



Aoraki

Aoraki No 22 November 2014

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Editorial

This edition of *Aoraki* is showing the impact that the Bishops' document *The Catholic Education of School-Age Children* is having on our schools and leadership. Our whole educational community is clearly considering very deeply the matters that our Bishops have brought to our attention.

Although in this edition there are more articles from those in the secondary sector than primary every article is thoroughly applicable to both levels. Our writers speak for themselves in their thoughtful articles. I will simply, as always, thank them on your behalf for their contribution to our ongoing thinking about Catholic education.

I want to reflect instead on an article by Fred Herron in *Momentum* April/May 2014. Herron asks "how can we respond to the challenges of supermodernity?" - challenges which face both children and adults in what has been dubbed the age of anxiety. This is a pertinent question for Catholic schools. It seems that in the USA teachers have children in their classrooms with levels of anxiety that were unseen fifty years ago. Writer Juliet B Schorr has linked this to the commercialisation of children in a materialistic, brand-oriented culture. Certainly, both adults and children live in a world characterised by rapid-fire change, so many local and international disasters, wars and personal tragedies reported instantly and replaced almost instantly with the next event that we suffer from a feeling of acceleration, impermanence and lack of personal agency, all of which makes our attempts as Catholic educators to infuse our own and our students' lives with meaning, more challenging and difficult. Even those social (electronic) networks that appear to bring us together may simply replace real interactions with chunks of personal data and add to students' fears of, for instance, not being good enough to match up with the group. It is not surprising, then, that students in the Western world may be the most anxiety-ridden in history - perhaps teachers are the same.

Herron has no solutions as to how to combat the rate of change, but in terms of the effects of the rate of change he refers us to a practice which helps to develop resilience and fosters spiritual growth, namely meditation.

Catholic school teachers round New Zealand can speak of the calming effect of Christian meditation when practised in their classrooms. Research revealing changes in the brain as a result of meditation has been going on for some years. Newberg and Waldman (2009 *How God changes your brain: Break-through findings from a leading neuroscientist*) found that long-term meditation and centering prayer "strengthen a specific neurological circuit that generates peacefulness, social awareness and compassion for others." The message for our primary and secondary level classrooms is

clear. Young people need to learn about and have the chance to work at meditation and/or centring prayer. These practices bring swift changes to the brain, and in the longer term can improve social awareness, fostering empathy and compassion. Christian meditation goes back to the Desert Fathers, and is effective today both to bring us closer to God in prayer and as a way to enable students (and their teachers) to cope with the anxiety and the tension that storm around them, helping them to live hopefully and reflectively.

At this very busy time of year, may you have enough time to pray, reflect, meditate, enjoy and be grateful for the present moment!



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Foot-washing in Catholic Primary Schools

Margaret Fitzpatrick, Religious Education Advisor (Primary), Auckland.

The recent General Election, and the subsequent public jostling for the coveted leadership of one of the main parties, raises the question of what exactly "leadership" entails, and is worth looking at in the context of Catholic schools. We constantly challenge and encourage the teachers, students and parents of our communities to aspire to varying forms of leadership, in and out of the classroom, and when they reach their goal we rightly celebrate their achievements. Thankfully, this is quite a different reality of "leadership" from that which is played out on our TV news all too regularly, when leaders of political parties, companies, sports teams etc. can be loudly lauded one day but then held accountable for the faults and failures of almost everyone around them and, often, cut down to size, publicly and harshly, the next.

Catholic schools by their very nature provide points of difference from society in general, and the responsibility for creating an environment in which these features become actual, visible, tangible realities arguably lies with the leadership within each school community. This article will look at leadership within Catholic school communities, explore how leaders themselves are required to be counter-cultural and life giving, and identify role models for leadership that serves our purpose well.

The New Zealand Bishops' document *The Catholic Education of School-Age Children* (January 2014) speaks of the courage required to maintain a truly Catholic environment when there are pressures to compromise with the culture of society. It is this very environment - our Catholic Special Character - that all school leaders are charged to create and maintain. The document cites St John Paul II: "The goal of Catholic education itself must be crystal clear... Catholic education is above all a question of communicating Christ, of helping to form Christ in the lives of others." It goes without saying that achieving the highest possible academic standard is also important to the Bishops and our communities, but a genuine and ongoing encounter with Christ is highlighted by the Bishops as being an essential function of the Catholic school. In any Catholic primary school the various forms of leadership opportunities open to staff, students and parents all then carry with them this responsibility: to enable educational activities "in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony."

This may seem a "big ask" when we consider the amount of time and energy devoted in recent years - albeit necessarily so - to embracing best practice pedagogy and keeping up to date with the latest educational research related to various subject areas as we have implemented the current New Zealand Curriculum in our integrated schools. Indeed it could be argued that in some instances and to some extent, our efforts to focus on our points of difference have taken a back seat to our efforts to comply with the norm for society.

However this is not altogether a bad thing. In a recent talk to principals and senior teachers in Auckland, Bishop Charles Drennan described *The Catholic Education of School-Age Children* as a "timely document", offering and promoting a clear vision for Catholic education at a time when there is a growing sense of faith communities, and addressing a much broader leadership base than the traditional Catholic school/community leaders of principals and priests. That is not to say that the roles of these two all-important leaders are any less crucial than before, but perhaps it signifies the complexity and scope of contemporary communities and the potential for taking on leadership roles within a Catholic community.

So what exactly makes Catholic leadership different from secular positions of responsibility?

First of all, there is the obvious "Jesus" factor, but even though it's obvious, we should not ever be thinking of this as business as usual. If our task is to engender an environment that enables "encounters with Christ", then leaders need themselves to be familiar with - and constantly be seeking - such "encounters." Perhaps theological study and professional development in topics to do with Catholic Character and Religious Education might become a priority for all of the teachers in a school where the Principal, DRS and other senior staff are "leading from the front" and embracing this themselves. All Trustees, but in particular the Proprietor's Appointees, might see their role as being more proactive in encouraging and supporting religious activities and opportunities that provide varied experiences and learning in faith matters for themselves, staff and students. Student leaders might be well equipped with knowledge of Scripture and Catholic teaching and have had enough experiences of faith to be able to "be" Christ to their peers - and to their teachers. Parents' expectations of a great education for their children might be celebrated in the context of having chosen a *great and Catholic* education, so that they too are encountering Christ and all that is Good News, because this is the obvious priority of the school environment. In other words, our points of difference could be - should be - what we celebrate most of all, because these are what define us.

Secondly (and this is not really detached from the "Jesus" factor) is the style of leadership we might increasingly espouse in Catholic schools. And we have a dynamic role model in the person of Pope Francis to look at for an appropriate style that could suit a school environment created around our faith in Christ. After we peel away the personality factors and job descriptions that we might use as reasons to not be as dynamic as Francis, we are left with what should be common to all - and what Francis unashamedly lives and speaks - the sheer joy of the Gospel. This requires absolute authenticity in our attitudes, words and actions, and if we can truly believe that Christ is the reason for our schools, then why not celebrate this joyfully every day? Our Pope "from the ends of the earth" is leading the way in showing that being loud and proud about God and our faith in Christ can actually be "cool" - and the reaction from people all round the world to him is a sure sign that although his words and actions seem to fly in the face of our secular, individualistic, modern culture, the world (including the

children of our schools and their families) is actually crying out for exactly this kind of witness.

Furthermore, we might look to Pope Francis' example in sharing the leadership role and taking advice from others. There is a common saying that the higher up the hierarchy you rise, the greater your obligation to serve others. And that is certainly so, deliberately, for the Christian, and most definitely what we see in the leadership of Pope Francis, not only in the many media-reported special events but also in transparent and patient discernment with his fellow Bishops. Immediately after the final report of the recent two week long Synod on the Family was published, Fr James Martin (himself a Jesuit and Editor at Large of America magazine) commented in social media, regarding Francis' leadership style:

'Dialogue is now a part of the church, at the very highest levels, and this is to the good.

To me, this seems a rather "Jesuit" model of decision-making. Jesuit superiors know, and explicitly say, that the Holy Spirit can work through everyone—both the superior and those men in his care. It is not simply a "top-down" method of governance. So in Jesuit decision-making there is always great deal of discussion and dialogue, which can often continue for a considerable length of time. At times, it's uncomfortable. All in all, the last two weeks have proven a very Jesuit "way of proceeding," as St. Ignatius Loyola would say. It's what we call "discernment," which includes prayer, as well as much discussion, some division and even some debates.'

None of this seems terribly revolutionary and some might argue it is what is already happening. But we, all of us, are being asked to "up our game" in relation to the Catholicity of our schools, and to develop a style not so much 'from the top down' but one that first and foremost shares and celebrates together the Catholic faith. The Bishops' document significantly identifies tagged positions in schools as an authentic source of increased leadership, not only for the schools, but, as these teachers are already "parishioners", for the entire Catholic community. This expectation has been less explored in the past and yet opens up vast opportunities and possibilities, perhaps linking with the all-important liturgical life within the school and for shared events with parish communities, as well as with their ongoing witness of living a Christian life.

And it is significant that in mentioning the liturgical life of the school parish leadership is seen as being connected and integral with that of the school. The local parish priest and/or leadership team is ideally directly involved with the school, not only on the Board of Trustees but as a familiar reality to all. So while the priest is often the first "go-to" person when teachers or students need clarification of a theological question, or when planning a school Mass, all Catholic communities would do well to develop a much closer and friendlier relationship than this when possible.

In conclusion, we are poised at an exciting and pivotal time in our wider Church and here in Aotearoa New Zealand, to embrace a new evangelisation. Catholic primary schools can play a huge part in realising the joy of knowing and loving Jesus, and of living the Gospel, into the hearts of the children we teach, and also into their homes and communities. We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us, but our eyes look to the future. The Bishops, bringing to the fore the reason for the existence of Catholic schools, require from us unified and enthusiastic leadership to make this refocusing happen.

And yet this very leadership, regardless of its type, needs to always be carried out in the style of the one we follow... and His exemplar involved washing feet!



Today's Great Witness

David Sullivan, Consultant Secondary Religious Education, Catholic Schools Education Services, Wellington

It is a very powerful statement of faith being baptised as a teenager in front of your whole school, on your school feast day, including your wider school community. It is an even more impressive statement of faith when the celebrant is the Archbishop and it takes place in a packed Cathedral. It is this example of witness that is needed more and more in our Church and Catholic schools today.

The 26th of September 2014 will be remembered by most of our Catholic school students as the last day of term three before two weeks of holidaying. For St Mary's College Wellington this day was their feast day and during their full school Mass they witnessed some of their fellow students receiving the sacraments of Baptism, Holy Communion and Confirmation.

I had the pleasure of walking with them, preparing them for this important occasion. As a recent DRS of St John's College in Hastings, these moments of faith-filled witness take much work but it is very rewarding work, to observe the love of God working through these young people. This is the second opportunity I have had this year to prepare teenagers for the Sacraments of Initiation. On both occasions I have been impressed by the spiritual depth of our teenagers. Their willingness to trust God and to make that public declaration of their desire to grow in their love for God was uplifting and inspiring for all those present. They each understood that despite being teenagers, they were talking in terms of an adult commitment to the faith.

We live in a time where the 'practising Catholic family' with its lived witness is hard to spot in our Churches. Yes, they are there, but not like they were twenty or thirty years ago. Back then we as a Church talked of the responsibility of parents passing their faith on to their children. Now, for some of this younger generation, they are approaching the reception of the Sacraments without having had that strong parental witness forming them along the way. When you look within our churches the generation of baptised Catholics between the ages of 20-50 is hard to find. And I sincerely acknowledge those that are there and the vital faith witness they do give.

In both groups of teenagers who have received sacraments this year I saw students who had the courage to stand up by themselves and say yes to the Catholic faith. I must acknowledge the evangelising work being done through the Holy Spirit in our Catholic Schools and in particular through the faithful witness of the Religious Educators, Directors of Religious Studies and Principals.

The publication by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops earlier this year, *The Catholic Education of School-Age Children*, clarified the reality of Catholic education, stating that "The Catholic school is an ecclesial entity, reflecting the deepest nature of the Church in its life, and participating fully in the Church's mission by forming Christ in

the lives of others".¹ That spirit of mission, of forming Christ in others, was important to Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Mercy Order (founder of St Mary's College), as with the other Catholic school founders. The witness of these young people receiving the sacraments is witness to our Church in its mission of forming Christ in others, a mission which is still vibrant in our schools today - but it does need greater resources.

There is no doubt that the introduction of Achievement Standards in Religious Education has meant a greater understanding of the teachings of the Church. However, another hard reality has been the time required for DRSs and Religious Education Teachers to create and implement these Standards. This has meant less time and energy to devote to Sacramental Programmes. Most of our schools no longer have Religious Congregation personnel or the resourcing for Chaplaincy. What is obvious is that there is a real need for sacramental programmes and personnel to help run them. It is disheartening when schools are unable to provide for this need and parishes appear to be unaware of it. The responsibility is not just that of the Catholic schools but the whole church community and I encourage dialogue between schools and parishes to continue to work together on this.

The goal of a Catholic school is that "first and foremost every Catholic education institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth."² This statement from Pope Benedict XVI in an address to Catholic Educators in the United States, 2008, and reiterated here by our New Zealand Bishops, clearly shows how important it is for our schools to be not just 'seen' as Church but to 'live' being Church.

What was obvious with these young people who received the sacraments was that this encounter had already taken place. The liturgies, especially the school Masses, the prayer moments, the Religious Education classes and the reality of authentic witnesses all add to these moments of encounter.

This encounter in which God reveals his saving love to us is inevitably life-enriching. What I noticed while walking with these students was their real commitment, their willingness to learn about the 'faith of the Church' and their ability to trust what was happening. This is the witness that was being celebrated in the presence of their peers, and who knows how that may now influence others in the future. This is evangelisation.

¹ NZCBC, 2014, *The Catholic Education of School-Age Children*, page 4.

² Quoted in NZCBC 2014, *The Catholic Education of School-Age Children*, page 5.

A Marist Brother's Reflection on *The Catholic Education of School-Age Children*

Terry Costello, NZ Marist Brothers Trust Board

(The article below, written originally for Marist Brothers schools, has been edited slightly for this publication. It shows the support of Marist Brothers' schools for the document, and offers some suggestions for those schools, which are likely to be relevant to other Catholic schools as well.)

In early 2014 The New Zealand Bishops Conference published the document *The Catholic Education of School-Age Children* in which the faith formation of children in Catholic and State schools was addressed.

Drawing on Vatican documents, addresses by recent Popes and a recent New Zealand doctoral thesis³ the document both affirms and questions those engaged in the faith formation of New Zealand Catholic children as to the outcomes of their ministries.

Catholic Schools in New Zealand

The history of Catholic schools in New Zealand is one of a number of stages. From the arrival of Bishop Pompallier in 1838⁴ Catholic schools began to emerge in various towns around the country which were lay led and administered. New Zealand had a system of Provincial Government until 1876 with some Provincial Governments providing funds for schools irrespective of who ran them. Where these funds were not granted or were insufficient, parents provided funds for the meagre salaries paid to these lay teachers.

With the abolition of the Provincial Governments, the Central Government passed the 1876 Education Act making New Zealand education free, secular and compulsory. This Act has remained the cornerstone of the country's education system ever since, as witnessed by the continuing controversies over "compulsory" donations from parents that many schools seek to supplement their operations grant.

The New Zealand Catholic community, led by its Bishops, then set up a system of schools parallel to the State system in order to continue the teaching of Religion to the pupils. For almost 100 years this system was staffed by religious priests, sisters and brothers, each of whom was paid a modest stipend.

The post-World War II "baby boom" and the impact of the changes in society and the Church post Vatican II saw enormous financial stress on the Catholic community as more and more lay teachers were employed who needed to be offered a just wage. After many years of unsuccessful campaigning for State assistance a breakthrough came with the passing of the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act in 1975.

³ Duthie-Jung, C. (2012) Faith and secularity: A critical exploration of Catholic identity among young Pakeha Catholics in Aotearoa New Zealand. Unpublished PhD, Sydney College of Divinity.

⁴ The first Marist Brothers in New Zealand were catechists.

The Integration Act guarantees the right of New Zealand Catholic Schools to teach Religious Education and to promote what is called their (Catholic) Special Character. The Bishops' document therefore examines the quality of that Religious Education and the strength of that Special Character.

The Nature of Catholic Education

The document begins with an examination of the nature of the Catholic school.

Among the key statements in this section are the words, "The education provided by the Catholic school differs from other schools in that: 'Its task is fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life.'" (Para 8) Any Marist school would be in complete agreement with this statement, for is this not why Father Champagnat founded schools and wanted the early Brothers to be teachers not just catechists?

Regarding the goals of the Catholic school the document states, "First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth." (Para 12) This goal resonates well with the Marist mission statement, "to make Jesus Christ known and loved by young people" and with our motto, "All to Jesus through Mary and all to Mary for Jesus."

The document then questions how authentic are the activities within schools that seek to promote that encounter. Catholic schools in New Zealand undergo an annual self-review of their Special Character and a tri-yearly external review. The reports from these external reviews paint a very positive picture of the efforts (and results) of the schools in the strength of their Special Character and the effect of this on the lives of their pupils. What would be revealed if families and parishes underwent similar reviews?

The document acknowledges that, "Many reasons are put forward for the lack of engagement of many young Catholics with the Church." (Para 39) It then goes on to state that, "the participation of young people in large numbers would change the parishes, assuming other age groups were open to that change and willing to give young people lead roles in the parish." (Para 77) The Bishops are perhaps hinting that if "other age groups" are not willing to change then it may not be surprising that young people don't come. A simple example - older people have an affinity with certain hymns. Young people do not relate to the sentiments of these hymns. If people want the young people to come then who has to change? In my opinion not the young people. See how willingly they participate in the liturgies at their school. As Pope Francis says "...the whole Church which is Mother Educator is called to "change" in the sense of being able to communicate with the young people she has before her."

Drawing on the research of the thesis, the document states: "The young people studied [a small group of pākehā] see being Catholic as part of their identity, but for the most part it is a cultural connection rather than a commitment." (Para 33) My response to this statement is that we should be very pleased that young people in our Catholic

schools "see being Catholic as part of their identity." Young people may be far from ready to make any commitment. Are we expecting something from young people with a call to commitment for which they may have neither the emotional nor psychological maturity?

Values and Virtues

New Zealand Catholic schools are currently held in high regard by their communities. When asked why they are choosing Catholic schools for their children many parents (including large numbers of unchurched parents) reply "because of their values." As the document points out the emphasis on values in the New Zealand Curriculum⁵ has in recent years led some Catholic schools to start with these educational values and link them to the Gospels, (rather than starting with Gospel values). This can lead to schools to "adopting generic values which are derived from secular humanism and detached from the Catholic faith." (Para 66)

Forming their students to be "good people" is a legitimate task of Catholic schools. Did not Father Champagnat ask the early Brothers to form "good citizens?" No one wants to see them producing fanatics or bigots prone to sectarianism. However, Catholic schools need to go beyond producing "good people."

Father Champagnat also wanted the children leaving a Marist school to be "good Christians." For Marist schools this should not be an issue as the work of promoting human growth is integral to the process of evangelisation but, "We go further."

The document makes the distinction between values and virtues pointing out the objective nature of virtues, "having God for their origin, their motive and their object." (Para 69)

One of the major tasks in the personal development of the young people in our Marist schools is helping them to find the strength to be strong in doing what is right. Every teacher has heard the excuse: "my friends led me astray." The document makes a very strong case that, "virtues give us the strength to do what is right." (Para 72)

In the light of this, perhaps a case could be made for examining how we present our Champagnat Marist Pillars. Do we use them to promote values or virtues? *In His Footsteps*⁶ sees our "three violets" as the virtues by which Marist teachers "allow the action of God to work through them." (Para 104)

For example, is our Pillar "In the Way of Mary" not first and foremost about Mary's journey of faith? Do our pupils hear of Mary's faith response in the Annunciation story as often as Mary's concern for Elizabeth in the Visitation story? Is the Pillar of Family Spirit based on the Trinity?

⁵ Values of the New Zealand Curriculum: Excellence, Innovation, Inquiry and Curiosity, Diversity, Equity, Community and Participation, Ecological Sustainability, Integrity. See <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/>

⁶ International Marist Education Commission. (1988) *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat: A vision for Marist education today.* Paragraphs 70-71.

The document also states something we have always believed in Marist schools. "At the heart of the Catholic Character of a school are the Catholic hearts of those who work in the school: principal, teachers, chaplains and other staff." (Para 47) Does this not echo the words of Father Champagnat, "To bring up children properly, we must love them, and love them equally." We call this preaching the Gospel without words. The three violets represented for Marcellin the three Marial virtues of humility, modesty and simplicity.

The Common Good

One issue that the Document raises, which is of concern to me in regard to our New Zealand Marist schools, is the matter of the "common good" and the accompanying "social conscience." Having visited nearly half of the Catholic secondary schools in New Zealand as an external reviewer I can say that they are very generous in raising money for charitable causes. The Young Vinnies is flourishing in most of these schools and service is a significant feature of the life of the pupils in many of them.

However this generosity is not matched by the "fence at the top of the cliff" examination of society - local and global. The document calls for all those in leadership (staff, Boards of Trustees) of Catholic schools to "receive regular training in the principles of Catholic social teaching." (Para 84) This call may well be one that our New Zealand Marist schools need to hear, following the lead of Pope Francis.

Yes, our Marist schools can always do better and must remain "on top of their game" and the document challenges them to do so. Is the prayer in our schools rich and meaningful or is it rote? Are Retreats true Retreats with a spiritual focus, not a camp with a spiritual overlay? Are actions in harmony with words in the area of discipline?

New Zealand society today is far removed from the society in which Catholic schools were established in our country but the reason for them remains unchanged - the evangelisation of school-age children - bringing them "to know and love Jesus Christ."

How can we Enhance the Special Character of Catholic Schools?

*Lyn Smith, TCI lecturer and TCI Auckland site co-ordinator,
Theo van der Nest, HOD Religious Education, St John's College, Hamilton*

The Catholic Church considers providing schools as a way in which the reign of God/ *Te Atua* can be a 'here and now' rather than an 'eternal life' event (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (SCCE), 1977 §66; The Code of Canon Law, Cn.794 §1). However, Catholic schools are sometimes seen as an expense the Church does not always reap the rewards from and yet, it is through the Catholic school that many of our young people have an opportunity to experience God. Catholic schools provide a holistic education, which assists parents as the first and foremost educators of their children in matters of faith and morals (CCC # 2221-2231; Paul VI, 1965). Parents, whether they are practising Catholic or not, expect that a Catholic school will provide an education that will enable their children to understand the world from a Catholic perspective. A Catholic school is able to do this through the Religious Education Curriculum and the aspect called special character.

Catholic schools as ecclesial entities

The synthesis of faith, life and culture has been a central theme in Church education documents since *Gravissimum Educationis* in 1965 (Paul VI, 1965; see also SCCE, 1977, 1982, 1997, 2007). However, one of the key changes in the Catholic Church over the past 40 years has been the rise of secularism among some Catholics whose religious affiliation with the Church has become tenuous (Kennedy, 2010; Rymarz, 2010).

The change in society's religious observances (Sibley & Bulbulia, 2014) and its indirect impact on Catholic schools is evidenced by the fact that Aotearoa New Zealand's population has become increasingly ethnically and religiously diverse (Hoverd, Atkinson & Sibley, 2012; Sibley & Bulbulia, 2014; Wane, 2011) and the fact that New Zealanders over the last decade have increasingly been opting for a life without religion (Hoverd, 2008; Smith, 2013; Stent, 2013). This trend has been paralleled by research on religious observances in other western countries (Smith, 2013).

Census information from 1966 to 2006 indicated that in Aotearoa New Zealand there has been a steadily declining affiliation with the Christian faith at a rate of 0.9% per year (Hoverd, Bulbulia, Partow & Sibley; 2013; Hoverd, 2008). This decline has continued to the extent where in 2013, the "non-religious" group (people stating that they have no religious affiliation), emerged as the largest group in the 2013 census (Statistics New Zealand, 2013; see also Smith, 2013; Stent, 2013).

Against this backdrop, the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference has stated that the complexity of the modern world has made it increasingly more necessary to raise awareness of the ecclesial identity of Catholic schools (New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference (NZCBC), 2014; see also Miller, 2007). As an ecclesial entity, the Catholic

school reflects the nature of the Church (NZCBC, 2014§7). The two critical elements essential for success in any organisation are identity and mission (O'Connell, 2012).

A sense of identity is needed if people are to live humanely (Groome, 2003). The identity of the Catholic school raises issues concerning a school's Catholicity, the Catholicity of its education and the extent to which the whole life of the school is imbued with a Catholic spirit (Brown, 2010).

International studies on the Catholic Identity of Catholic schools

A recent study with regard to the Catholic identity of Catholic schools conducted nationally in the United States, which included responses from 3300 teachers and principals, raised the issue that Catholic identity should involve more than the mere teaching of religious education and the presence of Catholic images, symbols and rituals (Convey, 2012; see also Miller, 2007). The permeation of Catholic identity through the whole school curriculum was generally identified by the principals and more experienced teachers as important, but among the newer and less experienced teachers in Catholic schools the importance of this was less likely to be recognised (Convey, 2012). Convey highlights the need for on-going professional development of all staff with regard to preserving and strengthening the Catholic identity of their schools to ensure that the whole curriculum is imbued with the Catholic identity, with the intention of developing the whole person of the student (Convey, 2010; see also Gleeson, 2013).

A Canadian initiative in Ontario examined the priorities and issues in Catholic education (Institute of Catholic Education (ICE), 1997, 2007). One of the emerging concerns expressed by the various role-players related to the degree to which Catholic schools can continue to demonstrate their distinctiveness as well as foster their Catholic identity at a time when a diminishing number of teachers and students identify with the Catholic faith (ICE, 2007). Pollefeyt and Bouwens stated that if Catholic schools let go of their Catholic identity, then the gradual decline of the Catholic faith will be a foregone conclusion (2010).

From this leads the argument that unless there is renewed effort to train and educate all teachers from all curriculum disciplines in Catholic schools on maintaining that identity, it may increasingly only become the responsibility of those in the Religious Education faculties. Groome (1996) has consistently argued that the distinctiveness of Catholic schooling parallels the distinctive characteristics of Catholicism itself (see also Sultman & Brown, 2011). Catholic identity is the essence and soul of Catholic schools and should permeate school culture as through school culture identity comes to life (Cook, 2008). The examination of the Catholic identity of the Catholic school must start with the nature of the Catholic school (Convey, 2012) which is central to the Catholic Church and its mission of creating a special atmosphere with a religious dimension wherein teaching and learning can occur (SCCE, 1988). Catholic schools therefore by their very nature have a distinct Catholic culture (SCCE, 1977; see also Groome, 1996, 2012; Hobbie, Convey & Schuttloffel, 2010). If the ultimate aim of Catholic education is the transmission of Catholic faith and culture, then an

understanding of that culture is essential for those who are to maintain and develop it within Catholic schools.

Issues surrounding Catholic identity are prevalent world-wide in Catholic schools (Buchanan, 2005; Miller, 2007; Mulligan, 2007; O'Donnell, 2001; Rymarz, 2010; Schuttloffel, 2012, 2013; Wanden; 2009). One of the most pressing concerns for the contemporary Catholic school has become the clarification of its Catholic identity (Mulligan, 2007; Treston, 2010). Catholic school leaders across nations are preoccupied with the encroachment of increased accountability to the State, increased government protocols, and the general rationalisation of education (Schuttloffel, 2012, p. 152). Other pressing concerns include the impact of an increasingly secular society and global capitalism; the responses of contemporary students to Catholic schooling; Catholic school leadership; teacher retention and recruitment; complexities regarding the continued financing of Catholic schools by the State; and the pursuit of the neo-liberal agenda in education (Davies & Franchi, 2013; Grace & O'Keeffe, 2007). Davies and Franchi underline the emerging crisis that Catholic schools face with regard to state funding when they state that (2013):

In a number of Western democracies the rise of secular elites has been accompanied by an aggressive campaign against religious schooling, as if the mere presence of such schools somehow represented the unfinished business of the Enlightenment. This has placed particularly state-funded faith schools at the centre of frequently heated controversy involving 'new atheist' interrogations of their curricular content, especially in the domains of religious education and science. (p.37)

These concerns are prevalent in Argentina (Buchanan, 2005; De Donini & Torrendell, 2007), Canada (Mulligan, 2007), England and Wales (Gallagher, 2007), Ireland (Tuohy, 2007), Australia (Buchanan, 2005; Crotty, 2002; Healy, 2011a, 2011b; Fleming, 2002; Pell, 2007), South Africa (Potterton & Johnstone, 2007), Scotland (Conroy & McGrath, 2007) and also in Aotearoa New Zealand (Birch & Wanden, 2007; van der Nest & Buchanan).

Special character in Aotearoa New Zealand

In Aotearoa New Zealand the provision of State funding for Catholic and other integrated schools was secured by the passing of the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975 (PSCI Act), which ended a hundred years of denial of State funding for Church schools. This Act of Parliament allowed for the integration of privately owned church schools into the State system in order for these schools to secure State funding, which was a much-needed resource (New Zealand Catholic Education Office (NZCEO), 2012; O'Donnell, 2000; Sweetman, 2002). This legislative provision ensured the continued existence of Catholic (and other integrated) schools (Snook, 2011). Integration permitted Catholic schools to continue with their provision of education within a Catholic religious framework, specified as their unique special character (Sweetman, 2002; Lynch, 2002; van der Nest & Buchanan, 2014; Wanden, 2009). However, State funding was conditional on Catholic schools being able to visibly

demonstrate to the State how the education that they provided was authentically Catholic and different from State education.

In order to assist Catholic and other integrated schools in Aotearoa New Zealand in fostering their special character ethos the PSCI Act made provision for the establishment of the position of a Director of Religious Studies (DRS) in Section 61(b) as part of the normal staffing entitlement of Catholic and other integrated schools (Association of Proprietors of Integrated Schools (APIS), 2010; see also CIT, 2004; NZCEO, 2000). This senior management position is regarded as the key leadership position in Aotearoa New Zealand Catholic secondary schools and is responsible for coordinating all aspects related to the maintenance and development of the special character in Catholic schools in compliance with provisions of the PSCI Act (NZCEO, 2000). As a result, DRSs are expected to provide leadership in the planning of liturgies, Masses, Church celebrations and the implementation of Religious Education, social justice and staff formation programmes in special character (CIT, 2004; NZCEO, 2000, 2004, 2007, 2010; O'Donnell, 2000; Snook 2011; Wanden, 2009, 2010). The position of DRS carries responsibility for the preservation of the special character of a Catholic school (Catholic Institute of Theology (CIT), 2004; National Centre for Religious Studies (NCRS), 1991, 2005, 2008; O'Donnell, 1999, 2000, 2003). The DRS therefore is central to ensuring that State funding remains accessible, by complying with the special character requirements set out for integrating schools in the PSCI Act (Birch & Wanden, 2007; O'Donnell, 2000; Wanden, 2009, 2010).

As a legal imperative, Catholic schools in Aotearoa New Zealand need to maintain their unique Catholic identity as expressed through their special character in order to comply with their Integration Agreement and the provisions of the PSCI Act (1975) (PSCI Act 1975; see also Kennedy & Duncan, 2006; Larkin, 2006; Lynch, 2002; O'Donnell, 2000; van der Nest & Buchanan, 2014; Wanden, 2009).

Recent research in Aotearoa New Zealand on special character in Catholic secondary schools has identified that the Director of Religious Studies is perceived as carrying more and more of the responsibility in the school for maintaining and developing special character (O'Donnell, 2000, Wanden, 2009, 2010). While this may not be the actual case in either primary or secondary Catholic schools it is worth noting the perception - further research may be needed in this area. O'Donnell and Wanden also reported on the changing and increasingly complex nature of the DRS role and the increasing need to reconceptualise the role forty years after integration.

Conclusion

Therefore, enhancing special character in Catholic schools in Aotearoa New Zealand has increasingly become the domain of the DRS, rather than the whole Catholic community (Birch & Wanden, 2007; van der Nest & Buchanan, 2014). In the future, Catholic school communities need to understand their collaborative role within the development, promotion and enhancement of special character. Catholic schools must remember that their purpose is to help students to understand what it is to be Catholic in the 21st century and so be a public witness to the wider community in which they live.

The Catholic school must make every member of the school community feel valued and of worth, because they are made in the image and likeness of God (Gen1:27; Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCCC) §66). This is what special character is about and it is the responsibility of the whole school community to enhance this in our Catholic schools. The Catholic school does this by creating an "atmosphere permeated with the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made to be" (Paul VI, 1965a). "Permeation" of special character across all curriculum areas therefore needs to be at the centre of the whole educational enterprise (Kennedy & Duncan, 2006; O'Donnell, 2000; Wanden, 2009).

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