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AORAKI

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NZCEO
TE TARI MĀTAURANGA KATORIKA O AOTEAROA
NZ CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE

New Zealand Catholic Education Office
PO Box 12307
Thorndon, Wellington 6144
Ph (04) 496 1739
nzceooffice@nzceo.org.nz
www.nzceo.org.nz

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Front cover:

Kōwhaiwhai (curvilinear surface design) is the ancient art of painted traditions by Māori. As an art form kōwhaiwhai is distinctively Māori, most often seen on the meeting house ridgepole (tāhūhū) and on the rafters (heke).

Kōwhaiwhai patterns show an emphasis on the use of forms that represent growth, the uncurling of the young fern frond, young curled leaves, shoots and branches. For this publication, the images represent the growth, development and unfurling of Catholic educators as they mature in their practice.

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EDITORIAL

November 2018

Welcome to the new look Aoraki!

Our aim has always been to gradually build Aoraki into a truly substantial contribution to Catholic educational thinking in New Zealand, and the current move to an annual, bigger publication is a step to fulfilling this vision. We also have the desire to build the link between school educators and The Catholic Institute. You will see that linkage in this issue. While we are drawing on the expertise of academic staff and students at TCI, our articles are not necessarily strictly academic – we want them to be stimulating even if you are reading them late at night!

The readership will now, we hope, extend beyond the senior school staff that we previously addressed, to be of value to others in the school community. We welcome your comments on how we are going.

Some of these articles pick up on themes addressed at Catholic Education Convention 2018, including key themes of evangelisation and the encounter with Christ. Others reveal the richness of the Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Catholic Culture, and some will simply provide you with significant stimulus.

We have chosen to continue to provide print copies, not converting solely to digital copies (though Aoraki will be available on our website) because, following recent research, we are aware that thoughtful reading, including applying critical analysis, gauging inference and other "deep-reading" processes is more effective done on print copy than on screen (if that research is new to you, read the article *Dear Reader* in the October 13-19 *NZ Listener*).

Thank you to all contributors. We are grateful for the time and effort you put into making this material available. Readers, and our Catholic education community, are enriched by what you share with us.

This is my final editorial as I leave NZCEO at the end of this year. Thank you for all the support you have given to Aoraki. It has been an honour and a delight to be part of the wonderful journey of Catholic education.

Susan Apáthy

Deputy Chief Executive Officer
NZCEO

Reflections on Catholic Education Convention 2018

KATH JOBLIN, Principal, St Thomas More School, Mt Maunganui

Article originally published in Kete Korero, the Hamilton Catholic Diocese magazine. Reprinted here with permission.

On the flight to Wellington our teachers were speculating about the value of attending 2018 Convention, after all most of us had attended two Conventions and some of us had been fortunate to attend every Convention since 2006.

We were speculating whether any of the workshops would be worthwhile because none of the topics seemed to have any relevance to our classroom teaching, not like the 2015 Convention which was very curriculum based.

I could hear the odd comment that shopping might be a better option and plans were in the making to escape to tempting places like *Lush* and *David Jones*.

Due to bad weather our flight left an hour late from Tauranga and landing in the dark was a challenge in itself. I had my rosary beads in my pocket and all around me a few prayers were said before we made it to the terminal. The pilot was a hero and we made sure that we let him know as we passed by the cockpit.

The mood changed as soon as we got to the baggage carousel because we could see familiar faces from other schools in our diocese waiting for their luggage. There were a few hugs exchanged, big grins of reconnection and amongst the crowd Bishop Steve was excited to be surrounded by so many friends and parishioners.

Father Stuart Young was travelling with us and we were quick to point out that he was one of the few priests from our diocese who were part of the convention. We were proud to have him on our team.

In the dark, squally weather, taxi vans took us to the Home of Compassion in Island Bay and it was a scramble to get luggage out of the rain. We were met by Linda at reception who explained that she was staying to help the sisters with visitors and arrivals. Linda had been placed at the Home of Compassion as a baby and was part of the Compassion family.

It was our second opportunity to stay with the sisters because we had made the Home of Compassion our base in 2015 for the last Convention. We were impressed with the changes that had been made in three years: Mother Aubert's remains had been shifted from the gardens to a new annex attached to the chapel, the heritage centre had expanded with the addition of a café, reception was bright and airy with a wonderful photographic exhibition of James K Baxter's tangihanga lining one wall, beautiful landscaping at the entrance reminded us of Mother Aubert's affinity to the bush and the river.

I am the river and the river is me

Ko au te awa, Ko te awa ko au. (Whanganui iwi)

Our shared bathrooms had been remodelled so that each of us had a bedroom with our own bathrooms across the hall. We felt very much at home.

Each morning we shared breakfast with teachers from Te Awamutu and Rotorua before catching taxis into the TSB arena on the Wellington waterfront.

On arrival we quickly snatched conversations with people from all parts of New Zealand before the Pasifika drums beat out a strong message to gather for our keynote speakers, presenters and organisers with the latest news items.

During the three days the 800 participants were lifted up by the inspiring, humorous, touching words of Catholics from all walks of life - Bishops, deacons, principals, CEOs, a Franciscan friar, colleagues, students, educationalists, orators and international guests. Te reo Māori and English communicated prayers, thoughts and sentiments in a comfortable mix which made the experience so Aotearoa New Zealand. We take for granted that speakers are acknowledged through waiata, that we greet each other with hongi and we respond to the beauty of the language of the Gospels shared in te reo. It is when you look around and realise that there are international visitors who are appreciating our way of being, that you truly feel grateful to be part of our church in Aotearoa - New Zealand.

I could feel Suzanne Aubert walking with us throughout the Convention. Her sayings were sprinkled throughout the visual presentations and on the convention hall walls. The bus tours that visited the places where the sisters lived, worked and sheltered the homeless and disadvantaged, were oversubscribed by people wanting to know more about the influence and mission of Suzanne Aubert. Mother Aubert's practical approach to reaching out included learning te reo Māori on the boat travelling over to New Zealand with Pompallier. The French/Māori connection was very strong in the early days of the church as missionaries left France to minister to the peoples of the Pacific. It could be said that the work of the French missionaries became the catalyst for the writing of the Treaty of Waitangi because the British were concerned that New Zealand was being influenced by the French presence in both islands.

One of the statements Aubert wrote in a letter really stood out for me. She emphasised to her companions the importance of respecting the culture of the Māori people that they served and reiterated that the actions of their nursing group needed to support their patients to be Māori rather than trying to change their customs and perspectives.

One of the workshops I attended was titled "Why did the whole of Wellington stop on the day of Suzanne's funeral?" One of the sisters who was archivist of the order showed us photos and read letters to explain the influence Suzanne Aubert had on all levels of society and within Parliament's corridors of power.

Another workshop of significance was focussed on establishing relationships with iwi. This was a particularly useful session because we left with practical advice and also with people who could support us in the development of tikanga which reflected the thoughts and traditions of mana whenua in our schools.

The last workshop I attended was a potted history of the establishment of the church in Hokianga through the work of Pompallier. This workshop was particularly effective in filling the gaps of history which were missed on our diocesan principals' pilgrimage to Motuti in 2016.

A Convention is many things to many people. Other members of staff will have had difference experiences and gained a wider understanding of topics which weren't on my radar.

However on the flight back there was a unanimous response to the question of whether we would go again. Everyone agreed that this Convention had been the best of the lot and that we needed the support from our Board of Trustees to participate again in 2021.

The St Thomas More community has supported our whole staff to attend the last three Catholic Conventions which means closing the school for three days in the middle of term three and setting aside $1,200 per person to cover the costs. We have managed this by splitting the financial commitment over three years and also by booking accommodation outside the CBD. We count ourselves very lucky to be able to participate as a team and we all feel valued as Catholic educators.

The rewards from having full staff participation are significant and long lasting. Our school team is stronger from our shared experiences. This year we have had the advantage of getting to know our parish priest on a day to day basis, over the dinner table. He has also seen us in a different context. There have been many opportunities to share personal reflections and to learn more about each other's faith during the three days.

This recount is one person's experience of the Catholic Education Convention 2018. I'm sure that there are 799 other recounts of the experience which highlight 799 different aspects of our three days. For me I have affirmed the decision to push for all of our team to be there now and into the future.

Actioning Care for our Common Home in our Schools

CATHERINE GIBBS

This paper has been adapted from a seminar presentation given at the NZCEO Convention June 2018.

"Humanity take a good look at yourself. Inside you've got heaven and earth and all of creation. You're a world – everything is hidden in you." Hildegard of Bingen.

The call to action in order to stabilise our climate is urgent. Unless we embrace big changes in our lives, we collectively face a grim picture of life on earth. Educators have a key role to play. We must become game changers. Pope Francis asks all teachers to become people who give students 'a change of air' that is more healthy and humane, and who live in an environmentally ethical way. The following is my response to the pope's challenge to educators.

What do we know about the current state of our common home?

Every day we are identifying and naming the realities of climate change. Both globally and locally this includes catastrophic flooding, out-of-season wildfires, rising river and sea levels and their impacts on ecosystems and low-lying settlements, severe storms, receding glaciers, destruction of coral reefs, as well as risks to homes, businesses and major impacts on food production and security, health and species.

We understand that stopping human-induced climate change requires collective action and international measures. Huge obstacles to this include geopolitical divisions; national self-interest; powerful vested interests like the fossil-fuel industry; denial; apathy and other priorities; complexity and uncertainty; and a limited capacity for enforcement.

We are beginning to realise that climate stabilisation is massive. It needs to be done globally, nationally and individually to keep warming to well below two degrees. To achieve the Paris goal there must be a rapid process of decarbonisation globally. We need to transform our energy systems, stop deforestation, and improve land-use management. We need a massive switch in public and private sector investment and consumption patterns.

Individual action is vital. We can act by becoming better informed; supporting sensible government measures to reduce emissions; supporting smart, higher density urban development; changing investment patterns such as divestment from fossil fuel companies; using public transport; purchasing low emission vehicles; undertaking less foreign travel; and consuming less meat and dairy products.

It is our Christian conviction of hope and our duty to live as responsible humans that will sustain us through these worrying times. We know that human imagination, creativity, and our capacity to love and care is enormous. We also have faith in God who loves, creates, suffers, redeems, is transcendent and immanent.

The Catholic Church has been speaking out about the gross misuse of the earth's resources for a long time. The most recent document, *Laudato si' – Praise Be*, is a ground-breaking encyclical issued in 2015 by Pope Francis which asserts that spiritually and morally everything is interconnected.

It brings contemporary science and theological truth together in dialogue on environmental issues.

Laudato si' describes how human dominion over creation has been misguided and we have lost our sense of nature as gift. Our task is to actively care for creation because it is like a global garden with the potential to generate new life. Francis maintains that shifting our relationship to the earth from control to mutuality would shift our relationship to one another - particularly towards the poor among us.

Key points from *Laudato si'* have major implications for our teaching.

1. All humans are affected; everyone must act responsibly and engage in constructive dialogue. We must transcend ourselves through prayer, simplicity and solidarity.
2. The solution demands an integrated approach responding to both the cry of earth and the cry of the poor.
3. Realities are more important than ideas. We have a duty to act and count for good. Care for creation as a corporal *and* spiritual work of mercy means seeing all things as loved by God.
4. The moral dimension must always be counted. There are no neutral moral decisions because all moral choices affect our common home and its inhabitants.

How do we use a social justice approach to respond to the challenges outlined?

Pope Francis says that humankind requires an ecological conversion which he describes as a vocation and a moral duty, *"Human ecology and environmental ecology walk together."*

Only by radically reshaping our relationship with God, with our neighbours and with the natural world can we hope to tackle the threats that face our planet today. (LS#66)

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) brackets four key aspects of social life:

The dignity of the human person, on which everything else is premised;

The common good, which is the range of social conditions needed so that as people, and as communities, we can more easily and more fully attain fulfilment;

Solidarity, which ensures that people are not left without the help they need from stronger or more central authorities;

Subsidiarity, which insists on the rights of individuals and smaller communities to have the scope they need to participate.

The following steps outlined by Cardinal Turkson in his address to the world's bishops are helpful. I have added examples of concrete actions for teachers and students, to help activate these CST principles within the school community.

Contemplation

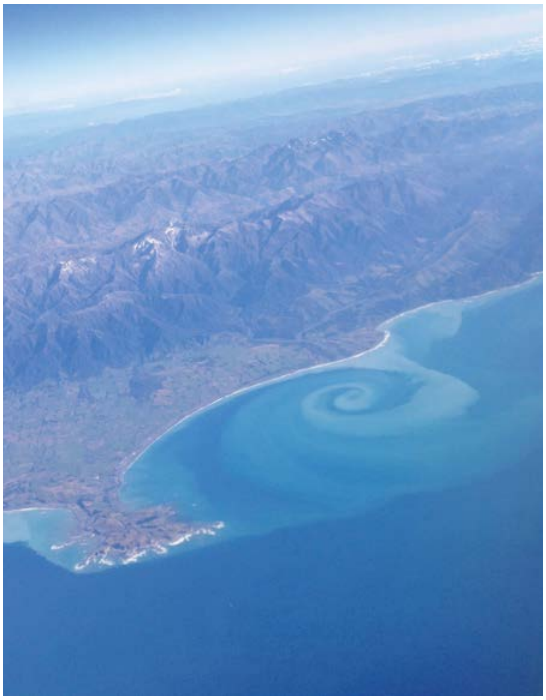
The Church offers great spiritual resources to inspire all people to awe, gratitude and compassion. We must come to know the intrinsic balance of creation and the power of "love" that holds everything together.

We will make the profound and necessary changes only when we know that God's love is immeasurable. At your school you could reflect on your current efforts to care for creation. Walk outside conscious of the soundscape, landscape and skyscape, observing with a loving eye, and giving thanks for all that is. Students should be given the time to look around seeking the details, the beauty, and enquiring how each created thing contributes to life.

Conversion

Pope Francis offers a new path because currently we are on a path of unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. His challenge is for a new order. Because everything is interconnected, we need a vision that takes into account every aspect of the global crisis. Mutuality is his keyword. You could work towards a "new order" by re-educating people to reuse, recycle, repurpose and refuse to consume more than necessary. Students could make

every day 'Earth Day' by being conscious of the resources we use. We raise consciousness by learning about and practising sustainability.



Conversation and dialogue

Truthful communication is the way to confront the problems of our world and seek effective solutions. Authentic dialogue is honest and transparent. Solidarity, human dignity and the common good promote open negotiation. You could share your concerns and love for creation, then as a result write a letter of concern or praise, or sign a petition calling for local action. Students could talk with each other about solutions. They could be a blessing for someone each day; pray for/with victims and survivors of extreme weather events.

Care

Caring for our common home goes beyond fulfilling our obligations. Caring means allowing oneself to be affected by another. Caring for our common home requires a profoundly different way of approaching relationships. You could reflect on how people in your learning community connect by *caring about and caring for* each other. Students could develop a garden or native plant area and experience caring about and caring for an ecosystem. Focus efforts to clean up beaches and neighbourhoods, be involved in Garden to Table programmes and caring about and caring for the local stream.

What would be one thing you believe schools could make progress on, in caring for the environment? Why?

I invited nine people skilled in different disciplines to respond to this question. Here is a summary of their replies.

Educate in the art of growing and cooking nutritious food

For schools, working with their communities, to educate children and their families in the art of growing their own food and cooking their own healthy, nutritious meals. Ultimately and most simply, this is good for people and good for the planet because it reduces so much of the 'infrastructure' we have built around food supply, which impacts on climate change and other aspects of the environment. (Social justice advocate)

Cultivate and care for the soil which supports and sustains all life

Teachers need to understand the sacred nature of our earth. We must cultivate and care for it because at its most basic level it supports and sustains life on this planet. We all must protect it, nourish it just as we do other living organisms, and then restore it from any poison. The soil grows food, plants, contains minerals, and is home to organisms important for health and well-being of all living creatures including humanity. (Professor of Earth Science)

Understand that everything humans do affects the soil and the water

For teachers and students to understand the human impact on the land and the resulting flow-on effects into streams, harbours and oceans. Everything humans do affects the soil and water. There is plenty of practical help in resources tailored for NZ schools. It's something everyone should be involved in. (Zoologist/Dean of Science)

Active mindfulness

Four things EVERYONE can do that would make a difference – physically, emotionally and spiritually: (1) Deal with your own detritus: your own rubbish in a bin or trash; your language; thinking rightly and optimistically. (2) I am responsible for my actions and my thoughts: my own actions are my own, not someone else's and I bear the consequence myself; my own emotions are personal and are my own and I bear the consequence myself. My ego is personal and is my own. Other people have their own ego and their responsibility to themselves. (3) Empathy rather than sympathy: I don't have to try this, to understand what you are going through; I understand your thoughts and feelings, but I don't have to feel that myself, to understand. (4) Pausing rather than rushing: take time to appreciate the gifts of life. Being in the 'present moment' is better than wishing for the past or the future; meditate daily. (Philosopher)

Caring is a requirement of faith

We all need to articulate the reason for care for the environment and the need for an ecological conversion. This means understanding that as Christians we believe that everything comes from God, that all is gift, that God creates and sustains the whole universe out of love, that everything will find its fulfilment in God, and that care for the environment is a requirement of

our faith. This also means understanding the difference between stewardship and care. An integral ecology is essential. Mutuality not dominance. (Spiritual teacher)

Build empathy towards all living things through a creative arts process

Teachers are responsible for building empathy through arts integration grounded in the arts, science and ethics. This enables accelerated creative solutions to address the authentic issues we face today. By using the creative arts processes which involve generating ideas, reflecting and refining, presenting and representing these ideas, the students will do what humans have always done - inform and delight/engage others for personal and societal CHANGE. Arts practices are innovative and inherently driven by communities of learners, which in turn creates greater, scalable impact. (Musician/arts educator)

Think global, act local

Teachers could explore and find ways for young people to be part of existing community and national networks which are currently up and running (e.g. rodent trapping). Value diversity for people and for the natural world. Everything is linked to something else. (Take away one bird, and the flower which grows to provide it with nectar might not be pollinated and thus not form any seed.) While this has always happened, the rate of change we are seeing now means that poor decisions are being made and executed before we know it such as the cutting of rain forests to plant palm oil. (Marine biologist.)

Young people can be agents of change transforming actions at home

Teachers could help students to be agents of change and encourage transformation in the family home and to flow out into the community. Parents/caregivers are interested in helping children learn so they could be part of the transformation by participating more in what is being activated at school in terms of caring for our common home. (Parish leadership team)

The following wasn't on my interview list but timely…

Educate towards zero waste and reduce consumption

We are called to not only respect the natural environment, but also to show respect for, and solidarity with, all the members of our human family. These two dimensions are closely related. Today we are suffering from a crisis which is not only about the just management of economic resources, but also about concern for human resources, for the needs of our brothers and sisters living in extreme poverty. Consumerism and "a culture of waste" have led some of us to tolerate the waste of precious resources, including food, while others are literally wasting away from hunger. (Pope Francis to the pilgrims on World Environment Day 2018)

When and where do we become 'game changers'?

In order to eliminate the causes of human-induced climate change it is useful to call to mind that it is humans who have caused this imbalance so humans can find the solution. Using the "See, Think, Judge and Act" process, we can decide what actions to take.

Your courageous and generous engagement in taking social action can be through a combination of:

Advocacy: speaking out using the local media or letter writing

Empowerment: helping people grow their own ability to deal with issues

Consciousness raising: through getting involved in communal action, and education.

There is no time to waste! This is where you start to become a 'game changer' for generations that follow. Choose to act justly by actioning these recommendations in your personal and professional life. Which of these resonate most with you?

Learn the art of growing and cooking nutritious food

Keep the earth healthy by learning the art of making compost

Understand that everything humans do affects the soil and the water

Active mindfulness

Caring is a requirement of faith

Build empathy and enable creative solutions

Think global, act local

Educate towards zero waste and reduce consumption

Nurture young people to be agents of change transforming actions at home

Acting justly is not an optional extra. It is our challenge as Christians when we See injustice to Think deeply, Judge wisely, and Act generously to make a long-term change for the better. As teachers we have a unique and privileged role to play in teaching students to live in an environmentally ethical way. Living by example through prayer, simplicity and solidarity we can begin to address the greatest challenge of this century.

The Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Catholic Culture: A World of Faith and Intellect!

MARY KLEINSMAN-POWELL, Principal/DRS, St Mary's School, Foxton

We are all called to *"build the kingdom of God"* with each other wherever we are. If we replace the word *"kingdom"* with the word *"love"* we are all called to build the love of God with each other! Or if we replace it with the words *"a relationship"* we are all called to build a relationship with God and each other! This is how we build God's "kingdom".

This is but one example of how the Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Catholic Culture (GCLCC) unpacks the meaning of what it really means to be a leader with impact, intellect and faith. Inspiring, energetic lecturers are there to guide us. We have so far formed a bond of fellowship with collaborative fellow professionals to network with, alongside being provided with stimulating material that we can refer to for years to come. All of this is in a Catholic faith context.

The course so far has explored defining what "made in the image and likeness of Christ" really is about. Everyone needs purpose in their lives, with an innate sense of identity and belonging at its core. Why are we really leading in a Catholic environment? How can we bring life to our mission statements that guide our schools and institutions? What drives us and those around us so that our jobs are constantly meaningful and joyful? How can we separate problems from people and at the same time remember the dignity of people in all walks of life? Through a set of questions for different purposes, we can help guide ourselves and others into owning their lives and their work. When faced with difficult conversations we can feel confident in approaching a wider range of situations with more depth. Only by truly listening more can we go beyond dominating viewpoints and gain more understanding of perspectives as faith leaders.

Lately we have looked at ethical theories in a Catholic context. Through knowledge of these theories we were able to make more effective justifications around life issues. I remained fascinated and convinced that the theory of Virtue Ethics works alongside our fundamental model of Christ that undergirds my Catholic school. It is the basis of our motivation on how to behave with practical wisdom, how to live fully and make decisions accordingly, so that they can be discerned for sensitive moral development and self improvement. Acting on being virtuous for me is to live out daily justice and compassion through *"reflection and strategic restorative practice."* With Christ as our ultimate role model, it is a driving force behind my behaviour as a leader for the actions of my staff, the children and the community I serve. I believe justice goes hand in hand with forgiveness and mercy and this demonstrates love towards the children who remain the centre of all we do in our schools.

Discussing ethical issues such as the following presented an example of social justice:

At present there is a proposed Abortion Law Reform happening in New Zealand. This issue is being discussed widely in the public sphere, through a variety of media. A considered opposing view to the law reform states that abortion is both a *"health and a justice"* issue and not just a health *"choice"* issue. Taking a big step back from language such as pro-life and pro-choice provides a strong reminder of respect for all perspectives in this pluralistic debate. For instance all sides of this argument are on about *choosing a high quality of life*. By addressing it as a societal issue where support is needed as a holistic community, this opens up our thinking in a much broader sense. It is science and technology for instance, that show us that an unborn child is a *"living, pulsating being"* and not a *"clump of cells"*. It is a strong reminder that we are on about giving all lives an equitable chance!

Moving beyond the secular way of thinking, we learned to then turn to faith for enlightenment on the pluralistic ethical issues such as these. Faith adds support to all of the theories, with humans being created in the likeness of God. If we are really to build God's kingdom then we have to strive to model Christ in every way. This begins with relationships that develop a better, non judgemental way of life. God wants us to be loving, joyful and to live life to the full with better choices. Christ was discerning when the public were judgemental, for example, with the attempted stoning of the adulterous woman. He was reminding us to work together and that saving and changing a life with an attitude of mercy is at the heart of all we do. I am humbled and privileged to work among people with Catholic ancestry in my area; real people that struggle with poverty, gang connections, drug addictions and family violence. I believe our school is there to witness the face of Christ in all guises. When they walk through my door I speak to them with gentleness. They are my people, God's people and I am dedicated to showing their children a better choice of life with the support of clear faith-filled strategies such as the course provides! Working amongst the people can only make the leadership stronger!

The course has given us the courage to make better choices with compassion. This attitude that we explored will enable more lives to be lived with the right guidance and care about moral development. Pope Francis urges us," not to forget that "responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation." Through discussing knowledge, practical wisdom and faith, I absolutely learned that we can achieve a wider dialogue around issues. We can grow towards a kinder world in the environments that we work in. This course directs us towards an empathy for all human dignity and the gift life brings. Discussing faith in this context gives us resilience, strength, healing and a selflessness that can lead to happiness. It shows that faith and intellectual knowledge can work together.

We have been encouraged to explore as much knowledge as possible, with mercy and justice as a guide in order to make the right ethical choices and flourish in our workplaces.

For me as a new principal of a Catholic school, the intensive study papers have so far provided strong strategies, practical wisdom and a growth mindset for exciting, effective Catholic pedagogy. The course challenges grey areas of faith and provides practical wisdom in a faith context that allows for real growth, dialogue and openness. We are part of a secular world, a world where evangelisation means to bring the church out to the people around us, rather than the people to the church! Study papers such as this course provides, help us to feel alive in what we are trying to achieve. I have been helped to discern my purpose as a leader in a precious Catholic school. The outcome has been personal growth in moral development. It has made me a better person. In order to be inclusive, I truly believe that we need to look at shining our faith torch on all of our decisions and discernments that come from everyday situations. Only then can we form loving relationships in our Catholic environments and really "graduate" to being leaders of our beloved Catholic culture!

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The Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Catholic Culture: Catholic Ethos and Care for the Person

ANNA MACKINNON, St Mary's Catholic School, Tauranga

I am one of three teachers and leaders from St Mary's Catholic School, Tauranga, who have embarked on the journey to complete the Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Catholic Culture through the Australian Catholic University.

Our first unit was 'Catholic Ethos and Care for the Person.' It was facilitated by Associate Professor Rev Jamie Calder.

The main learning from this week-long course focused on narrative therapy, the idea that everyone has many stories that make up their person, and the importance of separating the problem from the person. This learning has been integral in developing our leadership in a Catholic context.

One aspect that resonated with us and is an important aspect of being Catholic is that our humanness is what makes us closer to God. Michael Himes summed it up perfectly when he said, "Whatever makes you more genuinely human, more authentically, richly, powerfully human, whatever calls into play all the reaches of your intellect, your freedom, energy, your talents and creativity, makes you more like God." (Himes, 1995 P.10)

The dialogue throughout the course focused on how we can use this humanness to make us closer to God. What can we do to acknowledge and celebrate our humanness in order to bring out the best in every person that we live with, work with and meet?

This involves becoming more self-aware, and becoming more aware of others. It includes setting more time aside on a regular basis to pray, to reflect and to sit still in the calmness so that we understand our own emotions, thoughts, feelings and actions. Perhaps regular practice of the Examen. We need to be contemplative in action. "A deep union with God in Christ Jesus. This reality then expresses itself in any kind of activity, be it prayer or work, mental or physical activity. It is a union which exists not at the level of doing anything, but at the level of being." (Rodrigues, 2011, p.1)

As leaders and learners, we need to gain a better understanding of who we are and why we are, to believe in ourselves and have high expectations of ourselves. "Our own anthropology amounts to what we expect of others and of ourselves as persons. And it's amazing how those expectations become self-fulfilling." (Groome, 2003, p.44)

We spent a lot of time discussing the importance of listening to the many stories of a person in order to be able to know them in greater depth. As a society, we often judge others from a single story about that person, a single story that we have heard, seen, read about. How limiting this is to us and to others. "The consequence of the single story is this, it robs people of dignity, it makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult, it emphasises how we are different rather than how we are similar." (Adichie, 2018)

As leaders we must be critically reflective and model this in front of others, asking ourselves: What underpins my professional practice? Why am I here? What am I doing? Why am I doing this? What is my purpose? How do I portray myself? How do others see me? What do I believe? Do I live my beliefs?

Through embarking on this course, we have developed more of an awareness of how to continue our journeys of leading with integrity and authenticity. We are beginning to understand that "whatever humanises divinises." (Himes, 2004) We are committed to treating others with the inherent human dignity that they deserve by being critically reflective, having a greater awareness of ourselves and our purpose, and having a greater awareness of others.

This unit piqued our interest with its simple message and its deep meaning about life and God. It helped to explain the many things that we grapple with as teachers and leaders working in a Catholic educational setting.

This unit has grown our knowledge of God, humanity, and the importance of awareness of self and others. It has helped us understand that our humanness is what makes us closer to God.

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Assessing the Catholic Ethos of your Workplace

ALAN GRANT, **Consultant, Primary RE, Wellington Archdiocese**

"If I have no contact whatsoever with God in my life, then I cannot see in the other anything more than the other, and I am incapable of seeing in her or him the image of God. […] Only my readiness to encounter my neighbour and to show her or him love makes me sensitive to God as well." Deus Caritas Est, Part 1, 18.

Context

My name is Alan Grant. I am a Primary School teacher. Since September 2016 I have been working for the Archdiocese of Wellington as the Consultant in Religious Education to Catholic Primary Schools. I am currently engaged in the Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Catholic Culture (GCLCC) through TCI and ACU. The following paper is adapted from my first paper, THCT504: Catholic Ethos and Care of the Person, lectured by Dr Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer. In this assignment I was asked to assess the Catholic ethos of my workplace.

Introduction

In this paper I will assess the Catholic ethos of my professional context - Catholic Primary Schools in the Archdiocese of Wellington. In order to do so, I will firstly describe my professional context. I will then reflect on 'hallmarks of the Catholic ethos', synthesising course content (from slides and discussion) and course readings (particularly from Ronald Rolheiser and from the Congregation for Catholic Education) to name four 'hallmarks of the Catholic ethos in my professional context': continuing the mission of Jesus to build the Reign of God, embracing the human vocation to be fully alive to the glory of God, living a Christ-centred, selfless devotion to God and others, and facilitating an ongoing encounter with Christ through intentional discipleship. In the next part of my paper, I will explore these four hallmarks as 'evaluation criteria' for both internal evaluation and external review. I will then critically assess these hallmarks - considering both the intention and the lived experience of the culture of Catholic Schools Education Services (CSES). Finally I will consider opportunities to improve the Catholic ethos of Catholic Primary Schools in the Archdiocese of Wellington; opportunities for myself, for my colleagues and for the community of schools.

My Professional Context - Catholic Primary Schools in the Archdiocese of Wellington

I am the Consultant in Religious Education to Catholic Primary Schools in the Archdiocese of Wellington. My professional context therefore is Catholic Primary Schools in the Archdiocese of Wellington.

In order to adequately describe the professional context of Catholic Primary Schools in the Archdiocese of Wellington, it is helpful to look to the New Zealand Catholic Education Office (NZCEO) for guidance. In response to the question, 'Why do we have Catholic schools?', NZCEO states:

> All good schools seek to provide their students with a holistic education which will develop their intellectual, physical, cultural, emotional, social and moral potential. Catholic schools have the same aim, but what makes them different is that they recognise a spiritual and religious dimension which also needs to be nurtured in order to educate the whole child.[1]

In defining Catholic Education and in particular Catholic "Special Character", NZCEO quotes the Integration Agreement which states:

> "The School is a Roman Catholic School in which the whole school community through the general school programme and its religious instructions and observances, exercises the right to live and teach the values of Jesus Christ. These values are as expressed in the Scriptures and in the practices, worship and doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, as determined from time to time by the Roman Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of …" [2]

NZCEO also quotes Canon Law in defining Catholic Education:

> In order to provide truly Catholic education, Boards of Trustees and their staff must also ensure that "the formation given in Catholic schools is, in its academic standards, at least as outstanding as that in other schools in the area". (Code of Canon Law, Canon 806, 2)[3]

Catholic Primary Schools in the Archdiocese of Wellington are state-integrated schools and as such are accountable to both their Proprietor (the Archbishop of Wellington) and the state. Accordingly, Catholic Primary Schools in the Archdiocese of Wellington implement both the Religious Education Curriculum for Catholic Primary Schools in Aotearoa New Zealand and the New Zealand Curriculum.

It is critical in describing our professional context to highlight the relationship between parish and school - the school exists within a faith community as part of the local and global Church, as the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference states, "…the sole reason for the existence of Catholic schools in New Zealand, even under the Integration Act, is their relationship within the community of faith called the Church."[4]

There are 37 Catholic Primary Schools in the Archdiocese of Wellington, from Masterton and Levin in the North Island to Reefton and Kaikōura in the South Island, ranging in roll size from U1 (29 students) to U5 (451 students) and in decile rating from 1c to 10.

This is our professional context.

Hallmarks of the Catholic Ethos

A Catholic ethos leads us to embody a life-giving presence for others, to show a way of being in community that thrives on forgiveness, friendship, encouragement, unyielding trust, confidence and love.[5] A Catholic ethos could be understood as the animating spirit which enlivens Catholic identity. In order to identify the 'hallmarks of the Catholic ethos', I will first consider the hallmarks of the Catholic identity of Catholic Primary Schools in the Archdiocese of Wellington.

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1. NZCEO - New Zealand Catholic Education Office, *Being a staff member in a New Zealand Catholic School* (New Zealand Catholic Education Office, 2014)
2. NZCEO - New Zealand Catholic Education Office, *Being a staff member in a New Zealand Catholic School* (New Zealand Catholic Education Office, 2014)
3. NZCEO - New Zealand Catholic Education Office, *Being a staff member in a New Zealand Catholic School* (New Zealand Catholic Education Office, 2014)
4. NZCBC - New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, *The Catholic Education of School-Age Children* (New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, 2014)
5. Dr Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, 2018

Identifying hallmarks of Catholic identity was one of the first group discussion tasks during the course. We discussed such things as grace and sacramentality, the mission of Jesus, Gospel values, spirituality and vocation, life-giving presence, symbols and rituals, tradition, Scripture, care and concern for others, Christian witness, connectedness, and Christ-centred selfless devotion.

Thomas Groome offers the following five elaborations on Catholic Christian anthropology (which I think could equally function as hallmarks of Catholic identity): "(1) to affirm and celebrate the whole person and all people; (2) to recognise that we are terribly capable of sin but remain basically good; (3) to believe that by divine grace we can live as partners with God and each other; (4) to embrace our human vocation as becoming fully alive to the glory of God; (5) to become lovers forever."[6]

The Congregation for Catholic Education speaks of a wide range of hallmarks of Catholic identity in the context of education, beautifully captured in its quote from Pope Francis:

> Educating is not a profession but an attitude, a way of being; in order to educate it is necessary to step out of ourselves and be among young people, to accompany them in the stages of their growth and to set ourselves beside them. Give them hope and optimism for their journey in the world. Teach them to see the beauty and goodness of creation and of man who always retains the Creator's hallmark. But above all with your life be witnesses of what you communicate.[7]

Pope Francis here indicates hallmarks like those we suggested in that group discussion on the first day of our course (a deep care and concern for others, Christian hope, optimism, grace and sacramentality, and Christian witness).

This is an intimidating list of hallmarks of Catholic identity. In an effort to identify the 'hallmarks of the Catholic ethos in my professional context', I have referred to "The Catholic Education of School-Age Children" (a document by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference), I have reviewed the "Being a staff member in a New Zealand Catholic School" booklet (an information and induction booklet for staff members from NZCEO), and I have reflected on those hallmarks noted above. I propose that the hallmarks of the Catholic ethos of Catholic Primary School in the Archdiocese of Wellington are:

- Continuing the mission of Jesus to build the Reign of God
- Embracing the human vocation to be fully alive to the glory of God
- Living a Christ-centred, selfless devotion to God and others
- Facilitating an ongoing encounter with Christ through intentional discipleship

The Hallmarks as 'Evaluation Criteria'

Evaluation is the tool or vehicle which will enable me to engage with my work in living the Catholic ethos of my organisation. As I reflect on how the lived experience of the culture of our schools reflects these hallmarks, and as I look at these hallmarks as evaluative criteria, I'm drawn to ask, "In what ways today am I (or are we) …?" In each of these four hallmarks there is an expectation of community and of our schools being a life-giving presence, celebrating

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6. Thomas Groome, *"Who do we think we are?" - Living as graceful people in Thomas Groome, What makes us Catholic?* Eight gifts for life (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2000). p49

7. CCE - Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2014)

the presence of God and empowering others towards fullness, towards being the best they can be. In that sense my evaluation also asks, "In what ways am I drawing others into community, celebrating the presence of God in our lives, and connecting with our spirituality and vocation?" I believe that these hallmarks would be extremely useful as evaluative criteria, keeping me focused on "the 'why' and the 'who' (Jesus) which give meaning" [8] to my work. The criteria would be useful beyond my own work too as part of our regular reflections on our work collectively - staff, leadership or Board of Trustees meetings could easily include a short period of evaluation with a focus on a single hallmark each month. In fact, sharing a 'hallmark reflection' could become a regular agenda item. In addition to this monthly evaluation, each year when schools review our strategic and annual plans, we could begin this process with a more formal evaluation of the hallmarks of our Catholic ethos. Reviewing the plans as they are finalised through the lens of these hallmarks would also be excellent. This alignment would ensure that our work is continually oriented towards that which makes us authentically Catholic. In this way we would be intentional about the spirituality of our organisation.

I can see now a great synergy and cohesion between this evaluation and the primary goal of the Catholic school as stated by Saint Pope John Paul II in an address to Catholic educators in the United States in 1979:

> Catholic education is above all a question of communicating Christ, of helping to form Christ in the lives of others.[9]

This is my purpose. When I get it right, every task I perform at work is motivated by and oriented towards this purpose - to communicate Christ. As a team, we have an opportunity to revisit this 'Statement of Purpose' and to reflect on the way that this influences our decisions and our activity - I feel that there is an opportunity to be more intentional about the way that we act out this purpose in view of the hallmarks of our Catholic ethos, from the way that we respond to emails to the way that we facilitate teaching and learning to the way that we contribute to the community life of our schools.

Critical Reflection - the Intention and the Lived Experience

In my own critical assessment, I am absolutely satisfied that our intention as a body of schools is consistent with these hallmarks. Our work, particularly through our Charters and Mission/ Vision Statements aligns very well with the hallmarks of our Catholic ethos as listed above. In that respect, I believe there is no need for change at the intended level. The conversations around mission and purpose and function are very positive and give voice to the Catholic ethos of our schools.

When I consider the lived experience of the culture of our schools, I wonder if there is a gap between our intention and the lived experience. To some extent this is of course to be expected - it is quite okay that we do not consistently achieve what we set out to, provided that there is a means by which we can reflect on this and implement steps or support to close the gap. I wonder if everyone who has an encounter with a Catholic Primary School in the Archdiocese of Wellington would evaluate that encounter as life-giving, as a positive and inspiring experience of community which enlivens their spirituality and empowers them towards fullness of life. When we do not communicate effectively and efficiently and in a timely

8. NCRS - National Centre for Religious Studies, *The Religious Education Bridging Document* (National Centre for Religious Studies, 2014)

9. NZCBC - New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, The Catholic Education of School-Age Children (New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, 2014)

manner, others within our communities are not given the best opportunity to succeed or to grow. When we do not contribute positively and purposefully and professionally, we are not continuing the mission of Jesus. When an individual or whānau within our school community feels isolated and vulnerable, we have missed an opportunity to facilitate an encounter with Christ and to serve, witnessing Christ for others. When we are insular, we are missing an opportunity to build the Reign of God, to build the communion of saints.

So What? Now What?

It is important at this point to explore what changes could be implemented to close the gap between the intended culture and the lived experience of the culture of our schools.

Early on the first day of the course, Chris posed the following questions: "How are our Catholic organisations intentional about being Catholic? What do we do to cultivate our organisation's Catholic identity? How do we ensure that they are authentically mission-driven?"[10] In *Know Your Why*, Michael Jr said: "When you know your why, your what has more impact because you're walking in or towards your purpose."[11] My purpose adds punch to my work, it adds impact to what I do. Purpose adds a dimension to my work that is not present when I simply turn up to do my job. Purpose moves me beyond performing a series of tasks towards making a difference in the world and in the lives of those whom I serve in my work (and indeed in my own life). Several times throughout the course, Chris spoke about the ways in which the end determines the agent (Aristotle)[12].

I refer to these three insights because they each indicate the changes that we could consider in order to bring the lived experience closer to the intention. If, from the outset, our whole being is oriented towards these four hallmarks of the Catholic ethos of Catholic Primary Schools in the Archdiocese of Wellington, if we can make these hallmarks our why, our purpose, our end, then we have no choice but to be authentically mission-driven. If we continually orient ourselves towards these hallmarks, our function is more than just a series of tasks. We need to be intentional about the spirituality of our organisation, about "what we do with that *incurable desire*, the *madness* that comes from the gods, within us."[13] I think a positive change for the lived experience of the culture of our schools would be to align that incurable desire, that madness which Rolheiser speaks of with the hallmarks of the Catholic ethos which I listed earlier.

> There is within us a fundamental dis-ease, an unquenchable fire that renders us incapable, in this life, of ever coming to full peace. This desire lies at the center of our lives, in the marrow of our bones, and in the deep recesses of the soul. We are not easeful human beings who occasionally get restless, serene persons who once in a while are obsessed by desire. The reverse is true. We are driven persons, forever obsessed, congenitally dis-eased, living lives, as Thoreau once suggested, of quiet desperation, only occasionally experiencing peace.[14]

I am convinced that if the hallmarks I identified earlier became our *unquenchable fire*, there would be no gap between the intended culture and the lived experience of the culture of Catholic Primary Schools in the Archdiocese of Wellington.

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10. Dr Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, 2018
11. "Michael Jr: Know Your Why", YouTube, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZe5y2D60YU.
12. Dr Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, 2018
13. Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday 1999). p18
14. Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday 1999). p3

So, what do we do to make sure that the hallmarks of the Catholic ethos of our organisation burn within us, invigorate us to "embody a life-giving presence for others"?[15] I think it is critical that we structure opportunities to evaluate our work using the hallmarks as evaluative criteria. We need to schedule meetings where we ask ourselves:

- In what ways today am I continuing the mission of Jesus to build the Reign of God?
- In what ways this week have I embraced the human vocation to be fully alive to the glory of God?
- In my work this week, when did I live a Christ-centred, selfless devotion to God and others?
- In what ways in the last fortnight have I facilitated an ongoing encounter with Christ through intentional discipleship?
- In what ways am I drawing our children and young people (and their whānau) into community, celebrating the presence of God in our lives, and connecting with our spirituality and vocation?
- In what ways today am I responding to my *incurable desire* to serve Christ in others?

In addition to these structured opportunities, as indicated earlier I think we could consider a monthly 'link-in' to share our 'hallmark reflections' - each of us sharing an internal evaluation of our performance in relation to a particular hallmark each month. Further, our annual review processes could include a focus on the hallmarks of our Catholic ethos, and the final draft of our annual and strategic plans could be reviewed through the lens of the hallmarks. I believe too that we should invite external review of our hallmarks, inviting our 'clients' to share their own reflections of our performance against the four hallmarks of the Catholic ethos of our schools. This reflective, evaluative work needs to be complemented with shared spiritual formation for our staff, a chance to grow in understanding of and commitment to the hallmarks of our Catholic ethos - of course we need to identify those hallmarks collectively too! We need to maintain a healthy organisational spirituality - one which is both invigorating and balanced: "At a very basic level, long before anything explicitly religious needs to be mentioned, it is true to say that if we do things which keep us energised and integrated, on fire and yet glued together, we have a healthy spirituality."[16]

If the hallmarks of our Catholic ethos were to become our *unquenchable fire*, there would in fact be no gap between the intention and the lived experience of the Catholic ethos of Catholic Primary Schools in the Archdiocese of Wellington.

"At the heart of Catholic education there is always Jesus Christ: everything that happens in Catholic schools and universities should lead to an encounter with the living Christ."[17]

15. Dr Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, 2018
16. Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday 1999). p18
17. CCE - Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2014)

Managing Conflict

AHEAD ASSOCIATES, Auckland

This paper is based on a presentation at Catholic Education Convention 2018.

Conflict is a natural part of life – even for Catholics! Conflict can occur in a Catholic school or community or in any of our life situations. We are not all going to have the same objectives, the same style in reaching our objectives, the same needs along the way, so there is bound to be conflict. In fact, diversity in a workplace is good for performance. We have to deal with conflict. Ignoring it comes with peril.

There are two problems with giving people corrective feedback. "We don't want to give it to them and they don't want to hear it from us". (Goldsmith, 2007)

Let's look at the neuroscience of conflict. The brain is a social organ. Research shows that when people feel excluded, offended, unrecognised, or treated unfairly, activity in the dorsal Anterior Cingulate Cortex increases. This area of the brain also 'lights up' if people are suffering physical pain. The brain does not discriminate between physical and social pain. (Rock, 2009)

The brain's threat and reward response governs a lot of human behaviour. When you come across something unexpected your limbic system (the emotional part of the brain) is activated. The brain's fundamental organising principle is "minimise danger and maximise reward". If we perceive threat, the fight, flight or freeze response is triggered.

Possibly you will have experienced the person who, faced with a situation they don't like, withdraws, doesn't speak, sulks; or the person who hears something they don't like and immediately goes on the attack; or the person who changes the subject and moves out of range as soon as can be. So, what happens to us in these situations?

Cortisol and other stress hormones are released. At the same time, the executive function part of the brain (Prefrontal Cortex) becomes less active. Blood is diverted to the heart and the large muscle groups (good for running or fighting) and away from the brain. This severely reduces analytical thinking, the processing of new information, having creative insight and effective problem solving. Furthermore, the threat response is more intense and lasts longer than the reward response.

One way to deal with conflict constructively and minimise the threat response is to use a framework such as that recommended by David Marx (2009). In any conflict, the cause may be due to the system (poor processes, procedures, policies) or the behavioural choices that people made.

The latter, behavioural choices, come in three levels. The first is *human error*. We are all fallible. The person had no evil or deliberate intent to make a mistake. Mistakes happen. The second is *at risk behavior*. Here poor choices were made and some risk was knowingly taken. The third and most severe level is *reckless behaviour.* Harm was intended, or a violation occurred with no justification (driving your car at 150 kph just because you can).

Faced with any of these situations, you must *investigate, assess and judge* whether the issue is a systems problem or due to behavioural choices and if so at what level. Remember, you too have a human brain and your investigation, assessment and judgment may be impaired depending on your biases and the threat response triggered in your brain in dealing with this situation.

Your actions will depend on your judgment. If it is a systems problem, fix the system. If it is behavioural, console those who made a human error, coach those who behaved in a risky manner and discipline those who were reckless. To do this requires a set of interpersonal skills and techniques.

It is important to note that this is not about negative outcomes. Society often suffers from a severity bias. We embrace a 'no harm, no foul' philosophy to the point where we condone reckless behaviour, as long as no one gets hurt. If we treat human error or even risky behaviour as a crime, we lose the opportunity to learn, we encourage a blame culture and thereby trigger threat responses in our people.

Ahead Associates is planning a series of workshops for school leaders and teaching staff on managing conflict and other interpersonal skills.

For references and further information contact us through www.aheadassociates.co.nz.

Catholic Survivor - Tribal Christians

CHRIS J. DUTHIE-JUNG, Director, Family & Young Church Ministries, Wellington Archdiocese

I will never forget a particular visit to Wellington as a young teenager from Otane in Central Hawkes Bay. Crowds of people were creating and soaking up the bustle and excitement of Cuba and Manners Malls on a Friday night, way back in that distant past when Friday late-night shopping was a big deal! On the Mall corner right opposite James Smith's was stationed a street preacher in full flight. Gesticulating with bible in hand, he urged passers-by to listen to what he had to say for the sake of their eternal souls. I remember being awe-struck and repelled, amazed and humbled in roughly equal measure. Was he really preaching the Jesus I knew? Was this what we all should be doing if we claimed the name Christian?

This early experience of 'evangelism' probably marked the beginning of my awareness that preaching Jesus can look and sound quite different depending on one's own roots, experience and formation. Even the word we use as Catholics, 'evangelisation', is different, more nuanced; it's broader – more comprehensive – about a life journey rather than a momentary decision to give one's life to Jesus. As Catholic Christians we know our definition of evangelisation will include talk of unconditional love and reconciliation; of justice and mercy; of joy and freedom; of rights and responsibilities. And always, we'll be thinking in a collective context – we're 'all in this together' (as our Prime Minister recently reminded the UN). Of course, at the heart of it all for Catholic Christians is Jesus Christ, the one who came to point us to a God best imagined as a dearly loved and totally familiar parent (think Dad or Mum). No scary threats or distant judgement, more an intimately known friend and companion – albeit the Creator of all that is! It almost goes without saying, but no, it does need to be said, ours is an everyday God who is there for us all of the time. If that's not my experience, then I need to hone my awareness of this divine Creator Dad/Mum who seeks to reassure, guide and fulfil me.

If this is a fair (though admittedly incomplete) description, we can say that Catholic evangelisation in contemporary secular Aotearoa New Zealand amounts to showing people that this God and these life attributes are theirs too if they want them. But here's the thing (there's always a 'thing'), whose job is this? More specifically, who is tasked with ensuring that our children get to know this option in a thoroughgoing, convincing, truly witnessed kind of way? I bet you know where this is going – it's teachers, right? Yes, and no!

Yes: My experience in Catholic schools around the Archdiocese and the country is that we proactively foster havens of this message. We teach it; we make it our everyday business to communicate it; we capture it in child-friendly and stage-appropriate language and image; we pray and sing it; and, hopefully, we practise it. This last is a bit tricky. When we speak of authentic witness we cannot avoid the challenge that asks of me: who is this Jesus Christ for me? Is he to me, like the God he draws us toward, totally familiar, every-day, dearly loved? Do I really believe; do I truly feel that kind of relationship with him? With God? Evangelising kids in schools ask us to take those questions very seriously.

No: You are anything but alone in this role! We know today better than ever before that parents and parenting are critical to every aspect of a child's formation and education. If you as a teacher are asked to be an evangelist (and you are - see above), much more so are the parent(s) of the children in your care. So how and when are we to put to our parents these same faith questions? How and when do we ask and equip parents to ensure that their homes teach, communicate, capture, pray, sing and practise the alluring message of Jesus Christ? Think of the young parents in your orbit, where do they get a real chance to grasp, let alone feel confident about, being those first educators in faith for their children? We have got to work on this as by the time you see a child they are already five years into their life journey, five critical years into forming their own sense of faith almost solely from parental witness and example.

In my 2011 research into Catholic identity in Pākehā young adults, subsequently used by our bishops in their document, the *Catholic Education of School Age Children*, it became clear that for many (perhaps most?) of our Catholic children, the Jesus element in their lives never made it to what I describe above – the truly personal. Although measurement is problematic, it would appear to be all too common to have Catholic roots without any relational familiarity with the person of Jesus Christ and the nearness, the everyday relevance and connectedness of our God. Perhaps we are too quick to call this phenomenon 'cultural Catholicism' as I and others have done. It strikes me now that such a description suggests an impoverished view of what we mean by human culture. Surely, that which is cultural is in some way pervasive, integral, affecting us deeply and continuously. If it is 'cultural Catholicism' we speak of, then without an explicit sense of discipleship, can it really be said to be Catholic? It seems to me that to do so is to hold a sense of the Catholic that is in fact not Christian…

So where does this leave us? Each of us who would accept a role in the Catholic education and formation of our children is challenged to personally confront our own situation in relation to Jesus Christ. But never alone. Regaining something of the depth of what it means to be truly 'culturally Catholic', another concept appeals to me; the tribe. If we can put aside any pejorative colonial connotations, the three-ness of the idea might be useful. 'Tribe' can be traced back through Middle English and Old French to Latin origins in the word *'tribus'* – apparently in reference to an early three-way division of the Roman state. The cliché says it takes a village to raise a child but in our focus on faith formation - coming to Catholic discipleship of Jesus Christ - I would suggest it takes a tribe. Christian witness and nurturing of our young happens in three contexts if it is to take hold. That of:

1) The Catholic home (parent/s of faith - family);
2) The Catholic parish (broader Catholic faith community); and finally,
3) The Catholic school (teacher and peer disciples of Jesus Christ).

Evangelisation is no more your duty than anyone else's. But it is yours and everyone else's! Let's agree to go tribal. Let's ask and seek answers to how we can nurture authentic and personal Catholic Christian witness in all three contexts.

Encountering Christ in *Lumen Fidei* (2013) and *Gaudete et Exsultate* (2018) and some Implications for Catholic Schools

LYN SMITH, The Catholic Institute

In 2014 the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference (NZCBC) published, *The Catholic Education of School-Aged Children* to guide those who are involved in Catholic education. Within this document they outlined the goals of Catholic education of which the focus is to be "a genuine and ongoing encounter with Christ" (#13). This concept is referred to throughout the document and has been included as a focus dimension in *Āhuatanga Katorika Kaupapa Arotake Me Te Ahu Whakamua Catholic Special Character Review for Development* (Draft 2017). Both documents clearly signal to the Catholic community that the NZCBC considers the concept of "encounter with Christ" as fundamental to the development of the human person within Catholic education.

St Francis School, Thames.

For this article, I will discuss the concept of encounter as seen from within the tradition of the Catholic Church through the two documents of Pope Francis that speak about "encounter with Christ": first his Encyclical letter, *Lumen Fidei; The light of faith* (2013)(LF) and secondly the Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate; Rejoice and be glad* (2018)(GE).

In both *Lumen Fidei* and *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Pope Francis describes Jesus as the "light of faith" and the person to follow in holiness. Light here reveals the living God to us, transforming our vision so that we can see with the eyes of Christ and what do we see, God reflected in the person who is "next door" (GE #7). We encounter the light of Christ when we remember our relationship with God, when our present is illuminated through Christ's eyes to see the path to holiness, which is demonstrated to us everyday in the people and creation we encounter. In remembering where our faith has been, in people of both Scripture and our own families, we begin to understand the depth of what having and belonging to a faith community can mean. It can mean we are open to encounter with Christ when we acknowledge the faith written upon our hearts, the core of our being, by the God who has called us by name (Ps139). For our school communities how do we acknowledge this calling in words and actions?

This calling began at our conception and continues for eternity. It is as Pope Francis says, "a lengthy journey." (LF #12). Faith is a free gift from God to us that calls for both humility and courage; to trust and to entrust; it enables us to see the way to encounter Christ. Our Christian faith is centred on the resurrection, an event which is both transformative and salvific. When we accept the resurrection in this light then we see that Christ is a "trustworthy witness" and so

by accepting his call we too bear witness to the faith of the resurrection and the promise of salvation. It is this call to witness that we often discuss with our students and colleagues. How can we be witnesses to the encounter with Christ when we have lost the sense of, as Pope Francis says, "the tangible presence of God who is active in the world" (LF #17)? We need to be able to demonstrate that being centred on Christ means we need to see the world, others and creation through the eyes of Christ. The faith we have been gifted needs, like all gifts, to be opened and responded to. A response is needed which comes from our call to holiness (EG#14). For our school communities, how do we respond to and reflect on the gift of faith we have received?

Both documents discuss the importance of love as a witness of the truth of Jesus the Christ (LF#26-28; GE#19-24). This love is demonstrated to us throughout Scripture in the covenant between God and humanity (Gen 12:1-3/ Exo 20 /Jer 31:31-34 / Lk 22:14-23 / Jn3:16-21 / Rom 9:4 / Heb13:20). God's fidelity to the covenant is for all humanity and creation and through the love of God experienced in the covenant, we are awakened to new possibilities and realities of all we are able to and do in our encounter with Christ. For our school communities what are the realities and new possibilities we are open to?

As Christ calls us through our baptism, our faith then is illuminated by Christ's presence in our lives. When we behave as Christ did, when we speak the words of Christ to others, we are examples of encounter for others too. So, we ask ourselves when and how does my light of Christ shine for others to see and hear? Also, when we look at the students and colleagues in our communities how and when do they shine with the light of Christ for me? It is in this searching, this seeing and hearing Christ in others and ourselves that we are 'encountering' what is beyond us (GE#23 /LF#37). Our searching is for God and we find God in the ordinary, the Sacramentality of life. For as Pope Francis citing Xavier Zubiri, states, "life does not have a mission, but is a mission" (EG # 27); a mission to witness to the Baptismal call heard in the depths of our hearts from conception. With this Baptismal call our encounter begins, and we become part of a living tradition, that is dynamic and must be passed on. For our school communities how often do we search for God in the ordinariness of life (St Teresa of Avila)?

The Sacraments themselves are also ways in which we experience the encounter with Christ. Sacraments instituted by Jesus while on earth, are part of the shared memory of the Church. Our memories help us to understand the past, make sense of the present and look to the future with hope and knowledge of where we belong. The Church in the Sacraments, "communicates an incarnate memory" (LF #40), linking the past, present and future of our journey of faith in this encounter with Christ. The Sacraments engage the whole person, head (intellect), heart (compassion) and hands (action). Each Sacrament brings us closer to an encounter with Christ, even if we do not immediately recognise it. The Eucharist is the greatest of all encounters with Christ in Transubstantiation. When we receive and accept Christ in Eucharist we are truly acknowledging the Christ within us; a Christ we are then compelled to witness to as the prophet Amos says, *"The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord has spoken; who can but prophesy?"* (Amos 3:8). For our school communities when do we "roar" and "prophesy"?

In both documents, Pope Francis discusses the importance of Scripture and Tradition in the awakening of the encounter with Christ. Numerous passages from both the Old and New Testaments are used in *Lumen Fidei* to illustrate our journey of faith with God. In *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Pope Francis concentrates on the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12, Luke 6:20-23; #63-94) and the Parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matthew 25:31-46; #94-109), to explain the encounter with Christ and others we can experience.

The Gospel values demonstrated in both of these passages guide us in our understanding of what the encounter with Christ can and should look like for others and ourselves. The Beatitudes according to Stock (2005) provide us with the values of faithfulness, integrity,

dignity, compassion, humility, gentleness, truth, justice, forgiveness, mercy, purity, holiness, tolerance, peace, service and sacrifice (*Christ at the centre*: The Archdiocese of Birmingham Schools Commission 2005, p. 9). Pope Francis illustrates the value of each Beatitude by attributing them to holiness; "Being poor of heart: that is holiness…… Knowing how to mourn with others that is holiness…… keeping a heart free from all that tarnishes love: that is holiness…… Accepting daily the path of the Gospel, even though it may cause us problems: that is holiness" (EG # 63-94). In using Matthew 25:31-46 Pope Francis explains the importance of the actions we take to demonstrate to others how they encounter Christ through our words and actions and in the other who the person of Christ is for us. Pope Francis states, "we cannot forget that the ultimate criterion on which our lives will be judged is what we have done for others" (EG, #104). For our school communities how do we help all members to know, understand and demonstrate the Gospel values expressed in the Beatitudes and Matthew 25:31-46?

Drawing on our Catholic tradition of prayer Pope Francis tells us to recite the Lord's Prayer as this helps us to share in the spiritual experience of Christ who spoke these words to the Apostles (Luke 11:1-4 /Matthew 6:9-14). As we say the words of the prayer we are like Jesus, making an interior connection, an encounter with the living God, who brought us into creation. The guidance given in the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments (Ex 20) enables us to remember the past encounters of God with humanity, to identify the current encounters we have through our words and actions that reflect the person of Jesus, and to look forward to our eternal encounter after death. Prayer gives us an opportunity to respond to the love given to us through the gift of faith and to awaken the grace we have so that our words and actions have meaning and purpose. For our school communities how do we explore the meaning and significance of the words of the Lord's Prayer and other prayers we might recite? When we pray how does this affect what we do and feel about our relationship with God?

Both documents discuss the importance of Catholic social teaching as a fundamental aspect of what it is to be a person of faith, one that encounters and is an encounter with Christ. It is through faith that we help to build the reign of God by preparing our own hearts for and witnessing to the love of God for others. The permanent principles of the Church's social doctrine constitute the very heart of Catholic social teaching. These are the principles of: *the dignity of the human person*, which is the foundation of all other principles and content of the Church's social doctrine; *the common good; subsidiarity;* and *solidarity* (The Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church, 2004 # 160). These four are expanded further to include other principles such as: the preferential option for the poor, stewardship of creation and fair distribution of goods, to name three. Our faith as a call to holiness should lead us to action / praxis that can and should help to build the reign of God. Pope Francis states that "faith is born of an encounter with God's primordial love, wherein the meaning and goodness of our life become evident; our life is illumined to the extent that it enters into the space opened by that love, to the extent that it becomes, in other words, a path and praxis leading to the fullness of love" (LF, #51).

To help us understand the praxis needed to bring about he reign of God, the life that we are called to, Pope Francis discusses signs of holiness in today's world in Chapter Four of *Gaudete et Exsultate* (GE, #110 – 157). These signs or spiritual attitudes he explains as the "great expressions of love for God and neighbour" which are "of particular importance in the light of certain dangers and limitations present in today's culture" (GE, # 111). The signs or spiritual attitudes are listed as:

- *Perseverance, patience and meekness* (GE, #112 – 121): These need a person to have a "solid grounding in the God who loves and sustains us" (GE, #112). These will help us to have faith in God and in doing so, when we recognise God in others, faith in them as well. We need to understand the culture we live in, especially that which can be monopolised by the digital

Sancta Maria College, Auckland.

world, where we can easily turn to words of violence against others. By accepting and acknowledging God's grace in our lives we can be people of encounter, people who think before they speak out against others, people who see Christ in all they encounter. For our school communities how do we transmit a solid grounding in the God who loves and sustains us?

- *Joy and a sense of humour* (GE, #122 – 128): Pope Francis says as he did in *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013)(EvG), that we are to be people of joyful encounter; "Let us be realists, but without losing our joy, our boldness and our hope-filled commitment. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary vigour" (EvG, #109). We are, Pope Francis says, to be saints who "are joyful and full of good humour…. (radiating) a positive and hopeful spirit" (GE, #122). If we recognise the gifts we have been given by God, then we can be filled with a spirit of joy, which can be passed on to those we encounter, therefore demonstrating to others that God is a God of joyful encounter. For our school communities how do we demonstrate joy and a sense of humour in the Christ we encounter? Does the community recognise that this joy comes from our encounters with Christ?

- *Boldness and passion* (GE, #129 -139): if we remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:20; "I will be with you always, to the end of the world", how can we not be bold and face whatever life throws at us with passion in the knowledge that the God we encounter in Scripture is the God who stands with us always? God will be with us to speak out in boldness, as with St Paul and all those who have gone before us on this journey of faith. We must, Pope Francis says, recognise that Christ is with us in the encounters we have, just as he was with the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24: 13- 34); we may just not yet have recognised him. For our school communities what opportunities for the Emmaus experience to we offer to our members? How do we encourage our community to explain this Emmaus experience to others?

- *In community* (GE, #140 – 146): We live and grow best in community, in being with others. We should be aware of the other in our lives and look for courageous examples from within our community, who can lead us to fully understand our encounter with Christ through their example. A community which demonstrates the love of God for its members and the wider community is one which is an example of encounter with Christ. For our school communities how do we demonstrate love for each member and encourage them to spread God's love to the wider community? When we complete service projects, do our students understand that we do them because of the person of Jesus?

- *In constant prayer* (GE, #147 – 157): This sign or spiritual attitude is linked to what Pope Francis wrote about in *Lumen fidei* explained earlier. It is important that we have opportunities for both private and communal prayer as both grow the community to which

each person belongs. Pope Francis says, "trust-filled prayer is a response of a heart open to encountering God face to face, where all is peaceful and the quiet voice of the Lord can be heard in the midst of silence" (GE, #149). For our school communities what opportunities for both personal and communal prayer do we offer the community? Are students encouraged to try different examples of prayer in their life?

Pope Francis recognises that there will be challenges for us to face as we encounter Christ, due to our selfishness, egotism and lack of willingness to be open to God. We must therefore be vigilant against those things and the presence of evil in the world that may lead us astray and away from God. We must recognise and remember that our faith is one of hope, a hope that we too will be resurrected and that we can help to bring about the reign of God here and now as Jesus promised (Mk 1:15). We can do this through: "faith-filled prayer, meditation on the word of God, the celebration of Mass, Eucharistic adoration, sacramental Reconciliation, works of charity, community life (and) missionary outreach" (EV, #162). Each of these enable us to encounter Christ both personally and in community. They also enable us by our witness to demonstrate the encounter of Christ to others through our words and action. To help in this understanding of encounter we should use discernment and can learn through the accompaniment of others how it can help us to be witnesses of encounter for others. Our discernment is a process that may not always be easy. We may be required to stand against and above the culture of our time. However, our faith tradition recognises that we suffer and that this suffering helps us to learn "to share in the same gaze of Jesus" (LF, #56). We can see with eyes that are truly open to the power of God in our lives and the world.

For our school communities we can ask ourselves how we continue to discover, review and encourage them to:

- proclaim the word of God (kerygma – martyria);
- celebrate the sacraments (leitourgia) and
- exercise the ministry of charity (diakonia)

(Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est, 2005. #25 / NZCBC 2014, #6). Our community needs to be able to dig beneath the surface, for each member to understand and be able to explain that it is through this proclamation, celebration and exercising that the encounter with Christ will happen, and the community will be enriched as witnesses to the loving God who created us.

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Michelangelo's "Genderfullness" as True Image of God

CHRISTOPHER LONGHURST, The Catholic Institute

The following hypothesis offers an alternative idea on what it means for the human to be "made in the image of God" (Gen.1:27). This theory moves away from the idea that places the divine image in that set of discrete spiritual faculties, a soul comprised of intellect and will. It makes a case for the human's substantive genderfullness as "image of God" by placing the image in gender qualities shared between males and females, namely, in the divine attributes that can reside in actions conforming human beings to the divine names such as all-merciful, all-faithful, ever-loving, ever-forgiving, peace-maker, and home-maker etc. This idea carries over to the conception of the image of God being in qualities of the divinity extended to Adam, such as nourisher, provider, sustainer, caring, steadfast, etc. It uses the symbolic language and multiple meanings of Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* (see page 37) on the Sistine Chapel ceiling to do so, which situates the creator-God in a giant brain and in a massive womb.

To place the image of God in a kind of genderfullness corresponding to the actions that outwork a positive image of God's genderlessness, not only allows the image to transcend biological distinctions between males and females, it also allows the physical body to remain unseparated from the soul. This allows the image to be seen as a complement to God's genderlessness, that is, as neither male nor female but rather as all male and all female qualities insofar as God created female and not "a woman", and male and not "a man." This is hypothesised based on understanding the meaning of the Hebrew term "Adam" in Gen.1:26 as "human" and not "a man," thus male and female gender qualities can be seen to exist in men and women irrespective of two sexual identities. The image is, therefore, in the genderfullness or omnigender qualities of being human.

The language to describe the divine image in humans as "genderfull" is not a symbolic or analogical kind of language like the pictorial metaphor of Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* on the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Yet Michelangelo's masterwork foreordained the precise meaning of this imagery. By using pictorial symbolism, he captured what it means to possess male and female gender attributes in the one Adam. This is not to negate that according to the Genesis narrative, God created the corporeal forms of a man and a woman with their corresponding biological functions, though it proposes that the image is in the combined femaleness and maleness qualities of being human, that is, in what is common to both men and women in human being and actions, reflecting the divine attributes irrespective of a man or woman's sexual identity, simply insofar as human gender reflects, albeit imperfectly, God's archetypal genderlessness. All gender qualities, therefore, become part of the totality of the divine attributes, constituting the divine image in Adam.

The imagery of Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* testifies to this hypothesis. That scene can be interpreted as underwriting the Catholic idea that "God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. That [God] is neither man nor woman."[1] Michelangelo has depicted God's creation of Adam from the earth using both male and female attributes because in God there are all male and female qualities, or a totality of gender qualities. Based on Gen.1:26 which states that God made Adam in God's own image, there is the presupposition that Adam is not a particular person, much less a man, but rather a concept which includes all male and all female

1. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 239.

qualities irrespective of the Adam coming in two kinds (male and female). Those kinds are embodied in biological distinctions, though the image is raised to the level of shared gender qualities, that is, some kind of underlying genderfullness. Therefore, the image of God in Adam becomes an image encompassing both male and female qualities.

This hypothesis should not be interpreted as some kind of neo-liberal theological androgyny, though rather as a more meaningful understanding of the term Adam as "image of God" by being participant in the divine attributes. The question to ask is: Could this image constitute, as far as possible, a totality of male and female personality attributes, not genderlessness but genderfullness, or perhaps omnigender in quality of action, meaning incorporating a capacity to participate in what it means to share the divine attributes? Taking my cue from Michelangelo's Creation of Adam, Michelangelo was intensely interested in the human person, particularly in the body. He was a humanist and he studied human anatomy. He cut up corpses and opened craniums. He dissected stomachs and wombs. Giorgio Vasari, historian of the time, wrote about Michelangelo's skills:

> "in order to be entirely perfect, innumerable times Michelangelo made anatomical studies, dissecting bodies in order to see the principles of their construction, the concatenation of the bones, muscles, veins, and nerves, the various movements and all the postures of the human body; …. Of all these, he desired to learn the principles and laws in so far as touched his art." [2]

Various anatomical and theological interpretations of the meaning of this artwork have been proposed. One of the commonest explanations is the idea of the brain-God based on the shape of God's billowing shroud which outlines the cross section of a human brain. An interpretation of its meaning is that Adam's intellect bears the divine image, a gift that the intelligent creator-God gave to the earth-creature. Medic Frank Lynn Meshberger floated this theory nearly three decades ago in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* when he suggested that Michelangelo allegorically portrayed the moment when God bestowed upon Adam intelligence, not life, because Adam is already clearly alive in Michelangelo's scene.[3] Meshberger was brilliantly conforming to the putative idea that the divine gift of intelligence imparted to Adam renders the divine image in Adam, the human god-likeness. This is the moment when Adam became like God. (Cf. Gen.1:26, 5:1, and 9:6) If God is all knowing and the source of all knowledge, then the human's intellectual faculty comprises the divine image and likeness spoken of in Genesis 1, 5, and 9. This solves the problem of God being a spirit and Adam having a body though still being made to the image of God. In other words, based on this interpretation, the body is not the image, but the "spiritual" intellect is. Thus, the idea of situating God in a brain is justified. The divine intellect imparts intelligence to the living human form.

This interpretation alone, however, may not complete the meaning of the divine image in Michelangelo's vision. A group of Italian scientists recently proposed that the shape around the old-man/god-figure was another human body part. Some controversy surrounds this interpretation, though there may be room to construct a congruent theological explanation that does not dismiss their theory or remove the body from the image concept. It moves towards the idea that the human organ of birth could play a role in the image metaphors of Genesis. In Michelangelo's depiction, note that Adam has an umbilicus. This is unusual in figural representations of Adam in both Medieval and Renaissance imagery, because Adam was purposefully portrayed without a navel to underscore the belief that Adam had no human

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2. Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects.* Macmillan and the Medici Society, London, England; 1912 (volume IX:1-143), p.104.
3. F.L. Meshberger, "An interpretation of Michelangelo's Creation of Adam based on neuroanatomy," *JAMA* 1990;264: 1837–1841.

mother, that is, God created Adam. A navel implies a mother and an umbilicus implies a placenta. In 2007, Italian Professor Andrea Tranquilli and two Italian medics, Antonio Luccarini and Monica Emanuelli, published their theory of "The creation of Adam and the God-placenta" in *The Journal of Maternal-Fetal & Neonatal Medicine*.[4] They stated that the choir of angels around God resembled a placenta. The distribution of heads and colours are apparently the same as the cotyledons of the placenta. These specialists also noted how the two arms that almost touch, God's right arm and Adam's left arm, recall the umbilical cord in shape and colour, with the muscle torsion of the arms reproducing the torsion of umbilical arteries around the vein. They also talked about how the "anatomic proportion of the umbilical cord in relation to the placenta is perfectly maintained," [5] and how it is possible to discover other obstetric symbolism, for example, the water flow in the lower right side of the painting, below God's body, symbolised amniotic fluid, outlined by two legs protruding from the lower profile. They also referred to symbolism in the colour of God's garment, white and transparent like amniotic membranes.

The fact remains, Adam's navel implies an umbilical cord connected to a placenta in the womb of a mother. Michelangelo was known to be intentional and decisive in all his details. He supposedly did nothing without purpose. From the premise of the evident navel, the meaning of the image becomes more complex, confounded by the navel's external form which appears to illustrate a vulva. Had Michelangelo purposefully mixed up masculine and feminine gender identities? Another interpretation leads the image's meaning elsewhere.

In 2015, a group of Italian scientists proposed another obstetrical interpretation of the image.[6] They considered clues overlooked in other studies, by both theologians and art historians heavily invested in the meaning of this work. Looking again (Fig.1), God's billowing shroud may not be just a brain. The Italian scientists proposed that the image outlines a cross-section of the uterus in the stage of post-partum retraction (Fig.2). Vasari also reported how Michelangelo had access to the corpses of mothers who died in childbirth because, at that time, peripartum or postpartum sepsis leading to a mother's death was common.[7] Already in 1955, art historian Adrian Stokes wrote:

> "And so, on the Sistine ceiling the anomaly of the issue of Eve from Adam's side, beckoned forth by the Almighty midwife, dissolves; and we realize with awe that the keen, the sublime, God the Father of the Creation of Adam, controls about him a uterine mantle filled with attendants who clamber close, souls yet to be born, attributes as yet of his own essence."[8]

A clue to understanding this interpretation of Michelangelo's image is the small oval shape in the right upper part of the painting [A]. Di Bella et al, talked about how it appears like the stalk of an apple, the apple is the large dark red oval [B].[9] They mention that through an anatomist's eye, the small oval is recognizable as a section or cut of a hollow pipe, like a large artery [C]. This is the fallopian tube.[10] Considering the colour and shape of God's billowing shroud, this appears as if inside a hollow organ. The large oval is the uterus, though not a uterus under normal physiologic conditions. It depicts a postpartum uterus. Note the contracting folds [D].[11] The Italian scientists have explained that the folds of the large oval, resembling those of a cloak, are the folds of the mucosa of the uterus in the postpartum stage [D]. The mucosa

4. Andrea L. Tranquilli, Antonio Luccarini and Monica Emanuelli, "The Creation of Adam and God-placenta," in *The Journal of Maternal-Fetal and Neonatal Medicine*, February 2007; 20(2): 83–87.

5. Ibid.

6. Di Bella, Stefano & Taglietti, Fabrizio & Iacobuzio, Andrea & Boldock, Emma & Baiocchini, Andrea & Petrosillo, Nicola, "The 'Delivery' of Adam: A Medical Interpretation of Michelangelo." *Mayo Clinic proceedings* (2015), 90, pp.505-508. 10.1016/j.mayocp.2015.02.007.

7. Vasari, *op.cit*., p.104.

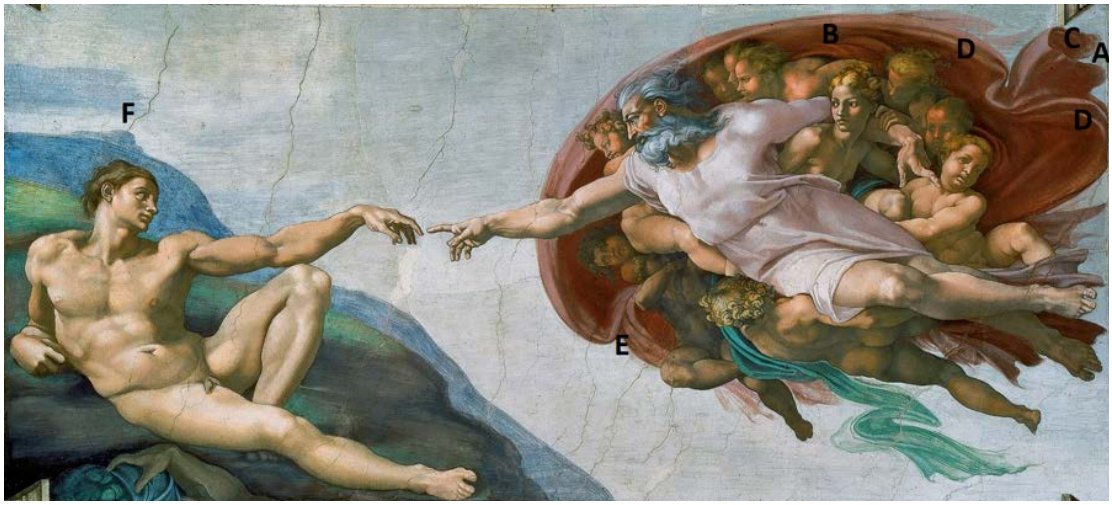

Fig.1 Michelangelo, The Creation of Adam, Sistine Chapel, Vatican City, c.1510.

Fig.2 Overlapping images: Uterus. Ref.: Di Bella, et.al., op.cit.

Fig.3 Overlapping images: Female body. Ref.: Di Bella, et.al., op.cit.

of a uterus in normal physiologic conditions has no folds. These folds are apparent only after delivery due to the subsequent retraction of the uterine muscle.[12] Furthermore, the dark red colour of the inner aspect of the large oval is typical of the endometrium after birth. Note also that in the lower part of the large oval there is a ruche [E], resembling the fold of a fabric. This fold appears to bend toward the inner part of the large oval, and is believed to resemble the uterine cervix.[13] Thus, the viewer may also be justified to see God situated in not only a brain, but in what has been identified as a postpartum uterus.

Returning to the idea of Adam in Genesis 2, the name "Adam" is originally not a personal name. In places throughout the Genesis narrative it carries the definite article "*hā-'ā-ḏām*" ("the human"). According to Gen 2:7, God fashioned Adam out of "*hā-'ă-ḏā-māh*" ("the earth"). In Michelangelo's rendition, the apparent male figure rests on the earth, on what looks like a rock. In ancient times, rock had the meaning of a generating mother. Behind the rock is a background of a different colour, bluish, which seems disconnected from the rock. Looking carefully, the outline of a female body may be seen (fig.3), with nipple just above Adam's head [F]. Effectively, Adam is being born out of woman who personifies *Ha-adamah* (the earth), because the earth-material is held to be a feminine principle. Thus, Adam comes from *Ha-adamah*, from the earth, from a feminine principle (earthling from the earth).

A recurring literary motif is the bond between Adam the earthling and *Ha-adamah* the earth: God created Adam by moulding Adam out of the earth. This earthly aspect is a component of Adam's identity. God took soil from the earth, from *Ha-adamah*, and created Adam. So, Michelangelo's Adam is rendered strong by incorporating the feminine powers. Thus, the first human is an earth-creature made from the very material that, in turn, will sustain human life.

Furthermore, given the respective cognates from Assyrian, Ugaritic, and other ancient sources, it is possible that both words, human/*Adam* and earth/ *Ha-adamah* are derived from a root signifying redness—red blood in the case of Adam, and red earth in the case of *HA-ADAMAH*, which plays into a theory of the creation of Adam and the God-placenta. This imagery is already present in te ao *Māori* and well understood in Māori cosmogony. In *te ao Māori*, Adam is a child of the earth. Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal mentions that "the idea of being born from the earth is the foundation for kinship between earth and humankind. There is no sense of ownership of land – rather, one is a child of the earth." [14] Furthermore, the Māori word for land is whenua which also means placenta.[15] All life is seen as being born from the womb of the earth mother *Papa-tū-ā-nuku*, under the sea. The lands that appear above the water are placentas from her womb. Traditional Māori culture also aligns women with the land, because the land gives birth to humans just as women do. As the world was born from *Papa-tū-ā-nuku*, so humans are born from women. Adam is therefore born from the soil of *Papa-tū-ā-nuku*, the earth mother. In *te ao Māori*, a woman's womb is called *te whare tangata* (the house of humanity), and it is seen as the womb of the earth.[16] This symbolism is present in Michelangelo's image.

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8. Adrian Stokes, ed., *Michelangelo: A Study in The Nature of Art* (Tavistock, 1955 [Oxon: Routledge: 2001]), p.89.
9. Cf. Di Bella, et.al., *op.cit.*
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal, "Papatūānuku – the land", *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en papatuanuku-the-land/print (accessed 7-October-2018)
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Similarities between the fresco and anatomical details are striking. In Michelangelo's vision it is biology, cross-sections of a brain and a uterus, that underpin the meaning of Adam as "image of God." To offer a congruent theological explanation, the birth of Adam is the birth of the human being "to the image of God," and Michelangelo captured that image without separating soul-consciousness from corporeal-form, or destroying the body-soul relationship. Without reducing the human form to a biology only – an anatomical organism at one end, or raising the image to such spiritual heights that it is separated from its corporeal form – those discrete spiritual faculties at the other end, Michelangelo's divine image in Adam becomes representable, comprehensible, in its composite nature of a body and soul which both is and acts.

In the end, one wonders, despite millions of people having looked at this fresco, why has this imagery never been seen before? Or was it is just not talked about? In the modern era, because of the separation among the primary branches of knowledge, and an abandonment of the original meaning of "university" ("to turn towards the one" [uni-versare]), even an expert medic today might not immediately identify the uterus owing to its unusual postpartum condition. Usually, anatomists and medics study only "normal" or "pathologic" uteri. Moreover, artists of the Western Renaissance embraced a complete cultural perspective, and Michelangelo was a humanist, that is, someone who would not have separated the major branches of knowledge from among themselves, but unified them in the original sense of the term "university." Most theologians, art historians and academics today have little medical or anatomical knowledge. They miss the fact that here, an extraordinary nexus of relationships unfolds in which theology, biology, geology and cosmogony are mixed up using art to render accessible to the mind of even a child one of the most complex concepts in the history of ideas: The creation of Adam in the image of God.

This creation is that of the human person who can act in imitation of the divine attributes which constitute both feminine and masculine qualities, not a male or a female theologically speaking, but the image of God because "God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. [God] is neither man nor woman." Herein lies the divine image, in this non-distinction between the sexes on account of gender quality inclusion, making the human person not reduceable to a biology based on sexual identity only, but possessed of male and female gender qualities which manifest in truly human actions. In this sense, on one level God created an image of God's self in humans by reproducing something of the divine attributes in Adam, and on another level God delivered Adam not from God's self, but from the earth, from God's creation, the land, whenua, and infused into Adam the divine image. Not only does Christianity acknowledge this, but so does Judaism, as does Islam.[18] Islam makes this point more explicit in Surah 59 verse 24 of the Qur'ān which states that Allāh is "Creator, Maker, and Fashioner of Forms."[19] In other words, after God created the universe, then evolved creation, then fashioned the form of Adam, God infused the divine image into Adam by which Adam, while certainly not *Ar-Rahmaan* (The Beneficient/All-Compassionate/Most Gracious) or *Ar-Raheem* (The Most Merciful/Ever-Merciful/Most Clement), is fully capable of beneficence, compassion, graciousness, mercy and clemency. Herein lies the divine image!

17. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 239.
18. Al-Bukhaari (6227) and Muslim (2841) narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet said: "Allāh created Adam in His image."
19. Q.59:24.

Non-figural Pictorial Art for Religious Education

CHRISTOPHER LONGHURST, **Lecturer and Site Co-ordinator, The Catholic Institute**

Abstract: This paper explores how abstract non-figural art pictorial art can serve religious education and the usefulness of this art for interreligious dialogue. It proposes that due to religious pluralism and Aotearoa New Zealand's religiously diverse classrooms, non-figural, so-called "secular" abstract painting may be a tool to educate about theological concepts across cultural boarders. The paper is intended for teachers of religion interested in moving beyond learned word definitions of religious topics, to utilising abstract imagery to understand basic theological topics. It may also interest anyone curious about the theological value of abstract art in general, and about connections between abstract art and religion.

Introduction

How religious ideas can be negotiated through abstract pictorial art is a relatively new topic in academia and surely a stimulating one for contemporary religious education. This topic opens up discourse about God on levels accessible to people of great faith or no faith, using images and not words to access fundamental religious truths. Non-figural abstract art is proposed here as a tool to educate about the living God, to inspire a less historically based faith, and to teach a visual theology across religious borders. This proposal applies to any genuine pictorial artwork that vaunts a non-figural description because of what will be argued as the artwork's capacity to establish fundamental and universal religious meaning, from the pioneers of the purest non-figural abstract paintings such as Russian avant-garde artists like Kazimir Malevich, through the Abstract Expressionism of Ad Reinhardt and Barnet Newman, to new-comers to the post-secular abstract art scene. Conclusions reached affirm that this kind of art is not only beneficial to educate about religious matters today, but it also serves that crucial enterprise of interfaith understanding.

Abstract Art and Religious Education

Most religions have proposed that art in general is of value for them, and all religions use visual art to express their messages and make the religion on such level attractive. The Second Vatican Council's "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" recognised that the Church acknowledges "new forms of art which are adapted to our age and are in keeping with the characteristics of various nations and regions."[1] In his *Letter to Artists*, John Paul II affirmed that "every genuine art form in its own way is a path to the inmost reality of humans and of the world, a wholly valid approach to the realm of faith, which gives human experience its ultimate meaning." He also acknowledged that art, "beyond its typically religious expressions, when it is true, has a close affinity with the world of faith, so that, even under conditions of greater separation of culture from the Church, art continues to be a sort of bridge to religious experience."[2] According to John Paul II, "every genuine artistic intuition goes beyond what the senses perceive and, reaching beneath reality's surface, strives to interpret its hidden mystery."[3] The Pope, therefore, concluded that society needs art to "translate into

1. *Gaudium et Spes*, 62.
2. John Paul II, *Letter to Artists* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1999), 10.
3. Ibid., 6.

meaningful terms that which is in itself ineffable,"[4] and it needs "artists to render visible or accessible the Invisible."[5]

At a *Meeting with Artists* in 2009, Pope Benedict XVI included abstract painting amongst the pool of visual imagery at service to the Church when he spoke of the relevance of art for the New Evangelisation. Benedict affirmed that "art, in all its forms, at the point where it encounters the great questions of our existence, the fundamental themes that give life its meaning, can take on a religious quality, thereby turning into a path of profound inner reflection and spirituality." [6] In introducing the *Compendium* of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in 2005, he mentioned how artworks "always 'speak,' at least implicitly, of the divine, of the infinite beauty of God…. images urge believers and non-believers alike, to discover and contemplate the inexhaustible fascination of the mystery of Redemption, giving an ever-new impulse to the lively process of its inculturation in time." [7] Benedict noted that all genuine artworks are "a luminous sign of God and therefore truly a manifestation, an epiphany of God."[8]

This positive relationship that popes foster towards modern art applies to art in general, to all of pictorial art's visual typologies, though what specifically is there about abstract art that serves the Church's educative mission?

Abstract Art's service to Religious Education

Under Pope Francis, the Pontifical Council for Culture has sought to revive abstract art's role in education and evangelisation. Francis has encouraged the Church to use modern art, and like John Paul II, he called the artist "a witness of the invisible."[9] He even applauded artists from outside the Church, at the forefront of the modern art scene, as being relevant for the Church.[10] This must apply to abstract artworks insofar as they are at the forefront of the contemporary artworld.

Abstract art for religious education concerns understanding the very meaning of religious content through pictorial form. A definition of pictorial form is "meaning made visible." The meaning lies behind the visual content which gives expression to the meaning. For example, abstract art would not depict an historical event such as the annunciation, but it would express the meaning of Mary's purity, the theological content, her freedom from sin to prepare her for the *Annunciation*. For example, consider a painting of the Annunciation, commonly readable from both Western and Eastern Catholic traditions. Its typical figural depiction displays the angel and virgin narrative, a story based on the biblical account (Lk.1:26-38), a religious truth in the Catholic tradition which conveys the theological significance of Mary's preparation to enflesh God by the power of the Holy Spirit. To do so she was to be pure and without sin. So, *Immaculate Conception* underwrites *Annunciation*. How, then, does an image meaningfully depict Mary's purity as a topic for teaching about the theological meaning of immaculate conception or annunciation, rather than an historical event? In other words, how could an educator use an abstract artwork to convey purity and sinlessness as the theological significances of the Annunciation, and not just represent the story?

This question challenges teachers to move the mental image out of an historical figural realm, into the deeper abstract mystery of sinlessness and purity, and in Mary's case, the symbolisation of ideal beauty (*tota pulchra*). What visual image could capture this meaning

4. Ibid., 6.
5. Ibid., 12.
6. Benedict XVI, "*Meeting with Artists: Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI*" (21-November-2009).
7. Benedict XVI, *Presentation of the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (28-June-2005),
8. Meeting of Benedict XVI with Clergy of the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone, 6-August-2008.
9. Pope Francis, "*La Mia Idea d'Arte,*" May 2015.
10. Ibid.

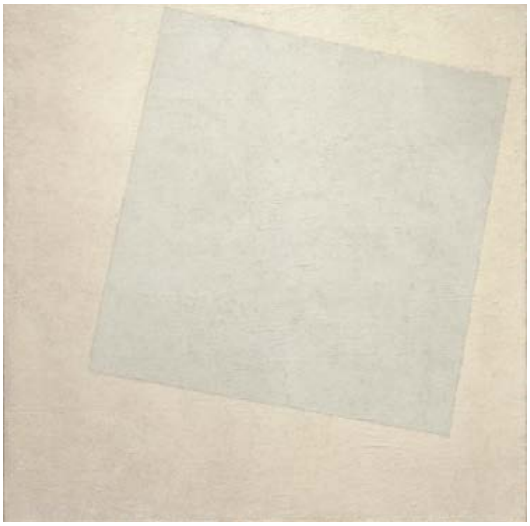

Fig. 1 Reinhardt, Abstract Painting, 1966." and "Fig. 2 Malevich, White on White, 1918.

for religious education, reaching beyond the limitations of an historical event or of religious doctrine's semantic constructions? Perhaps Reinhardt's "all black" (Abstract Painting, 1966) insofar as he talks about a black that is fresh? Or perhaps Malevich's Suprematist Composition "all white" (White on White, 1918), that visual manifestation of the sense of being without mark or blemish?

This is not to mistake *Annunciation* as an abstract idea only, or merely a figural abstraction like Simon Klein's oil painting, or the *Annunciation* by Boston College Alumni, much less Mary Grace Thul's *Annunciation*. The emphasis is on a concept underlying the theological meaning of purity and sinlessness in preparation for the incarnation of God. Therefore, the abstract image transforms the figural meaning and renders that meaning visible in a non-figural style. This is the distinction between a truly abstract painting and a non-representational painting which is figural. For a painting to be radically abstract, it has no figural subject matter at all, no figures, just, colours, lines and forms rendering visible the most spiritual meanings. In this point lies the depth to abstract art's usefulness for religious education, and probably the reason why the pioneer of abstract painting, Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky concluded that the most abstract paintings were the most spiritual. Spiritually ambitious modern artists have shown

Fig. 4 Klein, The Annunciation, 1983.

Fig. 5 Boston College Alumni, Annunciation, date unknown.

Fig 6. Thul, Annunciation, c. 1995

that their goals were best met through pictorial abstraction. They demonstrated that abstract art is a better vehicle for the exploration of spiritual realities than pictures of the physical world. This moves pictorial religious subject matter away from the kind of El Greco's figural "Trinity", through Andrei Rublev's Trinity icon and Michael Creese's "Holy Trinity" types, to the meaning behind what Kandinsky meant when he said that the impact on a circle of a triangle's acute angle produces an effect no less powerful than God's finger touching Adam's finger in Michelangelo's creation. Such a statement identifies the difference between the meaning of "The Resurrection" by contemporary artist Lance McNeel, compared to scenes after the figural genre by Johan Lund in his "Resurrection of Christ." This capacity to visually signify an article of faith beyond the limitations of word meanings could apply to most of the articles of the Nicene Creed.

Abstract art's primary service to religious education therefore lies in the fact that abstract art does not impose figural imagery. As such, while its meaning can be less obvious and more difficult to read, its non-figural content invites imagination which engenders a deeper and more genuine experiential understanding of the religious message. Colours, shapes and lines speak to the viewer's imagination, offering a visual language that stimulates the imagination, thereby evoking feelings and eliciting responses from within the attentive viewer. Through a pictorial content that engages with the world of invisible realities, the abstract artwork takes on an inherently spiritual quality, a kind of god-centeredness that can stimulate a religious sense to facilitate religious education.

Abstract art approaches visually that apophatic dimension of theology which attempts to know God in terms of what cannot be said about God. It aims at an understanding of God and a perception of divine realities beyond the realm of figural representation. By avoiding semantic constructs where religious content risks being confined, mummified, or reductivist, it moves away from representing articles of faith in learned historical contexts, to freeing religious subject matter from the confines not only of semantic constructs, but also from the visual limitations of figural imagery. It therefore moves towards conceptual understandings behind the doctrines and narratives underlying faith content. By offering a broader and deeper religious meaning, it facilitates an educative ingress to the more fundamental and inclusive meanings of theological content, opening also to dialogue.

Furthermore, abstract art's capacity to facilitate religious education rests in its highly symbolic content. All religions have used symbolic language to teach their followers. This language can represent not only the visible world of material things, but also the invisible world of abstract ideas, and the inner world of spiritual realities. In Christianity, symbols emerged in artistic

forms from the earliest stages of the religion's development. Similar to the bible's symbolic language, abstract art has an anagogical function held to be one of the ways to understand divine revelation. The abstract approach facilitates the transmission of spiritual meaning and interpretation through allegorical and anagogical language.[11] In stimulating the imagination, it evokes feelings and elicits responses, thus it provides a process of thought engagement with the world of invisible realities. Through its capacity to stimulate questions, it asks, "who is God?" and "what is existence?" Its anagogical function allows the observer to perceive or experience something of the divine realities. In this sense, it has a sacramental significance which further serves the pedagogical goal of catechesis.

Additionally, this art inducts the viewer into the world of archetypal forms. American theologian Robert Jenson, in his series of essays Christ as Culture, talked about how Dutch painter and theoretician Piet Mondrian invented truly abstract painting "by inspiration of and in support of a formulated theology."[12] According to Jensen, Mondrian "espoused Pythagorean doctrines, underlying the flux of the perceived world, which the impressionists and various 'post-impressionists' had explored, a world of pure, simple and changeless geometric archetypes." [13] In exploring the same world, abstract art allows speculative questions to be raised such as: Does such an art-form have a theological underpinning? Is it useful to teach about God? Does it contribute to the general idea of sacramentality? If any answer is yes, then presumably this art is relevant to the Church's educative mission because knowledge about God, along with sacramental approaches to life in general and ingress to religion's intellectual core are essential subjects for religious education.

In summary, to limit the educative function of any art to the "sacred" or "religious" is to miss a high note in abstract art's quasi-sacramental enterprise. Abstract art can express religious and spiritual meaning, and it can instruct in the content of divine revelation, to reawaken and nourish faith. The key is to understand abstract art as a medium by which an invisible God becomes evident to the mind. In this way, abstract art serves not only religious education and theological study, it may even be a kind of religious experience insofar as perceiving through forms, colours and lines allows a way of seeing that also leads to contemplation of the invisible, and perhaps even adoration.

Abstract Art for Interreligious Dialogue

Using abstract art to teach about religious ideas also crosses cultures. It allows the same religious content to be taught for students of diverse cultural backgrounds. It allows impressions about "god" to be discussed across religious and philosophical borders. While religion presents God as a reality and not an abstraction, abstract art allows theological discussion to transcend semantic constructs, and in this way it has the facility to cross religious boundaries as well. It may, therefore, be suitable for making similar religious ideas in diverse religions relevant, as students come to a deeper and broader understanding of the universality of religious experience, and what it means to be a spiritual person, and even to know something about the nature of God. Abstract art can therefore be a useful approach in both multicultural and interreligious classroom settings.

Abstract art, as pictorial ingress to an interfaith kind of religious education, is nothing more than an interreligious aesthetic experience because it transcends the confines of any one

11. Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 117, 118.

12. Robert W. Jenson, "Christ as Culture," in *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 6.2, April 2004.

13. Ibid.

Fig. 7 Moon, Oneness, date unknown.

Fig. 8 Newman, Onement I, 1948.

religion. It accommodates Hinduism's "eternal religion" whose divine principle is the Absolute-Beyond-Being, the idea of Brahman, towards which the highest and most noble function of art aspires. It manifests Islam's "*wahdat al-wujud*" (oneness of being) expressed by Sufi masters and rendered visible in pictorial non-figural forms. It is a pictorial expression of Judaism's "*echad*" (Divine Oneness) which permeates all existence manifesting itself through a synthesis and unanimity of purpose in creation's diversity. It offers an aesthetic experience of Shih-t'ao's "*i-hua*" (one-stroke), and the Upanishad's Soham (I am), along with Christianity's Divine Simplicity and the Catholic concept of God as *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* (Self-Subsistent Existence).[14]

To give examples, Plotinus' *Unum Animae* (One Soul) makes its mark in contemporary American painter Suni Moon's portrait of *Oneness* which pictorially revisits the original idea of unity in the divine mind, the primal unity of Tao. Islam's *tawḥīd*, Divine Unity and Oneness is discernible in Katrina Borneman's *Eternal Union*. Every monochromic painting conceptually captures *Al-Wāḥ id* (The One) and *Al-'Aḥad* (The Unity) without encroaching upon Islam's proscription against image-making. Māori *kowhaiwhai* adheres to the same principles, adding the idea of new life through the figure of the koru. Again, Kazimir Malevich's *White on White* depicts that "brilliant ray of illumination" which Schuon traces "back to the Divine Oneness as basis of all religions."[15] This masterwork also presents an "image" of Islam's *An-Nūr* (The Light), and what Zoroastrians, according to Hegel, identified as *Ahura Mazda*, the embodiment of an endlessly malleable light indicating the unbounded divine presence. It is nothing less than God's limitlessness expressed visually in abstract pictorial form.[16] It is Judaism's *Ein-Sof* (The Endless One) and Islam's *Al-Wāsi'* (The Vast, The All-Embracing, The Omnipresent), all intelligible in American Abstract Expressionist Barnett Newman's Onement I, and in the colour fields of German abstract artist Gerhard Richter and modern American painter Morris Louis, as well as in the monochromes of Reinhardt all red, or blue, or white, or black. Similarly, Reinhardt's *Black on Black*, reveals

14. "Deus sit ipsum esse subsistens." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1, q.4. a.2.
15. Cf. Frithjof Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* (The Theosophical Publishing House, 1984), back cover.
16. Cf. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1: 325.

Al-Bātin, the hidden God of Islam, synonymous with Christianity's *Deus absconditus*, "The Unmanifest" and "The Inner," a homage to infinity. Malevich's Suprematism captures the spiritual teachings of every religious tradition on stillness, that notion of heaven, prototype of order and balance in the universe. Laozi's Tao Te Ching (Way of Virtue) and Hinduism's *moksha* are encountered In Katrina Borneman's Bliss, *Harmonic Symphon*y and *Liberation*.[17]

As such an interfaith experience, abstract art can create a channel to communicate religious ideas on a broader common ground, not unlike a pictorial approach to German theologian Paul Tillich's existential theology. It witnesses to "Ultimate Reality" as Tillich would say, which is a fundamentally theological venture.[18] It bypasses those heavier logocentric formulations typically used in religious education. In simple terms, abstract art is "spiritual form" made visible, and spiritual form underlies all religions. The capacity to grasp this form is met through the pictorial form of abstract art. Thus, abstract art is useful to foster collective learning across diverse religions because it spontaneously engages practitioners of diverse faiths, or no faith, by generating processes in which "looking," "interpreting," and "sharing" religious meaning are activated. This establishes an enterprise in which an art-type effectively created in the absence of any conscious value for religion, becomes relevant and even vital for religious education and interfaith literacy. This is true because abstract artists go beneath the surface appearance of things, to reveal reality as if it were transfigured by grace. This is also true because abstract artworks portray a simpler reality, a spiritual reality. The features of this art are designed to move the viewer's attention away from the material world, towards spiritual realities.

Conclusion

For believers and non-believers alike, abstract art is inspired by the very theophanies of the living and invisible God, whose presence has often been expressed in abstract language, in allegory and imagery. Based on religious symbolism, the divine presence takes on forms employing abstraction to illustrate that presence. Regardless of the greatest pictorial representations of God, of Jesus, Mary, and the saints etc., no figural artwork, not one, can reveal the true essence of the divinity. John was clear. "God is a spirit" (Jn 4:24) and "no person hath seen God at any time." (Jn 1:18) Paul also told the Corinthians that "the Lord is a spirit." (1 Cor 3:17) Even Jesus himself declared that "no one has seen the Father except the one who is from God." (Jn 6:46) Yet abstract art can provide a sense, an ingress to, and an intuition of God's invisible presence by translating into abstract images that which is ineffable, and by rendering visible the Invisible, as John Paul ll announced. Thus abstract art is an excellent educative and dialogical tool for religious education. It is also sacramental because it excites thoughts stirring the soul to increase devotion to God. It can inspire and thereby lead to grace. Most especially, it always points to something greater than its form, something foundational and shared in all religions. Therefore, to view and ponder the meaning in an abstract artwork is a thoroughly spiritual affair and therefore also a matter of theological interest. Abstract art can, therefore, not only serve religious education, but also educate about theological concepts across religious borders.

17. See Katrina Borneman's series, "The Divine Marriage," online: http://www.gallerykat.com/thedivinemarriage.htm (accessed 02/07/2017).
18. Paul Tillich, *Art and Ultimate Reality* (Cross Currents Corporation, 1960).