

Leading for Mission: Educational Challenges 50 Years on From Vatican II

...Therefore, every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of the household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old (Matt 13:52-53).

This passage is a kind of a signature statement of the author of Matthew as Gospel writer and as Christian educator. Matthew's Gospel was written in a very demanding context following the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the destruction of the temple, a situation of chaos and exile for the community, about a half-century on from the death of Jesus. In the circumstances, Matthew's meaning-making task as leader within his community was daunting. What he was about as a meaning-maker is a task not dissimilar to that confronting Catholic educators today.

At the outset let me say that a foreigner like myself does not assume that she knows precisely the shape and character of your missional challenges. Having read some of your key documentation, e.g the statement from your bishops on the education of school-age children, and in a spirit of communion between Catholic church communities¹, I will endeavour to offer some perspectives gleaned from my own experience and research as a Catholic educational leader. I have, however, come to this conference expecting to learn much, and in that at least I have no doubt that I will be successful.

Education and Mission

Catholic school education is one of the principal means by which the Catholic community carries out the mission of Jesus in Aotearoa New Zealand. Another way of putting this is to say that Catholic education is a principal means by which the Church community here participates in 'God's missiological adventure of Kingdom-building in the world...'² It is vitally important,

¹ New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference The Catholic Education of School-Age Children, 2014.

² Stephen Bevans quoting Sarah Mitchell who was referring to the missional work of enabling the people of God to live and act together across the many cultural backgrounds that are God's gift in creation. Stephen B. Bevans and Katalia Tahaafe-Williams (eds)

therefore, that all involved are clear about mission, and the context in which they are privileged to minister in education, since mission is shaped by context in every era.

Pope Francis wrote in his manifesto, *Evangelii Gaudium*, about the fundamental nature of mission – his own and that of all Christians:

My mission (the Christian's) of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an "extra" or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world...(Evangelii Gaudium #273)

Mission – Jesus Stretched his Hearers' Imaginal Horizons

Catholic education is founded on, and remains centred on Jesus Christ – his person, his teaching, his mission. Jesus spoke of his mission in a very concrete way. The phrase 'kingdom of God' was the metaphor he used to help people stretch their imaginal horizons. His mission was to make present the Kingdom of God, to help people to see where the kingdom of God was among them, and to encourage them to connect with that. By using that particular metaphor Jesus was tapping into an image familiar to his hearers, that of God as king. It was a bit like saying 'Let's imagine what it would be like if God's priorities were making the running here in this school, this diocese, this parish, this Catholic Education Office.'

Before anyone has a chance to quietly 'switch off' on the grounds of not being a designated leader in your school or Catholic Education Office, and so not having to lead for mission, it is good to remind oneself that the very word 'educate' means 'to lead from...to'. For the Christian, that is to lead from self-centredness to other-centredness, towards God and other people, which is the very process and goal of the Christian life. Furthermore, the call to mission, which comes to every Christian by virtue of baptism, as Pope Francis reminds us, is a call to leadership in our world. This leadership is effected at many levels – person to person; community to community; institution to institution. Recently in a Masters program which Jim and I teach for the Broken Bay

Contextual Theology for the Twenty-first Century (Eugene Oregon: PICKWICK Publications, 2011), ix

Institute, the star student of the course was a mother who held no other leadership role except that most vital of all leadership roles viz that of the mother in a family. In a praxis-oriented course in which leaders bring their own leadership situation as an important ingredient of the course, she was encouraged to reflect throughout her involvement on her leadership as mother and did so very successfully.

Leadership in Catholic education is broadly based - parents, students, teachers, principals, governors - lay and religious, bishops and priests. These are all examples of the 'human face' of Catholic educational leadership; these are the ones who are called to provide leadership in creating 'kingdom spaces' in school communities, and expanding those spaces out into the wider society and culture.

Vatican II – Declaration on Christian Education

Because this year marks a half-century since the end of the Second Vatican Council (1962-5) and the beginning of the Council's implementation in which we are all caught up, it is appropriate early in this address to make reference to the Council's *Declaration on Christian Education* (DCE). How does this document approach education and mission?

The subject matter, as clearly stated in the document's title, is Christian education, what it is and the Church's duty to provide it. The document in its final form is the result of compromise. As the discussions progressed at the Council sessions, bishops from non-western countries wished to consider other agenda than that engaging their colleagues from the economically better off parts of the world. They persistently pursued the plight of young people in their own countries, and highlighted both the role and responsibility of the Church in providing for those denied an education.³ Bishop Pompallier, whose early educational endeavours on behalf of both

³ As there had not been a formal statement on Catholic Schooling since 1927, a Commission was established to develop a schema on the Catholic school to be considered at the Council. The original schema was rejected and a broader discussion followed concentrating of the Church's role in education and the principles that should guide this role. See Johannes Pohlschneider 'Declaration on Christian Education' in Herbert Vorgrimler (ed) *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol IV (London: Burns & Oates, 1969), 1-48.

Maori and settlers in New Zealand, would have resonated strongly with their line of argument had he been there.

The original schema on Catholic education presented for discussion by the bishops was deemed inadequate, and was abandoned. With the deadline looming for the bishops to produce a document, those responsible decided to focus on enunciating basic principles underpinning the Church's ministry of education across a range of contexts.⁴ Hence DCE deals with twelve principles or themes including the universal right to education flowing from the dignity of the human person; the goals of a Christian education; the obligations of parents and family; moral and religious education; and the importance of Catholic schools, tertiary institutions and theologates and so on. Because of their decision, limited attention could be given to the education of the young in Catholic schools, and it was decided that this topic would be taken up by others in the post-Vatican II period. This did occur more than a decade later with the promulgation by the Congregation for Catholic Education of a seminal document entitled simply *The Catholic School* (1977) which dealt with the identity and mission of the Catholic school. Just twenty years after that another document would be promulgated dealing with the identity of the Catholic school in what was by that time a recognizably different missional era. It was entitled *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1997). It addresses a specifically mission agenda such as I will deal with later in this address. There have been many other official documents issued over the past fifty years on aspects of Catholic education, but those two deal specifically with the Catholic school's identity. I will return to *The Catholic School* document of 1977 towards the end of this address.

The challenge posed by bishops from the Third World to recast Catholic teaching on education in terms of a responsibility more expansive than the wellbeing of Church members, struck a most important note. It opened up new thinking in regard to this topic such as was occurring at the Council in regard to other topics pertaining to Church life - that the Catholic school, like

⁴ See the discussion in J & T D'Orsa *Catholic Curriculum: A Mission to the Heart of Young People* (Mulgrave: Garratt, 2011), 92.

all elements of Catholic life, is best set within the framework of the Church's mission within the world, to make present the kingdom of God.

In hindsight it is clear that the Council fathers were setting the tone for a Catholic education agenda that would subsequently invite educators and leaders to journey along paths which they themselves could scarcely have glimpsed at the time. I don't imagine, for example, they could have foreseen Catholic schools being upheld as places particularly suited to and responsible for intercultural dialogue as the Congregation for Catholic Education did in 2013 in its document *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love*.⁵ But as most Catholic educators are no doubt well aware, intercultural dialogue is Kingdom work and a school that promotes such a dialogue is 'a kingdom space'.⁶ I was reminded of the importance and reality of dialogue recently when a principal of one of our Catholic large primary schools in the Sale diocese, accompanied at a diocesan event by tall students of obviously African origin, provided the information that nearly 20% of the school's population is now from East Africa. This is a significant change in a school community which, until very recent times has been predominantly European.

God's Mission

Today we often use the term 'God's mission' because we now recognize that this is where the emphasis is best put. God's mission is a foundational understanding. God is pursuing God's purpose (mission) in the created universe and in our world, and the Church as a community of Jesus' disciples is privileged to participate in that mission in a vocational and therefore intentional way, as was modeled by Jesus during his time on the earth. Jesus gives us our best understanding of how to actualize that mission, what it looks like concretely. We engage in God's mission as Jesus did by witness as well as word. It is important to recall that Jesus demonstrated his grasp on his Father's mission through his own choices, relationships, the way he spent his

⁵ Congregation for Catholic Education *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love*. Document marking the 48th anniversary of *Gravissimus Educationis*, 2013.

⁶ J & T. D'Orsa *New Ways of Living the Gospel* (Mulgrave: Garratt Publishing, 2015), 2.

time, the people he mixed with etc. Similarly, Pope Francis proclaims the Gospel very strongly by witness, not only because it is his nature and spirituality to do so, but also because he understands the importance of witness in how people learn and how imaginal horizons are expanded, so that hope can flood into lives. Furthermore, through word and symbolic action Pope Francis is inviting the world into a dialogue in which people are enabled to make their own interpretation of what is being said, but especially of what is being demonstrated, and consider deeply where the hope in the human condition really lies.

The Worldview of a Young Person: Creating Horizons of Hope

Since the overarching theme of the conference is creating horizons of hope, we are focusing mission in terms of that particular goal. What is involved in creating 'horizons of hope'? It is a matter of working with, and walking with, young people and their families to help them develop a worldview which is hope-filled enough to establish and sustain life-enhancing relationships with God, their fellow humans and the natural world.

Keeping the focus very much on young people, I would also ask you to consider the following questions:

- *In what way does Catholic education participate in God's missiological adventure?*
- *How does the contemporary context reshape the mission of Catholic schooling? i.e. What new issues does it throw up for us?*

God's Missiological Adventure and Catholic Education

Its (the Catholic school's) task is fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life....(The Catholic School #37)

If Catholic educational ministry is to play its part in helping create horizons of hope for young people, it can do so thoroughly and successfully only through Catholic education's essential project which is a three-way synthesis - the integration for a young person of their human experience, their culture (way of life) and faith - their own and that of the community. This integration in the Catholic educational process occurs essentially through three means: *relationships, curriculum and pedagogy* - because these three working

together constitute what Pope John Paul II called an 'ecology of human growth'.⁷ Attention needs to be paid to all three if the life-giving mission of Jesus is to be effected in Catholic educating communities.

Leadership – a Call to Conceptualise and Express Mission

A major task for leaders is to think very clearly about what the specific mission issues for them actually are. Educators are great doers; they are always on the job because there is so much to be done with agendas coming at them from all directions. Consequently, they tend to do very well at the *operational* side of their designated roles. These days leaders are becoming more competent at handling the *strategic* side of their roles, managing complex agendas by setting time-frames, harnessing resources, holding themselves accountable, and being held accountable, for getting on top of things in an orderly way. But I repeat. A major task for leaders is to think very clearly about what the mission issues for them actually are. Mission, deeply considered in the light of the Gospel and of the lived experience of the Christian community across time, has firstly to be understood and then driven down very deeply into the work of our school communities and Catholic education offices. Mission must be the bedrock of strategic planning and daily operations.

Mission – A New Understanding Emerges in the Church

Catholics are often aware that the Catholic community, at its most official level, has developed an impressive body of social teaching. What is not so well known is that, since the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, (1962-5) it has also developed a corpus of teaching in regard to the mission of that community in the world. At the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962-5), mission was cast in quite narrow terms. It was carried out by the 'foreign affairs' department of the Church, and not generally recognized as it is now, as any Christian community's very *raison d'être*. It seems almost incredible now, fifty years on from Vatican II, that the prevailing concept of mission at the time was limited by an inadequate understanding of Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God, Jesus' own expression of his mission. This inadequacy

influenced the Catholic tradition for centuries.⁸ As a consequence, mission became confined to what we know today as mission *ad gentes* (to the nations). Mission *ad gentes* continues to be a very important aspect of mission, but it is far from the whole. Whether we are talking of mission within i.e. to the church community, or without, that is, to society and culture, the Catholic community recognizes in its official documentation a multi-faceted mission in which prayer and worship, justice peace and reconciliation, inter-religious dialogue, liberation from personal and societal oppression, inculturation, the evangelization of cultures etc are all recognized as vital expressions of Jesus' mission today.⁹ Thankfully, a new missional imagining is permeating the Church and its various ministries including education which has one of the richest possibilities of living and expressing many of the forms of mission. Catholic educational leaders are also beginning to recognize that any consideration of the identity of the Catholic school must be a consideration of its mission, since in any institution mission and identity are so closely related as to be, metaphorically speaking, 'two sides of the one coin'.

God Walks With Us In Our History

Because we know that God walks with us in our history, it is useful briefly to take stock of where we are historically lest we miss aspects of God's presence with us. In the post-Vatican II period we can discern two distinct periods in Catholic education, the second of which is in its early stages. By giving quick attention to the first, we are enabled to throw into clearer relief the newness of the second which we are now moving into, with its distinctive missional challenges for Catholic educators.

Catholic Education in a Post Vatican II, Pre-Global World (1970-2000). The Second Vatican Council (1962-5) occurred just as the period which saw Catholic schools staffed and run almost entirely by members of religious congregations began to draw to a close. The numbers of religious vocations

⁸ Very useful background is to be found in Fuellenbach, J. *Church: Community for the Kingdom* (Maryknoll N.Y: Orbis, 2002).

⁹ 'Mission as Integrating Agent in Catholic Education' in J & T D'Orsa *Leading for Mission* (Mulgrave: Garratt Publishing, 2013), 95-110.

was not keeping pace with the population growth in the post-war period, and across the western world the growth in the demand for universal secondary education placed an additional burden which could be only partially shouldered. This was the time not only of religious change but of deep societal change due to the increased birth rate and migration in the post-war period. Reading your documentation, I see that New Zealand had its own particular experience of this phenomenon.

During this time, the highly influential postmodern school of philosophy, particularly the deconstructionists, began to affect how people saw society, generating fundamental questioning about how power was being exercised and knowledge constructed, and for whose benefit. Its effects were to gather pace and join with other elements of newness in the second stage – from about 2000 onwards. The issues they raised applied, many soon realized, as much to the life of the institutional Church as to the broader society.¹⁰ All institutions in society, including the family, were deeply challenged and affected in a variety of ways.

Since, as clearly evidenced here in NZ, the faith education of the young is a priority of Church communities, the post Vatican II period developed, despite great challenges of finance and personnel, as a story of the establishment of new educational infrastructure and the movement from schools led and staffed by religious to a partnership between lay and religious. Financial viability had to be assured if Catholic schools were to continue to exist, and the bishops were called upon to make certain arrangements to ensure this which they did. They also established the Catholic Education Office to provide support and leadership to school communities. Regional colleges with new governance structures were founded in growth areas, and previously existing schools were reshaped and amalgamated to provide for the expanding school-age population. A massive effort occurred to inservice especially in Religious Education.

¹⁰ Jim & Therese D’Orsa ‘The Postmodern Critique: Prophets of Deconstruction’ in *Catholic Curriculum: A Mission to the Heart of Young People* (Mulgrave: Garratt Publishing, 2011), 147-164.

Great credit is due to the leaders of Catholic education during this period for putting in place quality structures of leadership and management. They also weathered with optimism and faith the post-Vatican II changes within the Church with all their attendant angst. A great many of the internal culture wars waged in the Church at this time became focused on Religious Education. As the reality of the newness engendered by the Council began to impact on Catholic life, some saw the developments as a deterioration from better days, and to be lamented; others recognized the extraordinary opportunities for the Council's universal call to holiness¹¹ to take effective life through the apostolic involvement of lay people in the education of the young in a new context, and in new partnerships with parents, religious congregations, priests and bishops. What better opportunity to carry out the missional vocation of every baptized Christian than within a community devoted to the education of the young.

New Stage - Role of the Leader in Meaning-making and Worldview Formation

In the past few years we have entered a distinctively new era. It did not appear all of a sudden, but the impact of deep change is now being felt more concretely in Catholic education. The role of the leader as meaning-maker comes significantly to the fore in this new context. The leader is one who accompanies those s/he leads - students and staff - as, amid this newness, they develop their personal worldviews, a process which occurs throughout life, and in which the school plays an important part. The leader of today is very much in the 'worldview business'.

A person's worldview is the cognitive, emotional and evaluative framework within which that person makes sense of the world and experience within the world.¹² A young person develops their own worldview by drawing on the wisdom of the worldviews i.e. the cognitive, emotional and evaluative frameworks, embedded in their culture and their faith tradition.

¹¹ "The Universal Call to Holiness" Chapter V of *Lumen Gentium (The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church)*. Downloadable for the Vatican website.

¹² J & T D'Orsa 'The leader as Meaning-maker' in *Leading for Mission*, 142-154. This discussion draws on the work of the mission anthropologist Paul Hiebert *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2008) and David Naugle *Worldview: History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

These sources – the worldviews of faith and culture - exist in dynamic relationship with one another. In a time of significant change, the relationships have to be rethought, and aspects which were once taken for granted, now have to be intentionally renegotiated. This is because, in an age of deep change and therefore of transition, there develops a lack of equilibrium and coherence between these sources. The old equilibriums which were well enough understood and could be, if not taken for granted, at least worked around, have been disturbed, so that people have to make more conscious choices in regard to constructing their worldview. To be successful as humans and as Christians, they have to be more conscientious about the construction of their worldview, and leaders need to recognize the issues involved and find new ways of supporting students and teachers, of walking with them as they engage in the ‘worldview business’.

Of course, people have always constructed their own worldviews, but the process has not been as conscious, nor as demanding as it is today – the ingredients were more familiar, and the process was generally more predictable. In the West we place an emphasis, indeed an over-emphasis, on choice. Obviously choices in constructing a personal worldview are important. However, some young people today think they have to construct their worldviews on their own from a limitless array of possibilities. The end result is confusion and alienation. Even their teachers may lack a coherent worldview. As Christian leaders we show them that this situation is not unique; it has occurred before in times of great change, and they have both a living tradition and a community to support them which, with all their limitations and humanness, have persisted across these times and carried treasures which they can access. In each era of great change, the Holy Spirit raises up leaders who discern what is at stake, and help people through what is before them. Teachers and leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand should rightly consider themselves to be called to that vocation today.

In the meaning-making process, the default position, one which will always make the running in meaning-making unless there is a specific and successful educational effort to the contrary, is that the worldview of the culture will

predominate, and that worldview in this society is predominantly secular. Since the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century the worldview embedded in western cultures has become separated from the transcendent. That is a fact and must be taken into account when assisting young people in developing their worldview. It means that both faith and culture must be *consciously mined* in the meaning-making process, but also that a critical dialogue needs to be facilitated on the part of the educator between both faith and culture in dealing with significant issues young people will deal with in the course of their lives on this planet. This is partly the responsibility of the teacher in the daily lessons, but equally importantly it needs to occur in the way we construct curriculum, and choose and utilise pedagogy. It means that the connections between the religious tradition and the culture *must be consciously made; they cannot be taken for granted*. This is where the notion of a Catholic curriculum comes in. A Catholic curriculum does just that - it gives close consideration to how the connections between faith and culture can be made in considering human life issues.

New Mission Agendas - Catholic Education in a Global Post-Modern World

Let us put the focus further on this new mission era in which we now lead. With the new millennium, Catholic educators have begun to navigate a new stage in Catholic education.¹³ This stage looks superficially like the previous one in several respects because previous agendas have not gone away and must still be pursued. But other new challenges are recognizable and require clear conceptualization and adequate response from leaders in our time.

Time allows me only to name some of the distinctiveness of this context, and to elaborate briefly on a few aspects in bringing out certain challenges of curriculum and pedagogy. The ones I have chosen to name are:

- the new globalism, pluralism and their attendant secularity
- the earth as system
- knowledge construction and the intentional integration of life, culture and faith

¹³. A discussion of this can be found in Jim and Therese D'Orsa *New Ways of Living the Gospel: Spiritual Traditions in Catholic Education* (Mulgrave: Garratt Publishing, 2015), 238.

However, it is to the last I want to devote most attention.

New globalism, pluralism and an expanded secularity. Globalization and deepening pluralism are two phenomena that have changed the nature of the human experience, and also the historical consciousness of parents, students and teachers, and when combined, these are changing the educational agenda conceptually and practically. There are, for example, the all-too-familiar global connections opened up by the internet and social media.

Connections, but also deep divisions, are being forged among peoples of the world because economies have extended and deepened their global reach. A related 'face' of the new globalization is the vast movement of peoples across the globe – peoples on the move by choice or by sheer necessity, fleeing from persecution or civil strife. They are present in our schools in significant numbers.¹⁴ Refugees and migrants are bringing Christianity with them from other parts of the world, and studies are now being done on the impact of this on parishes and dioceses. Others bring different faiths. In such circumstances the value and skills of dialogue are essential to any effective education, essential *both within the educational process itself and as a goal of educational success*. In the new Catholic school situation, we also need to be mindful of what great possibilities exist for young people to come together in developing a relationship with God who is *the God of all*.

Educating for Mission Space in the Public Square. Contemporary pluralism is accompanied by new 'faces' of secularity. The more positive manifestation of this secularity is the accepted value of people meeting in what is termed the 'public square' - the social space available in a society such as ours for people of goodwill to come together and help build a cohesive society.¹⁵ The public square includes the media, education, political processes etc – all the various ways and places where people come together formally and informally. In the contemporary era the public square is clearly mission territory, a place where

¹⁴. VanThanh Nguyen and John Prior (eds) *God's People on the Move: Biblical and Global Perspective on Migration and Mission* (Eugene:Wipf and Stock, 2014).

¹⁵. Jonathan Sacks *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilisations* (London: Continuum, 2002).

the values of the kingdom can be actualized in shared human projects which must be properly discussed and collaboratively pursued if society is to cohere rather than deconstruct. It is a place of dialogue. Of course, we must recognize that hardcore secularists, a negative 'face' of contemporary secularity, recognize no such role for religion in the public square.

A very serious question for Catholic educators is how well young people are educated about the importance of contributing in the public square and how well prepared they are for actually exercising this Christian responsibility. Participation in this new 'mission field' is also a current and serious responsibility for Catholic Education authorities. Their constructive participation requires a clear understanding and capacity to articulate the relationship of their faith to the educational issues emanating from government agendas at a particular point of time. They need to do so much more than keeping the funding tap flowing, vital as this responsibility most certainly is.

New Interconnectedness – earth as system. Another 'face' of globalization is the consciousness that all peoples of the earth belong to the earth in a more fundamental way than the earth belongs to them, and that rich and poor alike will ultimately suffer from the degradation of mother earth, although the poor will suffer more and be the earlier victims. This situation provides us with an excellent example of a situation where our faith and our culture in the form of the content and processes of the academic disciplines come together in an area of learning. For the Catholic school it is not simply a matter of finding a place in an already crowded curriculum for a vital topic, but of ensuring that the wisdom of both faith tradition and cultural tradition, particularly in the form of the disciplines of learning, are brought to bear in critical dialogue on this area as on all others. The news from the schools is encouraging. Teachers are finding effective ways of enabling young people to be co-creators and co-repairers with God and God's children so that the world, or at least their part of it, becomes a genuine 'kingdom space'. We must not sell our children short. The values we mine are from our faith community and our scriptures. We educate in Jesus' name. There is so much more at stake here than simply

societal values the interpretation of which may be at the mercy of any current which might be running in society at a particular time, even a very good and positive one.

Knowledge Construction as Faith Project. All education is about knowledge, its creation and critical transmission. Catholic schools exist in a milieu characterized by many methods of knowledge creation. A serious element in educational leadership lies in discerning which methods best help young people during their school years to develop a worldview reflecting that of Jesus and his Gospel.

Asking the Biblical Questions. In working with curriculum material the Catholic school teacher is called upon to pose faith questions to secular disciplines: Who benefits from what is being done here? Does this mode of knowledge construction ensure that the poor are able to flourish and have an honored place in human considerations? Do the domains of feeling and valuing, so central to the Judeo-Christian tradition, find equal place with the cognitive in shaping curriculum and pedagogy in this Catholic school? Does this discipline admit of the transcendent?

The Catholic Teacher – Prophet Within Her Discipline(s). The Catholic teacher is challenged to take up a prophetic role in regard to her discipline. The authority in any discipline is the college of scholars who comprise it. Many of the so-called ‘secular’ disciplines have developed in the post-Enlightenment period, that is from the eighteenth century onwards. As part of the culture they have become secularized and hence carry a worldview that has become separated, and indeed closed to the transcendent. This is not immediately obvious because culture operates out of awareness. However, it is so, but not necessarily so. As a teacher said to me recently ‘I am a scholar with personal authority within my discipline, and I do not have a worldview closed to the transcendent’. The more teachers who can see this clearly and who can act upon their insight, the more effective is the critical encounter between faith and culture in their work likely to be, and the more likely it is that they will be able to help young people successfully negotiate their own Christian worldview formation.

Religious Education - the law of unintended consequences. In religious education, we have a particular challenge before us. As has been said, in recent decades, Catholic educational leaders have put a huge effort into training and in-servicing teachers of Religious Education, an effort which needs to continue unabated. However, if we separate out too much Religious education and the formation of religious educators from that of other areas of learning and their teachers, and fail to engage in critical dialogue and the integration which is at the heart of Catholic education, we buy into the fundamental separation of religion from the rest of life which is a legacy of the Enlightenment. This is diametrically opposed to the Incarnation – God in the midst of human society, culture and history.

The whole curriculum has to be harnessed to the project of religiously educating a young person. The formal Religious Education curriculum alone cannot carry that goal effectively. Bishops need to ask the hard questions about how the whole curriculum is furthering the religious education of a young person, not just sign off on quality Religious Education curriculum and in-service programs while leaving the rest ‘to the experts’ in other fields. The law of unintended consequences suggests that this choice furthers the very Enlightenment agenda that the Catholic school seeks to offset.

It is salutary to ponder the fact that formal religious education occupies a small percentage of the student’s time. During that small period students are exposed to a worldview open to the transcendent. During the other 80-90% of their schooling, they are working with disciplines that over time have become closed to the transcendent, or at least so separated as to have little real connection. This is the cultural reality. Given that culture is for most people their default frame of reference in meaning-making, there is no room at all for complacency as to which of the two meaning systems – faith or culture - is going to dominate in shaping a young person’s worldview. Culture is a genuine source of wisdom, but as a human construct, it has severe limits. It sets, but also limits, horizons. The reality is that both faith and culture need each other. Faith cannot be understood, appropriated or expressed without

culture. The faith of a loving person or community generates hope within individuals, society and culture. Culture always requires God's saving grace to challenge and heal its dark side and deal with its human limitations. Unless the whole curriculum is geared to facilitate the appropriate integration of life, culture and faith, the needed integration will not occur and the young person will not be religiously educated. The result may well be confusion or rejection.

Intentional Rebuilding by the Whole Educating Community.

In the new mission environment nothing can be taken for granted in terms of the integration of life, culture and faith in Catholic education. Both the cultural and the faith communities are becoming too fragmented to allow for complacency. Research indicates that young people today have a worldview built of fragments of the wisdom once held by these two communities. As a consequence, intentional rebuilding is the order of the day. It is Kingdom of God work in which every teacher needs to see themselves as contributor and leader. In my experience, helping teachers see where their work contributes to Jesus' project is usually greatly appreciated even by those teachers who may have personal problems with the Church.

Sometimes one is surprised by how people continue to struggle with the integration of knowledge in the Catholic view of the world. Recently, a senior Catholic educator, referring to the current discussions on Catholic curriculum, made the observation: 'Of course there are parts of the curriculum which don't come into this, Maths for example. There isn't a Catholic Maths'. My answer to such comments is: 'In the Catholic view of the world, God's awesome laws of mathematics, which humans are privileged to discover and work with, are exactly that – God's laws. Understanding and working with them helps us to stand in awe and wonder at God's wisdom and beauty, but also impels us to roll up our sleeves and ensure that our students are challenged to engage radically in the project of co-creating a better and sustainable world, one in which all God's children can flourish'.

A little thought readily shows how all sections of the curriculum, not just the obvious ones like literature or the social and physical sciences, are needed to religiously educate every young person.

Conclusion: The Catholic School as Community for the Kingdom

Twelve years after Vatican II, the Congregation for Catholic Education produced what was, and remains, a seminal work entitled simply – *The Catholic School* (1977). Other excellent documents have been produced since then on various aspects of Catholic education, but this is the one which gets to the heart of the matter - Catholic school's identity.¹⁶

In its discussion of identity, *The Catholic School* document, which still remains decades after its promulgation a seminal document, emphasizes the *community dimension* of the Catholic school. In regard to the issues named today, we can take courage from the fact that a community can do so much more than any individual within it, and more than the sum of all the individuals who comprise it.

A good community creates a strong culture that is a powerful force for good which can prevail over the shortcomings in individuals and bring out the best in all its members. As a faith community, a good Catholic school community is a force to be reckoned with. Because of this, as long as we continue to think deeply about mission and redouble our efforts at formation, I feel hopeful about the Catholic schools' future despite the range of staff on which it relies, with their individual strengths and limitations. It is, of course, crucial to build up the density of staff members who are committed to the intentional following of Jesus and are able to conceptualise and articulate clearly the project of the Catholic school.

Formation of staff and leaders is of the essence of success in the new era. Its challenges and demands are too great for us to live off the spiritual capital of the past. The need for sustained and carefully calibrated formation – with due attention to both spiritual and intellectual elements - is now urgent, and

¹⁶ In 1997 the Congregation for Catholic Education published *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* which reiterates several of these foundational themes in a specifically missionary key.

while some systems have forged ahead, others have lagged behind despite a good deal of rhetoric.

As we noted earlier, Catholic schools are privileged places where God's mission is effected and from which it can spread beyond the school community to the wider Church and society. The challenge is to synthesize a living faith tradition with the disciplines of the culture in the processes of teaching and learning so as to create radical newness - this is the project of Catholic education. As an ideal it translates into the practice of walking with young people and their families as they develop a view of themselves and their world that renders them capable of love, justice and commitment. They are thus enabled to co-create a better society, culture and Church. But it does require that "God's adventure of kingdom-building" frame the total enterprise. Discernment is therefore called for on the part of "the wise and faith scribes" who are Matthew's "householders" called to lead Catholic schools and school systems at this time.

Jesus' educational aid par excellence, the parable, is helpful here. In the same chapter 13 which we have already noted, there is also the parable of the wheat and the weeds growing together (Matt 13:24-30). Leaders need to have the wisdom to detect the wheat among the many weeds which flourish in the current educational environment. Whilst one might have to live with both wheat and weeds as Jesus clearly implied, it is the wheat that must be discerned and cultivated if the Catholic school is to be successful as a 'kingdom space' in which God's intentions for this world can be positively experienced. Such a situation ensures that young people, students and teachers, can be accompanied as they construct a coherent worldview in accordance with the Gospel of Jesus, a process providing them with a widening and hope-filled horizon which is their birthright as children of God. It takes all the skills of today's educators in leading students and teachers to that integration of our ancient and ever new faith with the personal lives of young people and their culture. While not a task for the fainthearted, the challenges of the contemporary era can, and I believe will, be recognized and met. Our students deserve no less.

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