Internal - External tensions in producing

balanced accounts of school cultures, including the impact of changing government policies on educational life. Restrictions of space mean that I can only indicate these in summary form as follows:-

a) Developing 'Practitioner Researchers' to complement the activity of 'External Researchers'.

In a recent chapter which I wrote in 2018 on 'Catholic schools and self evaluation' in John Lydon's (Ed) Contemporary Perspectives on Catholic Education, I suggested that a balanced approach to school evaluation was to be found In combining internal evaluation of Catholic mission effectiveness with external evaluations provided by OFSTED and other external assessment agencies. By the same logic, in relation to research, it can be argued that researchers and writers internal to school life, those which we can call 'Practitioner Researchers' are needed to balance the accounts of 'External Researchers' such as myself. I will offer three possible definitions of Practitioner Researchers as follows:-

#### i. THE ETHNOGRAPHERS

Recently retired teachers and school leaders, who within five years of direct involvement in school life want to analyse changes in school cultures and relationships. They now have the time and space to write.<sup>[3]</sup>

#### ii. THE ADVANCED STUDY GRADUATE

Practising teachers and school leaders who have been involved in studies at MA and Doctoral levels and who have been encouraged by their tutors to publish the results of their research. Their work should not be 'frozen' within the MA dissertation or the PhD thesis but disseminated in various ways.<sup>[4]</sup>

#### iii INDEPENDENT RESEARCHERS

Those involved in long term historical and policy research on aspects of Catholic education, which have been largely ignored by mainstream research. Such studies will resist a preoccupation with 'vivid present' problems, by placing them in a longer historical and time context which will give added depth to analysis.<sup>[5]</sup> These categories are used in 'ideal type' form, because in practice many of these

researchers' outcomes cross cut these divisions. However, the good news is that we now have a growing number of these PRs (viewed internationally); including in the field of Catholic education, Peter Boylan, Richard Byrne, O'Carm, Margaret Buck, Marcellina Cooney CP, Raymond Friel, Andre Gushurst -Moore, Louise McGowan, Joanna Oliva, Teresa Punnachet SPC, Christopher Richardson, Alan Shaw, Willie Slavin, Christopher Storr, Timothy Walker, Sean Whittle, Richard Wilkins, John Harris

Their publications can be found in the pages of Networking and in the journal International Studies in Catholic Education.<sup>[6]</sup>

### 3. Earlier formation of researchers among Senior Students in Catholic Schools: Towards Catholic Research Schools.

In the spring term of 2019 issue of Networking Volume 20 issue 2 an innovative article was published by Dr Louisa McGowan (with help from Christopher Doel) entitled 'A Catholic Research School'. It called for the creation of more Catholic Research Schools in these terms;

- What if we could use the vehicle of research to engage our students in reconnecting with their natural born inquisitiveness?
- What if we could connect them with researching professionals from University and enable them to participate in professional research studies? (page 15)
- We have a group of teachers engaged in the MA in Catholic school leadership directed by Dr John Lydon at St Mary's University and other staff research associates working on small scale school focused projects (page 16)
- Our research school is different from others in that it is focused primarily on Catholic education and asks the questions that are relevant to how we as a Catholic community can continue to remain faithful to the charism of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary (page 16)

This is an innovation at the Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College in north London which has considerable symbolic and practical importance. I have already mentioned the

important writings of Professor Basil Bernstein in the Field of the Sociology of Knowledge. He argued that the traditional mode of the secondary school curriculum was to socialise students to see knowledge as 'given, factual and certain' and their role was to 'reproduce' this in examinations. In fact, he argued, at a more advanced stage of learning, at College and University it would become apparent that knowledge was more open to question and to investigation by developing research methods. However, this realisation came late in a person's educational career. What makes the project at CJMC so exciting is that it proposes to bring 'research thinking and practice' as a significant feature of secondary school curriculum. In other words, an earlier socialisation of research activity is being produced before College and University. This has the possibility that school students will be capable of generating new forms of knowledge, in small scale research, which could be developed at a later stage. This is a progressive development, but the question has to be raised- will the present constraints of our existing examination systems make it difficult for Catholic research schools to flourish? Those who are already using research methods in schools should tell us this. The views of readers of Networking on this question will be welcome.

### Notes.

[1] There are complex historical reasons which account for this which relate to the status of different subjects, the scale and funding of research projects and the nature of the research methods used.

[2] It has to be recognised that time is the most valuable resource for research and publication activity

[3] Recently retired teachers and school leaders will have a store of knowledge, observations and experience to report on changing school culture over time. They also now have time. They should devote some of this time to writing articles for publication as a contribution to the Common Good of Education and Schooling.

[4] At present, there is a considerable amount of research based knowledge on Catholic education 'frozen' in MA and Doctoral theses. The thesis supervisors should encourage graduates to publish aspects of their work, subject of course, to criteria of quality.

[5] The serious study of the History of Education has been greatly reduced in contemporary teacher education and in initial teacher

programmes. No serious understanding of contemporary educational problems can arise if they are not located in an historical, social, economic and political context.

[6] The listing is only a sample known to me. I invite others to write to me with details of their work. Thank you.

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### REFERENCES

*A first introduction to the writings of Bernstein and of Bourdieu can be found in: 'Theorising Catholic education: the relevance of Bourdieu and Bernstein for empirical research' International Studies in Catholic Education Vol. 9 No.1 March 2017 pp.29-44 by Richard Byrne, O.Carm and Dymphna Devine.*

# Saint Paul's pupils take part in a fantastic interactive Enterprise Day!

*Year 8 pupils from Saint Paul's Catholic High School in Wythenshawe, Greater Manchester enjoyed a fantastic interactive Enterprise Day workshop.*

50 Year 8 students took part in the full day workshop which linked mathematics to real life and presented students with an opportunity to develop their mathematical skills, in addition to developing their softer skills such as communication, resilience and teamwork.

This numeracy focused workshop gave students the opportunity to act as large-scale event organisers in charge of arranging a pop concert for 10,000 young people. Using maths 'by stealth', students analysed the information available to help them make informed decisions about which artists they can afford to hire for the concert and how to arrange the respective stage layouts. As well as the concert, students were also asked to consider the event's catering and much more!

Mrs Erin Rudd, Careers lead at Saint Paul's who organised the event, said: "The day was a fantastic opportunity for the students to learn some extremely valuable information and raise their aspirations. Thank you to The Talent Foundry for delivering such an engaging workshop – our students really appreciated it."





# Child Poverty and COVID 19 – the Emerging Picture

One local area's experience reported in the context of the national context - *By Willie Slavin and Suzanne Wilson*



by Willie Slavin  
& Suzanne Wilson

Having set out the West Cumbrian community's initial reaction to the pandemic in the last issue of Networking, we promised to return in Autumn when there was a reasonable expectation that a slowing down of the spread of the virus to manageable proportions would be a good time to pause for reflection and a re-assessment of the situation. While that was far from the reality by mid-October, we were able to fulfil our promise to organise a webinar, led by a number of speakers of substance, to establish a more accurate picture of the recognisably devastating effects of the pandemic on many children and their families in our area.

The importance of the event to a cross section of professionals from statutory, voluntary and academic sectors alongside key interested parties from across the community, was evident in the rapid uptake of some seventy places. The number attending and the range of interest was sufficient indication of the importance attached to this opportunity to take stock of the most challenging event in our country's post war history.

The title of the webinar, Building a Therapeutic Community around Children Experiencing Poverty, has come from our community conversation as an aspirational statement of intent. In seeking a 'new normal' that puts children's needs at the heart of the recovery, we recognise that:

"in order to realise their potential as individuals and active citizens, children require an environment that fosters personal growth. They need to form relationships with others in an atmosphere of trust and security, they need to be valued, accepted and supported by those around them and they need to take real responsibility

for themselves, others and their environment" (Oxford Health Complex Needs Service, 2018). As we emphasised in our May report, "the effects of austerity across all public services...has made the challenging effects of COVID-19 all the more difficult." A measure of these effects, according to the Children's Commissioner's 'Annual Report 2019-20', "pre-virus - four million children were living in poverty in England an increase of 600,000 since 2010/11. 72% were from in-work households compared to 58% in 2010/11" (Children's Commissioner, 2020) Little wonder when, it was reported that in 2018 £37 billion had been cut from working-age benefits (The Guardian, 2018).

The Local Government Association predicted in its paper 'Local government funding Moving the conversation on', that by 2020, local authorities will have faced a reduction to core funding from the Government of nearly £16 billion over the preceding decade. That means that councils will have lost 60p out of every £1 the Government had provided to spend on local services in the last eight years (Local Government Association, 2018). The main beneficiaries of the accrued 'savings' are those who have benefited from tax reductions with an inevitable and significant contribution to inequality, making the UK both one of the richest and one of the most unequal countries on the planet.

The Webinar, offered a more vivid account of the developing situation facing schools and other agencies dealing with children, especially those whose lives have already been severely blighted by austerity's legacy of residual poverty prior to the pandemic. Presentations included views from

The Children's Commissioners Office, academia, schools and the Local Authority which reported that in June 2020, an evaluation of likely COVID impact took place in West Cumbria, conducted by the Local Authority. The methods applied included a survey, completed by 91 schools which found:

- 1: There is evidence that disruption to the education of disadvantaged pupils will have had a disproportionate impact on their achievement. The median estimate indicates that the gap would widen by 36%.
- 2: Access to technology was a priority for disadvantaged learners.
- 3: School leaders were concerned about the impact on emotional resilience and learning readiness, given the stress many students will have experienced in lockdown and uncertainty about progression in education, employment or training.
- 4: There is a need to place a strong focus on literacy support to close gaps, particularly in the Early Years.
- 5: There were concerns about likely increases in FSM, and potential impact on education and well-being.

In reality, schools have never "closed". Assessing, supporting learning, safeguarding and most important of all - caring – everything that is a school has continued, every day. School leaders, teachers and support staff are a precious resource. We must together challenge media terminology and ensure that the work of schools in our communities is championed and visibly supported. The contribution of two local Headteachers, one each from the Primary and Secondary sectors, fleshed

out these findings in more detail but were in absolute agreement that the principle concerns that emerged were food poverty and digital access.

Pamela Telford, Head of Monkway Junior School, with almost half of their pupils eligible for Pupil Premium funding, have been running a targeted breakfast club, augmented by free snacks at break time available to all children. The children choose from a range of food, such as toast, crumpets. The ready access to fruit in school, a favourite among pupils, was continued during lockdown by staff drops to supplement foodbank and similar provision. This allowed already good relationships to develop with a positive impact on home schooling with an on-going bonus since the return to school.

The whole school has followed a programme called 'Bounce Back to School', a six-week programme where children, staff and family activities run in parallel with each other. Tellingly, a group of eight pupils is working with a teacher and Play Therapist on a specific programme under the 'Time to Share Bereavement Service' for those who have suffered the devastation of a loss during the pandemic.

Jacky Kennedy, Head, St Joseph's Catholic School, Workington, described how, as soon as the school closures were announced, St Joseph's responded quickly in establishing good communication networks with parents; e-mail, Instagram, and Facebook became the main conduits of information. Those daily messages were maintained right throughout lockdown and included pictures or videos. The most staggering challenge was that around food. It soon became clear

the FSM provision was inadequate for students and their families. To support families the school provided weekly food packs from March to July to 135 FSM families. About a hundred parents came into the school to collect, and some thirty to forty deliveries were made. This proved successful in getting parents to come and talk to the school: they could initiate conversations about food, school, welfare, anything the parents wanted to talk about.

There were also the other issues of not having internet, not having devices, or parents obviously working from home, so the devices were taken. The school have faced considerable challenges in ensuring that all students have access to an electronic device.

Most impressively, St Joseph's has used the school closure as an opportunity to reflect upon and revise their practices. More structure has been included in the day and expectations have been deliberately made simple, clear unambiguous and fair. The school aims for outstanding behaviour. Detentions and isolation have been removed from the school, with the intention to develop a family atmosphere.

Considerable time has been dedicated to supporting the emotional welfare of students, working with students to develop positive coping mechanisms through our Personal, Social, Economic (PSE) programme.

In our experience at WCCPF, derived from numerous reports and conferences, it has become increasingly obvious that reporting on issues of poverty almost inevitably focuses upon the systemic inequalities, resulting as consequences of government policy, liberally

supported by statistical evidence. However, and our webinar is typically a case in point, it was the stories of the headteachers that attracted most interest and feedback. The immediacy of the response allowed schools to respond intuitively and generously to the immediate needs. The impact of those face to face encounters has subsequently gone way beyond the initial need and compelled a re-evaluation of how schools engage with parents. An epiphany by any other name.

Anyone doubting the power of a convincing story need look no further than Marcus Rashford MBE's 'referendum' on providing free school meals during school holidays. Put alongside the heroic and redoubtable Captain Tom's indomitable spirit in fundraising for the NHS and you have the generosity of thousands upon thousands of our fellow citizens holding a seriously judgemental mirror up to a longstanding systemic failure to feed our poorest children or reward our poorest paid workers.

As a nation, we seem to be giving a strong message to government about what kind of society we want to be. A 'new normal' has to be radically more supportive of those who constantly miss out on the benefits of living in the fifth wealthiest country in the world.

Our recent substantive report, published in the wake of this webinar, makes a strong case for recognising the importance of schools as 'anchor organisations' within our communities, around which a therapeutic community can be built. The full report is available on request at [willieslavin@aol.com](mailto:willieslavin@aol.com).



# News from Scotland

## Laudato Si' Schools Scotland



This year marks the 5th anniversary of Laudato Si', the watershed encyclical that called the world's attention to the increasingly precarious state of our common home. Coincidentally, in November of 2020 Scotland was due to host the UN climate change conference COP26. As a response to both of these, the Scottish Catholic education community launched Laudato Si' Schools Scotland.

Laudato Si' Schools Scotland is an initiative of the Scottish Catholic Education Service, SCIAF and Justice & Peace Scotland. It is an invitation to all schools to respond to the call to be stewards of God's creation and aims to meet the Holy Father's goal of creating an Ecological Education within our schools. It is not an award or charter, but rather a pledge to love God, look after each other and protect the world. It challenges schools to make a "change for good" within our schools, homes, parishes and communities based on the Pope's teaching. It has been designed to be used in any school in any context and hopefully the flexibility of the programme will allow all Catholic schools in Scotland to integrate change into school life over a number of years.

At the heart of this work is the commitment to Learn, Pray, Act and make a "change for good". Laudato Si' Schools Scotland offers resources and learning materials to

help "protect all life, to prepare for a better future, of justice, peace, love and beauty."

It uses the 7 Laudato Si' goals to explore the teaching of the Church, and Goal 5 "Ecological Education" in a particular way to achieve the other 6 goals in our schools, homes, parishes and communities. "Ecological Education (re-think and re-design educational curricula and educational institution reform in the spirit of integral ecology to create ecological awareness and action, promoting the ecological vocation of young people, teachers and leaders of education etc.)"

Using this Church teaching schools also explore:

- Learning for sustainability
- Environmental education
- Equity
- Children's rights
- Justice and Peace
- Stewardship for creation
- Christian responsibility and global citizenship
- Advocacy and action
- Outdoor learning
- How to address inequality, poverty, prejudice and discrimination

### Laudato Si' 7 Goals

- 1 Response to the cry of the earth
- 2 Response to the cry of the poor
- 3 Ecological Economics
- 4 Simple Lifestyle
- 5 Ecological Education
- 6 Ecological Spirituality
- 7 Emphasis on Community

Already 150 Scottish schools have made the commitment to be a Laudato Si' school and we look forward to following their journey over the next few years!

*"Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. All of these reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings. Reusing something instead of immediately discarding it, when done for the right reasons, can be an act of love which expresses our own dignity."*

*"We must not think that these efforts are not going to change the world. They benefit society, often unbeknown to us, for they call forth a goodness which, albeit unseen, inevitably tends to spread. Furthermore, such actions can restore our sense of self-esteem; they can enable us to live more fully and to feel that life on earth is worthwhile."*



# Walking Together in Faith

by Amélie Davidson, MEd2

The Student Pastoral Planning Team challenged School of Education students and staff to walk 10 km (at least) in a week so that, together, we could walk the 2,350 km to the Vatican (virtually!). The walk took place during the week of 4th-11th November, which was Just and Green Recovery for Scotland Week of Action. Just and Green Recovery for Scotland is a coalition of 80 organisations calling for Scotland's recovery from Coronavirus to put people and the planet before profit such as tackling climate change, restoring Scotland's nature and creating green jobs. The team decided to organise an awareness-raising event because in Catholic Teacher Formation class, they have been reflecting on Pope Francis's teaching on the environment in his letter *Laudato Si'* – a letter addressed to every person on the planet, asking us all to protect our common home.

For the second year running, the team also wanted to support the incredible work of Glasgow's Spirit of Christmas, which ensures that every local child living in poverty will have a gift to wake up to on Christmas morning. The sad reality is that 1 in 5 children in Scotland and 1 in 3 in Glasgow lives in poverty. This year, Glasgow's Spirit of Christmas is needing help to ensure 16,500 children wake up to a gift on Christmas morning. The expense of Christmas can be worrying for any family but this year, with the added financial strain caused by Covid-19 such as families accessing the furlough scheme or redundancies, Christmas seems even more daunting. It has been a difficult year for everyone and we have all learned the power of lending a helping hand in our community. After all, giving is the true spirit of Christmas.

The walk was a huge success and the team were completely overwhelmed by people's support and generosity. During the week, 114 students and staff as well as pupils at St. Margaret Mary's Secondary School walked 3,975km and raised a fantastic £3,625. The money was used to donate 75 gift bags to the PEEK (Possibilities for Each and Every Kid) Project who aim to improve opportunities for children living in poverty. In many ways, the Virtual Vatican walk was like a pilgrimage. It provided each of us with the chance to spend time appreciating the beautiful creation around us and to re-energise mentally, physically and spiritually. The walk also gave us the opportunity to focus on what really matters and to rediscover the joy of giving and generosity.

Due to university being online just now, the Student Pastoral Planning Team were unable to organise their usual in-person events. However, this did not stop them and, thanks to Zoom and social media, lockdown has enabled the team to communicate and work together with each other more than ever before. The virus which has divided us has, in fact, brought us closer together.

During this period of uncertainty and worry for us all, it often feels easier to focus on the negatives. However, the pandemic which has shut universities, cancelled flights and turned people into teleworkers has also brought out the best in people and proved that even in dark times, kindness prevails.

In the words of Mother Teresa, "We alone cannot change the world, but we can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples."



## Laudato Si' schools resources

Pope Francis's important encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*, calls on Catholics across the globe to unite together and care for our common home. To honour its 5th anniversary, Pope Francis invites us all to celebrate *Laudato Si'* until May 2021.

Below are a number of primary and secondary school resources to enrich your classroom learning about this important encyclical.

Before you get started, you can read the encyclical itself on our website at [www.sciaf.org.uk/resources/514-laudato-si-schools-resources](http://www.sciaf.org.uk/resources/514-laudato-si-schools-resources)

### 1. Laudato Si' Stations

An interactive resource suitable for secondary pupils to engage with *Laudato Si'* by way of prayerful reflection and critical thinking. Across six 'stations' pupils will pray, reflect and act on core teaching found in the encyclical. An optional *Laudato Si'* review presentation is also provided.

### 2. Laudato Si' Animations

These primary and secondary school animations offer a creative and easy to understand introduction to *Laudato Si'* and its key points.

### 3. Laudato Si' Colouring Sheet

A colouring sheet activity suitable for primary pupils to respond to Pope Francis' call to action.



# Is it time to rediscover a richer understanding of Catholic education?

By Dr Sean Whittle



by Dr Sean Whittle  
Research Associate at the CRDCE  
with Professor Gerald Grace

Pinning down the meanings of Catholic education is a surprisingly tricky challenge. In large part this is because for many of us it is an everyday concept that just is connected with schools and universities – the formal places of learning and education. When we start talking about Catholic education we almost immediately glide into matters to do with Catholic schools. Whilst the assumptions at play in this tendency are perfectly understandable, there is value in taking stock to reflect once more on what is meant by the phrase ‘Catholic education’ and to tease out its wider connotations.

All too often there has been a deep seated tendency to keep on conflating Catholic education with the formal settings of the school and university. However, perhaps it is time to counter balance this tendency by recognising the ways in which Catholic education needs also takes place in informal and non-formal contexts, and often with adults. The challenge we face is to find a richer set of meanings that more fully describes Catholic education as a life long process.

An apt starting point for a richer or more nuanced account of Catholic education is to be found in the broad vision about the vital importance of education described in Vatican II’s declaration *Gravissimum Educationis* (1965). In this short, and frequently overlooked document, Christian education is explicitly framed in terms of the ‘rights’ which flow from being baptised. Having received the gift of baptism there is a need for ongoing and deepening education and the declaration firmly grounds this in the language of rights (see par. 2). Catholic Christian education is, according to Vatican II, far more than what happens in the formal setting of the Catholic school and university, and

because it is a ‘right’ flowing from having been baptised. As such it is something which should be understood as being a life-long process. Although a Catholic education typically begins with Catholic schools, the challenge is to see this as just one stage in a lifelong process. In so many respects the forgotten dimension of Catholic education has been adult ongoing education. In the UK we have put almost all the emphasis on Catholic schooling, rather than on other stages of life, taken as a whole.

It is important to understand that framing Catholic education around the rights that flow from baptism does not mean equating Catholic schooling with being baptised Catholics. The bishops who composed and issued Vatican II’s *Gravissimum Educationis* were very mindful of the large number of Catholic schools in many parts of the world which exist in what used to be called ‘missionary’ regions. These frequently have only a tiny fraction of students who are baptised. This is an important insight that needs to be kept in mind by the leaders of Catholic schools in the UK, as they face the inevitable decline in proportion of baptised children seeking admission in Catholic schools.

## The meanings of Catholic education

It is worth keeping the spotlight firmly on the richness surrounding the meanings of Catholic education. If we do not challenge our tendency to focus just on formal Catholic education in schools and universities we face some significant dangers. One of these is the danger of assuming that by having our Catholic schools we have done enough to support the parents who choose to send their children to a Catholic school. Perhaps inevitably, the day-to-day reality of school life can soak up

almost all of our attention, and there is little capacity to recognise the need for Catholic education is actually a life-long process. There is far more to a Catholic education than what happens in the first few decades of a person’s life. Whilst reframing Catholic education in this way is challenging, it is also an opportunity to embrace a richer vision of what Catholic education means. A second danger is the potential failure to properly ground Catholic education in the theology of baptism. In the context of state funded mass education the link between attendance at Catholic schools and being baptised is these days seriously being challenged, particularly in countries like Ireland and the UK. For example, in England and Wales an increasing proportion of students attending Catholic schools are not baptised Catholic Christians. The state whilst being willing to fund Catholic schools, is forcing through a significant uncoupling of the relationship between baptism and attending a Catholic school. Of course it is a moot point as to whether or not this will in the long term be detrimental to the wider project of Catholic education. This is because it is relatively easy to reframe Catholic education along paradigms such as ‘hospitality’ or ‘service to society’. Thus a Catholic school that is framed around hospitality would seek to provide for those in need, regardless of baptism. Through reaching out in service to the poor, the Catholic school would witness to a sense of care and compassion. Similarly it could be characterised as a serving society by offering an alternative vision of what it is to be well educated.

# Learning from Medieval Monasticism

By John Sullivan



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Despite significant differences of context and vocation for the lay person and the monk, important lessons about Christian formation and Catholic education can be learned from the Benedictine tradition. André Gushurst-Moore (2020) has recently provided a very fine retrieval of St Benedict, effectively showing what Catholic educators today can learn from Benedict's teaching. Ronald Rolheiser (2019) has, in simple and down-to-earth ways, demonstrated how the home can realistically be thought of as a domestic monastery. Here I review the ways that, historically, Christian formation has taken place in the Church, referring specifically to some features of the Benedictine tradition. Key features that should be present in Christian formation today, ones that were fostered by Benedictines, include being multi-dimensional and holistic, hospitable, listening and inclusive, liturgical, communal and life-long.

Over generations, people have been instructed in their Christian faith in a wide range of ways: from their mothers by the hearth at home, from sermons in and outside of church, from the liturgy, from hymns, from the work and worship of confraternities and guilds, from stained glass windows, paintings, tapestries, religious plays on festive occasions, through hearing stories from the Bible and the lives of the saints, through pilgrimages, processions and devotions at sacred shrines, and from the their experience of pastoral care. At its best, Christian formation displays an interrelation of the moral, physical, mental and spiritual, a combination of the inner and outer. The linguistic, affective, cognitive, and embodied dimensions of learning are all linked.

During the first millennium – and for centuries afterwards – the Benedictines made a major contribution to the promotion of learning. Ten hallmarks of Benedictine education have been picked out by the Association of Benedictine

Colleges and Universities in 2007: Love of Christ and neighbour; prayer: a life marked by liturgy, lectio and mindfulness; stability: commitment to the daily life of this place, its heritage and tradition; conversation: the way of formation and transformation; obedience: a commitment to listening and consequent action; discipline: a way toward learning and freedom; humility: knowledge of self in relation to God, others and creation; stewardship: responsible use of creation, culture and the arts; hospitality: openness to the other; community: call to serve the common good.

Interestingly, the Rule of St Benedict recognized that each monk's formation had to adapt to their individual rate of development, even though the shape and ordering of community life, accompanied by discipline, lectio divina and prayer, would apply to all. The notion of differentiation, of adapting teaching to the capacities and needs of learners, is not a modern invention. The formation to be provided would be on-going and life-long. Bernard of Clairvaux confirmed the twin purposes of the Cistercian formation programme (which built upon a Benedictine foundation): becoming equipped in order to be able to edify others – a charitable service – and in order to be edified oneself. Without this one would lack prudence and wisdom. Such formation, for Bernard, should address, engage and develop reason, memory and will.

The daily life of monks was framed and governed by the Divine Office, accompanied by discipline, good works and regular gatherings of their community in the chapter-house. They spent time together (even if in silence) during meals, as well as having in common the vows they had each taken – of obedience, chastity, poverty and stability. It was expected that novices would learn the kind of manners that were fitting for God's city. This might be paralleled today by the notions of

socialization and acculturation, that is, learning 'how we do things here', a process adopted by any community aiming to induct people into its way of life. An important part of training the will, so that it could operate in service of living the truth, was physical discipline. This discipline included how they spoke to and looked at others, their movements and their obedience to authority. It is frequently assumed today that the exercise of authority is more likely to be corrosive of freedom, rather than constitutive of it.

Monks were expected to adopt – and adapt themselves to – a habit, or habitus. This habitus included, not only clothing, but also attitude, inner posture, frame of mind, stance, position. Self-control and 'tuning' the body were closely connected in monastic learning. 'Tuning' the body has repercussions on character development. If the student walks and gestures gracefully, speaks confidently and persuasively, and holds his head and eyes in a moderated and controlled way, then the inner world will be held to the laws of grace, restraint, moderation that are in force in the outer.

Perhaps what most marks out the medieval from a modern approach to education and formation, is its stress on the will. Far from being blind to and cruelly suppressive of the drives of our nature, monastic writers evidently displayed a shrewd insight into how our choices have consequences that change us and which can thereby reduce our freedom. Self-expression and radical autonomy, so often lauded in our day, can lead to self-imprisonment and to the erosion of true freedom. Too many of us today assume that we can exercise and reverse our choices easily and without consequences for our psychological make-up.

Formational purposes and practices depended upon a strong emphasis on the role of affections, the will and the body, on liturgy and community life, on



a range of closely connected disciplines related to food, clothing, posture and gesture, and on a richer and more complex understanding of both memory and of reading than is customary today. We should note that learning about God did not take place separately from learning about life in general. Many purposes guided religious formational practices, for example, a concern to promote spiritual salvation, personal well-being, ethical behaviour, inner contemplation and strengthening the monastic community. These were all seen as mutually implicating and reinforcing one another. Example, participation, observation, imitation, habituation, celebration - all played a part in Christian formation, for monks, but also for lay people. Cumulatively these were intended to prepare the self to hand itself over to the Creator and to open the way to transformation by God into our true identity.

Attitudes to food and to eating were treated as having spiritual significance. There were rules about what could be eaten, how much, with whom, when and even how. Self-control over food and fasting were regarded as spiritual health. Similar concerns arise today about diet and health, although they are usually expressed in terms different from those used by the monks. Whatever we voluntarily take into ourselves has the capacity to modify our character. This applies also to the images we gaze upon, for example, on the Internet. As with the intake of food, the images that engage our attention steadily and inexorably change who we are becoming, usually without our realizing this internal transformation.

Monks considered the intake of words as similar to the intake of food. Here the training of memory had an important role. The capacity to adapt and deploy creatively what is learned is quite different from the regurgitation often asked for in examinations. Another medieval monastic insight we might learn from today is their expectation that, instead of their reading being a process of establishing mastery over a text, so that its assimilation was governed by their needs, priorities and worldview, rather reading was a process in which they stood under the text, allowed themselves to be changed by it, and eventually to be assimilated into its purview. The word that is received, if accepted appropriately, effects a change in the monk, assimilating him to the word, bringing him into closer conformity with it. Not only were readers of scripture 'read' by what they read; they were consumed by

it. This was a truer appreciation of what is entailed by understanding, as compared with our contemporary tendency to mistake understanding for 'overstanding' or as establishing mastery over something, rather than opening oneself up to what it has to offer.

Reading was viewed in a more comprehensive way than is the case today; it involved the body, the mind, the will, the emotions and the memory. Its purpose was to facilitate transformation. The goal of transformation is the effective realization of human freedom in loving response to our Creator. Such transformation occurs when our humanization opens up into our divinization. The deep reading promoted by *lectio* offers a powerful alternative to the more superficial, undisciplined and instrumental modes of reading prevalent today among many students. Formation carried out in a Benedictine ethos provides an educational vision that integrates the multiple dimensions of our nature – physical, emotional, social, moral, intellectual and spiritual. Rather than education being colonised by technological, materialistic, therapeutic and worldly success-oriented aims, it is guided by the priority of the spiritual, with the goal of preparing us for heaven.

Two further points are pertinent here: first to stress the role played in the monastic tradition by liturgy as a central element in Christian formation; second, how Christian educators were to view the relationship between Christian and non-Christian culture.

It is probably legitimate to claim that the liturgy constituted the most influential context for the Christian education for medieval laymen and-women. It is easy for us today to underestimate the power of liturgy to influence the outlook and imagination of congregations. The effect of liturgy usually occurs indirectly and implicitly, not so much through explicit teaching (though this should not be neglected), but rather through being together in the presence of other members of the faithful, through communal singing and shared periods of silence, in bodily movements (processing to the altar to receive communion or a blessing, making the sign of the cross, offering a sign of peace, kneeling, bowing and standing) even through the sights and smells picked up subliminally. And, of course, medieval monks experienced all this, not in isolation from others, but accompanied by a very strong sense of community, the

same community to which they belonged outside the church. For most people, there was no notion of being 'outside' the church. Many activities we might consider as secular took place within church buildings, including entertainment and dancing as well as community decision-making events.

As for how Christian educators were to treat non-Christian culture, the best elements of pagan culture were not to be dispensed with; but they had to be brought into proper harmony with thinking and practices that were impregnated by Christian faith. If we adapted this tension for our own time, we might refer to the need (in Christian education and formation) to treat the passing on of religious tradition in its wholeness and integrity as a task that is both essential and life-giving, but, at the same time to acknowledge that this tradition needs to be supplemented by and brought into dialogue with contemporary forms of secular knowledge. Such an encounter with contemporary thinking and culture would inevitably require modifications within our understanding and implementation of the faith tradition we have received from the past. However, the assumptions, norms and priorities of contemporary culture need to be carefully sifted and prayerfully discerned in the light of the Christian tradition; not everything can be accepted as legitimate or assimilated into a reformulated faith. Some aspects of contemporary culture – in any age – are in need of purification before acceptance, others are open to re-shaping and elevation, while yet others must be judged to be contradictory to and undermining of the faith.

We may not be able to reinstate the conditions, assumptions and practices of medieval monks, but there remains much of great value that we can still learn from them.

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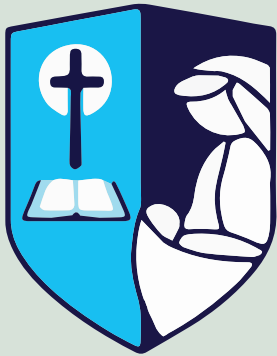
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# News from CATSC



## CATSC's Prof. John Lydon delivers continuous professional development to St Mary's Catholic Federation, Carshalton, Archdiocese of Southwark



*Logo of St Mary's Catholic Federation, Carshalton*

Prof. John Lydon, CATSC Executive/ St Mary's University was invited by the Executive Headteacher, Mrs Shirley Hulme, MA, NPQH, NLE to deliver a keynote speech on the theme of 'Embracing the Ethos in a Catholic School Whilst Working Together' at the formation/continuous professional development day of the St Mary's Catholic Federation of Schools, Carshalton in South West London on 3rd September 2020.

The St Mary's Federation is voluntary-aided and includes the pre-school and infant school and a junior school across two campuses and is located in the Archdiocese of Southwark. Originally founded in 1890 by the Daughters of the Cross religious congregation, due to considerable expansion, the infant and junior school separated in 1966. In 2016, the schools entered into a hard federation

The schools are three form entry for boys and girls aged 3-11 years. The total number of pupils is 322 at the pre-school and infant school and a further 360 in the Junior School. The schools lie within the parish of The Holy Cross in Carshalton and also serve the parishes of Our Lady of the Rosary in Sutton, The Holy Family in Sutton and St Margaret's in Carshalton Beeches.

The school's mission statement is 'learning, playing and growing together in the love of Jesus' which was very salient with the theme of the day working in partnerships

with parents, families, parishes, the diocese and other external agencies. The day was also attended by Chair of Governors Bernard Tomkins and Marie Norbury, School Chaplain, provided the wonderful liturgy for the day reminding us to be thankful for all we have during the Covid-19 pandemic, and special prayers for the new school year with more challenges than usual. Marie is also completing the MA in Catholic School Leadership Programme at St Mary's University, Twickenham.



*Prof. John Lydon outside St Mary's Catholic Nursery and Infants' Schools, founded by the Daughters of the Cross.*

Prof. Lydon spoke about the importance of schools working closely with all families despite the changing Catholic demography. He cited Grace Davie's (1994) work *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging*. Davie suggests that Europe is marked by a culture of 'believing without belonging', characterised by a profound mismatch between religious values that people profess (believing), and actual churchgoing and religious practice (belonging) and this is a challenge for Catholic schools.

Ann Casson's 2014 case study on Catholic primary school parents states the reasons why baptised Catholic parents continue to choose a Catholic primary school when they do not actively participate in the Catholic Church by, for example, weekly

presence at the celebration of the Eucharist. Nevertheless, many Catholic parents in this research sample maintained that the prime reason for the choice of a Catholic school was the Catholic nature of the primary school.

75% of Catholic parents who contributed to Casson's questionnaire maintained that their reason for choosing the primary school was that it taught the Catholic Faith. Reflections on what made a Primary school a Catholic school focused mainly on the parents' experience in this particular Catholic primary school, as they had limited experience of other Catholic primary schools or indeed of other primary schools. The main reasons given for choosing a Catholic primary school were: academic reputation; good values; location; the teaching of the Catholic faith and the Catholic ethos.

Therefore, it is key for all school stakeholders to work collaboratively with parents as primary educators wherever families are on their faith journey. Lydon stated that this is encapsulated in Jesus' call of the Twelve disciples. Jesus asserts that he has called the apostles 'to be with him', connoting a call to form a community, demanding a commitment that goes beyond the relationship between Rabbi and disciple. Jesus is, in essence, demanding solidarity around a common mission or a shared vision. Throughout the Gospels Peter, James and John form part of an inner group, present with Jesus at key moments in his ministry, for example; the healing of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5: 21-24 & 35-43), the Transfiguration, (Mark 9:2-8) and Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42). This is analogous to school senior leadership teams.

This building of community by teachers, middle and senior leaders is reinforced by the Vatican's congregation of Catholic Education (1988) which states: prime responsibility for creating the unique school climate rests with the teachers as individuals and as a community.





The religious dimension of the school climate is expressed through the celebration of Christian values in Word and Sacrament, in individual behaviour, in friendly and harmonious personal relationships, and in a ready availability. Through this daily witness, the students will come to appreciate the uniqueness of the environment to which their

youth has been entrusted (The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, para. 26).

Lydon continued to make some recommendations about how this building of community might be achieved in practice: through the work of the Senior Leadership

Team modelling servant leadership; Middle (subject/year) Leaders with an authentic vocation and being witnesses to the faith; formation of informal groups e.g. Parent Teacher Associations; through social interaction beyond the school and building extra-curricular activities and relationship beyond the classroom.

*L to R: Mrs Marie Norbury, School Chaplain; Dr Caroline Healy, CATSC Executive/St Mary's University; Mrs Shirley Hulme, Executive Headteacher, St Mary's Catholic Federation of Schools and Prof. John Lydon, CATSC Executive/St Mary's University*

## Members of the CATSC Executive are Privileged to Mentor two Inaugural All Hallows Trust Scholars as part of the Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education (GRACE) Partnership

Professor John Lydon and Dr Caroline Healy, CATSC Executive/St Mary's University, originally founded by the Vincentians, have been working in partnership with Rev. Professor Eamonn Conway and Rev. Dr Eugene Duffy, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, regarding two new PhD All Hallows Scholars commencing their doctoral studies in February 2021.

Each scholarship from the Irish All Hallows Trust founded following the closure of the Vincentian All Hallows College in Dublin in 2016, will provide €20,000 per year per scholar for a maximum of four years which will be used to pay for supervision fees and subsistence. The research undertaken by the All Hallows Scholars will serve to advance the wider aims and objectives of GRACE.

### GRACE

Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education (G.R.A.C.E) is an international research-based partnership between St Mary's University, London; University of Notre Dame Fremantle, Australia, Mary Immaculate College Limerick, Ireland and the Roche Center for Catholic Education, Boston College, United States. As an emerging community of practice (Wenger, 2000), G.R.A.C.E. provides an original opportunity for scholars of theology and Catholic education in their respective countries to affirm, study, collaborate, and

respond meaningfully to challenges we face in the field.

GRACE is designed to influence three domains of the field of Catholic education: 1) cognitive: the theoretical and conceptual base of Catholic education; 2) affective: the formative qualities and experiences that shape the Catholic educator and scholar; 3) behavioural: the adoption of new understandings which influence the practice of being a Catholic educator and scholar in promoting social justice, while enhancing one's capacity to foster a 'culture of dialogue' towards a global common good.

The cognitive domain is strengthened, in part, through the community's persistent, critical and constructive engagement with points of tension in the provision of Catholic education, its commitment to ecumenical and interfaith collaboration, and its conviction for stronger, more persuasive arguments for the place of Catholic education in the public sphere.



*All Hallows Trust Scholars will work in partnership with Rev. Professor Eamonn Conway and Rev. Dr Eugene Duffy (front centre), Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick Ireland in the area of Catholic education.*

GRACE affects the formation of the scholar and educator, honouring the primary role of the Christian faith in the life of scholarship. Members will be encouraged to reflect on their spirituality and their work in integrated ways, to attune their abilities to notice and respond to the presence of grace in the world, and strengthen their ability to witness to the beauty, energy, and attractiveness of Christian faith. The members of GRACE, formed in this way, will demonstrate a meaningful integration of scholarship and faith to the field of Catholic education.

GRACE contributes to the behavioural domain of the field of Catholic education by introducing new theories and structures to influence practice. Collaborative research, joint production of articles, and socializing across the community network will expand members' capacity for strategic action with the state and other agencies, foster the promotion of social justice in the public arena, and prepare a pipeline of leaders, ready and responsible for Catholic education for the 21st century. In these particular ways, GRACE hosts a 'culture of encounter' (Pope Francis) where people gather, learn from and grow together to ensure the present and future Church.

### Requirements of the All Hallows' Trust Scholars

In addition to working to advance the work of GRACE, each scholar will become a member of a scholarly group made up of the two All Hallows Scholars from St Marys, the two scholars from Mary Immaculate College, and their respective supervisors. There is an expectation that the Scholars will participate fully in the GRACE project and make themselves available for conferences, publicity events and other activities that serve GRACE and the All Hallows Trust. Such engagement will involve, for example, annual attendance at a seminar series or conference at either St Mary's University or Mary Immaculate College to formally present work in progress and to discuss research projects within the group. Costs associated with mandated events will be covered by the respective institutions. Any bridging studies and/or research methods development required by scholars in order that they can progress their projects will be decided by the supervisory teams and undertaken during the term of the scholarship.

### Intense Competition for the Scholarship

Candidates for the scholarship were required to submit a detailed minimum

2,500-word research proposal focused on a topic in accordance with the mission of GRACE such as curriculum, ecclesial contexts, contributions to the common good, or other topics relevant to Catholic social teaching. Together with their proposals, candidates had to present their CV; previous qualifications at Bachelor and Masters levels; a personal statement and two academic references, prior to being called for an interview with a panel comprised of Professor Philip Booth, Director of Catholic Mission (interim) and Professor of Finance, Public Policy and Ethics; Associate Professor Christine Edwards-Leis, Director of Education Doctoral Studies and Dr Caroline Healy, Senior Lecturer, MA in Catholic School Leadership and Doctor of Education Programmes, St Mary's University, Twickenham.

### Research to be Undertaken on Catholic Female Leaders in the Philippines

Nearly 15 people applied for the scholarship and two students were successful as they provided outstanding credentials and proposals. One is an international student from the Philippines, Joanna Oliva, a former student on the MA in Catholic School Leadership Programme 2018-19. Joanna's builds on her MA research on leaders of higher education institutions and her PhD proposal is focused on 'the extent to which Catholic education affects and influences the formation of women leaders of the Philippines'.



*Joanna Oliva, an international inaugural All Hallows' Trust PhD Scholar in Catholic Education from the Philippines*

The research rationale is to determine the extent to which Catholic education influences female leaders in the Philippines promoting the common good.

While promoting the common good is a key aim of the Catholic Church, Joanna states her research aims to determine the extent, if at all, of the interrelatedness of the Catholic formation of women leaders received in Catholic education institutions and the quality of service they provide to society to promote social justice. In the current context of the Philippines, which is a predominantly Catholic nation of 83 million Catholics and 1500 Catholic schools and universities, this poses a particularly interesting research question and will undoubtedly provide both a useful and fascinating comparative single country case study. It will examine leadership in a variety of fields and related policy documents, policy implemented and levels of individual commitment and vocation evidence, with the overall aim of enhancing Catholic formation approaches in educational institutions to promote a more equal and just society. Therefore, as a Catholic educator/formator with a number of years of service at Assumption College in Manila, Joanna is particularly concerned with how institutional and individual approaches to Catholic education and formation have practical implications for both the broader education of young people and especially the promotion of the common good among vulnerable communities in Philippines society.

Once presented, analysed and interpreted, the findings from the research will form the basis of suggested recommendations for policy and guidance for Catholic education institutions at school and tertiary level, especially in the areas of policy, curriculum and pedagogy, being mindful of the significance of the theological and religious education underpinnings. While the focus of this PhD is on seeing how Catholic education institutions promote and prioritise service to the common good, it will have wider applicability to female Catholic leaders, Catholic dioceses and policy-makers in the area of Catholic education such as the Catholic Education Association of the Philippines (CEAP) and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) responsible for a broad range of Catholic fields.

This is a timely research area because this case study will capture how often elite Catholic female leaders are endeavouring to make a more equal and just society. The Economic Forum 2018 observes that the



Philippines is creating rapid shifts in this area, being the 8th most gender equal country worldwide. Further, how Catholic education institutions have far-reaching impacts on families and communities in everyday practice. This study is original in that it is one that requires an understanding of while Catholic education institutions are largely private funded institutions in The Philippines, they have a duty to uphold the mission of the Catholic Church to serve the common good by providing women for service as well as leadership. This is the challenging balance for high-powered professionals that this dissertation will endeavour to explore and advocate for, in one of the first studies of its kind in relation to the Philippines.

### Research will be Conducted on Catholic Character Education

The second All Hallows Scholar is Kerry MacFarlane, a teacher at Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School in Bournemouth. Kerry wishes to research how Catholic Character Education contributes to the formation of children in primary schools. Kerry states in her proposal that there has been a recent national resurgence in research into character development across a range of disciplines, including education. This renewed attention to Character Education has led to its explicit inclusion in recent educational policy.

In the new Ofsted Framework for Inspection, there will be a judgement on the personal development of learners by evaluating how schools support children to develop their character. In 2017, the DfE surveyed 880 schools which showed that 97% sought desirable character traits among their students (White, Gibb, Lea & Street, 2017). Kerry's outlines show how her research will build on other studies which demonstrate that character education contributes towards positive outcomes for children promoting intrinsic wellbeing (Lickona, 1996; Kristjánsson, 2013; Walker, Roberts and Kristjánsson, 2015). Kerry observes, however, that while evidence of such an impact is not easily accessible or measurable, character education has been linked to increased academic achievement, improved classroom behaviour and emotional and mental wellbeing.

The fundamental aim of Catholic schools is a commitment to the education of the whole person through a 'personal integration of faith and life', and 'the gradual formation of conscience in fundamental, permanent virtues' (Congregation for Catholic Education,

1977). However, at present, there is little research relating to character education within the Catholic education system in England and Wales. It is of keen interest within this project to address this gap in existing research with a specific focus on identifying and evaluating the holistic impact of Catholic Character Education on the formation of the scholar.

Kerry identifies that the primary goal of Catholic Character Education is evangelisation and transformation - to seek to develop the character of Christ in our pupils and young people, which leads ultimately to human flourishing for the benefit of society and the common good. Human flourishing is Beatitude: 'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full' (John 10:10). Catholic Character Education fundamentally serves the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and has the potential to be both dynamic and empowering for children and young people. Likona (2003) reminds us that success in character education must focus on the impact it has on each individual: 'we build a moral society one child at a time'. Character Education seeks to cultivate the acquisition and development of virtues associated with common morality. Further, 'schools should and do aid students in learning to know the good, love the good, and do the good' (Jubilee Centre, 2017). It is the essence of 'doing' – the implementation of practical wisdom, that is an area of central interest in this research.

The project raises a myriad of questions which will be explored as part of the study: what is the impact of an implicit and an explicit culture of character education? How are virtues taught?; how are they put into practice?; are they developed habitually?; how does character education impact on moral choices? What are the potential benefits to the individual and to society?; how can we renew our moral culture through character education? what is the nature of the impact that character education has on pupils to help them in the pursuit of the fullness of life and the common good?

Kerry's project proposes to interpret how Catholic character education serves to promote value-based aspiration or 'sought' character. Key research in the field of Catholic Character Education, led by Dr Christopher Devanny (2017), as part of wider studies conducted by the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, investigated how Character Education is taught and understood in Catholic schools. His report acknowledges school ethos as the single

most significant component in supporting character education. Devanny identified character education as implicit in the vast majority of schools, rather than being explicitly taught as part of the curriculum. His research highlighted that virtue literacy had not been developed because of a reliance on Gospel values to shape ethos, in the absence of the explicit teaching of virtue. The report also recommended that schools should develop opportunities for critical reflection in order to support the development of virtue reasoning. At present, there is little or no further research available which allows primary schools to interpret how to promote virtue reasoning and virtue practice in a Catholic context.

Kerry rightly points out that there is consensus among educationalists about the goal of Character Education, but exactly how schools seek to foster formation of pupils through the vehicle of Character Education needs deeper exploration and justifies further research. In order to flourish in fullness with Christ, we need to do virtue, not just know virtue. Cooling (2010) proposes that the true purpose of education is that acquired knowledge and skills must be applied and utilised to enhance critical thinking and reflection and to seek social justice. Knowledge must bring societal benefit and help to make us more human. Likona (2001) defines character education in terms of its psychological components – 'knowing the good, desiring the good and doing the good'. These strands of cognitive, emotional and behavioural form the basis upon which we can interpret the potential power of Catholic Character Education – to advance the desire to do good and to act upon the virtue knowledge acquired, on our journey to become closer to God. A Catholic approach to education starts with discernment. We discern when we listen for and recognise God's call to us on how to bring about the common good.

Kerry's advocates for the need for the development of practical wisdom as integral to our growth in faith. This is also demonstrated in Cardinal Joseph Cardinal's 'See Judge Act' methodology for theological reflection and interpretation of reality, with the goal being transformative social action and justice. The See Judge Act methodology helps us to explore the relationship between belief and action. Through applying key Catholic Social Teaching principles i.e., the dignity of the human person, the common good, solidarity to various contemporary situations, we are reminded of our central mission as Christians - to build the Kingdom of God here on Earth. In Stage 1 we SEE,

asking questions, seeking information and assessing how we are connected to the situation. In Stage 2 we JUDGE, we determine who is affected, how and why and examine what our faith says. In Stage 3 we ACT, we plan and carry out actions in light of our Faith. In Stage 4 we RESTART the CYCLE - we return to the SEE stage and examine the impact of our actions. In the view of Kerry, this process encourages reflection and critical thinking integral to personal and spiritual growth. This research project will also explore the significance of the Eucharist and its link to formation, as a fundamental source of enlightenment and empowerment in Catholic Character Education. Through thinking, speaking and 'doing' the Eucharist, Scott (2009) describes the Eucharist as Christ's love for

us in action - 'DO this in memory of me', these words are a call to action, reaching out to humanity. 'The Eucharist is dynamite. It can and should explode into action, erupting into solidarity and a commitment to social justice.' This transformative power is echoed in the words of Pope Francis (2020) 'the Eucharist gives us Jesus' love, which transformed a tomb from an end to a beginning, and in the same way, can transform our lives'.

Kerry will explore in this research how schools can use the true meaning of the Eucharist to develop practical wisdom to motivate and inspire action towards the common good. This study will focus on the development of both implicit and explicit approaches to Catholic Character

Education which have not been previously examined through a comparative study of approaches between schools. The project will involve research into the development of an implicit approach in terms of Catholic ethos and culture, as well as more explicit opportunities within and throughout the curriculum and in other aspects of school life. It will include a review of leadership from both staff and students, opportunities for pupil voice and moral action to serve the common good, as well as partnerships with parents and the wider community.

**We wish Kerry and Joanna all the best with their research studies over the next few years and look forward to mentoring them.**

## Keynote Speaker Emeritus Professor John Sullivan 'The Post-Covid Moment - Crisis and Crossroad' CATSC/NfRCE Webinar

The aim of the webinar was to mark the date of the planned jointly organised Catholic Association of Teachers, Schools and Colleges (CATSC)/Network for Researchers in Catholic Education (NfRCE) Conference 2020 at St Mary's which has been postponed until September 2021. Please save the dates of Friday 24th September and Saturday 25th September 2021 in your diaries!

This was a webinar with a keynote by Prof. John Sullivan, Emeritus Professor of Christian Education, Liverpool Hope University, speaking on 'The Post-Covid Moment - Crisis and Crossroad', which was a reflection on how a range of recent developments, in society and in the Church, some caused by Covid-19, others brought more sharply into view because of the pandemic, cumulatively pose both a challenge and an opportunity for Catholic educators.

The webinar was hosted by CATSC's General Secretary, Dr Caroline Healy and responses were provided to the paper from CATSC's Assoc. Prof. John Lydon and Dr Mary Mihovilovic, together with Dr Sean Whittle, NfRCE Executive Member/ Visiting Research Fellow St Mary's University and Mrs Louise McGowan, Headmistress, Convent of Jesus and Mary College, North London.

The webinar was engaged very enthusiastically with over 90 participants engaged online at one, with international

colleagues represented from Ireland, The Philippines and Ghana in the lively Q & A section which followed the webinar.

### Sullivan on Catholic education during Covid-19

In Prof. Sullivan's paper he said that the Covid-19 pandemic cumulatively posed both a challenge and an opportunity for Catholic education. Some issues he had identified prior to Covid were in his view particularly prompted or reinforced by the Covid experience. He had been asked what new spaces he could see opening up in Catholic education - spaces for further dialogue and encounter. These included (among other possible spaces):

- A more honest discussion on sex & relationships, the Church's teaching on homosexuality, & changing modes of sexual identity
- The role of women in the Church
- The benefits and dangers posed by new communication media
- Relations with people of other Christian denominations, other religions and also with humanists and other secularists
- The need for new approaches relating to creation (including environment and climate)
- The question of whether we are being colonised by consumerism
- How we might construct healthier forms of political discourse

Prof. John Sullivan, Mrs Louise McGowan and Dr Sean Whittle during the webinar





- How we work out who God is calling us to be, both as individuals and as a Church.

He continued to advocate for a revitalised Christian humanism if we are to engage with the living tradition of our faith appreciatively, critically and creatively – and with our culture in a way that is credible and winsome, and he hopes to develop a book on this topic.

First, for Sullivan, Covid has reinforced the need to recover a sense of providence; and he has thought for a long time that in education there should be more attention paid to the multiple vulnerabilities experienced by people because we are ALL vulnerable and we all have special needs as well as special gifts. He said Christ cannot be appreciated as a physician, as our healer, if we are unrealistic about our common need for healing and help in our different kinds of vulnerability, and he raised some fundamental questions:

*"In a society that kids itself we are safe, secure and self-made people, entitled to success and comfort, it is little wonder that communicating Christ, as source of good news, does not get far with many people. Many people feel they can get along perfectly well enough without Christ as Saviour. Have we been living in a bubble of self-delusion? Will Covid 19 serve as a wake-up call about our precarious position and our false self-assurance, our radical individualism, our neglect of the climate, the environment, the social fabric and health of our communities? Were we living in such a way as to render the notion of God's providence unreal or unnecessary for us? Have we been blind to our radical mutual interdependence?"*

Second, Sullivan added, apart from vulnerability as a potential major curriculum theme we might focus on, as prompted by Covid-19, another might be presence – physical and virtual presence, the nature and value of presence, our modes of being present, what helps and hinders real presence; and why it matters. He stated our Catholic tradition has long emphasised the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, but that this is not the only way Christ is present to us. Sullivan quoted the great seventeenth century French mathematician and religious thinker, Blaise Pascal, who once said "I have discovered that all the unhappiness of people arises from the fact that they cannot stay quietly in their room". Then Sullivan asked the pertinent question, how do we get involved in distractions which prevent us attending to an inner emptiness? He said Pascal added: *"the only thing which*

*consoles us for our miseries is diversion"*.

Sullivan continued to remark that the Roman emperors were adept at distracting attention of the people from their troubles by providing bread and circuses. However, this distraction hinders us from serious and realistic reflection about ourselves. This made him consider that a major educational task for our schools and universities (if we are to cultivate real presence) should be training people in the disciplines needed for discernment. This requires attention, stillness, concentration, focus, detachment, contemplation, openness to other perspectives, developing a sense of priorities, awareness of who and what is 'pulling out strings'; receptivity to advice, a sense of vocation, and fostering the virtues.

Sullivan concluded poignantly by asking 'will things be different when this the pandemic is over? Even if many things return to what has seemed normal in recent decades, he believed that many of us have experienced a pause button on our usual patterns and habits, one which should prompt us to reflect deeply on our priorities and about how we move forward, personally, in society, the Church and in education.



### Prof. John Lydon response to the Sullivan paper in the area of education

In the response of Prof. Lydon, CATSC Executive, St Mary's University, to Professor Sullivan's paper, he referred to Sean Whittle's response where he spoke of the centrality of the Church's response to the poor. In reflecting on the response of one group of schools during these challenging times, Lydon stated that he wanted to bring us back to Christ at the Centre of all Catholic schools and to view the post-Covid moment through the lens of St John Bosco's (the Salesian) education vision. What he shared

he said related tenuously to Professor Sullivan's reference to 'a revitalised Christian humanism' and more substantially to his allusion to the nature of presence which is reflected in accompaniment, an epochal notion in Salesian education tradition.

Lydon continued to state that in a Catholic Christian Context accompaniment is rooted in the way in which Jesus accompanied his disciples at every stage of their journey. This is encapsulated best in the pericope recalling the encounter between Jesus and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). There are several striking features in this passage, not least the reciprocity and mutuality captured in the dialogue between Jesus and the two disciples. He cited Fr Michael T. Winstanley, SDB (2017: 351) who highlights in particular the way in which Jesus allows the disciples to take the initiative in inviting him to stay with them:

*"The disciples thus take the initiative in responding to Jesus and his words. It is not without significance that Jesus waits to be asked, for he never imposes himself, never forces his friendship; with remarkable sensitivity he reverences our freedom. But once the offer of hospitality is extended, he accepts it promptly."*

Reflecting the initiative of Jesus in inviting the two disciples to share their story, St John Bosco's advice to one of his key early collaborators, Fr Vespignani, was to 'Go to the Pump' (1930). At the water pump in Valdocco, Turin, near the site of Bosco's first Oratory, boys usually came together. Bosco expected his educators to be where the boys were. Lydon concluded that such encounters in a non-formal context have the effect of building up trust which forms the basis of every educational practice or encounter. As Carlo Loots (2018: 5) suggests "this practice teaches that it is best to follow first to be allowed to guide later".

Lydon summarised Bosco's idea which was that the boys would be inspired, through these initial invitational encounters of 'going to the pump', to join his Oratory, a name which reflects the influence of St Philip Neri (1515-95), the founder of the Oratorians. Don Bosco took over the basic features of the Oratory including catechism lessons and opportunities for recreation. He would often make the point that oratories without some element of religious instruction were simply games rooms. Luciano Pazzaglia (1993:282) is insistent on the latter point, cautioning against a reductionist view of the first Oratory as a playground or a meeting place for children:

*"what Don Bosco had in mind was a school... where... religion was practised and youngsters were inspired to live a Christian life"*

According to Lydon, this perennial reality has been maintained among schools inspired by and committed to a Salesian vision of education. He added as a matter of interest, apart from Trustee schools, a growing number of schools have become Fellowship schools, meeting regularly to discern ways in which they can embed a Salesian style of learning within their schools.

More specifically in the context of this moment, Lydon suggested that Salesian tradition can inform us since St John Bosco was faced with an outbreak of cholera just as he was founding the Salesians. While paying particular attention to the safety of children remarkably analogous to the current response of schools, Bosco led a response from staff and students which reflected truly schools where 'youngsters were inspired to live a Christian life'.

The students were divided into sodalities, groups combining spiritual exercises and charitable activities, referred to by Bosco as 'compagnia', a key expression of empowerment, regarded by him as fundamental to the Salesian 'family atmosphere', giving it an unmistakable character of solidarity and participation. Groups were involved in:

1. Supporting work in the hospitals

2. Visiting self-isolated patients
3. Searching the streets for people affected by the outbreak

For Bosco, Lydon reflects that sodalities were a valid instrument for the practical realisation of those educative collaborations between pupils and educators, without which it would be futile to speak of a family spirit.

Lydon concluded that the response of schools to the current situation mirrors that of 1854. Animated by leaders and all staff the response of students has included:

1. Designing and making PPE for local hospitals
2. Visiting families and collecting a significant amount of money to provide food for those students who would normally receive FSM
3. Collaborating with other Catholic groups such as the Catenians and the SVP. to provide, for example, holidays for parents and children who have never experienced a holiday. Two colleagues engaged in this Webinar this evening are engaged in this ongoing project.

Lydon has observed how Spiritual development of both staff and students has thrived during this period, both online and, more recently, gathering within the school in suitable spaces complying with Covid protocols. Similarly, extra-curricular activities continue to take place, reflecting the perennial nature of Catholic and Salesian

ethos in a moment which, like the cholera epidemic almost 1500 years ago will pass. Staff in the schools have exemplified presence and realised in practice a renewed Christian humanism.

Lydon concluded his response by sharing this prayer written by Fr David O'Malley SDB:

'Lord Jesus, you travelled through towns and villages curing every disease and illness. At your command, the sick were made well. Come to our help now, as we face the global spread of the corona virus, that we may all experience your healing love. Heal those who are sick with the virus. May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care. Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbours from helping one another. Heal us from our pride, and help us to recognise our weakness as we work together against a disease that knows no borders. AMEN'

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# St Benedict's students raise funds to help tackle homelessness this winter

*Students at St Benedict's in Ealing have raised over £2,300 this term for two charities which support homeless people across the UK - St Mungo's and Glass Door.*

James Hunter (Year 12) has raised £1,110 for Glass Door, which coordinates the UK's largest network of emergency winter shelters and support services, by taking part in the charity's Sleep Out in October. Braving the cold and the rain, James slept in his garden with only a sleeping bag between himself and the night sky.

"I took part in the Sleep Out because I think it's very easy to take for granted what we have," said James. "Sleeping out in what was a very cold, rainy night

made me appreciate the comfort and security of my home. Glass Door does a lot to support homeless people, and helps them to get back on their feet. We need to remember the importance of social justice; it's heart-breaking that so many people are homeless."

In a further initiative, Year 7 students at St Benedict's raised over £1,200 for St Mungo's, by organising raffles, socially distanced games and activities. The fundraising day was led by students in

Gervase House – one of St Benedict's four houses. Head of House, Ron Mushiso, said: "The Gervase House fundraiser was a collective effort, that included teachers, parents and students alike. Because current restrictions prohibit us from mixing year group bubbles, we decided to focus our activities around Year 7. This gave our newest intake to the senior school a first-hand experience of our House System, to see how the school comes together to fulfil the goal of service to our community."



# Formation in Virtues, Educating the Whole Person



by James Spencer,  
Communications Manager,  
Catholic Education Service

In recent years we have heard successive governments talk about the importance of 'character education' in schools as well as the positive impact this approach has on pupil development. Whilst character education may be a new approach for many schools, for Catholic schools, it has been at the core of what they have done for generations. However, Catholic educators have called it something very different, for them it is called Formation.

We hear frequently that Catholic education is centred on the formation of the whole child. However, what do we mean by this? Essentially, this is about the development of young people as human beings, engaging them in a shared vision for life based on virtues that lead to human flourishing modelled on Christ. In this respect Catholic schools are profoundly humanist institutions, because for the Church, Christ is the universal norm of all human ethical action – as the 'new Adam', He redefines what it means to be human.

This common vision calls all members of the whole school community to grow in positive personal strengths called virtues. These are not just theological virtues but also moral, civic, intellectual and performance-based virtues as well.

Virtues-based education in this respect runs counter to many modern methods of schooling. While some believe education to be a process by which one acquires knowledge and skills, akin to an empty container being filled up, virtues-based education seeks to give young people the foundations to make the right decisions in important situations. This is extremely poignant when you consider that the word education comes from the Latin 'educare' which means to 'bring out'.

Moreover, virtues-based formation in Catholic schools seeks to bring out the development of sound judgement, practical wisdom and the capacity to choose between alternatives illuminated by the light and truth of the Gospel.

What's more, there is both qualitative and quantitative data to support the benefits of this formation in virtues approach. Research from the University of Birmingham has found that a school's ethos is the single most important factor that supports character education. There can be no substitute for ethos because it embodies the purpose and sets the direction for the school.[1] Catholic schools, whatever the differences in their individually expressed 'mission statements' - all have the person of Christ at the core of their ethos, and as a result, Christ is at the core of every person that makes up the school community. Hence, formation must be a whole-school endeavour.

To this extent, recognising the importance of virtues-based formation being a whole-school effort, the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales Department for Education and Formation have produced a document called 'Formation in Virtues, Educating the Whole Person' which seeks to assist Catholic educators in weaving a study of the virtues into all aspects of school life.

Inspired by the art of Giotto di Bondone, and using definitions drawn from St John Henry Newman the document offers a simple articulation the seven principal virtues - the four pivotal or 'Cardinal' human virtues around which all other virtues are grouped, and the three virtues which the Church identifies as lying behind all our attempts to resemble Christ, which are known as the 'Theological' virtues.

By laying out a clear understanding of these seven virtues and their corresponding vices, Formation in Virtues, demonstrates how the virtues can be a lived experience where pupils can see them as more than just a subject taught in a Religious Education lesson, but as an integral part of how the school community operates as a whole. Formation in virtues is a life-long pursuit, and as we get older the challenges we face and our internal conflict between virtues and vice become ever more prominent. Given the context of modern society and the dangers therein, it is therefore more important than ever that young people see virtues 'lived' as opposed to abstract concepts and this is primarily what this document hopes to achieve.

You can access a copy of Formation in Virtues, Education the Whole Person via the following link: [https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/images/Formation\\_in\\_virtues\\_Final.pdf](https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/images/Formation_in_virtues_Final.pdf) or by visiting the 'publications' page on the Catholic Education Service's website.

To assist schools in the delivery of virtues-based formation the CES has brought together a series of resources which can be accessed here: <https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/schools/formation-in-virtues-resources>

## References:

[1] Devanny, C. 'Catholic Character Education', University of Birmingham Jubilee Centre, p.4

# The Theological Foundations of the Catholic School: notes towards a formation resource

By Raymond Friel

The Congregation for Catholic Education, in its 1977 document, *The Catholic School*, states that, "The Catholic school forms part of the saving mission of the Church" (CfCE, 1977, par. 9), which begs the question, what is the saving mission of the Church? This is one of the first points to present to anybody who is starting their journey in a Catholic school, especially one of the increasing number of colleagues who are not Catholic and may not be familiar with the Catholic Church (CES, 2019).

The same document states that the mission of the Church is to "proclaim the good news of salvation to all" (CfCE, 1977, par. 7). So what is this "good news", what is "salvation", and how can we make it comprehensible to those who may have no background in Christianity? The Good News (Gospel) is that "God the Father sent His only Son to begin the kingdom of God on earth and bring about the spiritual rebirth of mankind" (CfCE, 1977, par. 5). In other places the document talks about a "rebirth to a new life" (CfCE, 1977, par. 9). This need for rebirth brings us to a fundamental aspect of being human which is part of the Church's teaching. Human beings are incomplete, imperfect, 'fallen' to use the traditional language. Genesis, the first book of the bible, tells the story of Adam and Eve and their turning away from God. This is the biblical account of how sin came into the world. With an understanding of sin, we have an opportunity to consider the need for the "rebirth" referred to above. Sin is part of a discourse which has largely fallen away in the secular west, but is fundamental to the Christian understanding of the human person and cannot be avoided, although it needs to be presented in the 'fresh clothes' of contemporary understanding.

Pope emeritus Benedict XVI, reflecting on the story of the temptation of our first parents in the garden of Eden, describes the serpent as "that wisdom which rules the world" (Benedict XVI, 1995, p. 66). By giving in to this temptation, to eat of the fruit of the wisdom of the world, Adam and Eve denied their creatureliness, their covenant with God, their dependence on Him. This is the origin of "original sin", the damage to our right

relations with God, the urge to live without God, to be more than the creatures we are. This "wisdom" proves to be deceptive and only leads to inflated self-importance, rivalry, greed, competition, violence and vengeance.

The Catechism refers to original sin as something "'contracted' not 'committed' - a state and not an act" (CCC, 404). It's not something we've done, in other words, but something we're born into. It's what we know as human nature, which in the teaching of the Church is "wounded" but has not been "totally corrupted". That was an extreme position which emerged in the Reformation. Human nature is 'inclined' to what is not good for us, which in the tradition is called concupiscence. In his recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis defines this as "the human inclination to be concerned only with myself, my group, my own petty interest" (Pope Francis, 2020, par. 166). An inclination which can be overcome with the help of God.

Catholic education, then, is based on a premise that human nature is a mixed blessing. We are not wholly bad, but we are not reliably good either. We have natural inclinations which send us off in the wrong direction. The Church does not believe, in common with the dominant line of thinking since the Enlightenment, that human beings are autonomous creatures in charge of their own destiny. That approach has not served us well, as we can see all around us. Moral evil, the evil generated by human choices, is all too evident. The 1929 encyclical on Christian education by Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri* (still the most recent encyclical on education), states that "every method of education founded, wholly or in part, on the denial or forgetfulness of original sin and of grace, and relying on the sole powers of human nature, is unsound" (Pius XI, 1929, par. 60).

We should never mistake this theology for any kind of view of human beings as evil or irredeemable, quite the opposite. The book of Genesis reminds us that we are created in God's image and likeness (Gen 1: 27). This means that we are related to God and have in our mental 'equipment' the means to grow in the wisdom of God. We are God's project,



by Raymond Friel

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God's "work of art" (Eph 2:10) and "we stand under God's special protection" (Benedict XVI, 1995, p. 45). We bear God's breath in us (Gen 2:7). For Benedict XVI, "this is the deepest reason for the inviolability of human dignity" (Benedict XVI, 1995, p. 45). In the course of history when the human person is no longer seen as standing under God's protection, then the human being is viewed in a utilitarian fashion, to be used and exploited. This understanding of the innate dignity of the human person is one of the "major chords" of Catholic education.

*Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Vatican II) provides a compelling account of the dignity of the human person in Chapter 1. It describes the consequence of original sin as an inner "dramatic struggle between good and evil, light and darkness" (GS, 1965, par. 13), but always with the hope that God is working with and for our good, "through the wisdom which gently draws the human mind to seek love and what is true and good" (GS, 1965, par. 15). This God who draws us towards a different type of wisdom than the serpent's wisdom is not a distant figure outside of our existence. God is known in the intimate depths of the human heart, God within us, a "divine seed" (GS, 1965, par. 3), or divine spark. There is a law (natural law) inscribed on our hearts, whose observance is our dignity. This is our conscience, "the most intimate centre and sanctuary of a person, in which he or she is alone with God whose voice echoes within them" (GS, 1965, par. 16).

The same image of being "wounded" is used to describe the human condition but with an understanding of the freedom God has given us to seek Him of our own accord, although we can never fully realise our orientation towards God "without the help of God's grace" (GS, 1965, par. 17), not through our



own efforts. Grace is our sharing in the divine life and it is the foundation of our dignity, “the outstanding feature of human dignity is that human beings have been called to communion with God” (GS, 1965, par. 19). A distinct feature of the human being is that from our first moments, we are “invited to encounter God” (GS, 1965, par. 19). This is the human vocation, our eternal destiny, as the catechism expresses it, we are called by God “to seek him, to know him, to love him” (CCC, 1) with all our strength. We were made by God, if you like, with a ‘capacity for God’ – in our design is the hardware, the operating system, to be reachable by the creator of the universe and to respond. This is good news and makes us good. Flawed, maybe, but essentially good, in fact as God said at the end of the day he had made human beings, “very good” (Gen 1:31). We have perhaps laboured in the past, or previous generations have, with an image of God which is punitive and distant, a cold eye weighing up our moral endeavours to pass judgement on them after death. In this understanding, God assumes the features of humanity at its least forgiving and looks more like one of us than a God of love. God is not a projection of our violence and anger, nor is God an ‘object’ that we can define and therefore limit. Another document of Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), does not ‘define’ God as an object or refer to divine revelation as a series of propositions to be assented to, but rather places the emphasis on revelation as communication and God as calling us into relationship, into friendship, so that through Christ and in the holy Spirit, “human beings can draw near to the Father and become sharers in the divine nature” (DV, 1965, par. 2). God does not communicate in anger or judgement, but “in his great love speaks to mankind as friends” (DV, 1965, par. 2). This great insight into the nature of God – as one who seeks our friendship - is enshrined in the Old Testament in the idea of covenant. There are two main covenant traditions in the Old Testament. The first is the unconditional covenant of blessing bestowed upon Noah, Abraham and David. The second, which we find in the story of Moses on Sinai, is more conditional with an “If...then...” pattern. If you keep my commandments, then you will be blessed. The covenant with Noah after the flood was in fact a covenant with all creation, not just with human beings, but “between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth” (Gen 9:16). This reminds us of another foundational element of our faith which should be at the heart of the work of the Catholic school: care for the earth, our common home. It was not just human beings that God made and considered to be very good, but all of creation: “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it

was very good” (Gen 1: 31). Human beings were given a responsibility by God in the garden of Eden “to till it and keep it” (Gen 2:15). Pope Francis has brought this aspect of our faith back into the centre of our thinking with his landmark encyclical, *Laudato Si*. There he makes it clear that human health is not just about good relations with God, but also with our neighbour and creation itself. The exploitation of creation for personal gain or profit is a rupture in our relationship with God and neighbour and diminishes our own state of spiritual health.

In the law handed down to Moses on Sinai there is also a clear indication that love of neighbour includes the “resident alien” (Ex 22:21) and the widows and orphans (Ex. 22: 22). Deep in the Judeo-Christian tradition is a divinely sanctioned regard for the vulnerable, the precarious, the weak. If they are abused, the Lord said to Moses, “when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry” (Ex 22:23). So the ‘circuit’ of life runs through God, self, neighbour (especially the vulnerable) and creation. If the relation with any of these is broken then the circuit breaks and we are not in right relation, not taking part in life to the full or, in the terms of modern psychology, we are not in a state of good mental health, we are out of kilter. Pope Francis puts it this way:

“Disregard for the duty to cultivate and maintain a proper relationship with my neighbour, for whose care and custody I am responsible, ruins my relationship with my own self, with others, with God and with the earth. When all these relationships are neglected, when justice no longer dwells in the land, the Bible tells us that life is endangered” (Pope Francis, 2015, par. 70).

Julian of Norwich, the medieval English mystic, compared creation to a hazelnut held in the palm of God’s hand. She described three properties of the hazelnut: “The first is that God made it, the second is that God loves it, the third is that God cares for it.” (Julian of Norwich, 1998, p. 47) The love of God for creation is another of the “major chords” that should resound in the Catholic schools, as well as our role as ‘images’ of God to be good stewards, to love and care for creation and our vulnerable neighbour. Not only to care for creation but to participate in it, to be co-creators, to have a privileged share in God’s creative work, to be fruitful, to procreate and multiply. This is the human vocation, the revelation of which came to its fullest expression in the Word made flesh, God among us, Jesus Christ.

The abundant self-giving of God in creation and in his covenant with the people of Israel, reached a definitive high point in the

Incarnation, when God’s Word, the creative force holding together the universe, became a human child and was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem around 2000 years ago. The purpose of this extraordinary ‘self-emptying’ of God, the mission of Jesus Christ, was “to give witness to the truth, to save and not to judge, to serve and not to be served.” (GS, par. 3) To see Jesus is to see his Father (John 14:9). Jesus came to tell us “about the inner life of God” (DV, par. 4) and his message, in the memorable words of *Dei Verbum*, is “that God is with us, to deliver us from the darkness of sin and death, and to raise us up to eternal life” (DV, par. 4). A saviour is born to us, as we remember from our Christmas carols, but what does it mean to be saved, and in what way does Jesus save us?

For contemporary people who are distant from any memory of Christian culture or teaching, the theology of ‘atonement’ and ‘sacrifice’ might sound like a foreign language, but the concepts are close to home. Think for example of the attention paid to the sacrifice of military personnel. Think of the sacrifice of front-line workers during the pandemic. To lay down one’s life for one’s friend, or a stranger, is not a strange concept to us. Another way to talk about salvation, which is still very much in harmony with church teaching, is to think of ‘restoration’ – restoring human beings to fullness of life, showing them a way out of the confinement of original sin, this existence in an enclosure of death-haunted, vanity-driven futility where the prevalent ‘wisdom’ leads to looking for happiness in the wrong places, leading not to happiness but ultimately emptiness. The Word became flesh to save us by reconciling us to God (CCC 457), so that we might know God’s love and not hide from it as Adam and Eve did in the garden.

The ministry of Jesus began with a call to “repent” – in other words to change, to change our minds and our hearts, to be transformed from a life run by possessions, power and prestige, to a life which partakes in the divine nature (CCC 457), a new way of being and belonging which sets people free from the illusions of looking for happiness in the wrong places, which sees people, especially the poor, as brothers and sisters, deriving dignity, not as functions of worldly hierarchies established to serve the few. Jesus came to show us the forgiveness of God, to show us what it means to be fully human and to invite us into that state, that kingdom of God. Jesus came to proclaim a New Law, a new commandment of love. He extended the Jewish Law of love of neighbour to the radical command to love your enemy, to be a peacemaker, to serve and not to lord it over others, to look after the marginal and injured. And more than that, radically

more than that, he identified himself with the marginal by saying that “just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Mt 25: 40).

This is a revolution in human history, a radical departure from what has gone before. The Catechism refers to the “radical choice” (CCC 546) Jesus put before us in his teaching, to give up attachments to the former ways of being and belonging, which relied on domination, hierarchy, an “us” defined over against a “them” which kept so many in a state of diminished life. Hannah Arendt, a Jewish intellectual of the last century, understood this in a remarkable way when she said, “the discoverer of the role of forgiveness in the realm of human affairs was Jesus of Nazareth. The fact that he made this discovery in a religious context and articulated it in religious language is no reason to take it any less seriously in a strictly secular sense.” (Arendt, 1998, p. 238).

Jesus forgave the sins of human beings in his earthly ministry and most movingly on the cross. He was fully human – and fully divine. In his passion, he absorbed, ‘took on’, the violence and brutality of the human condition. He occupied the place of the victim, the ‘scapegoat’ which on the Day of Atonement took on the sins of the people and was driven out of the city and run to its death over a precipice (echoes of which we find in Luke 4: 29-30). He did not resist, or fight back, which

is the pattern of violence through the ages. He experienced the worst of what human beings do to each other to remove anybody who threatens the systems of exploitation and domination in order to expose the futility of such behaviour, in order to become our forgiving victim and call us to a new creation, a new way of being human.

Bishop Robert Barron explains the death of Jesus in this way: “as he hung from the cross, he became sin, as St Paul would later put it, and bearing the full weight of that disorder, he said, ‘Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.’ (Lk 23:24). Jesus on the cross drowned all the sins of the world in the infinite ocean of divine mercy” (Barron, 2011, p. 31). Jesus could not be held in death. He was raised from the dead by the power of the Spirit and appeared to his disciples. This apostolic witness to the resurrection is foundational to the faith. Everything is read backwards from that moment.

The account of the resurrection in John’s gospel reads like a re-telling of the account of creation: “Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalen came to the tomb...” (Jn 20:1). Eve is back in the garden and a new Adam has broken free from the shackles of death. In John’s gospel, Pentecost happens later that day. The risen Jesus appears to the disciples and simply says, “Peace be with you.” There is no vengeance, no tit for tat, no recrimination.

The victim forgives us, we are ‘loosed’ from our games of violence, shaming and victim-making. Then, “he breathed on them and said to them, ‘receive the Holy Spirit’” (Jn 20: 21). Their commission was to forgive sins, or as St Paul said, to be ambassadors of “the ministry of reconciliation” since in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself. This is the new creation in which, in the Spirit, we are called to take part, to be insiders in the life of God.

This brings us back to where we started, the mission of the church. Cardinal Grocholewski, who was the Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education from 1999 until 2015, described this mission as being “To preach the Gospel to all nations: to enrich all people with the light of the Good News, which, by its essence, is aimed at transforming the human person and setting him or her on the path that leads to salvation” (Grocholewski, 2008). The transformation of the person is what we have been outlining above as a slow emergence from the consequences of original sin to a new life inspired by the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in our lives, the experience of being forgiven. St John Paul II described the work of the kingdom, this new way of being in the world, in terms of relationships: “The kingdom aims at transforming human relationships; it grows gradually as people slowly learn to love, forgive and serve one another” (John Paul II, 1990, 14).

## Raymond Friel takes on his next challenge

For those of us associated with Networking who have worked closely with Raymond Friel from his days as a Secondary headteacher, to his two years as General Secretary of the Catholic Independent Schools Conference and, until last summer, his success in turning round the fortunes of the Plymouth CAST multi academy trust which had fallen foul of OFSTED, have been wondering what his next challenge would be. Taking on the temporary role of interim CEO of Westminster Academies Trust last September failed to fully answer the ‘what next?’ question.

Now we can announce that from April 2021 Raymond will take on the role of CEO of Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN), the official social action agency of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales which was established to develop the Church’s social action in

these parts of the United Kingdom. It seeks to make England and Wales places where every person can be fulfilled in their families and communities, living with peace and human dignity. CSAN seeks to develop the capacity of personal, parish, community and national action to address many forms of misery and to promote social justice in England and Wales. The network includes Catholic dioceses and professional organisations committed to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. If ever there was a time when the work of this agency was most urgently required it has to be in the world of COVID recovery where, in the fifth wealthiest country in the world, we are hearing the word destitute used to describe the lives of almost one million children.

Raymond Friel, whose writings, familiar to readers of Networking, demonstrate a critically perceptive mind, a capacity for

committed leadership but most importantly, a visionary perspective, deeply rooted in the Good News of Jesus Christ, tempered in the sharp end of engagement in the front line of Catholic education.

Not surprisingly, Raymond is setting off with the stated aim of bridging an already narrowing gap between our principal social action agency and our schools. Evidence in recent issues of Networking suggests that our schools are well on their way towards this convergence. Could there have been a better time for an educationalist to be taking on this particular role in the Church. Sr Lynda Dearlove, Vice Chair of CSAN said: “The Board looks forward to working with Raymond to realizing Pope Francis’ vision of a ‘poor Church for the poor’.”

By Willie Slavin



# The Well

Pield Heath House School

Pield Heath House School is one of only 2 special schools in Westminster Diocese. It is a non-maintained co-education school, within the Trusteeship of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. We offer day, week day and respite provision for students aged 7-19.

Following a successful application to the Cardinal's Appeal Fund, we were given a grant to set up a Community café. The name 'The Well' was chosen based on the encounter of the Samaritan Woman and Jesus from St John's Gospel Chapter 4. As part of the Year of the Word – 'The God who Speaks', this beautiful story was shared with all the students and staff. A key aspect was to provide a warm welcome to rest and relax. The importance of water for our mental, physical and spiritual refreshment and overall wellbeing is also another central theme.

As this has been a challenging time for everyone we were keen to show our care and concern for others. For our first Community Event of the new school year we

chose to host a Macmillan Coffee Morning on 25th September. Aware that everyone no doubt, knows someone who has suffered from cancer we also had a board for any prayer requests. Believing that as Pope Francis says 'All it takes is one good person to restore hope.' We took into account the necessary guidelines regarding social distancing and each bubble was scheduled to visit at a specific time. Unfortunately, we were not able to open our doors to parents and the local community; however, they supported generously by buying raffle tickets and generous donations.

Students in our 6th Form – The Victor Braun Centre, have Café Enterprise as part of their curriculum. This offers the ideal opportunity to develop many essential life skills including communication, working as a team, catering, handling money and above all the feeling that they are making a valuable contribution to society. Thanks to the dedicated Team at The Well, on the day of the Coffee morning students worked enthusiastically serving hot drinks and delicious cakes. They also ran some

have-a-go activities e.g. guess the number of coffee Beans, the weight of the cake, and they ran a raffle. Thanks to their enthusiasm, hard work and the generous support of everyone they raised an amazing £543.50.

We believe that hosting this event will bring lots of blessings to 'The Well'. We really appreciate having been given this opportunity to set up a Community Café. The potential for having this provision to support our students with their employability skills is enormous. Staff are invited to order snacks and lunch every day in the café. Once the current situation improves and it is safe to do so, we plan to open the facility to anyone who is lonely and in need of company in both the Parish and the local community. This is very much in keeping with our school mission which is to encourage everyone to live life to the full. (John 10:10)

Eryl D'Souza  
Associate Principal  
Community & External Partnerships





# Schools as an additional support service for vulnerable families

Sadly we are experiencing an ever increasing level of poverty in our schools today. Whilst I welcome the intervention of Marcus Rashford and his initiative to encourage the government to provide children with free meals in place of free school meals during school holidays, the media attention on this single issue masks a number of other related problems facing many families at the current time.

Many of us working in education have seen a significant increase in poverty in our schools over the past 10 years. An instance of this was when one of my students Bobby walked past me in a corridor; the sole of his shoe had become detached and was flapping about as he walked. Bobby was laughing at the time and I joined in with a little banter 'I see you are in a right flap Bobby'. I advised him it was best to change into his trainers and purchase a new pair of shoes at the weekend.

The following week, Bobby returned to school; to my surprise, as he was a very compliant student, Bobby was still wearing trainers. I enquired why this was the case. Bobby apologised and said his mother had been unable to purchase his shoes but he would definitely have them the following week. The weekend came and went and Bobby still did not have any shoes. Mum was contacted and the truth came to light. On being asked why Bobby still did not have any shoes, Mum broke down in tears and told us that she could not afford to buy them.

Mum had recently suffered an acrimonious separation from Dad and now Dad was refusing to support the family financially, having moved out of the family home. Mum could not afford the mortgage on her own, despite her job with the NHS. An illustration of a family that Theresa May called 'just about managing' were managing no longer.

Once we were made aware of the situation, we purchased Bobby his shoes and immediately contacted the Catholic Children's Society who made a cash payment available to support the family as a temporary measure. About a week after

this, I saw Bobby's mum at a parents evening. Mum, a very proud lady, could not talk when she saw me but embraced me in tears!

Sadly the family lost their home and had to move but are now in an improved situation, although they remain in a precarious financial position. This story is not unusual and I fear that with the Covid pandemic continuing things will get even worse. It is important to acknowledge that what has been described is occurring in Hertfordshire, one of the most affluent counties in England. The question must be asked, 'How bad is the situation elsewhere?'

Another example we recently encountered was with a refugee family; due to their status are not allowed to work or to access any state funding. I was approached by a local priest who brought the family to my attention as they were in his parish and had a child at our school. He wanted me to be aware of their dire financial situation and to be vigilant. I observed our student at lunchtime and was horrified to see her open her lunch box which contained two cream crackers! We immediately provided her with both breakfast and a main meal each day.

It has become all too familiar for families to suffer great hardship once there is any change in their circumstances. One of the happiest times in the life of a family should be the birth of a child. For some, however, it becomes a nightmare, as already overcrowded accommodation gets even more crowded, additional expenses are incurred like a cot, nappies, clothing and items to feed a baby when the means to pay are not available. For some families, a fridge, washing machine or oven breaking down becomes a catastrophe as again, there is no money available to pay for the white good needed; yet such goods are essential for any family. Here organisations such as the St. Vincent De Paul Society are incredibly helpful and have supported a number of our families.

As we approach Christmas, I am reminded of a situation experienced by one of our school cleaners. She is a hard-working single mum



by Edward Conway  
who is currently Headteacher  
at St. Michael's Catholic High  
School, Watford and has been in  
post since September 2010. Prior  
to this he was Headteacher at  
John Paul II School, Wimbledon  
from 2007-2010. He is a member  
of the Diocese of Westminster  
Commission for Education. Ed-  
ward was designated a National  
Leader of Education in 2016 and  
is involved in numerous initiatives  
concerning School to School Sup-  
port and School Improvement.  
He speaks around the country on  
educational issues.

with three teenage children. This lady has numerous jobs, hairdressing and cleaning. Just before Christmas 2019 as we were about to break up it was brought to our attention that due to increases in their rent the family were facing such a difficult time that they could not afford a Christmas lunch let alone any presents. Again, the school provided with numerous staff donating money from their own pockets for the family's Christmas lunch and the Catholic Children's Society providing gifts.

Currently the Coronavirus – Covid19 pandemic is having a devastating effect on our economy and this is inevitably being felt in schools. Whilst the current pandemic is responsible for an increase in poverty levels, it is an exacerbating factor rather than the cause. Levels of poverty have been increasing for the past 10 years due to a variety of factors. The main one being the deliberate implementation of the policy of austerity, first applied by the coalition government of 2010. The situation has been compounded over the years by additional policies which have had a negative effect on already struggling working families, such as changes to the benefit system and the introduction of Universal Credit. The negative impact of zero hours contracts, mental health issues, job losses and rent increases are additional factors that have led to increases in poverty in both our school and in the United Kingdom as a whole, but this list is by no means exhaustive.

Analysis by the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) has found that approximately 600,000 more children now live in relative poverty than in 2010, with low-income families



especially hard hit by austerity measures. It is estimated that around £36 billion has been taken out of the benefit system since 2010. Furthermore, services that used to exist to support vulnerable families have now either disappeared altogether or have seen significant cuts in their funding. Therefore they now have a limited capacity to support, and are thus unable to provide for all those who need assistance. It is estimated that 8.1 million people in the United Kingdom now live in relative poverty yet are working families

Schools are doing their utmost to support families in need and to make up for the existing social deficit, but schools have also seen their funding decrease and expenses increase; for example increases in pension and national insurance contributions as well as unfunded pay rises. Nevertheless, schools continue to assist families as an additional support service. At St Michael's, like many other schools, we are providing numerous services for our vulnerable children. We

still prioritise the funded provision of a School Counsellor as we believe this is essential. We also try to be inventive by looking at alternative provision. Our Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Co-ordinator (SENDCO) secured the services of a trainee therapist who was able to provide CBT sessions as part of her training to students who were unable to access the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Through our Pupil Premium funding, we have employed a Welfare Officer who supports our most vulnerable families and ensures that they are able to gain assistance from relevant agencies that currently remain in existence.

It is clear that over the past ten years schools have become a vital additional support agency. Despite our best efforts, it grieves me that our most vulnerable children are the ones who suffer most at this time of increasing poverty. During the previous lockdown this group were further disadvantaged due to their inability to

access virtual learning as laptops, tablets and other devices were not readily available in their households. Thus the already existing attainment gap increased further. This was despite the fact that every laptop and device owned by our school was loaned out to our vulnerable families. This difficulty in accessing learning and the curriculum remotely has a greater effect than simply disadvantaging students academically. It leads to poor self-esteem, a sense of failure and in some cases students stop attending school altogether as there seems little point since they have fallen so far behind their peers in academic achievement.

We know that the government has to date had to borrow billions of pounds during this Coronavirus-Covid 19 Pandemic. The economy will have to readjust once it is finally over and the money 'paid back'. It is imperative that new policies are implemented that do not unfairly penalise the poorest and most vulnerable in our society. A return to austerity is not an option.

# Ursuline Preparatory School Warley

*Wins the Sunday Times, Independent Preparatory School of the Year Award 2021.*

In what has been a most challenging and difficult year, The Ursuline Preparatory School, Brentwood were thrilled to learn that they had been placed 6th in The Sunday Times Parent Power league table for 2021, this is the highest place that they have achieved since the league table was first introduced. This achievement was heightened when they learnt that the school had been awarded "Independent Preparatory School of the Year".

Having this award bestowed upon the school is made even more special as it is not an honour that can be applied for; neither can a school be nominated for the award. The title is presented after all aspects of the school life is reviewed, including previous inspection reports. On making the award the Times commented "The school's ethos, strongly centred on its Catholic heritage, is to strive for excellence in all aspects of life and to be kind and caring." "The academic results achieved

by this non-selective prep school are little short of astounding and compare with the very best in England across all independent and state schools."

Mrs Wilson, Headteacher, was interviewed by the Sunday Times and said, "I am absolutely delighted and take great pride in accepting this award on behalf of the school."

"As a non-selective school, where the children are not accepted on academic ability we strive to celebrate and discover their unique strengths that allow them to become the very best of themselves."

"With the backing of our dedicated, Trustees, the support of our Governors and an incredible professional team of staff, receiving this accolade is the culmination of a lot of hard work and commitment from every member of my team."

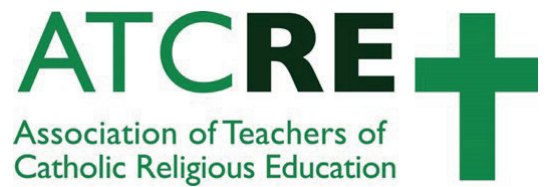


"We could not have achieved any of this without our parents. The trust and faith they have shown in us to keep their charges safe and well has been evident through them returning all their children back to school during these unprecedented times, ensuring minimal disruption to their education."

"Finally, I must say thank you to our wonderful children whose hard work and diligence is bettered only by their obvious joy and happiness at being part of our Ursuline Prep. Community".

# Catholic RE in 2020

*Edited By Andy Lewis*



The ATCRE Executive reflects upon the year gone by and shares some of their personal reflections from the classroom during this unique time to be a teacher of Catholic RE:

I have read Genesis 2 so many times. However, it is just now during these strange times of separation and isolation that I appreciate more and more what God reveals to us humans about our nature. He says 'it is not right that the man should be alone'. Our human nature relentlessly pushes us to connect with other human beings.

As teachers we have delivered hundreds of online sessions, whether directly via streaming platforms or as pre-recorded lessons. While it was 'something', I believe that for many of us it never felt 'good and right enough'. The beauty and benefits of teacher-student face to face interactions have never been clearer, with little 'in-house' jokes, praises or tellings-off, smiles or upsets, moments of feeling confident or being frustrated, ... with 30 students sharing their lives with one another under the same roof. Under these trying circumstances, thank you to all teachers who have made efforts to replicate that special "classroom experience" through online learning with their students, since for humans to feel alone - it is not right!



**Peter Hornak - Head of RE at St Joseph's High School, Diocese of Lancaster**

This term has highlighted the frequency with which I relied on non-verbal behaviour cues, such as tapping a distracted pupil's desk or merely going to stand in closer proximity to them. In the age of social distancing, these nuances of behaviour management which were previously a staple, have been removed all too abruptly. In its place, I ensure a more regular rotation of the seating plan, even greater emphasis on positive rewards, and have increased

my ability to spot poor behaviour at the outset; thinking of illicitly chatting to your neighbour? Let's make it part of an emergency mini-plenary and write a shared response on a mini-whiteboard instead!

What I've learnt from all this is how incredibly resilient teachers are, how few resources you actually need to deliver an excellent lesson, and that the 'teacher glare' still works above a mask!

**Helen Bridges - Extended Leadership Team at Saint Augustine's Catholic College, Diocese of Clifton**

I was at home with my parents the night that lockdown was announced and so I stayed there. Both my parents are RE teachers so it created a funny sort of household! Teaching on Teams had its challenges; I found myself making lots of PowerPoints so that the students had something more interesting to look at than my face. I realised that setting the students short, assessed tasks after each lesson was a good way to make sure that they paid some attention during the live call. I replaced most of my extended writing tasks with shorter, quicker activities. I also experimented with recording lessons a bit, which gave the students the chance to listen to new ideas and new concepts at their leisure while I was available on the Teams' 'chat' facility. This worked well for the older students.

It's easy to take for granted the joy of being in a classroom! The joy of a well-planned lesson being blown off course by excellent questions and of seeing the penny drop when you're going through the structure of a 12 mark question.

I'd like to think that I have returned to school with a renewed appreciation for the privilege of my job and I can't wait until we don't have to always be two metres apart!



**Marianne Lane Head of Religious Studies - St George's College, Diocese of Arundel & Brighton**

Moving around rooms, I have become a pilgrim of sorts - visiting the upper floors of the school and the science labs to teach Year 8 or invading the Maths block to teach Year 11. One positive, however, is that I see many more staff on a day to day basis and once we have figured out 'who's behind the mask', we greet each other and share our woes and triumphs (at a safe two metre distance!). In amongst the chaos, there have been some stirring moments: Watching the pupils say prayers behind their masks in small grouped assemblies; Using Zoom and Teams to reconnect with my Diocese and colleagues from other schools; The response from my Year 10 class when they found out that singing carols isn't going ahead this year!

However, there have been real difficulties too. Losing colleagues and being unable to attend funerals and pay my respect in the usual ways has been very hard. I pray 2021 is a new beginning of sorts... In the words of Pope Francis on the first Palm Sunday after his election "Do not let yourselves be robbed of hope! Do not let hope be stolen! The hope that Jesus gives us."



**Kath Wilson - Head of RE - Cardinal Allen Catholic High School, Diocese of Lancaster**

We have worked hard to have a daily act of worship and have a daily prayer which includes different resources from hymns, to readings from the Bible, to video clips. This is done via a video link each morning. As well as this we have produced a Gospel assembly and an end of term liturgy with homily and blessing from our priest which has helped to bring the School together. We made remembrance boxes where staff and students were able to submit their prayers for those who have died.

For Christmas we have made a nativity



scene for each member of staff with cut out pictures of different characters like the angels, Mary and Joseph... with baby Jesus arriving on the last day of term, staff will put up these each day during advent. This has become a real talking point and every classroom now has a nativity scene which is slowly being filled over Advent. We have filmed members of staff lighting the advent wreath which happens at the beginning of each week.

We are in process of filming the final liturgy on the last day of term which will include Christmas hymns and readings read by the staff and students. So Covid has made us more resourceful and we have had to look at lots of different ways to involve staff and students. In some ways the use of video links, online assemblies and prayers mean we are even more together as a staff in our separate classrooms.

While we can't meet as a community at the moment, we are able to worship together at the same time each day and when we have assembly and a liturgy. So in some ways we feel more together.



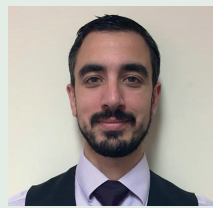
**Marie-Therese Weston - Head of RE - St Anselm's Catholic School Canterbury, Diocese of Southwark**

Unlike many other subjects, RE is a subject that does not need exceptional specialised resources, save perhaps a textbook, but if your digital resources are up to scratch this does not need to be an obstacle.

In the last few years we have tightened our structure in our teaching and student learning so that every page of the students' exercise books has pages allocated to each section of the GCSE, each student has a title page for each section so their book includes: learning objectives, sources of wisdom and authority, key terms, knowledge and understanding questions and practice exam questions. So, the exercise book becomes a revision tool that is being filled in as they go through the programme.

With all resources on our virtual learning platform, any time a student misses a lesson or has to self-isolate, all they have to do is find the lesson and find the pages in their books and fill them in.

In a time of uncertainty, the RE department is trying to maintain some stability and give the students a lesson where they know exactly what is happening, what is coming and what is expected.



**Andrew Capone - Head of RE - St Simon Stock Catholic School, Diocese of Southwark**

During this time we have had to give up many familiarities. For me, I have had to do without Think-Pair-Share (a favourite of the RE classroom) during home learning, have had to sharpen my explanations and subject knowledge for online lessons, have learnt to own awkward silences whilst I wait for someone (or anyone!) to answer my question in the chat, and I have had to deal with the demands of AfL and BfL whilst staring into a classroom through a slightly blurry camera where the usual body language I use is redundant. As I said at the ATCRE Conference, perhaps our new-found love of videos and the new-found independence of our Sixth Formers will inspire new methods of revision. Perhaps a new resilience in our students will mean they give even the hardest topics a go independently. And perhaps Covid will finally provide the chance for the flipped-learning that I have been trying to embed for years.

Yet, it is also worth celebrating what remains the same; keeping the main thing the main thing. The core skill of the teacher is to work out what students need to understand, to draw it out of students, and to assess this learning. Whatever Covid-related challenges we find ourselves facing in 2021, I would encourage us to keep it simple; what do I want all my students to all know, and how can I check they all know it?



**Dave Legrand - Head of RE, Salesian School and RE tutor for Teach SouthEast Diocese of Arundel and Brighton**

## The Chair writes ...

### Virtual CPD for RE teachers continues

We had a really strong turnout for our virtual conference that we ran in October 2020. We had nine speakers spread over four days. The resources and video recordings of the presentations are on our website for reference (see [www.atcre.co.uk/virtual-conference-october-2020](http://www.atcre.co.uk/virtual-conference-october-2020)). Participants said they enjoyed, 'The variety of speakers.', 'Getting free CPD from the comfort of your own home. Half-an-hour bursts were good too.', 'It was great to see the mix of classroom teachers, advisers and university lecturers sharing the same space with equal value', 'My whole department was involved on different days. Did not interfere with teaching; no cost, no cover.' From the questionnaire we received some helpful advice on how to make improvements, so in future we will give more time for questions and discussions. One person commented: 'Thank you for putting this together! I have had more external RE CPD in the two days I attended than I have in the last 4 years of my teaching career!'

### Monthly CPD for RE teachers

We have decided to continue to run free CPD for RE teachers on a monthly basis. As I write we have for December, Fr Eamonn Muchahy CSSp presenting on: What can we as Educators learn from Pope Francis' latest Encyclical letter Fratelli Tutti on Fraternity and Social Friendship? For January, we have Dr Margaret Carswell on: Teaching scripture for meaning not recall: Hermeneutical Pedagogy. For February, we have Daisy Christodoulou on: The use of comparative judgement in RE. More speakers and dates will be announced shortly, go to our events section of our website to see what is available (<https://www.atcre.co.uk/events>).

### Save the date National RE Conference in 2021

We are also delighted to announce the date of our main annual conference, Saturday 2nd October 2021. We are currently negotiating for a venue near Manchester. We hope things will be back to a new normal and that the Conference can go ahead as a face to face meeting, however, if not it will simply go virtual and become a Zoom national RE conference.

### Free to join

Remember if you teach RE in a Catholic school, it is free to become a member and receive our mailings, join at <https://www.atcre.co.uk/membership>

**Matthew Dell**  
Chair of ATCRE

# Parental Engagement Under Lockdown: Reflections on Disadvantaged Families' Perceived Barriers in Home-Schooling



by Suzanne Wilson, Research Fellow in Social Inclusion and Community Engagement, University of Central Lancashire

Children have returned to school following months of home-schooling. Although demanding on parents from all backgrounds, it presented particular challenges to some low-income families, including limited access to IT and the internet, and reduced incomes (Child Poverty Action Group, 2020). There is also evidence suggesting that disadvantaged students faced more challenged in accessed schoolwork when compared with their wealthier peers. This all leaves disadvantaged students at risk of not meeting their academic potential, and I would like to spend some time reflecting on this from a parental engagement perspective.

## Overview of Research

I want to draw on the results of some research I did to understand why some white, working-class parents have difficulties in engaging with the education system. I would like to use these experiences to consider how parents may have felt and responding during the national lockdown in the Summer Term of 2020, and consider ways schools can work effectively parents who seem removed from the education system with the ultimate aim of providing the best educational opportunities for all children.

I spoke to 77 parents of secondary school children, considered disadvantaged (i.e. eligible for pupil premium funding), in focus groups or interviews to learn more about experiences of educational engagement in education (for more information about how I did this see Wilson, 2019). I found that parents often felt frustrated, marginalised and disconnected from school which, in many cases, impacted on how able they felt to support their children's education (Wilson & McGuire, in press; Wilson & Worsley in press). I applied Bourdieu's notion of capitals to interpret these

results, proposing that that middle-class children and their families had an unfair advantage in accessing and navigating the educational system:

**Financial capital:** The financial means to support education through providing a suitable workspace at home, tutoring and enrichment opportunities. Financial capital also includes how working patterns may impact on the ways in which people can engage with systems. Many parents I spoke to worked unsocial hours in professions such as cleaners or carers, which impacted on how they felt they could access school, for example in attending parents evening:

*"I was working from 8 am till 10 pm and there was no way I could go to it, I tried to get part of it off and there was no chance. That was it, so I couldn't go to it. Once you've missed that parents evening there isn't an opportunity to meet all the teachers again. It's just one teacher and you don't know if you're getting the right outlook over other subjects".*

**Social capital:** Being in the same social circles of those with power and influence. According to Bourdieu, social capital is 'not what you know, it's who you know'. It also refers to how confident and comfortable people may feel operating in social situations. Within my research many parents told me how uncomfortable they felt speaking to some teachers:

*"every time I was going into a meeting, I was bursting out crying, and it's embarrassing. I'm sitting here with you lot round me, and I felt intimidated. Once when I went into a meeting there was six of them and me. I felt so intimidated. It was horrible. Why can't you have a one to one? If I'd known that I'd have fetched my husband".*

**Cultural capital:** The collection of symbolic elements (such as skills, tastes, posture, clothing, mannerisms, material belongings, credentials) that we gain through being part of a particular social class. Cultural capital also includes academic qualifications and knowledge of the education system. Bourdieu argued that cultural capital can be used to "explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes by relating academic success" (Bourdieu, 1986, p.47). Most parents I spoke to had limited educational qualifications themselves, and felt that this limited the extent and the ways they could support their children's education:

*"I was worried because I'm not well educated myself and that's the only thing, I was panicking for was because I thought 'How can I help teach him?'".*

**Habitus:** These accumulate in what Bourdieu called habitus, a "feel for the game" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.128). By this he argued that middle-class children and their families possess the relevant capital to succeed in the education as it was a system, they felt comfortable and competent operating in. The parents I interviewed told me that they felt unfamiliar and uncomfortable navigating the education system, that it was felt to be a world different from theirs:

*"If something needs cleaning, I can do it. If it's something I've got to read, take it in and write about it, I didn't really know what essays were".*

As can be seen, the parents I spoke to felt distant and disengaged with school and their children's education. This was sometimes expressed as overt hostility or disinterest, but in my cases, this was masking a deep-seated feeling of insecurity and discomfort.



## Implications of Research in a Covid-19 Context

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit the UK, I knew this would have a significant impact on the education system and was worried about the impact this would have on the most vulnerable families. I have been gathering evidence about this since the onset of the outbreak which includes photo diaries from teenage girls, conversations with parents and teaching staff, along with sitting on Covid response groups at a local, national and international level. Reflecting on this evidence, and interpreted through Bourdieu's capitals, I would like to argue that families experiencing poverty faced disproportionate barriers during lockdown:

- Financial capital: The challenges facing families experiencing poverty are well documented, as I have already discussed. As the economic impact hit during lockdown, I argue that parents struggled to be able to access work and provide the basics for their children, let alone meet the additional requirements placed on them, such as providing access to food and IT. The parents I am discussing were receiving Free School Meals, but the scheme was inaccessible to parents with limited access to IT and rural families faced the challenge of having no shops locally within the scheme.
- Social capital: Parents I spoke to in my initial research reported lacking confidence in talking to teachers in pre-Covid times. I suggest that this may have been worsened in a time where face to face contact with teachers was not possible. Parents may also feel isolated, not knowing who to talk to get support with supporting their children's education and accessing unfamiliar systems.
- Cultural capital: Access to IT and broadband was not the only challenge to engaging with online learning. Accounts from those working with parents during lockdown suggest that some parents lacked the right digital skills to access to use online learning systems. Furthermore, as was revealed in my research, many parents feel they lack the knowledge and skills to actively support their children with their schoolwork.

- Habitus: The world of school and education was unfamiliar to the parents I spoke to in my initial research, often perceived as threatening. During lockdown, which was unfamiliar and unsettling for everyone, I suggest this would have left some disadvantaged parents feeling further removed from education.

## Discussion

These findings are from a small sample in a particular part of the UK, and whilst they are revealing and interesting, we have to be cautious not to assume that all disadvantaged families are struggling or lack these different forms of capitals. Despite this, I hope that it presents a framework to help teachers to understand the experiences of some parents during the lockdown period.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say it has not all been gloom and doom. Many families living in communities facing significant poverty have shared experiences of bonding during the lockdown, making the most of the opportunity to spend time together. Parents and children alike have told me about baking cakes together and going on family walks. Despite 66% of families in poverty coming from working households, few parents experiencing in-work poverty are employed in roles where they have been able to work remotely, like many middle-class parents. This, conversely, may have provided parents experiencing poverty with more time to spend with their children, but, due to the barriers discussed above, was not always spent directly on schoolwork.

We are still to fully understand the potential impact this has had on some of the most vulnerable children, and we are certainly not arguing that other children were immune to the consequences of the lockdown. However, I urge teachers to use this as an opportunity to reflect on their parental engagement strategies. For example, schools can use the current situation to explore a revised structure for parents' evening, drawing on accessible, virtual means of meeting. It is important that parents are supported to access any virtual meeting space, which would ideally be on a platform they are familiar with. It would be interesting to know more about engagement in parents evening using different mediums, such as, face to face, a professional virtual meeting space and

WhatsApp calls, building on previous research showing the usefulness of text messaging and WhatsApp when building relationships with disadvantaged parents (Addi-Raccah & Yemini 2018).

I know from speaking to teachers that the profession is bearing a disproportionate burden at the moment in an attempt to ensure schools are 'Covid-secure' in addition to responding to increased educational, social and emotional needs of their students. It is hoped that this article can be used to inform teachers and help them reflect on their own experiences under Covid-19. This reflection can inform engagement strategies to develop strong relationships with parents who may seem difficult to engage, with the ultimate aim to ensure all children have opportunities to reach their educational potential following this time of crisis.

*Suzanne Wilson recently gave evidence to the Parliamentary Education Select Committee and to the International Council of Psychologists*

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By Willie Slavin

# News Roundup

## Catholic schools step up to feed the hungry during Covid-19

The coronavirus pandemic has pushed many families from a difficult financial situation into an impossible one. Since lockdown began in March, Caritas Westminster has been supporting schools across the Diocese of Westminster as they have rallied to ensure families do not go hungry.

While many schools were already aware of families who were struggling financially, lockdown both highlighted and exacerbated the problem. Danny Coyle, Headteacher of Newman Catholic College in West London, explained that when lockdown started, the school's initial focus was on ensuring students could continue learning from home. However, it wasn't long before the focus moved to ensuring pupils had enough to eat. The school worked with local volunteers who used the school kitchen to cook emergency meals. Soon, the volunteers were delivering up to 200 meals a day, with funding and support from Caritas Westminster and the Cardinal's Appeal.

Some schools are running food banks on their premises for the wider local community. David O'Farrell, Headteacher at St Bernadette's school, Harrow, started a foodbank at the school 5 years ago, but since the pandemic he has seen a big increase in the number of people using it. St Elizabeth's school in East London has also opened its own foodbank to meet local need. Tracy Jennings, Deputy Head, told us that schools are perfect locations for foodbanks as they often know who is in need and are well placed to support their communities.

Schools exist to educate children. However, all the schools that Caritas Westminster has been working with felt passionately that it was also their job as Catholic schools to serve their communities. One headteacher said it was important that the Catholic school she leads showed its children a real example of 'the Church's social teaching in action'.

## Manchester: MP opens multimedia suite at St Paul's Wythenshawe

Opened by MP Mike Kane, Saint Paul's is bridging the gap between what technology in schools can provide and what students can dream! The importance the school places on the library and the desire to have more students access it, made it a natural choice for a project unique to schools in the area.

So, when MP and former pupil, Mike Kane came to speak to students about the new facilities, and to officially open the new library, he found a sight not often found within a school, a collection of top of the range Gaming PC's and enough flashing lights to challenge the best Blackpool has to offer! With Mr Kane commenting "The best game we could run when I was at school was Space Invaders on an IBM PC."

Mr Alex Hren, Headteacher, followed with: "Thank you to Mike Kane, for returning to our school and speaking to our next generation of students about the new facilities.

## Middlesbrough: Multi-academy trust aims to bring joy to children's lives

St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust - the recently formed collection of 17 schools from across the Diocese of Middlesbrough - has published its vision to 'Bring Joy, Hope, Opportunity and Purpose for our children in an uncertain world' via a new brand identity and website. The Trust was also recently shortlisted for a Department of Education Sustainability Award in its first year of operation.

Amy Rice, CEO of St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust, said: "Our vision was crafted when we started a year ago, but it has never been more relevant. The staff across this



Trust are determined to make a real and enduring difference to children's lives and give them the strength and independence not only to face the challenges that are ahead, but to be the adults and young people who will reshape our future into a fairer and more loving world. In the current circumstances, we hope that people can experience our vision, virtually, through our new, engaging website."

The Trust is open about wanting to do things differently and majors on its value of courage, which will, according to the Trust team, see it break the mould to give new and exciting opportunities to all of its children and staff over the coming years.

Amy Rice added: "We firmly believe that each child has that spark, that gift within them. It's our job to help them see it and to nurture it so that they can be a positive force for good in whatever they do in their future. That requires an approach that looks at each child as a precious individual, unconstrained by mechanistic targets or the usual expectations. We are hugely ambitious for our children academically, of course, but that is far from the whole story. We hope that people with the same ambition and the same hope for our children's future will feel inspired to join and support us, in whatever way they can."

St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust was formed in June 2019 and by September of the same year, 17 schools - two secondary and fifteen primary - were part of the Trust.

## Welsh Government risks 'losing the trust of the Catholic community', CES tells Senedd

The Catholic Education Service has made it clear to the Welsh Government that they risk 'losing the trust of the Catholic community' in Wales if they continue with their planned changes to Religious Education in Catholic schools. The Bill has caused alarm among Catholic educators because it penalises Catholic schools, placing additional and unreasonable legal requirements on them that no other schools have to satisfy, specifically forcing them to teach an additional (secular) RE curriculum. The proposed legislation seeks to change the name of RE to Religion

Values and Ethics, something that all those on the evidence panel (which included representatives from the Church in Wales, the RE teaching profession and local government) strongly disagreed with.

In their evidence, the CES highlighted a 'lack of trust' between the Welsh Government and Catholic schools, and that the Bill gave the distinct impression to the Catholic community that these changes were needed because something was wrong with Catholic RE in the first place.

The CES also echoed the concerns of all 84 Catholic headteachers in Wales who wrote a joint letter to the First Minister highlighting the damaging impact these proposals would have on Catholic schools.

The evidence session provided the opportunity for the CES to make the case for parents as the primary educators of their children and insisted that the Catholic community would resist the Bill's proposals to remove parents' right of withdrawal from both RE and Relationship and Sex Education.

The extreme unfairness of the new proposals, that would allow a non-Catholic parent the right to demand secular RE for their child in a Catholic school, but would not allow a Catholic parent the right to ask for Catholic RE to be given to their child in a secular school, were also pointed out.

After the evidence session (which took place on Thursday 15 October) CES Wales Adviser Angela Keller commented: "Everyone giving evidence represented either a State partner or a member of the RE profession, and each one of us said the Welsh Government was going in the wrong direction.

"It's hurtful that the Welsh Government appears to see Catholic schools as the problem because we teach Catholic RE. The Welsh Government needs to start trusting Catholic schools and the professionals who work extremely hard in them."

On 5 May 2020, The Welsh Government opened its 'Curriculum for Wales: Religion, values and ethics' consultation. Many teachers and leaders in Catholic schools across Wales responded to that consultation to oppose the changes, viewing it as an assault on parental rights and on the academic rigour of Religious Education in Catholic schools. According to the Welsh Government's own consultation

analysis, opposition to its proposals came from across the whole sector. Despite fervent opposition the Welsh Government has moved to introduce these changes to rename Religious Education to Religion, Values and Ethics in the new curriculum. Concerns have also been raised over the lack of due process and transparency as the Government may publish the Bill before it considers responses to the RVE consultation

## Exciting new school resources from Edinburgh P&J Peacebuilders team

Edinburgh Peace & Justice Centre's PeaceBuilders team are creating a series of eight, filmed sessions for primary schools based on their Cooperative Games Programme. The films are a direct offering of support in response to lockdown, the subsequent restrictions in Scottish primary schools and the varying experiences children have had. They will consist of cooperative games and circle time conversations, and incorporate puppetry, storytelling and visual art, allowing teachers to use the materials flexibly, timetabling the films whenever suits them best. A companion manual will support teachers to facilitate along with the films.

PeaceBuilders have worked with more than 50 class groups in primary Schools across Edinburgh since 2015. With a commitment to building a culture of peace in Scotland and based on principles of nonviolence, their innovative programme works through dynamic activities and circle time reflection, and supports the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence.

Anyone who wants to donate can visit: <https://chuffed.org/project/peacebuilders-video>

A follow-on course called Collaborative Classrooms will provide deeper training for teachers and pupils in Nonviolent Communication, Restorative Practice and Peer Mediation.

To find out more or request a copy of the video series for your school visit: <https://peaceandjustice.org.uk/projects/peacebuilding-for-primary-schools/>.

# CISC NEWS

## 'Food for Thought and Wisdom to Challenge' Radical Catholic School Leadership



by Dr Maureen Glackin

CATHOLIC  
INDEPENDENT  
SCHOOLS'  
CONFERENCE

The National School of Formation (NSF), now in its fifth year, sees Headteachers and Governors from Catholic schools across the state and independent sectors participate in a distinctive programme of formation.

Built around three residential experiences and two study visits, the 'Christ the Teacher' programme provides for deeper formation, with an emphasis on aspects of theological exploration and experiential opportunities. This year long process 'seeks to enable school leaders, teachers and pupils to understand their place in the mission of the Church' and their role as educators who seek 'the transformation of the person, for the transformation of society'. One would expect that the commitment asked from such a programme would appear to be an inhibitor to participation and engagement: however, since its inception, the NSF has accompanied over 200 Catholic School leaders on this journey. So what is its impact on professional practice and personal formation within the lived experience of headship in our Catholic schools?

The residential aspect of the programme is built around accompaniment and presentations from leading Catholic thinkers from within and beyond education. They seek to inspire participants, challenging their theological understanding and guiding them to reflection on personal faith development. This is described by one headteacher as becoming a more 'reflective leader [which] in turn [has] given me the knowledge [and] wisdom to challenge'. Other heads gained confidence and a 'renewed impetus to take action and support the Catholic mission' of their schools. What emerges is a sense that the speakers almost give the headteachers permission to go back to their schools, reconsider processes and systems and 'to take that risk and be more brave'.

However the purpose of the NSF is not, necessarily, about making you a better headteacher but rather about making you a more Christ-conscious person by virtue of

which you will become a better headteacher. Sr Judith Russi, EducareM's Director, says:

***'We don't need more of the same... We need something that enables you to change - a proper encounter, not simply an intellectual one'.***

The transformative experience that the programme engenders is particularly apparent in the study visits to selected charities, mainly within the UK, which inspire participants to make meaningful changes in the lives of their schools. Some can be quite small, 'telling our young people we love them when we deal with them, so that they better understand Christ's message'. Others are more embedded, 'It made me appreciate how much welfare is given by the Catholic Church and ...how powerful our job as Head Teacher can be in supporting families dealing with housing, immigration etc. [It] has refocused me in reaching out to families before they come to ask for legal, economic support'. This elucidates the transformative impact of the NSF experience: 'Experience it, don't talk about it, then consider "what is it saying to you?"' As one would expect, there is realism about the challenges of changing self and changing cultures: 'I have learnt it's okay to find transformation difficult'. However the overriding impact of the study visits is one of meaningful, deeply felt renewal which is positively welcomed by headteachers, both personally and professionally: 'It rebooted me and enabled me to see beauty in everything, building my resilience and purpose'.

It is fair to say that there is a tangible sense of delegates being inspired and enthused by the programme experience - 'Fired Up and Ready to Go!' as Brendan Duffy, NSF Director, puts it. In so doing, it might be expected that the programme would leave participants feeling unsure, or lacking in confidence in embracing such radical change. However, the sense of collegiality, community and 'networking' that the programme generates means that the

opposite is the case. One participant said: 'It has made me more BRAVE - has made me realise I am good enough and here for more.' In turn, we begin to see how the experience of the NSF can inform strategic developments in schools: 'It is the impact of the questions that we're being asked. This will now inform the formulation of policies in all areas to include changes that will support our Catholic ethos more effectively'. For one delegate, this prompted a re-consideration of the role of the school within the broader structure of the Church: 'It has opened my eyes to the need of the school as a parish and that level of responsibility and accountability which I had left at the foot of the church door.'

These comments highlight the challenges of embarking upon such a transformational experience and yet such challenge is necessary if Catholic school leadership is to remain vital, impactful and mission faithful in the 21st century. The design and nature of the programme seeks to expose delegates to radical thinking and move them to reflect upon their educational vocation so that they are better placed to serve the mission of 'Christ the Teacher' and more aware of the unique and vital contribution that they are being encouraged to make to this endeavour. In so doing, what is experienced is both 'prophetic' and 'challenging' but absolutely 'essential in trying to shape a Catholic education system that really works and empowers [us all] to make a difference in the world'. As one headteacher put it: 'I am more confident to not hide my 'Catholicity'. Be open with my role as a Catholic leader and not be worried when staff say, 'Oh, you can tell she's been on a holy course'. Good, I now say!'

Dr Maureen Glackin  
General Secretary CISC  
November 2020



# Book&Media Review



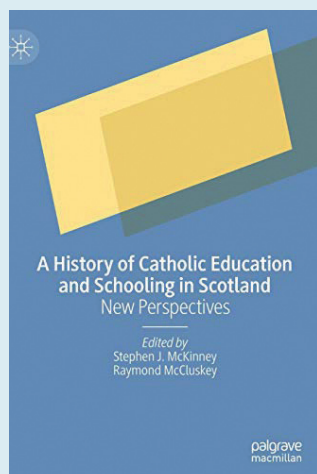
By Willie Slavin

## A History of Catholic Education and Schooling in Scotland. New Perspectives

By Stephen McKinney and Raymond McCluskey

Publication Date: May 2019

Publisher: Palgrave - £58



The turning of a new decade provides an opportune moment to take stock and cast a mind-full eye back at how we have arrived at where we are today. When it comes to Catholic Education and Catholic schools we often forget that our current provision did not float to ground ready-made. Rather the wide provision and ubiquity of good Catholic schools across the entire UK is the product of an often fraught history. There is much to be gleaned from having a thorough grasp of the history of Catholic education and Catholic schooling in different countries. In what follows the spotlight will be firmly on the situation in Scotland. In these fraught political times of Post-Brexit Britain, knowing more about the history of Catholic education and Catholic schooling in Scotland is both timely and provides an insightful mirror against which to reconsider the historical contexts in other parts of the UK. What is being presented here is an exhortation to read a serious but very

accessible new book offering fresh perspectives on the history of Catholic Education in Scotland.

### The need for well researched histories of Catholic education

With the publication in 2019 of *A History of Catholic Education and Schooling in Scotland*, an invaluable service has been provided by the editors, Professor Stephen McKinney and Dr Raymond McCluskey. In drawing together eight informed and well constructed new perspectives, the editors have established a fitting way to mark the centenary of the Education (Scotland) Act, 1918. In terms of state-funded schooling in Scotland the Act passed a century ago was a pivotal point. What the historical investigation in the volume reveals is the way in which all the Churches in Scotland were at the forefront of providing schooling to a large proportion of Scottish society. It was this shared commitment to education that helped in establishing a largely positive funding arrangement to come into effect with the 1918 Act.

Scotland, like other parts of Britain, saw a rapid rise in the numbers of Catholic Christians over a few decades, because of the large numbers of Irish immigrants who were escaping from famine. The development of Catholic education is rooted in the way a largely poor and unskilled community have, through schooling, become radically changed. Their Catholic education made them skilled and able to enter the professions and other significant aspects of life. This story of socio-economic transformation is rooted in the resilience and shared sense of identity of the Irish Catholic immigrants.

### The significance of large scale Irish immigration

Both in Scotland and the rest of Britain, it is important to appreciate the impact that huge numbers of Irish immigrants had both at the socio-political level and within the life of the Church. One of the central themes brought out by the McKinney and McCluskey volume is how these levels of poverty and hardship impacted on schooling. The historical analysis draws attention to a range of hardships - the inability to pay the

minimal weekly fees, the lack of warm clothing in winter months, the need to care for siblings or even the need to work in order to support the family, kept many Catholic children away from their school. Similarly there has remained a strong tradition of the Catholic community having to fundraise in order to support the viability of Catholic schools. The poverty of the majority of the Catholic community a century ago is something that needs to be remembered. Catholic schools were often in poorly appointed buildings and, crucially given the budgetary restraints on teacher salaries and equipment, children were taught in large numbers, in overcrowded classrooms and with inadequate resources.

### The importance of religious orders and congregations for Catholic education

Another facet of Catholic education that it is easy to forget today is the importance of both female and male teaching congregations and orders. This volume does a useful service by drawing attention the role of these professed women and men. Scotland was able to provide a place of welcome to many of the congregations forced out of by the French social upheaval during the 18th and 19th Centuries. These women and men reciprocated through establishing many schools. Of vital importance is the way the female orders established high quality secondary education for girls. Moreover, through being well qualified and capable women, these female religious proved themselves to be excellent role models to the girls they taught. It is hard to over emphasise the long term educational impact (especially for women) of educational role models. The development of teacher training and education for Catholic women quickly became well established in Scotland. However, paradoxically, the historical analysis in some chapters point out that the lay women teachers in schools founded by female religious were often poorly paid – more so than male teachers. No doubt this is a reflection of ingrained sexist attitudes in wider society during this period rather than a deliberate policy of exploitation.

The *History of Catholic Education and Schooling in Scotland* does not shy away from exploring the often contentious relationship between Catholic

education and Catholic identity and sectarianism. Catholic schools in Scotland have been a melting pot of religious and national identities and the competing claims of being an 'Irish', 'Scottish' or even a 'British' Catholic. There is evidence of some clerical pressure to have a British identity rather than Irish one. There are also critical observations in the book on how Catholics understood their identity in relation to the wider world and their relation to traditional sciences and the emerging social sciences. Sectarianism refers to interdenominational division and hostility between Catholics and Protestants that led to discrimination and at times even violence. Sectarianism is a term that incorporates anti-Catholicism and anti-Protestantism. In Scotland it has fuelled the enmity directed towards the Catholic community at different stages of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Sometimes it was rooted in a Protestant Calvinism that had a vehement opposition to Roman Catholicism. Sometimes this was conflated with anti-migrant xenophobia and sometimes conflated with anti-Irish racism or conflated with both anti-migrant and anti-Irish attitudes.

## The many strengths of the volume

One of the key strengths of the way that McKinney and McLuskey have edited their volume is that each chapter can stand on its own merit. They deserve to be given a brief individual mention. Chapter two, written by the editors, follows their overview in the opening chapter, to drill down to explore the 1918 Education (Scotland) Act in terms of its historical context. This chapter surveys the presence of schools connected with the Church from the earliest times. It is of course only possible to refer to Catholic schools in the wake of the Reformation. Thus it traces the historical narrative for Catholic schools in Scotland from the early Post-Reformation times. Consideration is also given to the role of different Christian Churches in funding and promoting school education at this time. The whole 1918 Act is scrutinised and particular attention is given to Section 18, which deals with denominational schooling. The final sections explore the response of the Catholic Church to this Act and the slow process of the integration of Catholic schools into the state-funded school sector.

Chapter three, written by Dr Geraldine Vaughan, explores the distinctiveness of Catholic schooling before the 1918 Education Act. Vaughan provides very valuable insights into some of the early practices, including the relation in certain places between the Catholic school and the religious instruction delivered in parishes on Saturdays and Sundays. She describes the unevenness of the experience of children in Catholic communities, observing that some Catholic children attended non-Catholic schools. Dr Vaughan points out that there were problems with attendance at school, due to poverty, and there were challenges in

remaining as voluntary schools after the passing of education legislation in 1876. One of the key features of this chapter is that it raises the question of the Irish identity of Catholic schools and proposes that the influence of ultramontanist was strong within Scottish Catholicism. Attention shifts in chapter four to the contribution of women religious after 1850. The author, Dr Kehoe, argues in support of the importance of the role of the female religious in Scotland, especially after 1850. She argues that historical narratives have been slow to acknowledge their contribution to Catholic schooling at all stages, from elementary schooling to teacher training for women. Kehoe highlights some of the major barriers that the Catholic community faced in engaging with Catholic schooling, mostly caused by great poverty.

Juxtaposed to Dr Kehoe's chapter is Professor O'Donoghue's examination of the contribution of male religious orders in Scotland in the period leading up to the Education (Scotland) Act, 1918. He helpfully offers a concise but very useful context of the origins and development of religious life from the ascetics in the desert to the present day. He then explains the importance of the contribution of religious teaching orders as the Catholic Church responded to the perceived threats of pluralism and rationalism in Scotland. O'Donoghue reviews the variety of male religious orders that established schools throughout different parts of Scotland. In chapter six Dr McDermaid turns attention to the role of lay women teachers in Catholic education before the 1918 Act. These were tough times for lay women teachers, with poor pay from employers who wanted to exploit these unqualified workers as a cheap source of labour. A crucial change came with the establishment of Notre Dame College and the impact that this ambitious teacher training centre had on the quality of female teachers and also on the widening of the curriculum.

A very valuable contribution to the whole volume is found in chapter seven, with Dr McCluskey's discussion of informal learning and the role of public lectures in the late Nineteenth Century. Drawing on the Catholic weekly, the Glasgow Observer, McCluskey presents two intriguing examples of wider Catholic engagement with wider issues in public life that cropped up in newspapers. The first example is the discussion of the Roman Question, which focused on the debates around the fall of the Papal States and the emerging tensions between ultramontanist and Gallicanism. McCluskey describes the contribution of a peripatetic lecturer, the Rev. John Stewart McCorry. The second example is around the surprising level of engagement with some of the major scientific issues of the day - light, respiration and of course Charles Darwin. In chapter eight Professor McKinney presents a skilful analysis of the Presbyterian campaign against the 1918 Act. The Church of Scotland began to perceive that the Roman Catholic Church was gaining an advantage

in denominational schooling. McKinney traces the key points of the anti-1918 campaign. The key source for this investigation is the Church of Scotland Assembly documents. One interesting observation is that at an early stage the campaign against the 1918 Act was actually uncoupled from anti-Irish racial rhetoric at an early stage of its passage through parliament. In essence the campaign was a means of reclaiming and recovering some of the influence of the Church of Scotland in schooling and to strengthen the position of religious instruction in public schools.

The final chapter, by Ms McHugh, offers a helpful discussion of some of the developments that actually followed from the 1918 Act. It is explained that in reality the legal transfer of certain Catholic schools was a slower process than is often understood. In part this is because the representatives of the Catholic Church were often cautious and guarded in their relationships with Local Authorities. The author also provides a very useful outline of the progress and development of Catholic schools and explains that there were after 1918 persistent challenges in recruiting a sufficient number of Catholic teachers for the schools.

## Appreciating high quality historical research about Catholic education

It is important to realise that one of the many legacies of Catholic education in the UK is that it has now produced numerous skilled researchers in wide-ranging disciplines, including history. It is particularly pleasing to be able to read a work where accomplished Catholic historians and scholars investigate aspects of Catholic education and schooling. The writers are the key writers in the history of Catholic schooling and education in Scotland. It is pleasing to observe that McKinney and McCluskey's volume is the work of four female historians and three males. The contributors should be commended for their attention to detail, despite covering two hundred years of history. The result of their hard work is that the volume as a whole provides a good explanation of the uniqueness of the Catholic school system in Scotland. It also offers a much needed insight into the complexity around the evolution of Catholic identity. This is a scholarly but eminently readable and accessible treatment of the history of Catholic education and schooling in Scotland. Having set an extremely high standard the challenge now must be for some sister volumes that present new perspectives on the history of Catholic education and schooling in other countries. This reviewer would be pleased if it could begin with Scotland's close neighbours - England and Wales.

*Author of the review: Dr Sean Whittle  
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Research Associate with Professor Gerald Grace  
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# Books that look more than a little inviting

## Behold the Word: 52 Visual Meditations

by James Roose-Evans and John Rowlands-Pritchard

Publication Date: (26 Nov. 2020)

Publisher: Redemptorist Publications - £9.95

It's not a quick read although Fr James Roose-Evans' text on the left-hand page is less than 300 words in length. John Rowlands-Pritchard's beautiful painted quotation on the right-hand page is also not to be skimmed at speed: it's designed to take time and effort so that the words do not merely stay on the surface of the mind but, instead, go deeper.

Behold the Word: 52 Visual Meditations offers what can become a weekly meditation practice which will continue throughout the year, arranged to allow the reader to dip into the booklet at will regardless of the liturgical season.

Fr James Roose-Evans, Anglican priest, author, award-winning theatre director and now almost 93 years old, wrote his reflections following a lifetime of prayer. He perhaps best summarises Behold the Word in quoting Etty Hillesum, who died in Auschwitz: "The few great things that matter in life can be said in a few words. What matters is the right relationship between words and wordlessness, the wordlessness in which much more happens than in all the words one can string together."

John Rowlands-Pritchard, Associate of the Royal School of Church Music and founder of musical

group Opus Anglicanum, uses his painted words with restraint. Their colour and sometimes complex arrangements lead the readers on a journey of personal inner discovery. In highlighting both scripture and other sources, his work is a rich and beautiful word-tapestry, one to be savoured at length.

Behold the Word: 52 Visual Meditations presents a beautiful example of the sort of teamwork which happens when people work together to spread the Word of God. It is then that they are qualified to say to others, "Behold, the Word."

## Called by God: Reclaiming the meaning of Baptism

Publication Date: (21 Jan. 2020)

Publisher: Redemptorist Publications

Catechist's book - £9.95

Parent's keepsake book - £3.95

An intriguing fact about the sacrament of baptism is that, unless they are converts or baptised as adults, many people give it no thought at all between leaving school and planning to have their baby baptised. Yet this is the first sacrament to be administered or received, the one on which the other six depend and the only one which is shared by all Christians. Why, then, does baptism receive such little attention? Is it because most Catholics were baptised as babies or children?

Called by God: Reclaiming the meaning of Baptism is a new and excellent catechetical programme which

attempts, as its title suggests, to reclaim the meaning and significance of this most important sacrament. Conscious that baptism welcomes an individual into the family of the Church, the book's authors, Ellen McBride & Sr Margaret Jones, ensure that, from the very beginning of the programme, catechist, parents and godparents – and the little one – are a thinking, loving community whose reflections on scripture, the Church, baptism and its relevance are respected and taken seriously. The programme is designed to meet the parents and godparents where they happen to be on their faith journey, whether they are daily Massgoers or perhaps rarely enter their local parish church.

Called by God: Reclaiming the meaning of Baptism takes it for granted that embarking on a baptismal programme is a unique opportunity for evangelisation, learning and discovery. Every meeting includes both reading and reflecting on scripture and opportunities for discussion, questions and answers. Personal experience is where we meet the God who calls and loves us into being and so this programme encourages its participants to rediscover God in their own lives – perhaps even in the most unexpected places – and to consider ways in which adults can help their child(ren) on their faith journey in the days to come. It includes the liturgy of baptism, reflections on the importance of godparents and several frequently asked questions, all of which are taken seriously.

Called by God: Reclaiming the meaning of Baptism consists of the catechist's book and a keepsake for the parents. It is readily adapted to the needs of the parish. Its simple text and accessible layout make it a very valuable addition to parish resources.



Fertile Heart

**Relationships Education [primary], and Relationships and Sex Education [secondary] are not just subjects Catholic schools are obliged to deliver, but ought to be new opportunities to explore with pupils and staff the life-giving and liberating vision of what it means to be made in the image and likeness of God, who relates to each of us in a deeply personal and intimate way.**

A Fertile Heart has been specially developed to be taught in Catholic schools reinforcing the values of personal growth, sacrificial love and hope-filled patience to our young people.

Designed in a modular format starting with 6 per year in KS1 and increasing to 10/11 in KS2, 3 and 4, teachers have access to lesson plans, PowerPoint presentations, guidance notes per slide and downloadable worksheets. Our comprehensive resources cover from Reception to Y6 and from Y7 to Y11, thus providing schools with an all through curriculum from Key Stage 1 to the end of Key Stage 4.

**A 90 day trial giving full access to all the online resources is available to schools for just £100**



"It is not easy to approach the issue of sexuality education in an age when sexuality tends to be trivialized and impoverished. It can only be seen within the broader framework of an education for love, for mutual self-giving"

Pope Francis

# RSHE

## Crisis or Opportunity?

"This is a very good RSE resource for Catholic schools: carefully crafted by practitioners, rooted in scripture and the teaching of the Church, good use of YouCat endorsed by Archbishop George Stack. Well worth a look."

*Raymond Friel, Interim CEO Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust.*

The Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, The Joy of Love has an entire chapter on the importance of Catholic schools entitled "Education in Hope." This even includes a section addressing the need for credible and sound "sexuality education." Pope Francis is saying that Catholic schools are not called to educate children in "sex" nor instruct them in "safe sex" but to help them form a developing healthy and wholesome attitude to the gift of the body and personhood. Our schools strive to lay the rich foundations for a virtuous and happy life so that children can approach adulthood with a knowledge and mind-set that will help them have an authentic sexuality that is fully integrated.

Due to Covid, the DfE has allowed schools in England to delay implementation of Relationships, Sex and Health Education [RSHE] until the Summer term 2021. The new statutory regulations from the DfE are supposed to protect schools with a religious character to teach and present issues around relationships and sexuality that are in conformity with their moral doctrines and the religious convictions of the families whom they serve. So positively-speaking what can be done?

A Fertile Heart - Receiving and Giving Creative Love [[www.fertileheart.org.uk](http://www.fertileheart.org.uk)] is a faith inspired programme of study that offers schools, especially those striving to maintain and deepen a Catholic identity, a new way of approaching this important area of human formation. It invites teachers and pupils to explore together the big questions of life; What does it mean to be human? Why does sexual difference matter? What do we mean by freedom? What lies at the heart of authentic personal dignity? The content reinforces universal values of personal development, growth in character, mutual respect, love and patience and thus compliments good Religious Education.

The "Vision" is simple: To provide an inspiring and dynamic programme for the spiritual, moral, emotional and intellectual development of young people, that enables them to fully appreciate and understand what makes life-enriching relationships. The "Mission" is creative: Teaching young people that true freedom is so much more than just the mere freedom to choose, but the real and authentic freedom to choose well. The "Purpose" is clear: to enable educators and parents to

transmit the profound truths of the human person to children in a comprehensible, attractive and convincing way so that their desire to live by these truths grows daily. In this great endeavour, we are all of us, partners in a shared task. Fertile Heart is a genuine and sincere effort in making a valid contribution to this urgent task of formation.

In our current climate of new demands being made on our schools, we hope that Fertile Heart can have parity of esteem with other recommended resources especially as a number of bishops have already given it their endorsements. From February 2021 onwards there will be a new teacher manual available to provide lessons from Reception to Y2 in KS1 and a new edition of the teacher manual for the whole of KS2. The pupil books for KS3 and 4 will also have new supplementary lessons for years 7-9 and amended content in years 10 and 11 as a result of feedback from schools that have been using the materials over the last two years. Archbishop Longley has granted a nihil obstat and imprimatur for the books. The books are supplemented with excellent online resources; professionally designed PowerPoint slides with accompanying guidance notes to help teachers, both specialists and non-specialists, Catholics and non-Catholics alike to deliver the material with confidence as they use it to embed learning in an incremental way over time.

All of the Bishops and their education advisers have had the sample books since September 2018 from which we received some very encouraging feedback and all the schools across the Archdiocese of Cardiff are now well into their second academic year of using the programme. Other dioceses and schools are engaging with us and we anticipate some exciting collaboration with archdioceses as far away as Australia and Tasmania as we progress in to 2021.

From the outset, thanks to the good offices of the Director of Religious Education in Cardiff, Archbishop George Stack has given his unswerving support and endorsement of the programme. He not only carefully scrutinised the materials himself, he has also written the Foreword for each of the books. Several dioceses have included FH in their local guidance to schools on RSHE and there have been formal presentations at diocesan headteachers/RE coordinator briefings in various dioceses and even at the first annual conference of the Association of Catholic Teachers of Religious Education (ATCRE) at St. Mary's University last year. We are getting more and more enquiries from individual schools who are interested in the resources as they continue to discern how best to respond to the statutory requirements and that is why we provide a matrix on our website for senior leaders so they can see



*By Edmund Adamus  
Edmund is the Education Consultant to [www.fertileheart.org.uk](http://www.fertileheart.org.uk).  
He was Diocesan Schools Commissioner for Portsmouth Diocese 2016-19 and Director for Marriage & Family Life for Westminster Diocese 2004-16. He blogs at [www.edmundadamus.wordpress.com](http://www.edmundadamus.wordpress.com)*

where and how the FH learning objectives and themes are aligned with or equivalent to those set out by the RSE guidance from the CES which of course is DfE approved. The link to the matrices is here and these will be updated in due course to reflect the new KS1 content. <https://fertileheart.org.uk/teachers/dept-for-education-compliance/>

We believe FH offers exceedingly good value for money for schools at a time when they are facing very challenging times financially. The key stage 1 and 2 teacher's manuals are £25 and £35 per copy respectively. We are inviting primary schools to enter into a three-year agreement or "covenant" with us. They can choose the numbers of copies they need for staff for which they will get full access to all the web-based resources FREE for the first year and then only pay £100 per year to continue to have access to resources for the following two years. For secondary schools, the pupil/student books for key stages 3 and 4 are priced at £15 each. Schools can choose to spread the total cost of the purchase over a three-year period depending on the size of the order. During this time, they will have full access to the web-based resources at no extra charge. If they decide to continue with the programme beyond the three-year agreement, the online subscription will cost £500 per year.

Contracts invite us to think about what we gain. Covenants ask us to think about the impact we have on others. This is why @AFertileHeart we ask schools to enter into a real collaborative partnership with us and not just buy our resources, so that teachers feel they are in a dynamic and collaborative partnership with us.

The new Ofsted inspection framework places a great deal of emphasis on "Personal Development". We at FH welcome this because we believe we have produced a high-quality resource to aid the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children equipping them with deeper levels of theological and philosophical literacy and oracy. As Bishop John Keenan of Paisley writes; "A Fertile Heart is attuned to the signs of the times, it understands the situation, hopes and fears and questions of the younger generation today. At the same time, it has a faithful and sincere attachment to the evangelical effort of the Church to pass on the truths of the Catholic faith and the meaning of the person."

# MISSION TOGETHER

## helping children to live the message of Fratelli Tutti

### Recognising the face of Christ in our abandoned brothers and sisters

The last year has shown how much we depend on one another and on God. While the world was gripped by anxiety and uncertainty, and many of us were affected by illness, bereavement or loneliness, there were still signs of God's love shining through the gloom – comfort found in the heart of the family, the dedication of key workers in hospitals and schools and acts of kindness amongst neighbours who had previously been strangers to one another. All of these brought us together and gave us hope for a better future in the knowledge that God never leaves us.

Similarly, missionary priests and sisters working overseas, and supported by Missio, the Pope's charity for overseas mission, recount stories of the hope the Church is bringing to communities that were already struggling with poverty, exclusion and oppression before the pandemic. On the water's edge of Cebu City in the Philippines, Sister Victoria, a Presentation Sister, runs a Child Care and Education Centre for children from the marginalised Badjao community of divers and fishermen. During lockdown, and with Missio's help, she and her sisters were able to distribute food to the centre's 90 families and bring milk and chocolate drinks for the children. She told us, 'The families of the children were very thankful.'



Stories like these are echoed across the world as missionary priests and sisters continue to bring hope, love and solace to the communities they serve. Inspired and sustained by their faith they do what Pope Francis tells us all to do – 'recognise the face of Christ in our abandoned or excluded brothers and sisters' and confer on them their infinite dignity in the belief and understanding 'that Christ shed his blood for each of us and that no one is beyond the scope of his universal love.' Fratelli Tutti 85 Missionaries can only do these acts of solidarity with the help of the worldwide Church: when all her members pray and share what they have, to help bring about a world of peace and justice, and engage in fraternity and dialogue with those people the rest of the world has forgotten.



### God's love has no borders

For over 175 years Mission Together, Missio's children's branch, has been inspiring children and young people to act in fraternity with one another in prayer and by caring for each other. This year our new universal map, shows how children everywhere do this, including and especially, those children who are living in very difficult situations themselves. Using video clips of children dancing, singing hymns, praying, and telling their stories, the interactive map is a fun way to find out how children share their time, gifts and talents to be missionaries of God's love.

Pupils here can discover how children living in Kenya made rosary beads to send to the children in war torn South Sudan to encourage them to pray and to remind them that they had not been forgotten – there were other children praying for their safety and for peace. They may enjoy following in the footsteps of pupils in Australia who call the Mission Month of October, 'Socktober', named after their fundraising activities, like sponsored football games using balls made from old socks and sock puppet shows, where pupils act out Bible stories.

They might be inspired by children like Eduardo in Bolivia, who gives up his time to be part of the parish Mission Together group and, with the leaders, visit the elderly and housebound. He told us that the group, 'helps me to see that Jesus is my friend and guide. I want to make his life known to other children, so that they can try to love as Jesus did too.' For more ideas on how to help your pupils to be missionaries of God's love, visit the Mission Together website's home page and follow the instructions to navigate your way around the globe and encourage

your pupils to live out the words of Pope Francis: 'Each of us can learn something from others. No one is useless and no one is expendable' Fratelli Tutti 215

### Pupil Led Liturgies and the Stations of the Cross

Pope Francis reminds us that openness to God, an awareness that we are God's children and members of his worldwide family, give meaning to our quest to live in peace with one another and to strive for equality. Without this understanding we cannot establish true fraternity. He tells us, 'If there is no transcendent truth... then there is no sure principle for guaranteeing just relations between people.' Fratelli Tutti 273

In this vein, our Mission Together materials are designed to help pupils to grow in faith, develop a concern for others and work for a fairer society. This year's Lent liturgies may be used either in bubbles at school or transmitted online and are written so that they may be led by pupil chaplains and guided by a teacher. They allow children to hear an abridged Gospel reading for each Sunday of Lent, reflect on it, pray about what they have heard and act upon what they have learned.

As children progress through the season they are introduced to tenets of our Catholic faith - Jesus is the Son of God and we are to listen to what he tells us (The Transfiguration – the Second Sunday) and God loves us so much he sent Jesus into the world so that we might share eternal life with him (The Fourth Sunday) leading eventually to his death and resurrection.

The popular Lenten devotion of praying the Stations of the Cross has been adapted to help children put themselves into the story and to remind them that Jesus is always with us, especially





in our own pain and sorrow, and see how we can be attentive to each other's suffering. Using accessible cartoons, reflections and prayers, the Stations of the Cross may be used as a class or in the home and either as one act of worship or, depending on the age of the children, in sections - over the course of Lent.

## Bringing the Word of God into the Home

Mission Together's home learning resources created during lockdown continue to be available online for use in either school or in the home. As well as covering themes of global family, healthy living, and prayer, they may also be used to support the school curriculum. The Sunday Activity Sheets offer an abridged Gospel for younger children to follow together with a simple comprehension. A cartoon and related story about a missionary priest or sister whom Mission Together supports demonstrate how the Church is living out what Jesus teaches.

The Holy Week Activities of word searches, crossword puzzles and challenges mean that every day of this most devout time of year is acknowledged – from the joy of the crowd on Palm Sunday to Judas' betrayal on Spy Wednesday and Joseph of Arimathea's generosity on Holy Saturday. The Easter Scavenger hunt brings the Easter Bible stories to life as children are challenged to guess at, and find, everyday items that appear in the Scriptures, like a white cloth, akin to that left in the tomb at the Resurrection, or a small stone to represent the one that was rolled across the entrance to the tomb. When all these items have been identified and found, children are invited to share each one's significance with their families; and thereby, learn and retell in their own words the Gospel stories they have heard.

All these liturgies and devotions are supported by our popular Lent calendar that prompts pupils to reach out in love and friendship to both those people who live near to us and to those who are living far away. Like the Good Samaritan in the parable, our

understanding of 'neighbour' cannot be restricted to those we know, approve of, or even like. We are the bridges that serve to bring God's love to everyone, and especially to the most vulnerable and exploited.

This is Fr Henry. He lives in Africa. He travels hundreds of miles to visit and care for his parishioners. Fr Henry shares with them the living bread of Jesus. This reminds the people that Jesus is very close and will never leave us. Jesus's love lasts forever.

Go around the shape of these letters with a pencil. Then colour the words.

Mission Together children pray and share to help children living in poverty overseas. You can help them too by praying the Mission Together Prayer. When you have said the prayer, colour in the picture of Jesus and Fr Henry.

**Mission Together Prayer**  
May all children  
In the world  
Share love  
Share friendship and live  
In the peace  
Of God's love  
Now and forever.  
Amen.

What could you share to remind others how much they are loved and cared for? Write them here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**missio**  
Mission Together is the children's branch of Missio, the Pope's charity for world mission.  
23 Euston Square London NW1 1NU 020 7821 9755 missiontogether.org.uk  
missiontogether.org.uk Registered in England and Wales Charity No. 1056651

## Bringing God's love to the world's most vulnerable

Last year more than 4 million children in over 1,000 missionary dioceses were helped to discover their self - worth and dignity in Missio backed projects. These projects, and the many other overseas children's projects we support operate thanks to the prayers and sacrifices of children around the world, including those in England and Wales. The priests and sisters who run them not only recognise the physical needs of children and young people but also their need for spiritual and personal growth, and the skills to build healthy relationships. As well as this, they offer the children and young people they serve 'the opportunity to nurture the seeds that God has

planted in each of us: our talents, our initiative and our innate resources.' As Pope Francis tells us, 'This is the finest gift we can give to the poor, the best path to a life of dignity.' Fratelli Tutti 162

This year, by following our Mission Together Lenten materials, your pupils can delve deeper into their faith, establish stronger links with their Mission Together companions overseas, and help to bring about a fairer world where everyone is treated equally and in the words of Pope Francis, 'seek God with a sincere heart ... to recognise one another as travelling companions, truly brothers and sisters.' Fratelli Tutti 274

*Sheila Isaac - Education Coordinator, Missio*

## Mission Together

### Sixth Station: Veronica wipes Jesus' face

A woman called Veronica was also in the crowd. She could see that Jesus' head was bleeding. Although afraid of what others might say to her, she reached out to gently wipe the blood from Jesus's face.

**Let us reflect:** Veronica risked getting into trouble for trying to help. But her pity for Jesus overcame her fear.

It can be difficult to stand out from the crowd, even if that is to do something good, like help someone no one else wants to.

**Let us pray:** Lord Jesus, help me never to let fear of others stop me from being kind to everyone.

**Let us act:** Through Mission Together, children are reaching out with helping hands of friendship to other children around the world. By supporting Mission Together, you can reach out too.



# Networking

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