



Mandate

Catholic Education Commission
of Western Australia

2009 - 2015

2009-2015





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MANDATE OF THE CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

This document contains the Mandate, Mandate Letter, Terms of Reference and Membership of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia. It supersedes the 1981, 1993 and 2001 documents.

The document reflects further developments in Western Australian Catholic education and in official Church teaching on Catholic schools. In promulgating it, we reaffirm the importance of Catholic schools for the Church's mission in Western Australia.

We express appreciation to all who have helped develop our Catholic schools. In particular, to those who have served as members of the Catholic Education Commission, its committees and office, since 1971.

PROMULGATION OF THE MANDATE

We, the Bishops of Western Australia, mandate the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia to foster the continuous development and improvement of Catholic schools in Western Australia, and to act on behalf of the Catholic community for the benefit of all Catholic school-aged children, be they in Catholic schools or not.

The Commission is appointed by the Bishops of Western Australia and is responsible to them. The Commission is to generate official state-wide policies and assist the individual Bishops with Catholic schools in their own dioceses.

The Commission will continue to recognise and make provision for Religious Institutes that operate Catholic schools in Western Australia, and to respect their particular charisms.

This Mandate is given for seven years from the first of January 2009.

- +Barry J Hickey, Archbishop of Perth
- +Justin Bianchini, Bishop of Geraldton
- +Christopher Saunders, Bishop of Broome
- +Gerard J Holohan, Bishop of Bunbury
- +Donald Sproxton, Auxiliary Bishop of Perth

MANDATE LETTER FOR ALL INVOLVED IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

1. Any renewal of the Mandate and Terms of Reference of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia provides a new opportunity for all involved in Catholic schools to reflect once again on their purpose. Parents, priests and religious, teachers and other school staff, school leaders and boards all need to keep the purpose of a Catholic school clearly in mind.

Catholic schools have a vital part to play in the Church's mission to the world of today – particularly in Australian society. Their purpose can only be understood within the context of this mission.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

2. Jesus Christ instituted his Church as the community of his followers, his Body in the world.¹ He would be its Head, and all who believed and accepted Baptism would be his members. He gave his Church the mission of proclaiming his Gospel to every human person, and to baptise all who believed.²

Jesus promised that, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, he would 'make a home' in each baptised believer.³ As Head of the Church, Jesus is present today in each member of his Body, working through each to the extent that they are living 'in the faith'.⁴

As Head, Jesus shares with his members the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who guides and empowers them to play their parts within his Church's mission.

THE UNIVERSAL SACRAMENT OF SALVATION

3. The Church Jesus instituted is both divine and human. It is divine because Jesus is its Head, and because, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, he is present in each of his members.

The Church is human because its members are human, with all their weaknesses, failings and sinfulness. These are the people for whom Jesus came. He taught that he came, not for those who think themselves sufficiently good without God, but those who recognise their need for God because they are sinners:⁵

It is not the well who need the doctor, but the sick. I came to call not the upright, but sinners.

Jesus intended that his Church should serve in every age as the Universal Sacrament of Salvation, a sign and an instrument of God's saving purposes in the world.⁶ This is important for understanding the mission of the Catholic school within the Church.

Jesus instituted his Church to serve as a *sign* of the inner union between God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and those within whom God 'has made a home' through Baptism. It is to serve as a *sign* too of the growing unity the Holy Spirit accomplishes between people of different nations as more and more believe in Jesus Christ and all that he taught.



As each baptised Christian grows closer to Jesus himself, all are drawn closer together spiritually by the Holy Spirit. This is why the Church declares that Christ is the Foundation of the community of the Catholic school.⁷

The Church, as well as being a sign, is also Christ's instrument of salvation. Through its members, who are his members, he acts today in human societies. The Church is the instrument of his action in the world. The Catholic school community too is called to serve as his instrument, particularly of all he is trying to do for students.

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

4. Any reflection on the mission of the Church today requires us to study what Jesus called 'the signs of the times'.⁸ These are the 'signs' of the activity of God in the world today. The Church needs to build on what God is doing in the lives of people today.

Many confuse these words of Jesus with changing social trends, attitudes and values. These are not what he meant by the term.

Rather, the 'signs of the times' are 'genuine signs of the presence or the purpose of God' as seen in the events, the needs and the desires of people today.⁹ Through these, Christians recognise:¹⁰

...the creative activity of God which communicates goodness to all beings; the power of sin, which limits and numbs men and women; and the dynamism which bursts forth from the Resurrection of Christ, the seed renewing believers in the hope of a definitive 'fulfilment'. A world view not incorporating these three elements cannot be authentically Christian.

Catholic schools play a vital part in the life of the Church in Western Australia. The first sign of the times that we, the Bishops of Western Australia, recognise in our Catholic school system is the dedication and sacrifice of so many lay-faithful, priests and consecrated religious. Like those who went before them, these people serve at all levels of our school system.



L-R: Archbishop Barry Hickey, Bishop Justin Bianchini, Bishop Christopher Saunders, Bishop Gerard Holohan, Bishop Donald Sproxton

THE PURPOSE OF THIS LETTER

5. This Mandate Letter shares our vision for Catholic schools in our dioceses with all who serve the Church within the Catholic school system. It comprises four parts:
 - ❖ Signs of God's Self-Revelation
 - ❖ Signs of the Times in the Christian Witness of the Catholic School
 - ❖ Signs of the Times in the Catholic School Curriculum
 - ❖ Signs of the Times in the Catholic School Community.

The vision of this Letter is based on official Catholic teaching about Catholic schools. We take seriously our responsibility to help Catholic schools apply these teachings to their local situations.

We call upon all involved in implementing the renewed Mandate and Terms of Reference of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia to use this Letter as a guide for policy development, planning and other decisions they undertake on our behalf. This includes the Commission Standing Committees, the Catholic Education Office, and regional and school-based decision-making structures.

In particular, we call upon all involved in the formation of Catholic school leaders, Catholic school staff and members of school boards to see this Letter as a foundational reference document. It is our hope that this Letter will affirm and assist Catholic schools with the development of evangelisation plans.

OUR REASONS FOR MANDATING CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

6. Catholic schools are an important means of fulfilling our responsibilities as Bishops.¹¹ We continue to mandate them for several important reasons.

- Catholic schools are important means through which the Church proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or evangelises, in the world of today. They are privileged places of evangelisation where the young learn ‘the good news of salvation’ – and what it means to live as ‘new creatures in Christ through Baptism’ and ‘knowingly as children of God’.¹²

Schools need to provide opportunities for young people to reflect deeply upon the meaning of their lives, particularly in the light of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is particularly important for the new evangelisation of students whose families ‘are far from the faith’.¹³

Catholic schools contribute to the development of our young through education, particularly to their formation in Christian conscience and virtue. To be Catholic schools, they need to be good schools.

- Catholic schools assist parents who wish to develop their children as Christian men and women. Also, they support parishes with their responsibility of supporting parents as the first educators of their children.

To fulfil their Gospel mandate, Catholic schools need to be open to all parents who seek a Catholic education for their children, as far as resources allow. It is essential for each school to minimise potential barriers for parents such as fees and other school costs, for:¹⁴

... (this) can result in the exclusion from Catholic schools of those who cannot afford to pay, leading to a selection according to means – which deprives the Catholic school of one of its distinguishing features, which is to be a school for all.

- Through Catholic schools, we seek to foster a Christian mentality in our society, and to encourage young people to contribute more broadly to the development of the kind of world envisaged by Christ. One of the key tasks of the Catholic school is to form Christian men and women committed to the love, compassion and justice of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Catholic schools need to promote justice, particularly to those who are culturally, physically, intellectually, financially or spiritually disadvantaged. Our hope is that Catholic schools will demonstrate the Church’s commitment to the dignity of the individual.

We also hope that, in this way, our schools will form their students to contribute to the development of Australian society. A society with a Christian mentality will recognise its responsibilities to God.

- Catholic schools offer a genuine educational choice in our pluralist society. Catholic schools make a distinctive contribution in the provision of educational excellence in Western Australia. They do so within the context of Catholic teaching and practice.
- Catholic schools can serve as models for all within Western Australia who seek to create genuine communities. Such communities are always founded upon shared commitment to the common good.¹⁵



part one

PART ONE:

SIGNS OF THE PRESENCE OF THE SELF-REVEALING GOD

7. Any discussion about Catholic schools must begin with the desire of God for every human being. This is that each will enter into an ever-deepening personal relationship with God, beginning in this world and continuing for all eternity in the next.¹⁶

REVELATION

8. To achieve this desire, the Son of God, in addition to his divine nature, took on human nature. He did so in order that human beings, through him, could share in God's own nature. Only as they do so can they deepen in the kind of relationship God wishes with each.

Because of this desire, God reaches out to every person of every generation and culture, calling each into a personal relationship. The process by which God does this is called Revelation. Basically, this is a process of self-revelation by God.¹⁷

God continues the Revelation process today, calling every human being on planet earth into a personal relationship. This includes every student, staff member and parent in the Catholic school community.

All who respond to this call in the ways Jesus taught will find their lives becoming increasingly enriched. They will find themselves growing in God's guidance and strength, as well as other gifts of God, as their lives go on.

THE ORIGINAL STATE OF HOLINESS AND JUSTICE CREATED BY GOD

9. Originally God created human beings in the kind of holiness that brought oneness and familiarity with their Creator.¹⁸ Because they were in harmony with God, they experienced harmony within themselves, harmony with each other and harmony with the rest of creation. This we call the 'original state of holiness and justice', a state our Creator intended for all.¹⁹

This state was lost through the sin of Adam and Eve, an event recalled in the figurative language of the Genesis story of the Fall.²⁰ The original harmony between God and human beings was destroyed. As a result, the harmony within each person was destroyed. So was their harmony with others and harmony with the rest of creation.²¹ Sinfulness destroyed the human capacity to resist evil.²² Peace and harmony were replaced by discord and conflict.

Ever since, God has sought to renew the human race in stages, the stages of Revelation.²³ Each stage involved a new call to renew and deepen further the human relationship with God.

GOD IS CALLING PEOPLE INTO RELATIONSHIP TODAY

10. People were first awakened to God's call into relationship as they discovered their Creator's self-revealing presence through creation, and through their experiences of themselves as created beings, particularly the yearnings and questionings in their hearts which cannot be fully satisfied or answered by others or themselves.²⁴ This awakening continues today, and deepens as people continue to become more aware of their deeper human heart questionings and yearnings, which God alone can satisfy fully.

There are many human heart questionings, including those about the meaning and purposes of our lives, of human suffering and of death. Examples of the deeper human heart yearnings include those for peace, freedom, true happiness and justice.

11. God's call into relationship became more direct with the call to Abraham to become the Father of the People of Israel.²⁵ This People became God's own people through the Covenant at Mount Sinai.²⁶

Then, over centuries, God led this People to discover that to relate intimately with their Creator, human beings needed salvation from human sinfulness, which is a barrier to any effort to grow close to God. Sinfulness is revealed, for example, in selfishness, other human weaknesses and in tendencies to do wrong. In order to receive this salvation the human race needed a Saviour.

12. People today become open to God's call to personal relationship as they grow in awareness of struggles that point to their personal need for salvation. Frustrations at failures to live ideals, to change for the better and to rise above bad habits are a few examples. Others include the desire for freedom from dominating emotions and negative attitudes.

People experience their Creator's call into relationship at a new level when they learn that God's response to their need for salvation was to send them a Saviour.

GOD IS EXPERIENCED TODAY IN WAYS REVEALED BY JESUS CHRIST

13. God fulfilled the human need for a Saviour in Jesus Christ, the Son of God who became also the Son of Man.²⁷ By his life, death and resurrection, Jesus revealed and offered previously unheard of experiences of divine power. These he referred to as 'the Kingdom of God'. This Kingdom is:²⁸

... a new and definitive intervention by God, (into human history) with a transforming power equal and even superior to his creation of the world.

In this sense, Christ proclaims salvation...the great gift of God...comprising not merely liberation from all those things by which man is oppressed, but especially liberation from sin and from the domination of the evil one....

Jesus inaugurated this Kingdom during his ministry in Israel. Its influence grows as more people believe in him and accept Baptism. Its final climax and fulfilment will be realised only on the Last Day of the universe, when he will come again.

Human beings today accept the experiences of divine power Jesus revealed – the power of the Kingdom – into their lives by converting to Jesus personally, and by believing and following him in their daily lives. This power is *the basic Christian promise of Salvation* [see 44-46 below]. It is the ‘Good News’ of Salvation.

The first people to whom Jesus Christ communicated these experiences of his Kingdom were his Apostles. The experiences have been handed down ever since to each generation through the Church, the community in which Jesus remains as Head.

14. Today, all people can enter into experiences of the Kingdom of God through the means Jesus instituted within the community of his Church for this purpose. These are preserved in Tradition, the unwritten Word of God, and the Scriptures, the written Word of God.

The basic means of experiencing the Kingdom of God have been codified since earliest times in the Apostles Creed, the Seven Sacraments, the Life in Christ and the Lord’s Prayer.²⁹ Along with the inner life of prayer, these are also the means for experiencing the Kingdom today.

The Catholic understanding of these means is presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. To the extent that people enter into the basic experiences of the Kingdom proclaimed and made possible by Jesus, they find harmony between God and themselves growing. As this harmony grows, they experience also growing harmony within, growing harmony with others and growing harmony with the rest of creation.

THE HISTORY OF SALVATION

15. The progressive stages of God’s self-revelation to the human race are referred to collectively as the History of Salvation.³⁰ We live in its final stage – called the ‘Today’ of this history.

This ‘Today’ began with the conception of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man. It will conclude when he comes again on the Last Day.

Risen from the dead, Jesus is present in the world today in the community of his Church. Christ continues his work of Salvation through this community, of which Catholic schools are a part.

SIGNS OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND PURPOSE TODAY

16. There are many signs of God’s self-revealing presence in Catholic schools today. Members of their communities, especially students, show signs of a growing appreciation for the sacredness of creation. They show signs of a growing awareness also of the human heart questionings and yearnings which God alone can satisfy. Many sense and respond to God calling them into relationship. Many yearn for freedom from human sinfulness and weaknesses.

All who encourage others to enter into deeper relationship with God are also signs of God’s presence or purpose in our schools. Those involved in staff and school prayer, liturgies, retreats and Religious Education are important examples of these signs. They are sources of great hope and joy.

EVANGELISATION AND ITS BASIC PROCESS

17. Jesus gave his Church community the mission of proclaiming his Gospel, or Good News of Salvation, to all, and baptising all who believed. In practice, this means that *its mission is to share in his mission*. The Church's basic task is to call all to enter into ever-deepening relationship with God by repenting and believing in Jesus Christ and the Good News he proclaimed.³¹

In the 'Today' of the History of Salvation, the Church plays its role in God's self-revelation through the process called 'evangelisation'.³² The Church evangelises by:³³

... bringing the Good News into all the strata of human society, and through its influence, transforming humanity from within and making it new.

The Church evangelises when she seeks to convert – solely through the divine power of the Message she proclaims – both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, their lives and the concrete milieux in which they live them.

The purpose of the Catholic school is to play an important part in the Church's mission of evangelisation.

18. There are two basic elements to the evangelisation process. The first is *Christian Witness*. This is given through actions and words that reflect a *Christ-like* presence and a *Christ-like* love to others.

The second is the *Ministry of the Word*. This Ministry uses words to proclaim the Good News in the same ways as did Jesus.³⁴ We will return to a discussion on Christian Witness and the Ministry of the Word shortly [see 33-40 and 41-51 below].

Church communities evangelise in different ways. Catholic schools do so by:

- ❖ striving continually to be good schools
- ❖ teaching students to integrate faith, culture and life.

A GOOD SCHOOL

19. For a school to be Catholic, it must first be a good school. Otherwise it will be unable to fulfil its mission.³⁵ With many other education traditions, the Catholic school's concept of education will be:³⁶

...the development of (students) from within, freeing them from that conditioning which would prevent them from becoming fully integrated human beings. The school must begin from the principle that its educational program is intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person.

The Catholic school, however, differs in a fundamental way from those of other education traditions. What makes it distinctive is its vision of the 'fully integrated' human being:³⁷

The Catholic school differs from all others which limit themselves to forming men and women. Its task is to form Christian men and women, and, by its witness and teaching, to show non-Christians something of the mystery of Christ, who surpasses all understanding.



The Catholic school will be concerned with the development of students as responsible, inner-directed individuals of Christian virtue, capable of free choice and of making value-judgements enlightened by formed Christian conscience. Catholic schools seek to help students develop a total commitment to Christ.³⁸

Greater detail of the Catholic vision of the human person is found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.³⁹

20. To be Catholic, a school must recognise that the History of Salvation continues today, and that its community has a particular role in the 'Today' of that History for students' lives.

To fulfil this role, the school must continue its efforts to offer evangelisation to all within its community, especially its students. Within this context, it must also contribute to God's reunification of the human race through the Church [see 3 above].

To offer evangelisation, the Catholic school needs to teach students to integrate faith, culture and life. In this way, it helps form them as individuals who can contribute to Christ's restoration of the original state of holiness and justice created by God [see 9 above].

THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND CULTURE: A GOSPEL VISION OF AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

21. Learning to integrate faith and culture will help students develop a Gospel vision of Australian society. It will also help them to work out practical ways of promoting that vision to others.

To learn this, the first requirement is that students understand the values of the Gospel. Key among these are love for God and neighbour.

The values of the Gospel lead to genuine peace and harmony. They make easier the promotions of reconciliation, justice, compassion and mercy, as well as special commitment to the poor, the disabled and to all with special needs.

Students need to appreciate the four harmonies God originally intended for creation, including the creation of human nature. They need to learn how to recognise the 'signs of the times' in Australian society, and to develop sensitivity to the ways of God.⁴⁰

Students need to develop a spirit of solidarity with, and service to others. They need to learn respect for the dignity and rights of every human person, be they born or unborn.

22. To promote a Gospel vision in Australian society, students need to understand that they have been called by God to play their own part in the 'Today' of the History of Salvation.⁴¹ They need to understand the shared Christian calling to foster everything that, from a Gospel perspective, serves to promote the good and unity of society.

Students need to learn to challenge, and to work towards changing whatever in Australian society conflicts with the Gospel and its values. In these ways, students learn to contribute to the development of the kind of society Christ envisages.

Students need also to critique the influence of social, political and economic structures in Australian society from a Gospel perspective. Media and other instruments of communication are particularly important. So are social attitudes, values, practices and trends.⁴²

Finally, to promote a Gospel vision of Australian society, students need to develop a genuine commitment to the human search for truth. Schools need to integrate the truths and values of the Gospel in educationally appropriate ways into everything students learn and experience.

THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LIFE: THE 'NEW LIFE' OF CHRIST

23. To integrate faith and culture, students need to learn how to integrate faith and life. It includes developing a Gospel vision of themselves as people empowered by the Holy Spirit.⁴³ This means learning to live the 'new life' of Christ that Baptism makes possible.

The Catholic school facilitates learning to live this 'new life' by presenting Jesus Christ himself as the 'Model of genuine human development'.⁴⁴ Baptised and confirmed students need to learn how to integrate the powerful effects of these sacraments into their developing personalities.⁴⁵ They need encouragement to develop all their personal gifts and to live as God calls them to live.

Teaching students to integrate faith into daily life means helping them above all to understand what is involved in Christian discipleship – making a 'total commitment of one's whole being to the Person of Christ'.⁴⁶ They need to learn God's answers to their deeper human heart questionings and yearnings, particularly those related to the purpose and direction of their lives.

24. To develop a Gospel vision of themselves, therefore, students need to learn many lessons. Baptised students need to learn what it means to develop as *Christian* individuals – as people who share in the 'new life' of Christ. Students who have not received Baptism need to learn 'something of the mystery of Christ' from the behaviours they observe, and from the teachings they learn, in the Catholic school.⁴⁷

Students need to learn, too, how to develop Christian consciences. It includes learning what is involved in committing themselves to serve God by serving others, and by working 'to make the world a better place for all'.⁴⁸

To integrate faith and life, students need to learn to discover the influence of God in all that is good in the events, work and human relationships of daily life. They need to learn how to live as responsible citizens and to make responsible choices.⁴⁹

Finally, to live a Gospel vision, students need support in discovering their vocations or life callings from God. They need to learn that each person has their own part to play in the 'Today' of Salvation History.⁵⁰

SIGNS OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND PURPOSE TODAY

25. All who are trying to evangelise today are examples of the signs of the times. It is God who moves anyone to contribute directly or indirectly to the spread of the Gospel in the lives of individuals, society and the wider world.

This activity of God is evidenced in the concern of many parents and families for the growth in faith of students. It is evidenced in Catholic school leaders who are concerned that their schools should proclaim the Gospel as effectively as possible.

It is evidenced also in the many Religious Education teachers and parish catechists who strive to offer quality Religious Education in schools and parishes, often in difficult circumstances. In schools, there are teachers, too, who integrate Gospel values into the other curriculum Learning Areas, while respecting the proper integrity of each as an area of human learning.⁵¹ Then there are priests who offer liturgical as well as other services and the many non-teaching staff who contribute to the Gospel climate in Catholic schools.

EVANGELISATION PLANNING

26. Good evangelisation planning is a basic need for any Church community or group if it is to respond effectively to the faith needs of those it has been commissioned to evangelise. Evangelisation planning in Catholic schools and parishes today is critical.

The handing on of Catholic beliefs and practices needs to be planned so that this responsibility is performed 'explicitly and in a systematic manner'.⁵² Evangelisation plans need to develop achievable outcomes that can be evaluated and renewed periodically. The following considerations need to be borne in mind in Catholic schools when developing, implementing and renewing evangelisation plans.



CHALLENGES TO EVANGELISATION

27. The Church's vision of the Catholic school as a place of evangelisation is an inspiring one. So are the integrations of faith and culture and faith and life.

In practice, however, Catholic schools in Western Australia face formidable challenges in trying to implement this vision. To begin with, students live in an affluent society. They are surrounded by materialistic and individualistic attitudes and values which conflict with those of the Gospel. Many experience these attitudes and values in their own homes. God, religion, and religious people, all too often are perceived as irrelevant.

It must also be acknowledged that many parents have motives for sending their children to Catholic schools that are in no way related to the vision and goals of Catholic education. Students from many school families have little experience of the Church and its life, and so they learn about the Gospel for the first time in Catholic schools instead of within their families and parishes.

These realities bring many other challenges to the task of developing evangelisation plans. Schools face considerable obstacles to the integration of faith and culture and faith and life.

CHALLENGES TO INTEGRATING FAITH AND CULTURE

28. A society that places little value upon Christian faith poses serious challenges to helping students develop a Gospel vision of society by learning to integrate faith and culture. For example, it is difficult to teach the justice demanded by the Kingdom of God in a society that largely ignores God. Individualism and subjectivism undermine basic Catholic moral concepts such as human solidarity, absolute values and social responsibility. Social attitudes often blur the Creator's vision of the human person, causing this vision to be lost.

Among other factors, the declining number of people involved today in voluntary organisations, suggest a decline in respect in many for the God-given dignity of every human person, especially of the disadvantaged and those in need. This respect is a foundation for the motive to serve. Its decline has accompanied a similar decline in other religious values in our society.



CHALLENGES TO INTEGRATING FAITH AND LIFE

29. Many of the challenges Catholic schools face today in helping students develop a Gospel vision of themselves come from the division rather than the integration of faith and life. This division 'deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age'.⁵³ Then there is the practical atheism that prevails in so many areas of social life. This is revealed wherever people seem to live and plan their life priorities as if God does not exist.

The split between faith and life weakens people's ability to appreciate Christ as the Model, the 'perfect human person'.⁵⁴ The goodness God created in human nature, especially its spiritual, moral and religious dimensions, is harder to appreciate. This leads to confusion about genuine human values and the formation of Christian conscience.

Most importantly, the split between faith and life, rather than their integration, weakens people's ability to see the relationship between the Christian Message and the deeper questionings and yearnings in the human heart. This leads to difficulty in understanding what it means to say that those who have received Baptism share in the 'new life' in Christ.

The split between faith and life leads also to difficulty in understanding the supernatural gifts Christ makes possible through the sacraments, such as faith and divine love, particularly the Sacraments of Christian Initiation.⁵⁵ All of these gifts relate to the human heart questionings and yearnings.

Materialism, depersonalisation and individualism make it difficult for students to discover their true identities, the real meaning of their lives and their personal dignity, for these include the spiritual and the social. And, without the spiritual, students can never hope to have the deeper questions and yearnings in their hearts satisfied or fulfilled.

NEW EVANGELISATION

30. The challenges our schools face today are not new in the Church's experience. They require the pastoral response called 'New evangelisation'. This is needed wherever:⁵⁶

... entire groups of the baptised have lost a living sense of faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel.

New evangelisation seeks three things. The first is to stir disinterested baptised people to develop the gift of faith they received through Baptism. The second is to strengthen the faith of those who express themselves with 'sincere religious feeling', but who know little of the fundamentals of the Christian life. The third is to strengthen the faith of those who have reached adulthood, but whose religious formation has not deepened since their childhood and teenage years.⁵⁷

New evangelisation recognises that the 'divine power of the Message' the Church proclaims germinates in people over time [see 17 above]. Its fruits may not appear in the short term. Those contributing to the process of new evangelisation need to recognise themselves as individuals within a succession of people and experiences through whom God works.⁵⁸

31. New evangelisation is essential for all Western Australian dioceses. It requires active commitment from families and parishes.

This Letter, however, is limited to what it calls for from the Catholic school. Schools need to help nurture faith in students with little or no interest in or experience of the Gospel and to help prepare them to face the faith challenges posed by contemporary Australian society.

NEW EVANGELISATION AND PARTICULAR GOSPEL CONCERNS

32. New evangelisation requires good planning. A basic step is to look for signs of the times in light of the Parable of the Sower.⁵⁹ In explaining this parable, Jesus identifies key new evangelisation challenges for any church activity, including Catholic schools.

- Jesus explained that the seed scattered by the Sower is the Word of God (or the 'Message'). Some seed fell on the edge of the path. This illustrates what happens when those hearing the Word lack the understanding needed for its 'divine power' to bear fruit in their lives. Helping students to understand the Christian message, therefore, is an essential new evangelisation task for every Catholic school.
- Some seed fell in shallow soil. This illustrates people who initially become enthused by the Christian message but give it little further reflection. The root of the Word is too immature for 'the divine power of the Message' to strengthen them for life or faith crises and so they lose faith.

Every Catholic school, therefore, needs to encourage its students to reflect upon the Christian message by helping them to relate it to their daily lives and aspirations and to understand what it means to be a follower of Christ in Australia today. The school needs to show students how the Gospel can fully satisfy the questionings and yearnings that are growing within their hearts.⁶⁰

- Some seed fell amongst thorns. This seed sprouted, but soon it was choked by thorns. Jesus identified these thorns as 'the worries of the world' and the 'lure of riches'. These continue today to choke people's capacity to respond to 'the divine power of the Message'.

New evangelisation needs to keep repeating the call of Jesus to seek God before everything else.⁶¹ Every Catholic school needs to keep repeating this call, for, today, the gift of faith in so many continues to be choked because they have allowed work, personal ambitions and concerns about such things as social status, to become greater priorities than God.⁶² Parents who have followed this path are unlikely to be able to contribute to the faith development of their children for no one can share what they do not have themselves.

33. For new evangelisation, a school needs to give Christian Witness and to call students to develop a spirit of poverty instead of succumbing to the 'worries of the world' and 'the lure of riches' [see 18 above].⁶³ With this spirit, wealth becomes a blessing for those who share it with others, particularly the poor.⁶⁴ Jesus taught it is more blessed to give than to receive.⁶⁵

The calling of a Catholic school today is to be prophetic and to keep before students the values of Jesus in the contemporary world. It needs to keep before everyone within its community the Gospel story of the rich young man whose attachment to wealth choked his development in faith.⁶⁶ It needs to witness to a spirit of simplicity and Gospel poverty in its life, buildings and the use of material resources.⁶⁷

Finally, the healthy growth of the seed described by Jesus in the parable occurs in well-prepared soil. This has many implications for new evangelisation. For every Catholic school, it means proclaiming the Word of God through its Christian Witness and its curriculum in educationally appropriate ways, trusting always in 'the divine power of the Message'.⁶⁸

SIGNS OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND PURPOSE TODAY

34. The concern of many at the current decline of religious practice in Australia is a sign of the times. Their concern reflects the concern of God, who desires a close personal relationship with every human person. Without the religious practice Jesus taught, this relationship is not possible.

Those who try to analyse and address possible causes of this decline in Australian culture are also signs of God's presence and purpose. So are those who seek to renew the means by which the Church proclaims the Gospel in this culture.



part two

PART TWO:

SIGNS OF THE TIMES IN THE CHRISTIAN WITNESS OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

35. Christian Witness is always ‘the first act of evangelisation’.⁶⁹ ‘Witness’ is how people strive to live as they respond to the God who dwells within them. It expresses the ‘new life’ a Christian receives through Baptism [see 23 above].

Christian witness is being a Christ-like presence to others [see 18 above]. It gives them Christ-like love, and models Christ-like example in the ways Christians live the First and Second Commandments of Jesus – loving God and others. This includes Christ-like prayer and worship in the ways Christ taught.

When Christians give witness, they become signs and instruments of ‘the divine power of the Message’ as they seek to evangelise [see 17 above]. Indeed the Christian witness of all who belong to a Catholic school community is even more critical to its success than what is taught.

This is particularly true of teachers and other staff. Students are always more impressed by what they see than what they hear, so they need:⁷⁰

... to see in their teachers the Christian attitude and behaviour that is so often conspicuously absent from the secular atmosphere in which they live.

For evangelisation, all Catholic school community members need to keep reviewing and renewing their efforts to be more Christ-like. Christian witness in the Catholic school will include the following characteristics.

A SPIRIT OF FAMILY

36. A Catholic school gives Christian witness first in the way that its community welcomes students and their families. Students should experience school as an extension of their own homes, the climate being a humanly and spiritually enriching one. This is an important way for school communities to support parents in their own responsibility to provide Christian witness to their children.

A CHRISTIAN PASTORAL DIMENSION

37. From the moment they join a Catholic school community, students should learn of their value as human persons. Every aspect of the school’s life should reflect a Christian pastoral dimension.

Where this is true in a school, students realise their Christian dignity ‘before even knowing its definition’. The pastoral care and attention students receive from all within the school community should help students to realise that they exist ‘for God to love’ and that they will deepen in their experiences of God’s love as they love God in return.⁷¹

The pastoral dimension of a Catholic school needs to include the mutual care and support staff demonstrate both towards each other and for their students. Some schools have full-time pastoral care staff. Others may have staff in counselling roles, contributing in a special way to the wellbeing and development of students with particular needs.

While appreciating the contribution of these people, we stress that every staff member shares responsibility for the pastoral dimension of the Catholic school. We call on all staff to develop the kinds of relationships that will help them respond proactively to their students' pastoral needs.

TEACHER – STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

38. Students need to feel loved by their teachers and by other school staff, just as his disciples felt loved by Jesus. Students need to be inspired to love their teachers in turn. Ideally, teacher-student relationships will develop the openness and dialogue that helps teachers to guide their students.

Positive relationships enable students to understand what is involved in living as Christians in Australia today.⁷² Staff need to model and speak of Christian values, attitudes and behaviour, especially in the informal discussions that can arise outside the classroom. This helps students to accept the Christian message as reasonable, valuable and relevant.

Finally, teacher-student relationships in a Catholic school need to express a religious dimension. Teachers need to pray for their students.⁷³ They need to pray about students' problems, worries and challenges, especially those they face by trying to live Christian lives.

Students should be encouraged in turn to pray for their teachers. Teachers and students also need to participate in school community and class prayer together.

A SPIRIT OF POVERTY

39. A spirit of poverty is important if Christian witness is to be prophetic to an affluent and materialistic Australian society [see 33 above]. While schools need to provide students with all that is necessary for a good education, including complex and expensive equipment, they need at the same time to avoid affluence and ostentation. Students need encouragement, too, to accept responsibility for the care of school buildings and equipment, to care for their 'school home'.⁷⁴

Catholic school buildings, materials and resources need to witness to genuine Christian simplicity and to the Gospel spirit of poverty. In acquiring these, schools need to avoid material ambitions that might lead to higher fees and other costs that could force schools into 'giving counter-witness' by having to 'admit a majority of students from wealthier families'.⁷⁵

To give Christian witness, schools must be 'counter-cultural' to the materialistic preoccupations of our society. This can be challenging if the parent body tends to be materialistic, and has little interest in avoiding obstacles to the growth of their children's faith.⁷⁶ However, it is a challenge our schools need to overcome.

CONSECRATED RELIGIOUS

40. Members of Religious Institutes have much to offer a Catholic school community in its understanding and practice of Christian witness. Most schools were established by Religious Institutes with educational apostolates. Their contribution to Catholic education in Western Australia is incalculable.

Consecrated Religious bring to a Catholic school community the spirituality and values associated with the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. They bring too



the experience and richness of their own educational tradition. Through their love, prayer, lived spirit of poverty and work, Religious express the richly varied life of the Church itself in different ways, as well as its mission to the world.

We urge our Religious priests, brothers and sisters to continue to offer their shared experience to our schools and to assist them to understand what it means to become a community of Christian life and learning. We urge Catholic school decision-makers to value and encourage the involvement of Religious in our schools.

LAY-FAITHFUL

41. The vocation of the lay-faithful is to promote 'the kingdom of God by engaging in affairs of the world and directing them to the plan of God'.⁷⁷ This is the vocation to which most students are called, the call to holiness within society.

We call on the lay-faithful in our schools to be inspiring models of the Christian vocation in the world. We encourage them to teach students about social and world conditions from the perspective of the Gospel.

This means helping students to learn to integrate culture and faith, especially by working to improve the structures and standards of society from a Gospel perspective. It is vital that students learn to distinguish values that are consistent with the Gospel from those that are not.

SIGNS OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND PURPOSE TODAY

42. Everyone who strives to be Christ-like in their love of God and neighbour, and to promote lived Christian values, is a sign of the times in the Catholic school. Those in our school communities who give generously of their time and talents to respond to the needs of students are genuine contributors to evangelisation. Their efforts to prepare students to hear the Word of God, and to plant this Word in them, reassure us that these efforts eventually will bear fruit.



part three

PART THREE:

SIGNS OF THE TIMES IN THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM

43. Every educational activity in a school is part of its curriculum. What makes the Catholic school curriculum distinctive is its efforts to contribute to the development of baptised students as followers of Jesus Christ who can live the 'new life of Christ' in the world of today, and to the growth in awareness of 'something of the mystery of Christ' in those who have not received Baptism [see 24 above].

The forms of the Ministry of the Word that are appropriate to the Catholic school – primary proclamation, initiatory catechesis and Religious Education – are integral to the Catholic curriculum [see 18 above]. This occurs through the integration of faith, culture and life into the nine curriculum Learning Areas, the first of which is Religious Education.⁷⁸

For new evangelisation, primary proclamation and initiatory catechesis must be the priorities for Catholic families and parishes.⁷⁹ Both are required for the faith development of children and adolescents.

PRIMARY PROCLAMATION

44. The primary proclamation calls people to accept initial personal relationships with Jesus Christ himself as their Lord and Saviour. The primary proclamation calls for conversion to the person of Jesus Christ himself.

The primary proclamation of Jesus himself was the 'Kingdom of God', the divine power that he shares with all who believe in him as Lord and Saviour.

He revealed its power first through his miracles of healing, casting out demons, freeing cripples to walk, and giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf and speech to the mute. Then he forgave sins and raised the dead.

45. God's greatest demonstration of the power of the Kingdom was the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. From this his disciples realised that, since he could conquer death, the greatest of all human limitations, no human sin, weakness or failing was beyond Christ's power.⁸⁰ It continually recreates and renews human beings.⁸¹

His disciples learned that the power of the Kingdom frees those who convert to him personally from the sinfulness and weaknesses that hamper them from living as Christ taught. It empowers them to 'rise above' selfishness, dominating emotions, feelings of hurt and guilt and bad habits and attitudes.

The power of the Kingdom empowers believers to 'rise above' the frailties of the human condition and all the other aspects of 'that conditioning' which prevent them from becoming 'fully integrated' Christians, people of Christ-like love, peace and freedom.⁸²

Finally, the power of the Kingdom not only frees from sinfulness and weaknesses, it enables those who relate with Jesus personally to live as he taught, by loving God and their neighbour. It strengthens their efforts to forgive, to behave justly and to live the Christian ideals.

The primary proclamation today proclaims the Christian promise of Salvation and how this promise is fulfilled in all who 'repent and believe' in Jesus and the Kingdom of God [see 13 above].⁸³ It invites reflection on the salvation Christ offers and how he changes the lives of all who come to know him and the power of this resurrection'.⁸⁴ It proclaims:⁸⁵

...that God is not a distant inaccessible being, 'a remote power without a name', but a Father, who is present... and whose power is his love.

The primary proclamation is particularly urgent today for those who see Christianity and the Gospel as irrelevant to their lives, and for those who feel alienated from the Church, or even reject Christ and his teachings. It is needed too by those who think that 'one religion is as good as another'.

THE SENSE OF THE SACRED

46. Those in the Gospels who heard Jesus were already aware of the presence and the power of God, for they were members of the People of God that had many experiences of God over at least eighteen centuries, starting with the call of Abraham. This awareness is called a *sense of the sacred*.

This sense is a prerequisite for the primary proclamation to bear fruit in the lives of those who hear it. Sadly, this sense is often lacking today in people who live in affluent and materialistic societies, such as Australia. In these situations, helping people to develop a *sense of the sacred* is an essential task in the primary proclamation.

Contemporary lifestyles often dull religious awareness and sensitivity. They discourage people from taking the time needed to appreciate creation, to reflect upon the deeper questionings and yearnings of the human heart, and to discover either their personal need for salvation or God's call for them to enter into a personal relationship with their loving Creator.

47. In Australia, schools need to do what they can to awaken in students a religious awareness or *sense of the sacred* where this is lacking. This can be a serious problem where their parents are focused primarily on the material world and affluent lifestyles.

Religious awareness is awakened by helping students to become aware of the ways the self-revealing God is calling them into relationship [see 8,10, 12]. This awareness is awakened initially by promoting appreciation for the created Universe. It is promoted also through reflection and discussion of the questionings and yearnings of the human heart that God alone can satisfy completely.⁸⁶

Religious awakening deepens in people as they grow in their awareness of those personal experiences that point to their personal need for Christian Salvation.⁸⁷ Through such experiences, they can discover the loving God who continues calling everyone on planet earth into personal relationship.

NEW EVANGELISATION IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

48. Catholic schools must continually emphasise to all in their communities the Christian promise of salvation. This helps students understand the hope that this promise offers them amidst the difficulties they are facing, and will face in the future in their personal lives. They need hope today in a society in which many young people feel alienated, disenchanted, angry and marginalised, particularly in the pre-adolescent and teenage years.

For effective new evangelisation, the primary proclamation must be proclaimed in ways that show both the close connection between the Gospel and the questions and yearnings of the human heart, and how the Gospel fully satisfies the human heart.⁸⁸

49. In their evangelisation plans, Catholic schools need to help awaken a *sense of the sacred* in their students who lack this awareness wherever this is appropriate in the curriculum. Outdoor and camp excursions, studies of nature and the sciences are obvious examples. Religious symbols and sacred places, such as chapels and prayer centres that are used exclusively for religious worship, serve also as important reminders to students of the presence of God.

The most significant of all Christian symbols is the crucifix. This reminds all of the total and unconditional love of Jesus who gave his life for all people. Crucifixes remind us all that our closeness to him will deepen as we carry the crosses of daily life.⁸⁹ Other Christian symbols include those that honour Mary and the Saints.

50. Catholic schools need also to help students who are already aware of the sacred to deepen this sense within themselves. In particular, this means helping them to respond to a sense of the presence of Jesus Christ, especially within the school. Students and staff need to appreciate that he is present within each baptised person, such as when the school community gathers in his name.⁹⁰ He is present, too, in the Word of God in whatever way it is being celebrated and in every person in need.⁹¹

Jesus is present in liturgical celebrations – especially the Eucharist. Students need to be reminded frequently that it is Jesus himself who acts in his sacraments and liturgies of the Word, including their celebration in the Catholic school.⁹² Liturgies are his prayer, in which each member of the school community is invited to participate actively, internally within their hearts as well as externally, by placing before God their personal prayers. Jesus makes these prayers his own so that they take on the infinite power of the Son of God praying to God the Father.

Ideally students will be given quiet time before each liturgy to reflect on what they are going to pray for. Without this, students, especially those from families with little or no religious life, will lack one of the most basic needs for active participation in a liturgy.

51. We speak of the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist as ‘the Real Presence’ – meaning his presence in the fullest sense, body and blood, divine and human:⁹³

In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist, ‘the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of Our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really and substantially contained’. ‘This presence is called “real” – by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be “real” too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense...’

The ultimate expression of reverence is adoration.⁹⁴ In the Catholic school, students need to learn the traditional Catholic expressions of adoration and reverence for Jesus who is present in the Eucharist, or the Blessed Sacrament, in Church and Chapel tabernacles.

INITIATORY CATECHESIS

52. For the growth of Christian faith, the primary proclamation must be followed by initiatory catechesis. Effective catechesis matures the faith stirred by primary proclamation to the depth required to live a Christian life.

Catechesis is the central activity of evangelisation. Its first stage is called initiatory catechesis. Initiatory catechesis aims to help people mature from the initial conversion to Jesus Christ that results from fruitful primary proclamation, to deeper personal relationship with him.

In the Gospels, we see that those who wanted to relate more closely with Jesus could do so only by joining others who were following him already because they wanted the same thing. No one could come to know or to relate with Jesus as closely on their own as they could in the community of followers that he was establishing.

In the same way, those seeking a deeper personal relationship with Jesus today need to join in community with everyone else who is seeking the same, his Church. It is within this community that they will find the means Jesus left for anyone who wants a closer personal relationship with him to do so.

53. Initiatory catechesis is the most basic form of catechesis. From a pedagogical perspective, it is an apprenticeship:⁹⁵

....a formation in the entire Christian life, an apprenticeship ...during which the disciples will be joined to Christ their teacher.

Initiatory catechesis is so called because it aims to initiate the fledgling believer into the experiences of himself that Christ makes possible within the community of his Church. Initiatory catechesis builds upon the action of Christ, the teacher. Its definitive aim is:⁹⁶

... to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ.

... catechesis is principally distinguished... by its comprehensive and vital deepening of the mystery of Christ ... in such a manner that the entire person, at his deepest levels, is enriched ...

54. Initiatory catechesis achieves this by helping initial believers to enter into 'the nucleus of Christian experience'. This is the experience that binds the Church community to Christ himself, and to each other.

This experience grows through the new dynamic that begins when a person has begun to relate personally with Jesus himself as a result of the primary proclamation. By this dynamic, Jesus unites them gradually:⁹⁷

... with everything with which Jesus Christ himself is profoundly united: with God his Father, who sent him into the world, and with the Holy Spirit, who impelled his mission; with the Church, his Body for which he gave himself up, and with humanity, whose lot he wished to share.

As an apprenticeship, initiatory catechesis seeks to build on this dynamic. It helps those receiving it to enter into personal experiences of the Father and the Spirit through the Son, Jesus himself. For this purpose, it seeks also to form hearers in:⁹⁸



The most fundamental certainties of the faith and the most essential evangelical values ... it lays the foundation, nurtures the roots of faith and enables (hearers) to receive more nourishment in the ordinary life of the Christian community.

Initiatory catechesis also strives to help hearers grow in their awareness of how God seeks to reach them through their personal experiences and to read the sign of the times.⁹⁹

55. The 'nucleus of Christian experience' grows within a person as they learn to respond to the dynamic just described.¹⁰⁰ Through Jesus, it is the unfolding experience of:¹⁰¹

... God 'the almighty Father as Creator; the Son as Lord and Saviour; and the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier in the Church'...

Initiatory catechesis is also an apprenticeship in the ways in which the Church community expresses its beliefs, celebrates, lives and prays.¹⁰² These are the ways the Church community enters into this experience. Each experience of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit ultimately is an experience of Christ himself, for each is possible only through him.

56. There are other forms of catechesis as well. They are grouped as *continuing or ongoing catechesis*. Their shared purpose is to keep deepening the personal conversion needed by his followers if their personal relationships with Jesus are to grow deeper over a life time.

These forms of catechesis are helpful to adults of mature faith. In this Letter, in which we recognise the need of Catholic school community members for new evangelisation, we will focus upon initiatory catechesis.

NEW EVANGELISATION IN OUR SCHOOLS

57. For new evangelisation, initiatory catechesis must be offered to young people in ways that draw out the Christian Promise.¹⁰³ The 'nucleus of Christian experience', along with the most fundamental beliefs and the most basic evangelical values needed to enter into

this experience, are preserved in the four pillars of faith that provide the structure of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: the Apostles' Creed, the Sacraments, the Life in Christ and the Lord's Prayer [see 14 above].¹⁰⁴

The truths of the *Apostles' Creed* need to be presented in the context of the human search for God and for meaning. The *Sacraments* need to be presented as works of Christ, whose 'effects' or 'fruits' are meant to be experiences of the divine power of the Kingdom of God in daily life.

The *Life in Christ* needs to be presented as the Christ-like life Christians are empowered to live through the seven Sacraments and Christian prayer. The *Lord's Prayer* needs to be presented as the model for prayer for anyone who shares in Christ's relationship with God.

A SCHOOL CULTURE OF INITIATORY CATECHESIS

58. To grow in faith, young people need initiatory catechesis from their parents from their earliest years.¹⁰⁵ They need too the initiatory catechesis provided by the parish. As the 'prime mover and pre-eminent place of catechesis', the parish is vital for the faith development of the young.¹⁰⁶

Yet while students need family and parish catechesis, in reality many young people today receive little, if any, apprenticeship in the faith in their families and parishes. This is particularly true where families do not take part in parish life. This makes it essential for the Catholic school to do all that it can to provide initiatory catechesis – even though schools can never substitute for the initiatory catechesis young people need from their families and parishes.

Schools need to develop an initiatory catechesis culture so that they offer students basic apprenticeship experiences of liturgies, prayer, retreats and Easter and Christmas celebrations.

Schools need to celebrate Mary as the model Christian disciple, and the lives of saints and martyrs, both of the past as well as of more recent times. They need to help students appreciate Catholic symbols, practices and customary signs of reverence, particularly for the Eucharist.

Schools need to keep in mind the goals of new evangelisation when planning their initiatory catechesis activities.¹⁰⁷ Yet such catechesis will need to be presented also in ways that strengthen the faith of those students who do receive family and parish catechesis, enabling them to face the faith challenges of today's world.

AN APPRENTICESHIP IN CHRISTIAN LIVING

59. Catholic schools need to provide the best apprenticeship that they can in the Christian life through their expressions of belief, celebrations, Christ-like living and prayer, particularly in relation to:¹⁰⁸
- God as the Creator of the universe, including of human nature itself, which has been created in God's own image and likeness
 - Christ's Paschal Mystery, especially the Easter, Ascension and Pentecost celebrations of his sufferings, death and resurrection and the promise of what this Mystery offers believers' lives today

- the Incarnation, the conception of Jesus in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit, especially during the final term of the year, before Christmas
- the Holy Spirit, who forms believers to become more like Christ, and who is experienced especially within the Church, its life and worship
- the Word of God, especially the written Word – the Sacred Scriptures – inspired by the Holy Spirit, through which believers are offered 'enlightenment', 'strengthened will' and 'renewing love'
- the Sacraments, which celebrate the Paschal Mystery by which Christ accomplished the work of our salvation
- the 'Life in Christ', living as Jesus taught, which he and the Holy Spirit make believers capable of living
- Christian prayer, the living relationship of children of God with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

60. The school's evangelisation plan needs to assist students:

- to appreciate the Word of God, especially through liturgies of the Word, signs of reverence for the Scriptures and by honouring the Bible as the written Word of God
- to participate actively in the sacraments, both internally and externally, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, so as to experience their fruits or effects in their daily lives
- to develop their capacity to pray, both through formal Church community prayers as well as personal and spontaneous prayer
- to grow in devotion to Mary, the Mother of Christ, whom he made our mother, particularly through celebrations of her feasts
- to appreciate the meanings of major Christian feasts and liturgical seasons
- to relate personally with God through the divine attributes, especially those of God's love, justice, mercy and compassion
- to grow in appreciation for the divine power, received through the sacraments and prayer, that can help them to live the Christian ideals, and strengthen them to rise above contrary temptations, failings and personal weaknesses
- to grow in hope for the life to come, especially through celebrations of the Christian understanding of death and the Last Things, such as prayers for the dead, the feasts of All Saints and All Souls and Christian funerals.

Of particular importance are school and class liturgies, school and class prayer, the school calendar if it includes significant feasts, Christmas and Easter celebrations and school retreats.



THE NINE CURRICULUM LEARNING AREAS

61. There are nine Learning Areas in the curriculum of Catholic schools in Western Australian. The first is Religious Education.

The other eight Learning Areas are those identified by the *Curriculum for Western Australian Schools*.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

62. Religious Education needs to be the first priority in the Catholic school. Religious Education is a form of *the Ministry of the Word* and an activity of evangelisation in its own right [see 18 above].¹⁰⁹

The Religious Education program to be taught in our Catholic schools is that promulgated by the diocesan Bishop. Like Christian witness and catechesis, Religious Education expresses ‘the divine power of the Message’.

Religious Education aims to share Catholic faith by promoting knowledge and understanding of the Gospel, as it is handed on by the Catholic Church, and of how those who follow Christ are called to live this Gospel in today’s world.¹¹⁰ It is quite different from catechesis, which is an apprenticeship in the faith.

The role of Religious Education is to complement catechesis. It strengthens catechesis students have received already, reinforces catechesis they are receiving currently and prepares for catechesis to be received in the future.

The fruits of Religious Education can vary, therefore, with the different faith backgrounds of students. For students of little or no religious experience, it can lay a firm foundation for a later more fruitful primary proclamation and initiatory catechesis.

Religious Education ideally will serve as the leaven of the Gospel within the school curriculum. It is the underlying reason for the school's existence. Any Catholic school that fails to offer the best Religious Education it can is betraying its mission. Indeed:¹¹¹

.. it would no longer deserve the title if, no matter how good its reputation in other areas, there were just grounds for a reproach of negligence or deviation in Religious Education properly so called.

Effective Religious Education will reflect 'the same systematic demands and rigour' as all other Learning Areas.¹¹² This includes the time allocated for Religious Education classes.

Religious Education must never seem to students as merely 'an accessory' alongside other Learning Areas. It will have its own outcomes and present 'the Christian message and event with the same seriousness and depth' as other Learning Areas present their content.¹¹³

63. Ideally, curriculum planning will foster coordination between Religious Education and other curriculum areas. All need to work together to help students with life questions, such as those related to identity, the human origin and destiny, social justice, freedom, sexuality, conscience and what it means to develop as a truly human person.

Religious Education and other Learning Areas need to collaborate to work out on how questions and issues related to the religious and moral dimensions of the human person should be treated, and on how to present the major moral issues confronting Australian society today.¹¹⁴

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR NEW EVANGELISATION

64. For new evangelisation, Religious Education needs to support the primary proclamation of the Gospel, and to complement initiatory catechesis. Its tasks are to prepare students who have had little or no family or parish religious experience, for religious experiences they may be exposed to in the future; and to deepen the understanding of students who are receiving effective family and parish catechesis.

For new evangelisation, Religious Education will contribute also to the development of a sense of the sacred, a religious awakening in students. It will seek to ensure that students understand the foundational Christian belief that Jesus Christ is Saviour, as well as the Christian promise of Salvation. It will draw out the implications of this promise for students' lives. It will aim to show at all times 'how the Gospel fully satisfies the human heart', particularly its deeper questionings and yearnings.¹¹⁵

Religious Education will relate Catholic beliefs and practices to the life situations and conditions of children, and to the questions, sensibilities and problems of teenagers. Teaching young people how to discover their life's vocation and to form Christian conscience are important tasks.

THE CURRICULUM FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

65. The *Curriculum for Western Australian Schools* identifies eight Learning Areas Catholic schools are required to implement in addition to Religious Education. These Learning Areas need also to contribute to evangelisation by helping students to develop fully as Christian persons.

The Catholic school's curriculum will be distinctive by the ways in which Gospel values are integrated into the outcomes and content of all Learning Areas. In implementing the Western Australian School Curriculum, Catholic schools will be mindful of the following important principles.

CENTRED ON THE STUDENT

66. To contribute to students' Christian development, the starting point for all curriculum decisions will be the students themselves and their individual needs. Education that seeks to promote integrated personal development relates curriculum content to students' real life situations.

It aims to help students 'spell out the meaning of their experiences' and the truths that underlie them. It will do these things in the light of the Gospel. Good education never offers pre-cast conclusions, for, in Catholic educational experience, this hinders students' personal development – including their religious and faith development.¹¹⁶

THE HUMAN QUEST FOR TRUTH

67. For Catholic education, human knowledge is always 'a truth to be discovered'.¹¹⁷ In all Learning Areas, students need encouragement to be as concerned to seek answers to questions that arise as they are to learn course content.

Students need encouragement too to search for deeper understanding and meaning in whatever they study. This is particularly important in relation to issues of life and death, what it means to be human, moral right and wrong, the relationship between faith and science, and the origin, purpose and ultimate destiny of human life.

The desire to search in this fashion is a characteristic both of deepening human maturity and growing spiritual awareness. It can lead towards God, the ultimate Truth and Creator.

We urge teachers to encourage students to join in the human quest for truth, particularly by asking constantly 'how?' and 'why?' as well as 'what?'.

THE VALUE OF ALL HUMAN LEARNING

68. As Creator, God is the ultimate source of all human knowledge. All human learning is drawn from creation, including religious learning. All learning, therefore, including the religious dimension of knowledge, is of value.¹¹⁸

Education should never be for self-centred purposes, such as to acquire personal power, material prosperity or success. Rather, it should be to help people develop into the integrated persons God intends, including as individuals who have learned to 'serve and be responsible for others'.¹¹⁹

ABSOLUTE VALUES

69. The Catholic school aims to teach Gospel values – the basis for a Catholic outlook on life.¹²⁰ The Catholic school curriculum needs to help students to discover which values are absolute, and deepen their understanding of these through critical reflection and application.¹²¹

Such values need to be presented within life contexts and frameworks, and never abstractly. Values are critical to evaluating real life situations, and working out how to respond to them. Students also need to understand values to interpret the real meaning of their life-experiences.

THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF HUMAN LEARNING

70. The inter-relatedness of human knowledge means that all Learning Areas explicitly or implicitly teach about God and religious values and questions. Hence, Catholic schools need to help students to reflect critically on the contribution religious understandings can make within each Learning Area.

An integrated approach to curriculum planning, teaching and learning has always been a major emphasis within the Catholic education tradition, which calls for the integration of faith, life and culture.¹²² Such integration is essential if students are to develop appreciation for religious themes such as the human person, the family, society and history.¹²³

KNOWLEDGE OFFERED IN A SPIRIT OF SERVICE

71. Catholic schools approach the handing on of knowledge in a spirit of service, concerned always to offer students an education of the highest standard. As mentioned earlier, to be a Catholic school, a school must be a good school.

This handing on of knowledge in a spirit of service should be offered to all students. Students with particular needs should be given all the support and encouragement resources allow.

KNOWLEDGE BRINGS RESPONSIBILITY

72. As a privilege and gift from God, new learning needs to be accompanied by the development of a matching sense of social responsibility. The gift of knowledge is not meant for self centred purposes.

All, especially those entrusted with curriculum decisions, need to challenge students with this principle. It is worth repeating again that learning is not to be thought of solely as a 'means for material prosperity or success'. Students should be encouraged to study for reasons beyond personal advancement, material success or social ambition.

CONCLUSION

73. In their evangelisation planning, Catholic school decision-makers need to identify effective strategies to provide the primary proclamation and initiatory catechesis apprenticeship experiences that are appropriate to the faith needs of students. They need to ensure that Religious Education is given the prominence appropriate to this form of the Ministry of the Word in the Catholic school, and that Gospel values are integrated into the school curriculum.

As they are helped in these ways, students learn what is involved in 'bringing the Good News into all the strata of human society, and, through its influence, transforming humanity from within and making it new'.¹²⁴



part four

PART FOUR:

SIGNS OF THE TIMES IN THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL COMMUNITY

74. New evangelisation, like any other evangelisation activity, requires faith experiences within Christian communities because of the nature of Christian faith. The Catholic school cannot succeed in its mission unless it always strives to become a better faith community.¹²⁵

The characteristics the Catholic school strives to develop can be properly understood only in the context of the family and the parish. While the school can enrich faith experiences students are receiving in their families and parishes, it can never replace them.

THE FAMILY

75. Jesus promised to be present wherever two or three of his followers gather in his name.¹²⁶ Students need to experience the family as a faith community from their earliest years. The role of parents is vital.

Their calling from God is to serve as the first faith educators of their children. Special rights and obligations accompany the role of Christian parents for three reasons.

First, it is they who brought their children into the world. Second, as Christians, they are bound by Jesus' farewell command to proclaim the Gospel to everyone.¹²⁷ They are called to be the first heralds of the Gospel to their children. Third, through the Sacrament of Marriage, Christian parents are gifted by God to contribute uniquely to the Christian formation of their children.

We call on the parents of all Catholic children to keep striving to bind their families together as Christian faith communities. As a community gathered ultimately by Jesus Christ himself, the family is 'the domestic Church'.¹²⁸ It is within their families that children need to have their first experiences of 'Church'.

It is even more vital in an age requiring new evangelisation for parents to develop close relationships with their children and to give them Christian witness in this context [see 35 above]. Through their actions and words, parents need to teach their children Christ-like love, and to share with their children their own faith through actions and words.

It is for parents to help their children to prepare to live as Christians in the world, to face challenges to Christian faith in today's society, to avoid moral dangers and to learn ways of contributing to the life of the Church and of wider society from a Gospel perspective. Children need to learn from their parents how to discern their vocations and to appreciate their eternal destiny.

Parents need to receive from their parishes the faith formation required to fulfil their role as evangelisers. It is ideal when parishes and schools work together to provide this.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS TO THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

76. As the primary educators of their children, parents have special responsibilities regarding Catholic schools. Chief among them is the responsibility to contribute towards the distinctively Catholic ethos of the school through active participation in its life and practices.¹²⁹

Good relationships are vital if Catholic schools are to achieve their aims. Both parents and the school need to work at building constructive relationships.

Parents need also to support the efforts of schools to assist them with their responsibilities. This is particularly the case in regard to their children's religious and moral formation (social and personal) and to their developing sense of Christian vocation in the world.

Parents' support is critical in the educational process. Therefore, we urge parents to use the school processes and opportunities provided to facilitate their involvement.

77. Catholic schools would not exist without the outstanding dedication and contribution of parents. We urge school staff to continue involving parents in the development of the school's outcomes.

They should inform them about the school's Catholic educational philosophy, its primary proclamation and initiatory catechesis activities, the Religious Education program, other student programs and important administrative procedures and practices. Staff members are to keep parents informed about their children's progress and be responsive to parents' concerns.

We thank parents for all that they currently contribute to Catholic schools. We urge all concerned to support their schools as far as possible.

SIGNS OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND PURPOSE TODAY

78. The many Catholic parents who do so much to share their faith with their children are among the greatest signs of God's presence. The role of Catholic parents requires heroism at times, particularly when children seem to lose interest in religious practice. Catholic schools in Western Australia could neither exist nor function without the often outstanding dedication and contribution of parents. Again, we call on schools to do whatever they can to keep the financial costs to parents as low as possible.

Finally we recognise that many parents in Catholic schools today have drifted away from the practice of the faith. We invite them warmly to return to the community of the Church where they can come to know and to relate personally with Jesus more deeply and experience his power to help them in their lives more fruitfully.

We offer this invitation to parents firstly for their own sakes, for we know that each is loved deeply by God. Second, we offer this invitation to parents for the sakes of their children, each of whom God wants to relate with deeply.

THE PARISH COMMUNITY

79. The parish community is indispensable for the new evangelisation of young people. It will always be 'the prime mover and pre-eminent place for catechesis'.¹³⁰

After the family, the parish is the Christian faith community children and young people need for their religious development. Parishes have a vital role to play in supporting parents as the first educators of their children.

Parishioners need to work together so that young people can experience their parish as a 'family of God, a fellowship afire with a unifying spirit, a welcoming home and a community of the faithful'.¹³¹ All families should find welcome, encouragement and support in their parishes.

Catholic schools complement parishes with their supportive responsibilities towards parents. For evangelisation to be effective, it is imperative that family, parish and school work in partnership.

80. Parishes need to support actively the schools their young parishioners attend. In isolation, the Catholic school cannot adequately promote a sense of Christian mission.

Without strong parish-school collaboration, students will be deprived of the range of Christian community experiences needed for the apprenticeship of initiatory catechesis, which is required for their faith development. They need good experiences of active liturgical participation and of the Gospel being proclaimed in ways that relate to their lives.

Young people need encouraging Christian witness from their fellow parishioners. In particular, they need to feel welcomed, supported and recognised. As members of the parish community, young people need to be inspired and engaged by the parish community today.

Parish and Catholic school decision-makers need to work together. Otherwise their evangelisation activities for families and for young people will not complement each other. Nor will they, in their respective ways, help young people to become involved in their parish and diocesan communities.

Ideally, the Chairperson of the Catholic School Board, be it a parish or a regional school, will be an active member of their parish. This will enhance the parish-school relationship.

We urge parents to develop family-parish relationships so their children can experience parish as a community. The breakdown of the family's relationship with a parish is a serious factor in the decline of many young people's faith today.

SIGNS OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND PURPOSE TODAY

81. The ways parishes reach out to young people are important signs of God's presence. Various parish-school initiatives, such as sacramental preparation programs, provide also for parent faith formation.

The concerns of parishes about the faith circumstances of young people and their parents reflect both the presence and the purpose of God. This includes concern at the decline in their religious practice.

Reaching out to the young today remains an ongoing challenge. We invite parish communities to be encouraged and to maintain Christian hope, based upon the presence and the promises of Christ who remains in their midst.

THE PARISH PRIEST

82. The Parish Priest's role is to build up the parish as a family of God by proclaiming the Word of God, by presiding at sacramental celebrations and by building up the community of the parish as a faith community centred on Christ. This includes empowering and supporting individuals to fulfil their evangelisation responsibilities. The Parish Priest also encourages all to accept their Christian vocations and responsibilities, both in the world and in the Church.

Within Catholic school communities, we call on priests to continue proclaiming the Word of God, particularly in homilies, relating it always to the daily life questions, issues and the faith circumstances of students. We call on them to continue presiding at school celebrations of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance. We emphasise the pastoral role of priests in supporting school staff, for, in turn, their work affects members of the parish community, particularly younger members.

83. The Parish Priest is responsible for ensuring that the Religious Education Program mandated by the diocesan Bishop is followed. He is responsible too for encouraging coordination between school and parish evangelisation activities. In fulfilling his role, the Parish Priest acts in ways respectful of the Catholic Education Commission's Mandate and Terms of Reference, in addition to policies and directives from the diocesan Bishop.

While the priest is not required to guide the teaching strategies employed by teachers, he needs to be fully aware of the content of the Religious Education program in the school. Liaison between the Parish Priest and those responsible for the Religious Education program is essential.

84. Where students from his parish attend a regional Catholic school, the Parish Priest's responsibilities need to be exercised in collaboration with the other Parish Priests in the region and with the school leadership team. The relationship between the school and the Parish Priest (or Parish Priests in the case of regional schools) is of the greatest importance in fulfilling our purposes for Catholic schools.

We ask our schools to appreciate that the priest has a special role to play in every faith community, including the Catholic school. In practice, it is not always easy for priests to feel comfortable in schools. Often, the size and range of school activities – as well as the culture of youth – can seem daunting.

SIGNS OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND PURPOSE TODAY

85. The dedicated service of priests to students and staff in Catholic schools is a great sign of the presence and purpose of God. Of particular importance is their service through the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance. So are the pastoral relationships established with students, especially with those who have little other experience of the Church community.



THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL COMMUNITY

86. All who have responsibilities in Catholic schools need a clear understanding of what makes a school community 'Catholic'. We wish to emphasise here some of the key points of this teaching in relation to the community of the Catholic school.

The meaning of 'community', in the context of the Catholic school, is spelt out by the Second Vatican Council in the second chapter of *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*. 'Community' in this context is not understood in a purely sociological sense.¹³²

JESUS CHRIST IS THEIR HEAD

87. Catholic school communities recognise Jesus Christ as their Head. Their members are his members. He is the Source of the Spirit in all who have received Baptism. They are part of his Body, the Church. They are called to play their part within the Church as it fulfils its Christian Mission to the world.

We call on all involved with our schools to strive to appreciate the message of Jesus more deeply and to look to him for the nourishment and energy they need for their educational work. We encourage them to develop personal relationships with Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, particularly through liturgical celebrations of the Word and the Sacraments and through prayer. Christ is the Word who dwells among us¹³³ – the Word we experience through Tradition, Sacred Scripture and in the lives of all who offer Christian witness.

COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

88. To foster students' development as Christian men and women, Catholic schools need to be communities of faith. Teachers, administrative and auxiliary staff, principals, parents, voluntary helpers and students all belong to the school community. In this community, Parish Priests have a unique and special pastoral role.

THE DISTINCTIVE ETHOS OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

This entire Mandate Letter is about the distinctive ethos of the Catholic school. Some key points need to be made in summary.

89. The first basic requirement for the ethos of a Catholic school is that it recognises Jesus Christ as the Head of the school, as he is the Head of the Church of which the school is a part. It is 'Catholic' to the extent that each member of its community bases their vision of education upon him and his Gospel.

This ethos grows with the recognition by all within the school community of the need of each one to relate personally with Jesus himself.¹³⁴

The second basic requirement for the ethos of a school to be 'Catholic' is the commitment of community members to the Christian vision of the student as a person. This is a shared vision of whom God is calling students to become, as revealed by Jesus Christ. He is the model the school presents to students.¹³⁵ His teachings and the values of his Gospel are the educational norms that need to permeate the school's entire curriculum and life.¹³⁶

The ethos of a Catholic school community includes everything that contributes to its life as a place of evangelisation. Strategies to strengthen this ethos are of fundamental importance in the school's evangelisation plan.

Our Catholic schools are called to be Christian prophetic communities, fostering the 'new life in Christ' and growth in Christian values, as proclaimed by the Catholic Church. This includes helping students to integrate faith and culture, to be encouraging and supportive of all that is good in society – as well as to challenge all that is contrary to Christ's message. This is crucial to their contribution towards the new evangelisation of our young.

90. Promoting the ethos of the Catholic school calls each member of its community to give Christian witness. It means avoiding deliberate behaviour that conflicts with the teachings of Christ.

The lifestyles, attitudes and overt witness of adults are of the greatest importance. In Catholic education, 'conduct is always more important than speech'.¹³⁷

Primary proclamation, the apprenticeship of initiatory catechesis and Religious Education are essential for promoting the Catholic school ethos. These forms of the Ministry of the Word need to be actively supported by all members of the school community.

91. We call on principals and all school leaders to promote actively the Catholic ethos of our schools. In practice, it is their decisions and leadership that affect the quality of this ethos.

Emphasising this ethos will contribute to students developing a Gospel vision for society. It will assist them to learn how to live a Gospel inspired life.

We call on all others involved in our schools to fulfil the Catholic ethos responsibilities they explicitly accepted when they joined these communities. It is vital that all remember the need for their schools to remain faithful to their role within the Church's mission, remaining 'in union with the Holy Father', 'attentive to the Magisterium' and reflecting love and fidelity to the Church in whose name they serve.¹³⁸

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL COMMUNITY

92. All members of the Catholic school community have responsibilities related to promoting its aims and effectiveness. Anyone accepting a position within a Catholic school community accepts the role of Catholic educator who helps to form followers of Christ.

PRINCIPLES OF PARTICIPATION, CO-RESPONSIBILITY AND SUBSIDIARITY

93. Roles in the Catholic school entail specific responsibilities. We emphasise two fundamental Catholic principles that need to be remembered as these responsibilities are being fulfilled.

The Principle of Participation and Co-Responsibility requires that all within the Church and its school communities (according to their level of competence) be involved from the start in decisions that affect them.¹³⁹

The Principle of Subsidiarity requires that nothing should be done by a higher authority, agency or level that could be done as well or better by a lower one.¹⁴⁰ These principles release human energies at a local and less complex level. They are founded on a concern to serve.

SCHOOL LEADERS

94. The principal leads the school community. The principal promotes its evangelisation purposes, its aims and ethos, its development as a faith community, as well as the outcomes of its curriculum, including the Religious Education program.

The principal has ultimate responsibility, under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, for every aspect of the Catholic school's ethos, life and curriculum. All other leadership roles within the Catholic school are delegated by the principal in the spirit of shared leadership.

The principal is responsible for the school's effectiveness as a community of evangelisation. The principal has the delegated right and responsibility to lead the Catholic school community in the development and periodic review of its evangelisation plan, with the support of the Catholic Education Office.

95. We urge principals and other Catholic school leaders to continue striving for deeper personal relationships with Jesus. Formation from within by the Spirit of Christ (particularly through prayer and liturgical worship) is essential, so that school leaders continue to become more like Jesus in how they think, hear, speak and behave. In this way they will become ever more effective as leaders of Christ-centred school communities.

All who are called to leadership roles in Catholic schools, especially principals, must remember that, as leaders in the Church, theirs are roles of Christian service. For staff, parents and students, they are to reflect the Christ who came to serve rather than to be served.¹⁴¹

All school leaders are called to embody the vision, values and outlook of the Catholic school. Leadership through witness is critical for the effectiveness of the school community. They should support one another with faith and courage.

The contributions of our Catholic school leaders to the life and mission of the Church are examples of God's presence in our schools. We value their generosity and willingness to collaborate with us in the fulfilment of our responsibilities regarding Catholic schools.



TEACHERS

96. A prime task for teachers is to ensure that a Gospel atmosphere permeates the school. Their special responsibility is to cooperate actively in fostering the school's mission through its life and curriculum.

Teachers should strive 'to enlighten students' human knowledge with the data of faith'.¹⁴² We ask them to do all that they can to apply the principles of new evangelisation to the extent that these relate to their Learning Areas.

We ask teachers to do all that they can to ensure their school's religious and pastoral activities are coordinated with those of the parish (or the region of parishes). It is important to help students become active members of their own parish and diocesan communities (for example, through service activities and youth organisations).¹⁴³

97. Catholic school teachers need to understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it is transmitted through the Catholic Church. They need to contribute to ensuring that the common vision of the school community reflects the Gospel of Christ.

Commitment to the specific ideals and objectives of Catholic schools is also essential. We call on teachers to appreciate and value the Catholic vision of the human person, and work to integrate faith, culture and life in all they do.

98. The calling of the Catholic school teacher today is demanding and challenging. Their pastoral care, therefore, needs always to be of the greatest priority.¹⁴⁴

Catholic education leaders need to do all that they can to provide teachers with the doctrinal background and the appropriate skills they need to help students to integrate faith, life and culture. Teachers need up-to-date spiritual and religious formation, an appreciation for the vocation of teacher in a Catholic school and an understanding of their role within the diocese.

The outstanding work and great generosity of our Catholic school teachers is a fundamental sign of God's presence in Catholic schools. We urge those responsible for our teachers' pre-service, accreditation and professional development courses to provide for their needs in ways that are meaningful, stimulating and practical.

TEACHERS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

99. All teachers share in the school community's responsibility to promote the religious dimension of Catholic education.¹⁴⁵ Teachers of Religious Education have a special vocation in the Catholic school, for Religious Education is a form of the Ministry of the Word in evangelisation. As it directly expresses the Word of God, 'relying solely on the divine power of the Message', their role in Religious Education is sacred [see 17 above].

Religious Education teachers present, explain and justify the Christian message as it is transmitted by the Catholic Church. In doing so, they help prepare students to make free and responsible choices in the light of the Gospel and to discover coherent ways of life based upon that Gospel. Religious Education classes should foster the kind of critical reflection that leads to commitment to the Person of Christ, and not simply propose an abstract understanding of Christian beliefs.¹⁴⁶

To fulfil their role, teachers of Religious Education need to ensure that they understand and follow the Religious Education program mandated by the diocesan Bishop. Every support is to be provided to assist these teachers in their very challenging role.

100. Teachers of Religious Education accept a very difficult and challenging vocation. They have to compete with seemingly overwhelming societal, peer and family influences that run counter to the Gospel message. They are at the cutting edge of the Church's mission of new evangelisation to our young.

We thank all who accept this vocation, and urge them to remember that their sacred task is like planting seeds. Religious Education teachers may never see the fruits of their labours. However, they need always to have faith in the Word they plant and in the fruit it will eventually bear.¹⁴⁷

The continuing faithfulness of so many Religious Education teachers in our schools is one of the most heartening signs of God's presence. They serve as real instruments of God's self-revelation to those they teach.

SCHOOL CHAPLAINS

101. Priests whom the Bishop appoints as school chaplains are called to fulfil the responsibilities of a Parish Priest for the school [see 80-82 above]. They serve as signs of God's presence in the same ways as Parish Priests.

In a regional school where no school chaplain has been appointed, the Parish Priests of the region are to nominate one of their number to fulfil this role. There must be a clear and agreed understanding of the roles of all priests in a regional Catholic school where there is no chaplain.

Schools are to provide chaplains with the resources and support they need to fulfil their responsibilities.

Larger schools may need to establish a ministry team to work with the school chaplain.



THE DIOCESAN BISHOP

102. The diocesan Bishop aims to lead his diocese to become truly a local Church community. By ordination, the Bishop's responsibilities are to foster the celebration and living of faith by his sanctifying role, the proclamation of the Gospel by his teaching role and discovery of the Spirit's activity in the life of the diocese by his leadership in love, or governance.

The Bishop serves as the unifying link between all involved in Catholic education. As the first teacher of faith in his diocese, he establishes and mandates all of its educational institutions.

CATHOLIC SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

103. Only the diocesan Bishop can give a school community the mandate that allows it to be called 'Catholic'. It is for him to ensure the school's formation and education programs are based upon Catholic doctrinal and moral principles and to approve and, if necessary, withdraw teachers of Religious Education.¹⁴⁸

In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the staffing of schools is the principal's responsibility, as is the monitoring of teachers' effectiveness and conformity with the ethos of the school and the Bishop's requirements.

THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

104. The Director of Religious Education is appointed directly by the Bishop of the diocese to develop and supervise the Religious Education program to be taught in his diocese.¹⁴⁹

The Director of Religious Education is responsible also to the Bishops of Western Australia for the religious content presented in any other programs and activities offered by the Catholic Education Commission through the Catholic Education Office.



THE CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

105. The Bishops of Western Australia have established the Catholic Education Commission to assist them in exercising responsibility for the Catholic schools in their dioceses. This includes implementation of the Religious Education program mandated by the Bishop of each diocese. Specific details of the Commission's responsibilities are spelt out in the Mandate and Terms of Reference that accompany this Letter.

We thank all who serve, or who have served, as members of the Commission, its Standing Committees and as staff of the Catholic Education Office, since the Commission's establishment. They serve as special reminders of God's presence and purpose in our Western Australian Catholic school system.

THE DIRECTOR OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

106. The Director of Catholic Education is appointed by the Bishops of Western Australia to support them in the development and improvement of Catholic schools in Western Australia in accordance with the Terms of Reference given by the Bishops to the Catholic Education Commission. The Director of Catholic Education is the spokesperson for the Commission.

THE CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

107. The Catholic Education Office is an ecclesial organisation. It is called to witness for Christ and, through its various services, to invite all members of the Catholic education community to develop a personal relationship with him. The Catholic Education Office will demonstrate leadership that contributes to the evangelising mission of Catholic schools.

The Catholic Education Office is the secretariat of the Catholic Education Commission. The responsibilities of the Commission are exercised through the Catholic Education Office in Perth and its Regional Offices. These Offices will be directly accountable to the Catholic Education Commission through the Director of Catholic Education.



TO THE FUTURE

108. Our wish is that this Mandate Letter be studied as the point of reference for the interpretation of the Mandate and Terms of Reference we are giving to the Catholic Education Commission in the development of all Commission policies and for all programs offered by the Catholic Education Office.

Our hope is that all Catholic school decision-makers will see this Mandate Letter as an affirmation and an encouragement to them to keep striving towards making real the vision of the Catholic school. We call on all concerned to renew their commitment to achieving this vision and to honour in this way the Christian witness of our forebears since the foundation of Catholic schools in Western Australia.

Our faith in 'the divine power of the Message' proclaimed in Catholic schools means our schools inspire hope. School leaders, school staff and community members who strive to apply the principles outlined in this Letter can say:¹⁵⁰

Glory be to him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine...

We commend our schools to the intercession of Mary, the Virgin Mother of Jesus, Patroness of Australia, and to St Joseph, her husband. As the first educators of Jesus, may they provide inspiration and encouragement to all who belong to our Western Australian Catholic school communities.

We commend them also in a special way to the prayers of Blessed Mary of the Cross MacKillop. She knows the challenges of Australian Catholic schools from first hand experience.

+Barry James Hickey, Archbishop of Perth
+Justin Bianchini, Bishop of Geraldton
+Christopher Saunders, Bishop of Broome
+Gerard J Holohan, Bishop of Bunbury
+Donald Sproxton, Auxiliary Bishop of Perth

terms of reference

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia has been established for the sole purpose of ensuring that the Bishops' Mandate for Catholic Education is implemented throughout Western Australia. The Commission is established by and remains responsible to the Bishops' Conference of Western Australia.

The Commission will act on behalf of the Bishops, collectively or individually, unless advised otherwise by the Conference of Bishops or separately by the Bishop in his diocese.

In so acting, the Commission will, in terms of primary and secondary education:

- (a) provide leadership for the betterment and quality of Catholic education in Western Australia
- (b) coordinate Catholic education in Western Australia
- (c) develop, promulgate and evaluate Catholic school policy and programs
- (d) act on behalf of Catholic education in Western Australia, including for all Catholic students not enrolled in Catholic schools
- (e) establish committees as required to advise it
- (f) respond to state and Australian educational issues
- (g) liaise with other organisations for the benefit of Catholic education
- (h) provide representation on state and Australian bodies as appropriate and as requested.

In a spirit of Gospel service, the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia will:

- (a) develop and evaluate Catholic school policy where the Bishops elect to adopt a joint policy and
- (b) act for each diocesan Bishop in specified matters concerning the education of Catholic children in the diocese.

The responsibilities of the Commission are exercised through the Catholic Education Office in Perth and its Regional Offices. These Offices, through the Director of Catholic Education, will be directly accountable to the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia.

In complying with its Terms of Reference, the Commission will:

1. Witness to and proclaim its commitment to Jesus Christ and to the truths and values of the Gospel as proclaimed by the Catholic Church. The Commission will strive to do this faithfully within a variety of ecclesiastical, educational, social and political milieux.
2. In keeping with Catholic social teaching, operate in accord with the principle of subsidiarity, which requires that nothing should be done by a higher administrative authority, agency or level that could be done as well, or better, by a lower one. In particular this should apply when:
 - (a) supporting parents as the primary educators of their children
 - (b) promoting co-responsibility between the Catholic Education Office and school communities, and between principals and their staff
 - (c) complementing and supporting other services appropriate to Catholic education, including those offered by state and diocesan bodies, parishes and Religious Institutes.
3. Keep itself informed of Church and government statements on education and integrate these into the activities of Catholic education as appropriate.

STATEWIDE FUNCTIONS

On behalf of the Bishops of Western Australia, the Commission will fulfil the following responsibilities as well as any others when so directed by the Bishops:

WITHIN THE CHURCH

- 1.1 Advance the Church's purpose for Catholic schools by ensuring that every school in its jurisdiction is a good school.
- 1.2 Advance the Church's purpose for Catholic schools by providing a religious and faith education of all Catholic children.
- 1.2 Foster cooperative parish and Catholic school relationships.
- 1.3 Advance the Church's purpose for Catholic schools, while embodying the Church's preferential option for the poor and disadvantaged, by making available a Catholic school education for all Catholic children, insofar as this is possible.
- 1.4 Provide leadership for the Western Australian Catholic school system, and
 - ❖ assist parents to understand and exercise their responsibilities as Christian educators
 - ❖ assist school communities to be faithful to the aims of the Catholic school
 - ❖ consult and collaborate with Catholic school communities.
- 1.5 Develop, enunciate and implement statewide policies that enhance the quality of education in Catholic schools.

OFFICIAL VOICE FOR THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

- 1.6 Speak officially on behalf of the Western Australian Catholic school system on matters affecting Catholic schools, and on Western Australian schooling in general. In particular, the Commission will:
 - ❖ ensure a Catholic education viewpoint is expressed on education issues that are raised publicly and on other issues relevant to education and young people that ought to be raised
 - ❖ represent the Western Australian Catholic school system in negotiations with Australian and state governments, educational institutions, public authorities and community organisations
 - ❖ provide representation on statutory bodies, government committees, community organisations and relevant bodies
 - ❖ publish and distribute to Catholic schools statements on matters of concern that fall within the Commission's Terms of Reference
 - ❖ offer advice to diocesan Bishops and to Religious Institutes
 - ❖ prepare an annual report on the Commission's activities that includes
 - a statement on the progress of Religious Education and Faith Formation in Catholic schools
 - an audited statement of the Commission's income and expenditure
 - the state of Catholic education in Western Australia.

CATHOLIC SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

1.7 Support Catholic school communities by providing:

- ❖ guidance in implementing Commission policies and requirements
- ❖ personnel to assist school staffs, school boards, and parents
- ❖ guidance to school boards in discharging their duties by assisting them to understand and foster the aims and character of Catholic education
- ❖ access to appropriate information and advice.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1.8 Ascertain, by rigorous research, the professional needs of principals, teachers and other school personnel, and provide:

- ❖ professional development services and opportunities
- ❖ ongoing faith formation activities
- ❖ opportunities for Catholic school personnel to deepen their understanding of the principles and practices of Catholic education
- ❖ advice on suitable programs for school-based professional and faith development.

1.9 Ensure all Catholic school staff have appropriate qualifications.

1.10 Ensure all Catholic school staff have appropriate and approved accreditation by providing or approving suitable accreditation programs.

PROMOTION OF CATHOLIC CHARACTER

1.11 Inspire Catholic school communities to preserve and develop their Catholic character, and in particular:

- ❖ the ethos of a Catholic school
- ❖ to promote close links with the wider Catholic community, especially the parish
- ❖ to ensure that all school staff understand the expectations regarding their manner of life arising from Catholic moral teaching
- ❖ to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to recruit, appoint, develop, assess and when necessary, dismiss Catholic school staff
- ❖ to consider how to recruit suitable personnel when planning new Catholic schools or the extending existing schools
- ❖ to ensure that school boards understand what is distinctive to the Catholic school and its relationship with the parish.

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

1.12 Monitor schools and assist them to maintain and enhance educational standards consistent with:

- ❖ the aims of the Catholic school
- ❖ the requirements and standards set by external authorities
- ❖ best practice and innovation consistent with the aims of the school communities.

THE COMMON GOOD

- 1.13 Require principals, teachers and school boards to provide the Commission with all the information needed to fulfil its responsibilities.
- 1.14 Ensure proposals to expand, reduce or make major changes to Catholic school communities are referred to the Commission in good time to ensure adequate consultation takes place before decisions are made.

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

- 1.15 Foster leadership in financial administration so that decisions taken apply principles of justice, effectiveness, co-responsibility and preferential option for the poor in all financial decision-making processes. The Commission will:
 - ❖ act as the official agency to receive, distribute and account for funds received on behalf of Catholic schools from Australian and state governments and other agencies
 - ❖ make decisions on resource sharing, after proper consultation and in accord with the principle of co-responsibility
 - ❖ ensure that financial resources are distributed with maximum benefit to schools
 - ❖ ensure submissions are prepared to access funding for various programs
 - ❖ coordinate and supervise programs funded by Australian and state governments and other agencies
 - ❖ prepare an annual budget
 - ❖ audit its annual budget.

RESEARCH

- 1.16 Commission, conduct and cooperate in research projects judged to be of value to Catholic education and:
 - ❖ gather and maintain data essential for Commission purposes
 - ❖ disseminate appropriate data to dioceses, Religious Institutes, parish communities, parent organisations and school communities
 - ❖ cooperate with other Catholic education authorities and agencies in any appropriate new activities that emanate from research findings
 - ❖ provide Catholic school communities, parish communities and other relevant organisations with information and advice on sound educational theory, to promote quality in Catholic education and to keep all concerned informed of Commission's programs.
- 1.17 Consult with other organisations and collaborate in joint activities consistent with the Commission's Terms of Reference and which will be mutually beneficial.

DIOCESAN FUNCTIONS

To assist each diocesan Bishop fulfil his educational responsibilities, the Commission will:

WITHIN THE DIOCESE

1.18 Make recommendations to the Bishop on:

- ❖ mandating and developing new Catholic school communities
- ❖ closing schools
- ❖ rationalising school resources and services.

1.19 Ensure effective Catholic school leadership by:

- ❖ proposing suitable candidates for appointment by the Bishop as principals
- ❖ undertake appropriate performance review of principals
- ❖ when requested, support Religious Institutes in appointing and re-appointing principals in schools within their jurisdiction
- ❖ ensure appropriate Accreditation for School Leadership Teams, Religious Education Coordinators and Religious Education teachers and all other Catholic school staff.

1.20 Assist other diocesan agencies with their educational activities and cooperate with them as appropriate.

1.21 Obtain the diocesan Bishop's approval when appointing Regional Officers of the Catholic Education Office.

CURRICULUM

1.22 Ensure school curricula are consistent with the requirements of state education authorities and fulfil the requirements for curricula in Catholic schools, as well as the approved Religious Education curriculum units adopted by the Bishop and:

- ❖ assist schools to implement effective curricula which advance the vision, goals, principles and values of Catholic education
- ❖ train and assist teachers and others responsible for implementing curricula.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1.23 Ensure schools implement the diocesan Religious Education programs and:

- ❖ provide appropriate professional development and resources for Religious Education teachers and coordinators
- ❖ develop procedures by which the Bishop approves Religious Education teachers in diocesan schools
- ❖ reviews and evaluates school Religious Education programs
- ❖ promote close liaison between school Religious Education staff, parents and Parish Priests
- ❖ ensure schools report adequately to parents on their Religious Education programs for students
- ❖ foster cooperation between Catholic school Religious Education programs and those conducted in parishes, and where appropriate, with those of diocesan youth organisations
- ❖ assist the Diocesan Director of Religious Education to review periodically the diocesan Religious Education programs and to develop or modify them at the Bishop's direction.

1.24 Assist parish catechists with the Religious Education of children and young people not attending Catholic schools.



membership

MEMBERSHIP OF THE CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

1. The Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia has up to 17 members, all of whom are appointed by the Bishops of Western Australia.

The term of members other than those appointed ex officio will be three years with a reappointment of one term (maximum six years).

2. The Commission has the following representation:

- ❖ a Chairman (appointed by the Bishops of Western Australia)
- ❖ the Director of Catholic Education in Western Australia (Deputy Chairman)
- ❖ the Director of Religious Education
- ❖ one Bishop
- ❖ two parents
- ❖ one primary school principal
- ❖ one secondary school principal
- ❖ one Parish Priest
- ❖ two representatives of Catholic Religious Western Australia
- ❖ the Director of the Catholic Institute of Western Australia (or an appointed substitute)
- ❖ the Dean of the College of Education of the University of Notre Dame Australia (or an appointed substitute)
- ❖ the Chairman of the Catholic Education Aboriginal Committee
- ❖ three Commission nominees (appointed by the Bishops because of their special expertise).

3. The spokesperson for the Commission will be the Director of Catholic Education in Western Australia.
4. All members of the Commission Standing Committees are appointed by the Commission, except for the Chairman of the Religious Education and Curriculum Committee, who is appointed by the Bishops of Western Australia.
5. Should the Bishops appoint a member of the Commission to the position of Chairman, the number of Commission nominees may be increased by one to a total of four for the relevant period.
6. Although members of the Commission may be nominated by particular organisations, they do not represent them on the Commission itself. The Commission is accountable to the Bishops of Western Australia.



abbreviations

ABBREVIATIONS

AG	Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (Second Vatican Council, 1965)
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church (Vatican City, 1994)
CF	On the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World (Pope John Paul II, 1988)
CIC	Code of Canon Law (Vatican City, 1983)
CS	The Catholic School (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977)
CT	Catechesis in Our Time (Pope John Paul II, 1979)
DCE	God is Love (Pope Benedict XVI, 2005)
EN	On Evangelisation in the Modern World (Pope Paul VI, 1975)
GDC	General Directory for Catechesis (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997)
GE	Declaration on Christian Education (Second Vatican Council, 1965)
GS	Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Second Vatican Council, 1965)
LC	Lay Catholics in Schools: Witness to Faith (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982)
LG	Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Second Vatican Council, 1964)
RD	The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988)
RM	The Mission of the Redeemer (Pope John Paul II, 1990)
TM	The Catholic School in the Third Millennium (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997)

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- 1 [Colossians 1:18; Roman 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12: 12-14, 27; Ephesians 1:23, 4:1-6]
- 2 [Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:20]
- 3 [John 14:23]
- 4 [2 Corinthians 13:5; Roman 8:10]
- 5 [Luke 5:31]
- 6 [CCC 775-776]
- 7 [CS]
- 8 [eg Matthew 16:3]
- 9 [GS11; cf GS4]
- 10 [GDC 16]
- 11 [CIC 805-806; CS 71-72]
- 12 [CS7; cf 8-9]
- 13 [CS 58]
- 14 [TM 7; cf CS 58]
- 15 [CCC 1905-1909, 1912]
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- 17 [GDC 36, 38]
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- 19 [CCC 374-379]
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- 30 [GDC 107-108; CCC 51-67]
- 31 [Mark 1:15]
- 32 [GDC 39]
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- 35 [CS 25-32]
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- 39 [CCC 356-361, 374-379, 400, 405, 1691-2051, 2201-2203, 2331-2350 etc]
- 40 [GDC 31-32, 108]
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- 42 [CS 36; GS 53, 57, 59, 62]
- 43 [CS 35-36; RD 98-99, 84; GE 2, 8; CCC 1691-1698]
- 44 [CS 35]
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- 46 [CS 50]
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- 49 [GDC 32, 152 (c)]
- 50 [CS 46]
- 51 [CS 38, 39]
- 52 [CS 50]
- 53 [GS 43]
- 54 [CS 35; cf 30, 19]
- 55 [CCC 1262-1274, 1302-1305, 1391-1398]
- 56 [RM 33d; GDC 58 (c)]
- 57 [GDC 25; RD 78]
- 58 [GDC 288-289; cf CCC 153-154]
- 59 [GDC 15-33]
- 60 [GDC 117]
- 61 [Matthew 13:23]
- 62 [Matthew 6:33; Mark 10:41-45; Luke 10:41-42]
- 63 [Matthew 5:3]
- 64 [Luke 12:33; 16:9; 19:8]
- 65 [Acts 20:35]
- 66 [Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23]
- 67 [RD 29]
- 68 [EN 18]
- 69 [AG 11-12]
- 70 [LC 32-33; CS 43]
- 71 [CS 55]
- 72 [RD 110; LC 32-33]
- 73 [RD 110-111]
- 74 [RD 29]
- 75 [CS 58]
- 76 [Luke 4:2]
- 77 [LG 31]
- 78 [GDC 259-260]
- 79 [GDC 58 (c); cf 56 (b), 62, 101-102]
- 80 [Acts 2: 14-39; 3:13-26; 4:10-12:1 Corinthians 14:13-14; Romans 16:25 – see also CCC 571, 654, 1988 and 457-560; GDC 101-102]
- 81 [GDC 62, 102]
- 82 [CS 29-30]
- 83 [Mark 1:15]
- 84 [Philippians 3:10; Romans 1:4, 6:4]
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- 89 [Luke 19:23]
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- 91 [John 1:1; Matthew 25:31-46]
- 92 [CCC 1088, 1114-1116, 1120]
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- 94 [CCC 2096-2097, 2628]
- 95 [AG 14]
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99 [GDC 16]

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107 [GDC 185; cf 58 {c}]

108 [CCC 282, 355-379; 571, 654, 667, 747; Catechism 484, 525-526, 688; DV 23; CCC 75-84, 101-133, 1067, 1692, 1697, 2565]

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