



Nurturing the Catholicity in our Catholic Schools

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To look at how the catholicity in our Catholic Schools is being nurtured 4 Church documents will be used:

- The Catholic School
 - Educational Guidance in Human Love
 - The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School
 - The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium
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Why Have Catholic Schools?

- The Catholic school is a privileged place of evangelisation.

However the different meanings of evangelisation make us ask
What is Evangelisation?

- The word can mean transforming the world in accordance with the will of God
- A movement by which the church is built up to Christ's intention
- An activity whereby the Gospel is proclaimed and where living faith is awakened in non-Christians and fostered in Christians
- The word Evangelisation can be restricted to meaning the first proclamation of the Gospel to non-Christians, whereby faith is awakened.

Why Have Catholic Schools?

...You need to understand evangelisation because if you confuse what it means you would confuse what is the mission of the church and therefore the mission of the school.

... you need to distinguish evangelisation from its theological sense and its pedagogical sense.

- Theologically, evangelisation means bringing the Good News to everyone and transforming it from within.
 - As a pedagogy, evangelisation is the process of conversion that is dependant on the "divine power of the Message"
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What does 'transforming humanity from within' mean?

...Transformation is about becoming 'a new creation.'

Early Christians saw evangelisation as gradually changing a person's personality. So that selfish traits should be overcome by selfless love when the person draws on the power of the divine from within them.

... from this there is a need to identify: 'What is our shared vision of the human person?' Schools who do not see the religious as part of their vision of the human person, may not see the development of the religious dimension within the student as an educational goal.

... the Catholic school is different in that it seeks to 'develop the total person.' ie., the Christian person, who as well as having natural gifts, shares the gifts received through Baptism and Confirmation.

To this end, it is important for schools to assist students to spiritually as well academically.

What does 'transforming humanity from within' mean?

... the seeker of knowledge is the seeker of truth.

..."Being able to grasp truth, the human intellect can soar to truths beyond the world we can see. Ultimately, it can find God."

... Catholic educators will agree that 'truth ultimately encompasses total reality – both seen and unseen.' In Catholic education, the total truth can only be taught when one explores the spiritual considerations as well as the educational ones.

What does 'transforming humanity from within' mean?

...becoming whom God wishes (or created) us to be involves a life-long process of conversion. To follow this process we need the freedom to love and to choose good.

... True freedom can only be found when the intellect, the conscience, the emotions and the will come together powered by the person's 'spiritual dynamism.'

... The Catholic school needs to educate students towards this freedom and its community needs to reflect a climate of Gospel freedom.

What does 'transforming humanity from within' mean?

... Part of our belief is that the human person is a unity of body and spirit.

It is the spiritual working within us that stirs us to reflect God's attributes (love, justice, mercy, etc.). It stirs within us the yearning for truth, goodness, freedom and true happiness.

The human spirit stirs people to relate with others, to belong, and to contribute towards community and social development.

... The maturing human spirit stirs us to seek God.

What does 'transforming humanity from within' mean?

The school also has a function in forming conscience within the individual..

... 'Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of the human person. There they are alone with God, whose voice echoes in their depths.' (Second Vatican Council).

Without the proper formation of conscience it is 'difficult for a person to distinguish echoes of God's voice within from all the other inner and outer influences that affect people's lives.'

...Through our own tendencies to be social beings we create a society that reflects the effects of original sin – eg., socially unjust structures and practices, racism, violence, hardness of heart.

What does 'transforming humanity from within' mean?

From the Catholic school the individual 'can learn to appreciate a more liberating vision of themselves as human persons, created in God's own image and likeness.'

...Baptism makes a fully integrated human being possible. Moreover, we are made capable of living the life of Christ by his grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The main challenge in nurturing the catholicity of a Catholic school is to promote it wholly and comprehensively through learning areas and the life of the school.

What does the divine power of the message mean?

1. A clear understanding of evangelisation is needed if we are to work proactively towards it. Unless schools are clear about their evangelising mission, their basic mission can be watered down or lost.
 2. Promote the big picture of evangelisation. The big picture of evangelisation gives hope it taps into notions of: the presence of the power of the Creator; individuals as instruments of this power; Jesus who is present and the source of this power; divine power transforming the lives of individuals and society.
 3. The challenge is that the Gospel message is taught and understood because if it isn't, this will weaken the school as a place of evangelisation and therefore as a Catholic school.
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How is evangelisation achieved?

...Teachers who are non-Catholic need to be supported in understanding the Word of God ... not forcefully converted or manipulated.

How is evangelisation achieved?

4 basic aims in the pedagogy of evangelisation:

- Christian Witness
 - Primary Proclamation
 - Initiatory Catechesis
 - Continuing Catechesis
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How is evangelisation achieved?

Catechesis tries to proclaim elements of the Gospel message in ways that connect with, how people are experiencing their human heart yearnings.

The basic idea of catechesis is: proclamation, encounter point and faith response.

Through Christian witness we arouse a person's interest in the primary proclamation.

In schools we need to be concerned with proclaiming the Gospel through scripture, liturgy (worship), doctrine and the Christian life (at family and parish level) are the means of proclaiming the Gospel. This is essential for handing on Christian faith.

How do we evangelise as Jesus did?

When Jesus evangelised he used the four basic pedagogical steps to proclaim his Gospel: Christian Witness, primary proclamation, initiatory catechesis and continuing catechesis.

Christian Witness: Jesus attracted an interest in himself by performing actions that expressed his love (Eg. Miracles). Christians today also need to attract interest to Christ's message. We can do that through Christian Witness.

Primary Proclamation: Jesus needed people to convert to him personally. To do this he proclaimed the Kingdom and power of God (eg the resurrection). Through him people drew on divine power for their lives in ways that touch people's hearts (yearning for healing; for freedom; for empowerment to overcome failings)

How do we evangelise as Jesus did?

Initiatory Catechesis: This focuses on the crux of the Christian experience (faith and Gospel values). Initiatory catechesis is fundamental as it initiates people to the church where one can encounter Christ personally. It recognises the Trinity; the Father (the author of all good and giver of all blessings), the Son (as saviour and redeemer) and the Holy Spirit (who sanctifies those who respond in faith).

Continuing Catechesis: Jesus sought to deepen the faith of his Apostles. In the same way continuing catechesis seeks to deepen the faith formation of Christian communities/individuals.

... The Catholic school must offer catechesis as part of its life and ensure it is understood. It should run alongside its RE programme.

How do we evangelise as Jesus did?

Catechesis and Religious Education are distinct but complementary.

“The aim of catechesis is (faith) maturity; spiritual, liturgical, sacramental and apostolic. The aim of religious (education) is knowledge...” - *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*

Catechesis continues until there is a faith response (echo) and may take years to happen; Religious Education continues until there is understanding and is course directed.

Religious Education is an educational pedagogy; catechesis is a formation pedagogy.

How do we evangelise as Jesus did?

Challenges:

1. Helping the school, the family and parish communities to appreciate that Christian faith is a journey.
 2. Helping to appreciate that there is a need to offer evangelisation steps to people at different stages of their faith journey.
 3. Helping all in schools to understand the specific aims and the practice of each of the steps in the pedagogy of evangelisation.
 4. The challenge of helping people to appreciate the differences between catechesis and Religious Education.
 5. The challenge of the school community to offer the primary proclamation and initiatory catechesis to the level they are are.
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6. The challenge for schools to offer the best possible catechesis programs and Religious Education they can provide.

Where should evangelisation of our young take place?

The strongest possible communities for evangelisation is through family and parish. The school tends to be limited and at best can complement what happens at family and parish. It can never substitute for them.

However the above institutions need to work together as a team for a young person's faith development.

Where should evangelisation of our young take place?

The family:

- seen as the domestic church
- the first experience of Christ through a living Christian community
- Role of grand parents is growing

The Parish:

- Primary place of evangelisation
- The quality of evangelisation here affects the quality elsewhere
- The parish nourishes families and teachers to continue the process of evangelisation in their own communities.

The Catholic School:

- Students are unchurched
 - But the school is a place of evangelisation because "Christian faith is born and grows inside a community" - *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*
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Where should evangelisation of our young take place?

Catholic schools are described as “meeting places for those who wish to express Christian values in education.” – *The Catholic School*

Two basic aims of the catholic school is the integration of faith and culture and the integration of faith and life.

Major challenge for schools today:

- to keep reviewing how strongly they reflect a spirit of Gospel poverty and simplicity to the students.
 - The continuing faith formation of the school community
 - Valuing Christian models more than Christ himself. (Eg the founders of the College and their values)
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Focus 1 Christian Witness

Schools need to re-focus on the life and mission of Jesus Christ and not 'water-down' His divine message. This may occur when there is too much concentration on a school's foundations ideals (or dedicated saint) or as a result of attempting to meet the needs of pluralistic pressures. (p19)

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Focus 2 Display Gospel Values

Schools are required to reflect an authentic model of life that is based on the spirit of Gospel poverty and simplicity, that is, to reject of affluent and privilege. (*Religious Dimension of the Education in a Catholic School*)
(p31)

Focus 3 Continuing Catechesis and where it takes place

Schools are to nurture the catholicity of all Catholic school members (faith formation and personal relationship with God) regularly

Focus 3 Continuing Catechesis and where it takes place

And they must create opportunities to raise the vitality of faith practices and social interactions within both the family and the parish community by creating linkages with Catholic school activities.

Focus 3 Continuing Catechesis and where it takes place

In recent times, teachers have been called upon to develop greater knowledge in religious education. Equally, the 'art of catechesis' should be rediscovered so that young persons can experience the 'living Christian faith' via liturgical actions incorporating 'echo points' within Scripture and Tradition.

Focus 4 Initiatory Catechesis

- Schools need to respond to each young person's yearning for a harmonious relationship between self, others and the natural world.
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Focus 4 Initiatory Catechesis

Simplify the richness and complexity of the Catholic theology of the human person in terms that are understandable and relevant for our young people.
