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Charism and Vision

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this morning. I regard it as an honour to be able to participate in your ongoing professional development. I commend your choice of topic, one which is, in a sense quite removed from the practicalities of your everyday school leadership tasks and yet, in another, so central to the mission of leadership in Catholic Education. The fact that you choose to stand back from your daily pressures and ponder something more foundational, speaks volumes for your desire to reflect on your frameworks for doing what you do.

Soon after I received Paul Ryan's kind invitation to join you in viewing the exhibition 'Melbourne Winter Masterpieces: Art Deco 1910 – 1939', I read with interest John Armstrong's review of this exhibition in the Weekend Australian. Exhibits on which John focused included the sea-green Bakelite radio, the chrome plated record player and the poster advertising the new train travelling between Melbourne and Albury called the 'Spirit of Progress'. He went on to describe his understanding of a perfect Art Deco moment. It went like this 'a woman with short hair, mixing a martini at a chrome plated home bar while listening to a jazz band on the radio, only to be interrupted by her maid saying she is wanted on the telephone'.¹ It is probably understandable that a woman viewing this exhibition at the same time as John is reported to have exclaimed aloud 'I was born in the wrong age'.² Putting this period into context, it is important to recall that during these years, our Church was striving to come to grips with how Christianity might respond to modernism and play its part in averting the increasing threats of Nazism. Such were those days.

If we transfer our thinking now to our present day, we find ourselves amidst the excitement of another Olympic Games with its motto *One World One Dream*. This follows the memorable events of World Youth Day and the visit by Pope Benedict XVI to Australia. Through the 'Days in the Diocese' and the events in Sydney many were awakened to the possibilities faith can offer us as an Australian people. About the same time, a Melbourne Age columnist was claiming that there are three characteristics of our contemporary society: triviality, superficiality and mindless distraction. Here we have juxtaposed very different experiences of life, one, explicitly profound and faith filled, the other hollow and empty. For me the Pope's own words blazoned across the front pages of our daily newspapers helped provide the key focus:³

Do not be fooled by those who see you as just another consumer in a market of undifferentiated possibilities, where choice itself becomes the god, novelty usurps beauty, and subjective experience displaces truth. Christ offers more. Indeed, he offers everything!

Many participants of the World Youth Day events seemed to feel relieved to have the opportunity to consider a more profound reflection on contemporary society. In a recent book titled *The Future of Management*, London Business School Professor Gary Hamel observes⁴:

For more than 300 years, commentators have been predicting the end of religious faith. From Auguste Comte to Richard Dawkins, they have argued that faith must

¹ Armstrong, 2008, p.59., p.18.

² Armstrong, 2008, p.19.

³ Schumaker, 2008, p.7.

⁴ Hamel, 2007, p.169

inevitably crumble as scientific certitude grows. Yet faith in a divine presence continues to be one of humanity's great common denominators. While some societies are more overtly religious than others, the majority of human beings share a belief in the transcendental.

For Pope Benedict and for us, it is the search for Christ that gives us our vision for life and our collective motivation for leading Catholic schools. I must say in passing how grateful I am to my parents who handed on this vision to me through my life at home and at the Catholic schools I attended - experiences which enabled me to begin my search for 'the true, the good and the beautiful' as Benedict so poignantly describes life's goal.⁵

Let us now move more specifically to the subject of today's presentation. I propose to address our topic in three sections. First, I would like to focus on charism as it might be understood in our context, second share some thoughts about the nature of vision and third propose some ways our charism and vision might impact on our daily leadership responsibilities in the Catholic schools we lead. But first a story.

Last month, I had the privilege of visiting Papua New Guinea. There I attended a District Chapter. At this gathering Brothers from Melanesia had assembled to consider their vision for the next three years and to elect their leadership team who would in turn help implement this vision. I went to this four day Chapter, having previously participated in a number of Chapters in Australia. I assumed that the process at all such Chapters to be quite standard. This process involves consulting those who might be affected by any decisions, collating their responses and putting recommendations to the elected Chapter delegates. In Port Moresby, however, there was one difference. When the Chapter facilitator asked these indigenous Brothers to speak, there was often silence. Sometimes, as we sat together in our group of twenty five, this silence lasted for up to five minutes. I became a little uneasy at this. My nature is to offer my contribution while I have the chance! But perhaps this is the Western way! Not so for the Melanesians. Perplexed by this, I asked the District Leader, Ken McDonald, to help me understand what was going on. He informed me that Melanesian Brothers will not do so until they are ready to speak and they will not do so until they are sure the previous speaker has nothing more to add. An individual will indicate that he wants to speak and then expect those around him to wait until he has clarified his thinking and is ready to proceed. The more I thought about this, the more I began to reflect on the process of discernment. In turn, it led me to ask myself the question 'Who is really leading this enterprise?' 'Is it the Holy Spirit I wondered?' Is this a way to give the Holy Spirit adequate space to do the leading?"

Let us now consider what we mean by charism.

⁵ Zwartz & Stafford, 2008, p.1.

1 Charism

Like many words in the English language 'charism' is one which has taken on added meanings over recent years. In some circles it has almost become a cheap word, suffering from the fate of words that eventually take on false meanings. The word 'love' would be another example. Today, charism is a term that is often applied to social or religious movements. In addition, on a more secular front, newspaper reporters often claim a particular political leader is charismatic. Sometimes it is almost as though charism is a commodity that a person puts on in the morning like a special outfit, or something that one includes in one's personality for an important performance or address, if that were possible. During the lead up to the last election, the member for North Sydney, Joe Hockey did suggest, a little irreverently, that he had, on one occasion, seen the aspiring Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, with his hair uncombed! Fortunately any such artificiality is quickly detected.

As a word, charism came into more regular usage after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), when Religious Congregations were asked to return to their roots, to examine their founding charisms and through this process to chart their vision for the future. Much earlier, of course, charism as a concept had been addressed by St Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians:

To one is given ... the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge ... to another faith ... to another gifts of healing ... to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses⁶.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries charism was analysed academically by, among others, legal theorist Rudolf Sohm (1841 – 1917) and later German philosopher Max Weber (1864 – 1920). Weber, a Calvinist, understood the leader with charism to be a prophet who by virtue of his or her mission, 'proclaims a religious doctrine or divine commandment'.⁷ There are echoes here of prophets like Ezekiel and Jeremiah who spoke God's word when they came across an injustice.

Etymologists⁸ tell us that the word 'charism' or 'charisma' comes from the Greek word 'kharis' meaning 'gift', 'grace' or 'talent bestowed by God'. It is a simple word with a straightforward meaning. We all enjoy gifts - the gift of life, the gifts of each other, the gift of health, the gift of opportunity to name but a few. For us too the Church is a gift, the sacramental community that established Catholic schools in the first place and the community that has always seen education as central to personal growth. As a result, Catholic schools are essentially religious communities and, in many cases, religious communities with a charism. Traditionally, schools belonging to Religious Congregations are seen to offer a charism. But charism is not restricted to these schools only. Where there is a founding person who sees a particular need to be addressed, a resulting community can emerge. The members of this community are keen to attend to the need and the charism

⁶ 1 Cor. 12:8-11.

⁷ Weber, 1978 [1922], p.439.

⁸ Barnhart, 2002, p.161.

flourishes. Such a charism inspires ‘an energy, a dynamism, a power that cannot be contained or possessed. It is relational. It becomes real and actual only when it is acted on, believed in and shared’.⁹

It is the notion of charism as ‘grace’ that I would also like to affirm this morning. As Catholics, grace is not something that today we talk about extensively. It is a little like sacraments. And yet, sacraments play such central roles in our faith lives, and, of course, provide opportunities to receive grace. I am not suggesting that grace is only received through sacraments. I am sure we have all experienced grace in other places. Believe it or not at staff meetings or at leadership team meetings, there can be inspired moments, occasions where someone shares an inspiration, a prophetic insight, even an ‘aha’ moment. Personally, grace is an experience that each of us can feel intuitively. It often seems to come from nowhere, and, strangely, it is frequently only in hindsight, that we recognise it as grace.

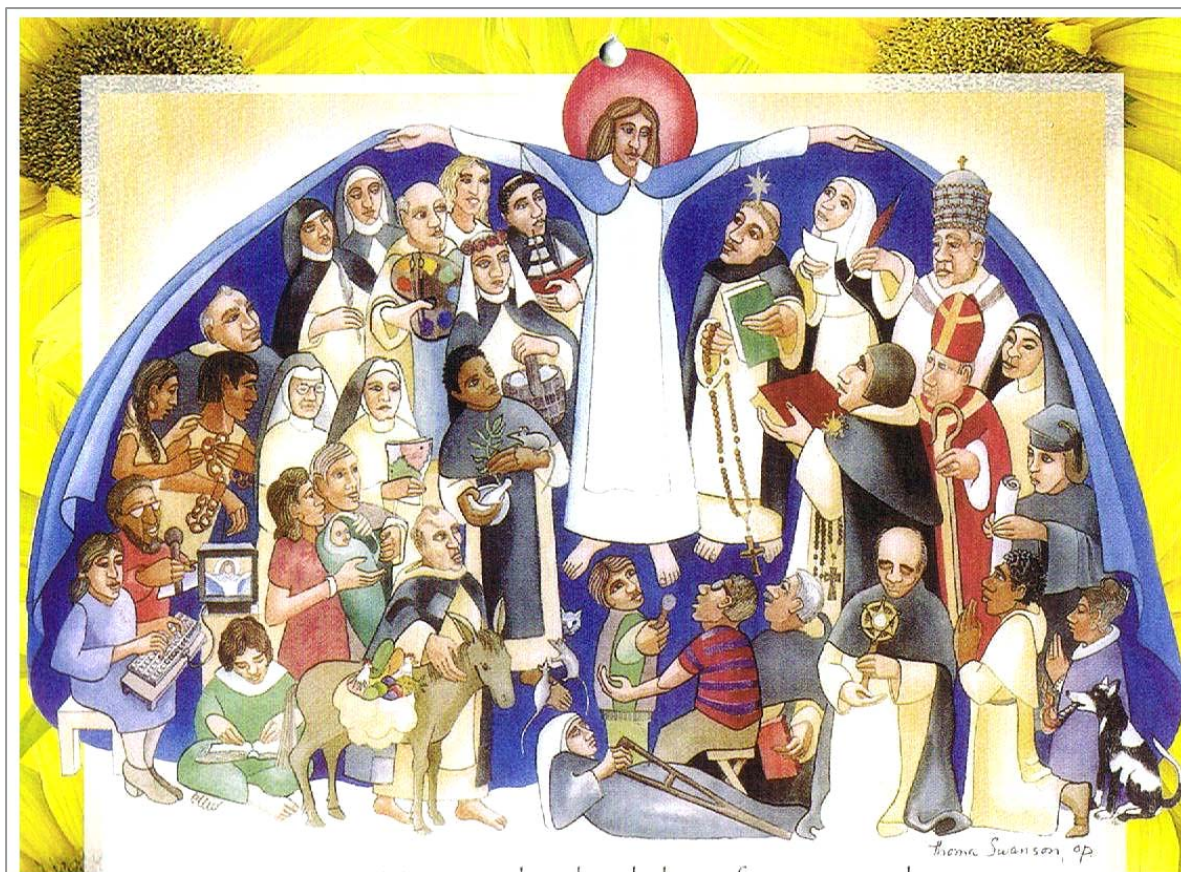
Weber, however, does not see charism as permanent. For him it is a phenomenon typical of prophetic movements ‘in their early stages’.¹⁰ For him, as ‘soon as domination is well established, and above all as soon as control over large masses of people exists’ charism ‘gives way to the force of everyday routine’. In other words, Weber believes that ultimately bureaucracy or excessive adherence to tradition squeezes out any continuation of charism.

By way of contrast, let us have a look at diagrammatic representation of a group of people who have been influenced by a particular charism across eight centuries. This painting by Thoma Swanson depicts people to whom the charism of St Dominic Guzman has been passed on across the centuries. Dominic, along with Bishop Diego established the first Dominican community in Prouilhe, southern France in 1206. Today Dominican men and women minister in 108 countries. The artist's description of her painting follows¹¹

⁹ Leddy, 1991, p.161.

¹⁰ Weber, 1978 [1922], p.252.

¹¹ Hellwig & Volona, 2005, p.26.



Dominicans under the shelter of Mary's Mantle

Mary holds open her mantle at the request of Dominic who is looking all over heaven for his brothers and sisters. He finds that Mary is sheltering the whole Dominican family, old and new. On the right side is Dominic, praying his rosary and carrying the gospel of Matthew. Next to him, Catherine of Siena ponders her most recent letter to the Pope, and Pius V, wearing his papal crown contemplates the scene. Thomas Aquinas is offering Mary his *Summa Theologica*, while Albert the Great pushes him forward. Below Thomas is Hyacinth of Poland, carrying the Blessed Sacrament.

Next to Pius is a Chinese sister, and below her an African friar and a contemporary sister, who has just completed her education. They represent the vocations that are the gift of God to those who preach the Gospel to all nations. At the bottom right, under the mantle, is Jane of Aza, Dominic's mother, and with her is the famous dog of her dreams. The sister graduate with a diploma demonstrates the continuing dedication of Dominicans to study and learning. At the front is Margaret of Castello, who attained sanctity as a Dominican after her parents abandoned her because of her blindness and physical deformity.

On the left side of Mary, with the boat, is Vincent of Valverde, a Spaniard who sailed to Peru as chaplain with the soldiers of the conquest and heroically tried to save the Indians from the conquerors. Below him is Rose of Lima, with a basket of food for the poor. Her Peruvian contemporary, Martin de Porres, is holding herbal medicines, while his animal friends look on. Below Martin is his friend and contemporary, Juan Macias, whose burro (small donkey) knows his way through the streets of Lima to the homes of the poor.

Behind Rose is Fra Angelico, holding his palate, and behind him, those dear friends of Dominic, Diana and Cecilia. The smiling blonde is a contemporary Dominican sister, who somehow got into the back row. The two below them with familiar veils represent the founding members of American congregations. Behind them is Bartolome de las Casas with his hand on the shoulder of Native Americans he is defending.

Below him are contemporary members of the Dominican family: a couple with their baby, and other Dominicans making use of advanced technology to preach the word of God and to record this heavenly event.

Having considered the Dominican family as an example of a community where charism has been passed on from one generation to the next for over 800 years, let us now turn to how charism can ignite a vision for an organisation.

With whom do you associate your school's charism?

2. Vision

Those of us who were educated in the 1950s and 1960s can recall the option we were normally given at school of studying Latin. It is true, of course, that in those days, Latin was the language of the Catholic Church and more specifically of the Mass. I look back fondly on those Latin classes as I do on those Year 12 English Expression classes where we were expected to become familiar with the Greek and Latin roots of more frequently used English words. One of the words I recall learning about was the word 'videre' which means 'to see' and which is the root of our contemporary word 'vision'. It was about this time that I was considering joining the Marist Brothers. I recall undertaking a Year 12 retreat at the Jesuit retreat house in Watsonia which is now part of Loyola College. Three days of silence was a tall order for us in those days. Fr Con Finn SJ gave us our retreat. I remember going to have a chat with him and asking him how do I really know that God is calling me to this way of life. He suggested I transfer my thinking for a moment to the end of my life and look backwards and ask myself what would I most like to have done during my life. I suspect he was asking me about my vision for my life.

As its Latin root reveals, vision is not a new concept. Back in the 7th Century BC, the prophet Habakkuk insisted that we write the vision down and 'make it plain on tablets'.¹² In the 4th century AD, Constantine had a vision for the all-powerful Roman Empire to become Christian. More recently, Martin Luther King enraged by seeing a black woman on a bus being asked to give up her seat for a white man, articulated his vision proclaiming: 'I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men [and women] are created equal'.¹³ In 1992, Michael Fullan observed that the role of vision appears in every book on educational

¹² Habakkuk 2:2.

¹³ Quoted in Malone, 1991, p.34.

excellence¹⁴. For some, vision is 'the product of exercising many skills in a holistic way to create a mental picture of what the future could and should look like'.¹⁵ For others vision is a way of aligning people with the goals of the organisation.¹⁶

People who receive a charism are normally seized by a vision. Jesus, for example, sought to proclaim the vision of God's ongoing love. The Founders of Religious Congregations strove to co-operate in God's plan by helping people experience God's love through their particular ministry. Such ministries have sometimes involved abandoning the status quo¹⁷.

In January 1959, Pope John XXIII caught the mood of the day when he invited the Catholic Bishops of the world to a General Council to discuss their vision for the role of the Church in the modern world. In his historic letter 'Pacem in Terris', the Pope made reference to what he called the 'signs of the times'. The phrase 'signs of the times' seemed new to us in the 1950s and 1960s. St Luke, however, had discussed it many centuries earlier in his gospel when he recalled Jesus saying to the crowd¹⁸:

When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, 'It is going to rain'; and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat': and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

Vision, therefore, must take account of the signs of the times. Take for example, William Wilberforce (1759 – 1833), British politician and philanthropist. In 1787 he met Thomas Clarkson and a group of anti-slave trade activists who persuaded him to take on the cause of abolition, which eventually led to the adoption of the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833. After his conversion in 1784, Wilberforce's political views were informed by his faith and his desire to promote Christianity and Christian ethics in private and public life¹⁹. Let us now have a look at this video clip displaying Wilberforce's charism at work.

Today, we only have to ask the people of the United States whether their vision for their country is affected by the signs of the times. Was their vision for their country the same the day after the aeroplanes flew into the World Trade Centre, as it was before this tragic event? While interpreting the signs of the times is a difficult task, like most things, doing it together makes it both easier and more authentic.

If you were to summarise the vision of your school in one sentence, what would it be?

¹⁴ Fullan, 1992, p.44.

¹⁵ Patterson, Purkey, & Parker, 1986 quoted in Fullan, 1992, p.45.

¹⁶ Flood, 1992, p.33.

¹⁷ Congar, 1986, p.70.

¹⁸ Luke: 12:54-56.

¹⁹ "William Wilberforce," 2008.

3 Impact of Charism and Vision on School Leadership

Earlier, I made reference to the work of Professor Gary Hamel. I would now like to return to this work as we begin to consider the impact of charism and vision on school leadership. I do this because when I initially viewed this part of his work, I was surprised and then realised the importance of his findings. I think you will see why. Professor Hamel believes that human capabilities that contribute to success can be arrayed in a hierarchy. But first let me name the capabilities in no particular order. Hamel sees successful workers using the following talents 1. Intelligence - the ability to improve skills and borrow best practices from others; 2. Obedience - the ability to take direction and follow rules; 3. Diligence - people who are accountable, conscientious and well organised and who don't take shortcuts; 4. Passion - people who turn intent into accomplishment, climbing over obstacles and refusing to give up; 5. Initiative - people who don't wait to be asked and don't need to be told and 6. Creativity - people who are inquisitive and irrepressible. I invite you to list these capabilities in order of importance and indicate your own per centage allocation so that the total is 100%. Now let us see the order in which Hamel places them and their varying importance.

Human Capabilities

Passion	35%
Creativity	25%
Initiative	20%
Intellect	15%
Diligence	5%
Obedience	0%
	100%

What surprised me in Hamel's assessment of the relative contribution of each of these human capabilities to a thriving organisation was the rating regarding Obedience. As I contemplated the 0% attributed to Obedience, I came across the following story in Stephen Denning's excellent book titled *The Secret Language of Leadership*²⁰. The story goes like this:

²⁰ Denning, 2007, p.55.

Think of *two children learning to play the piano*. One child loves it. She thrills to the sound of music. She practices as often as you can because it's a joy. It fills her life with meaning. She inspires her friends with her playing. She has won a prize for her effort and accolades from her school-teachers, but this recognition isn't nearly as important to her as the joy that she gets from the playing itself. Meanwhile, another child studies the piano, playing the same pieces, because her parents have told her that she must. She dutifully practices the pieces she is assigned. Because she has a natural aptitude for music, she does quite well, but it gives her no more than mild pleasure. She finds her practices monotonous and forlorn.

These two young girls are engaged in the same activity, but they have a very different attitude toward it. One feels energized and enthusiastic about it and energizes others by her attitude. The other sees it as a drag and a bore.

I could see now why Hamel was giving 0% importance to Obedience.

The importance Hamel gives to passion was less surprising. But he takes it further saying passion 'is contagious and turns a one-person crusades into mass movements'²¹. Here we have the idea of a charism leading to a movement. Further, if we return to our entymologist we find that passion comes from the Latin 'patior' which means 'to suffer'.²² Here, our themes converge. A person with charism exudes passion because he or she understands suffering, has experienced it and can identify and empathise with those who are suffering now. The next step is to do something about this suffering - to decide what action to take. For that decision, we need what we might call 'prophetic eyes'.

Prophecy is key to effective grace filled leadership

We probably all feel tentative about claiming to have prophetic eyes because to be prophetic is to be able to name what we genuinely believe is the action God is asking of us at this time. We also recall that Jesus reminds us to beware 'of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will know them'²³ (Mt. 7.15-16). The editor of the Philippine publication *365 Days with the Lord*, Gil Alinsangan observes²⁴:

The genuineness of the prophet is known by the kind of life he [or she] lives ... A true prophet is one who lives simply, and announces the word of the Lord in its purity – whether for the good or the ill of the people, defends the rights of the poor and the weak and is unafraid to confront the proud and the mighty if they displease the Lord.²⁵

²¹ Hamel, 2007, p.59.

²² Barnhart, 2002, p.761.

²³ Mt. 7:15-16.

²⁴ Alinsangan, 2002, 25th June.

²⁵ See 2002, 25th June.

While leaders in our Catholic schools have the opportunity to assume these prophetic responsibilities, it takes time and wisdom to discern appropriate prophetic actions. To assist us, Pope Benedict gave some hints when speaking to our World Youth Day participants²⁶: ‘Dear young friends, the Lord is asking you to be prophets of this new age, messengers of his love, drawing people to the Father and building a future of hope for all humanity’. The Pope's message is similar to the one given by St Peter in his second letter: ‘So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in hearts’²⁷. In other words, be loving, hopeful and optimistic!

A call for a charism based educational philosophy

In 1997, Mark Hilton, a Brother of the Sacred Heart, was based in Melbourne. Some of you may remember him. That year Mark concluded his doctoral thesis on the transmission of charism with the words ‘given the rapidity of these changes [in Catholic Education], a clear, conscious and responsive educational philosophy may be a far more enduring legacy than any buildings that dominate the skyline today’.²⁸ Studying educational philosophy is not a popular activity these days. Yet, I believe our schools are poorer for its absence.

Mark Hilton's supervisor, Dr Dick Cotter²⁹ challenges us to do some practical reasoning, an exercise he sees as closely intertwined with ethics. ‘How should I live?’ becomes our first philosophical question - a question that goes back to Socrates.

Alternatively, we could take a Cartesian orientation adopting the role of a solitary thinker espousing the principle, ‘I think, therefore I am’. However, this ‘epistemological orientation’ is said by communitarian philosophers like Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor, not to mention the Greeks and Thomistic thinkers, to distort how we describe and understand human experience³⁰. For them the human condition is essentially one of action, action that involves communal dialogue.

In this spirit, allow me to propose a charism based philosophical framework for ‘practical reasoning’ informing us how we might act in the world. You might wonder how we best identify the most fundamental principles that inform such a charism based philosophical framework? This is a task for us all, but let me begin by suggesting five basic principles that might apply across all charism based schools. While each is important in its own right, they really constitute a set of principles that interact with, and support each other in assisting a charism based school to be authentic.

1. Principle of Communal Learning

During the 17th and 18th centuries, Europe gave birth to key developments in science, technology and rational thought.³¹ This led people to begin to see truth as private and personal, rather than being God given and contained within a community of faith. This

²⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, 2008c.

²⁷ 2 Peter 1:19.

²⁸ Hilton, 1997, p.186.

²⁹ Cotter, 2006.

³⁰ MacIntyre, 1990.

³¹ See Giddens, 2002, p.1.

belief is still with us today. It is only possible to shape an authentic vision for a Catholic school if it is communal in nature and provides communal learning opportunities. This often takes place with the telling of stories, especially deep stories.

2. Principle of Faith Development

During his recent visit to Australia, Pope Benedict spoke about 'faith's rich vision' with the following words³²:

Empowered by the Spirit, and drawing upon faith's rich vision, a new generation of Christians is being called to help build a world in which God's gift of life is welcomed, respected and cherished – not rejected, feared as a threat and destroyed.

If we are to give life to our faith communities, we need to be able to hear the movements of the Spirit within us and share them with our communities. How do we receive these insights? How have they been received in earlier times? We recall how Elijah found God on Mount Sinai, not in the strong wind or the earthquake, but in the 'still small voice'.³³ More recently, Mary MacKillop told us 'Believe in the whisperings of God to your heart'.³⁴ Just last week, the new Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Fr Adolfo Nicolas concluded his email to one of our Brothers with the words³⁵: 'enjoy every minute of God's presence to you'.

3. Principle of Solidarity with the Poor

The Catholic Church's first 'social encyclical' was published in 1891. Many have been written since. A significant theme in these Catholic Social Teachings is the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable. This implies that the disadvantaged should receive special assistance to enable them to participate fully in society³⁶.

With the expansion of the European Union in 2004, the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community stated 'Solidarity is the soul of the European Union'. They see this as a 'new form of living for each other'.³⁷ The European Bishops quote Paul's Letter to the Romans: 'We who are strong ought to bear with the weak'.³⁸

Throughout the history of education, the nature of what is taught is a function of the character of the institution itself. This often reflects the values of the wider society. This character may demand the teaching of values which are different from those of society at large but synonymous with those of our founders. As leaders in Catholic schools we are called to accept this challenge, including embracing the poor.

³² Pope Benedict XVI, 2008c.

³³ 1 Kings 19:12 (KJV).

³⁴³⁴ Quoted in Zwartz, 2008, p.7.

³⁵ Adolfo, 2008.

³⁶ See Pascoe, 2004p.4.

³⁷ Roberts, 2004p.35.

³⁸ Rom. 15:1.

4. Principle of Discerning Leadership

Jesus' life was marked by a trusting and filial obedience to his heavenly Father: 'My food' he said, 'is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work'.³⁹ Our call, as human beings is to attune ourselves to this work of God, to God's project. In the gospel of Luke, Jesus calls 'blessed' whoever hears the word of God and keeps it.⁴⁰

Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him for the crowd. And he was told, 'Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you'. But he said to them, 'My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it'.

Like their schools' founders, Catholic school leaders seek to do God's will. They strive to create an environment conducive to prayer and significant sharing so that the school's charism is alive and practised in the organisations they are leading. The Melanesian practice of reflection before action, can assist us here.

5. Principle of Responding Prophetically to the World

The second Vatican Council encouraged Catholics to embrace the modern world, to interpret what is happening in the light of the movements of the Holy Spirit and to respond accordingly. Founding people normally knew how to adapt to the evolution of society, to its social and educational requirements, as well as to its political and legal demands.

For educators in charism based organisations, this action often involves taking risks, choosing a minority position and being eloquent about the reasons for doing so. To take an unpopular position is often to take the prophetic stance.

What story would you tell about charism and vision as it applies to your school?

To summarise, schools adopting a particular charism have great opportunities to live the Gospel through a particular framework. Often this framework enables staff to carry out their mission in more informed ways, because they are identifying with people who have taken a similar approach in the past and, as a result, passed on methodologies that can be applied to, or adapted for today. One great advantage charism based schools have is that they can connect with similar schools across the state, country and even internationally. Charism comes to life in community and especially within a community of schools of a similar philosophical framework.

Further Questions for Discussion

1. Who determines the vision of your school?

2. Why do some charisms last and others die?

³⁹ John 4:34.

⁴⁰ Luke 8:19-21.

I would like to conclude by acknowledging your own work in leadership. I know you are often under pressure, you have difficult decisions to take and you face increasing compliance requirements. Yet, despite all this, you manage to continue to look to the future with optimism, to read the signs of the times and to respond to the daily calls from the Holy Spirit. May you and your school communities be richly blessed in this wonderful work.

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