



A Framework for Formation for Mission in Catholic Education

My mission of being in the heart of people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an "extra" or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world. We have to regard ourselves as sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing.

(Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 273)



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FOREWORD

As is well known, Catholic schools in Australia educate one in five Australian children. This is an extraordinary contribution to the social fabric of our society and one of the primary ways in which the Catholic Church seeks to play a constructive role in the Australian community.

Our schools are unapologetically Catholic in inspiration and in nature. We aim to provide the best education possible to every child who attends one of our schools. Believing as we do that, in the words of Gerald Manly Hopkins “the world is charged with the grandeur of God”, we recognise that every aspect of human knowledge and activity, to the extent that it is truly human, reveals something of the mystery of God and of God’s creative intention for the world.

Because it is our firm intention to educate the whole person, and because we believe that education is for life and not just for a job, we also acknowledge and insist that an education which sidelines or excludes the mystery of God from consideration is an education which can only ever be less than complete. By leaving God out of the process, we are indeed selling our children and young people short and leaving them with a limited and distorted understanding of what it means to be a human person living his or her life to the full.

For the Catholic school to achieve its objectives, it needs people who are committed to this faith-filled vision, confident in their understanding of the Christian faith as it comes to expression in the Catholic tradition and eager to do their best to help their students grow in their own understanding of the presence of God at work in their lives. This *Framework for Formation for Mission in Catholic Education* has been developed to assist our teachers and other staff in their understanding of the awesome responsibility they have accepted, mindful of the old Latin tag: “nemo dat quod non habet” – no one can give what he or she doesn’t have.

On behalf of the Catholic bishops of Australia, I thank all those involved in the preparation of this important resource. May you be rewarded for your efforts by seeing our schools become more and more places where “the God thing” really matters.

+ Timothy Costelloe SDB

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RATIONALE

The National Catholic Education Commission publishes this document as a resource for educational leaders with responsibility for staff faith formation for the mission of Catholic education. This responsibility applies to the principals, leadership teams and school governance bodies of Catholic schools and to those with director, mission leadership, governance and formation roles in diocesan, religious institute and ministerial public juridic person entities and systems.

This framework is offered as a resource for the evaluation of current practice and strategic enhancement of formation for mission of leaders and staff in Australian Catholic schools and systems. There is a formative dimension to every aspect of Catholic schooling. Therefore, this document provides not only a framework for formation but an orientation for the whole life of a Catholic educational community. All members of the community can find themselves in this framework as it presents understandings that are fundamental to the formation of all individuals and communities, leaders, staff, parents and students.



INTRODUCTION

Across Australia there are many committed, well-formed Catholic leaders and teachers playing an essential role in the mission of Catholic schools. There has been increasing strategic activity in forming leaders and staff for the mission of Catholic education. The spiritual journeys of school and educational office staff are individual and diverse. Some staff members have acquired theological and religious education qualifications, most meet accreditation requirements but the need for greater strategic focus on formation is increasingly apparent.

Bishops, diocesan education offices, religious institutes, public juridic persons and leaders

at school level have identified the need for systematic, developmental and well-resourced programs for the evangelisation and spiritual growth of school, system and other community members as a priority.

While some dioceses, religious institutes and public juridic persons invest considerable resources in faith formation of staff, others require greater expertise and/or resources as they work towards providing comprehensive, systematic programs. Effective faith formation requires an organised and intentional approach, given the uneven levels of knowledge, experience and personal appropriation of the Church's spiritual traditions and religious practices.



A VISION

*I have come so that they may have life
and have it to the full.*

Jn 10:10

Catholic anthropology guides this framework for formation for mission. Catholic schooling repeatedly emphasises the need for an educational philosophy built on the foundation of a Catholic understanding of the human person. “The person of each individual human being is at the heart of Christ’s teaching: this is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school”.¹ The Catholic school is committed to the education of the whole person since in Jesus Christ all human values find their fulfilment and unity: “herein lies the specific Catholic character of the school”.² Christ is “the centre and fulcrum of the entire enterprise” and “the standard and measure of a school’s Catholicity”.³

This framework recognises parents as the first educators of their children. It affirms that Catholic schooling is a partnership with the home and the parish, the pre-eminent place of catechesis.⁴ It affirms the Christian vocation of educational leaders and teachers and their need for formation of the heart for it depends chiefly on them whether the Catholic school achieves its

purpose.⁵ It recognises that school staff “who truly live their faith will be agents of a new evangelisation in creating a positive climate for the Christian faith to grow and in spiritually nourishing the students entrusted to their care”.⁶

The formation of the whole person recognises the innate dignity of the child and young person who is educated in the Catholic school. They “are the ones most receptive to the gift of God” and in “their openness and trust, they offer us a glimpse of what it is to be open to God”.⁷ Catholic anthropology demands that this framework supports all in the Catholic educating community in affirming the students’ inherent goodness in the image of God, developing their gifts to the fullest, and forming them as missionary disciples⁸ of Jesus. It calls on curriculum and pedagogies in which the learners are active participants who are engaging their whole person (“head, heart and hands”) in a systematic and critical synthesis of culture and faith, and of faith and life.⁹

A CATHOLIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMAN PERSON

*You have made us for yourself,
and our heart is restless until it rests in you.*

St Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.

The desire for God is written in the human heart because the human person is created by God and for God.¹⁰ The starting point for a Catholic understanding is that every human being is a person made in the image and likeness of God;¹¹ hence human nature is essentially good. This is assured indisputably by the Incarnation, wherein the mystery of the Word made flesh the true meaning of the human person becomes clear.¹² “The divine became human so that the human could become divine”.¹³ The divine image is never lost, even by sin and the misuse of human freedom. Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, humanity is restored and the grace of salvation is offered to all men and women. As a result, a Catholic anthropology is shaped by hope in the mercy of God. No human person is ever self-sufficient but above all in relation to God, we are always in need of God’s grace. The human person transformed by grace is animated by the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity.

In the Catholic understanding, the human person is a moral agent, an “acting subject”¹⁴ initiating and responsible for one’s own actions and capable of repentance for sin and ongoing conversion in response to God’s mercy. A Catholic theological anthropology rejects any notion of the person as a mere victim of fate. At the same time, as a mirror of the Trinity, the human person is essentially relational, finds God in and through others, and has an obligation to work for justice for all in the human community and to “care for our common home”.¹⁵ In this it opposes excessive individualism. The Catholic understanding sees life as a gift from God that should be affirmed and defended for its essential dignity, and lived joyfully and hopefully in the promise of life with God for all eternity.



FORMATION FOR MISSION IN A FAITH COMMUNITY

The understanding of formation for mission in a faith community operative in this framework is as follows:

Faith formation of Catholic school community members is Christ-centred. It is an intentional, ongoing and reflective process that focuses on the growth of individuals and communities from their lived experiences, in spiritual awareness, theological understanding, vocational motivation and capabilities for mission and service in the Church and the world.

THE CONTEXT FOR FORMATION FOR MISSION IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

It is absolutely necessary for us to take into account a heritage of faith that the Church has the duty of preserving in its untouchable purity, and of presenting it to the people of our time, in a way that is as understandable and persuasive as possible.

Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 3

The worldwide picture of Catholicism has changed dramatically over the last century. There has been a global shift southwards. Whereas 100 years ago, 70 per cent of Catholics were in Europe and North America, now 70 per cent are in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

The growth in those continents has been paralleled by significant social, cultural and religious shifts in Western society, including Australia. There has been an erosion of tradition in religion and society accompanied by processes of increasing pluralisation and secularisation. Belief in meta-narratives is questioned and individuals are said to construct their own meaning in an autonomous and self-reliant manner. For many, religion is no longer the self-evident answer to human aspirations.

Even so, a desire for a life of meaning remains strong. Many people, particularly the young, who have abandoned institutional religion favour forms of spirituality that have been described as “being spiritual but not religious”.¹⁶ In this overall context, Catholic schools, school leaders, staff and students now increasingly choose to be Christian

rather than living in a dominant Christian culture as a matter of course.

In the past, Catholic schools demonstrated their religious identity mainly by habit, traditional forms of piety, sacramental practice, family of origin and locality. The very tight and very visible Australian culture of parish and religious life has altered. Participation in Sunday Eucharist has declined significantly. While some adults in Catholic education continue to express elements of confessionality, the traditional notion of handing on faith in family, school and parish can no longer be presumed – either for students or for staff.

As Pope Francis has emphasised, these “vast and rapid cultural changes demand that we constantly seek ways of expressing unchanging truths in a language which brings out their abiding newness”.¹⁷ These renewed forms of expression arise from reflection and reinterpretation of the Catholic heritage in response to the signs of the times in order to re-present it to the next generation so that it also addresses their context and questions.

The formation and capabilities required for leaders and staff in Catholic education within this context speak to the very mission of the Church. Teachers and leaders need to know confidently where the Church comes from and where Catholicism stands as a faith tradition, and their place within it. This will enable them to sustain engagement with contemporary expressions of Catholicism and open dialogue with fellow staff and with students so that they too might experience them as meaningful for their lives.

The staff of Australian Catholic schools and systems come from a variety of backgrounds:

- Nationally, 80 per cent of primary school teachers and 61 per cent of secondary school teachers identify as Catholic.
- Some of these are engaged regularly in the worshipping community of a Catholic parish outside their school experience. Research in Western Australia shows that about 25 per cent of staff are in this category.¹⁸
- Other research shows that these teachers have a strong sense of belonging to the Catholic Church and are most active in leadership and ministry roles in the parishes.¹⁹
- Some staff have little familiarity with Catholic beliefs and values. For most staff, the Catholic school is their only regular experience of the mission and

life of Catholicism. This includes the 29 per cent nationally who are not Catholic or whose religious affiliation is not recorded.

Several studies show a high degree of support among staff for the mission and identity of Catholic schools. The religious identity profile for Victorian teachers in Enhancing Catholic School Identity Project 2012 research shows that 96 per cent had faith in Christ, including 48 per cent who had strong faith in Christ. Furthermore, 94 per cent supported Catholic school identity or they “think it’s OK”.²⁰

The Western Australian research mentioned above was among 4,000 Catholic education staff and provided data on their differing faith formation needs. The survey sought to find out from staff what experiences nurture faith, what experiences detract staff from engaging in formational opportunities and what sorts of experiences they identify as needs in faith formation. The data revealed seven groupings or “faith segments” of staffs. Each “segment” has similar descriptive features, particularly with regards to enhancers, detractors and needs. It is clear that a critical aspect of integrated and systematic planning is to offer experiences for staff that equip them for mission in a way respectful of the diversity of their backgrounds and experiences.

SOME KEY

Arising out of the Understanding

'Come and see' (Jn 1:39)

Aspects of the Understanding of Faith Formation for Mission

It is Christ-centred:

- it articulates the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and his Gospel as a revelation of God's love for us and the way to true freedom as it is proclaimed and lived in the contemporary Catholic Church.

It is a process that is

- intentional
- ongoing
- reflective.

It focuses on the growth of

- individuals, and
- communities.

It is from

- their lived experiences.

It is growth in

- spiritual awareness
- theological understanding
- vocational motivation, and
- capabilities for mission and service in the Church and the world.

QUESTIONS

of Faith Formation for Mission

and go and do (Mt 28)

Some corresponding factual questions to consider across a suite of formation programs

Is the suite of programs and the content explicitly Christological, scripturally rich and ecclesially grounded?

Does it invite staff into a personal relationship with Jesus and deeper or renewed participation in the Eucharist and a faith community?

Is it purposeful, strategic, developmental and sequential?

Is formation of the heart characterised by prayerfulness, reflection and celebration of the Eucharist?

Is there differentiation according to individual backgrounds, needs and roles? Does it build communal Catholic identity and culture?

Is it respectful, experiential and relevant, building on participants' personal story and everyday reality?

Is there an affective focus on a person's faith journey and discipleship?

Is there substantive theological content?

Are personal vocation and responsiveness to mission promoted?

Does it seek to develop the willingness, confidence and capacities of participants to serve the evangelising mission of Catholic school education?

SOME KEY PRINCIPLES FOR CATHOLIC FORMATION FOR MISSION

Catholic educators need a “formation of the heart”: they need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others, so that their educational commitment becomes a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love (cf. Gal 5:6)

(Educating Together in Catholic Schools, 25, cf Deus Caritas Est, 31)

Formation for mission is a process that is systematic, collaborative, graduated and ongoing. This process holds itself within relationships built on accompaniment centred on the self, others, creation and God.

Formation for mission in Catholic education:

1. Is “formation of the heart” that is characterised by prayerfulness and reflection.
2. Is respectful, experiential and relevant, building on participants’ personal story and everyday reality.
3. Is explicitly Christological, scripturally rich and ecclesially grounded.
4. Has an affective focus on a person’s faith journey and discipleship.
5. Has substantive theological content.
6. Sets out to build communal Catholic religious identity and culture.
7. Is differentiated according to individual and community needs.
8. Promotes personal vocation, connection with the Catholic tradition and responsiveness to mission.
9. Develops the willingness, confidence and capacities of participants in their roles to serve the evangelising mission of Catholic school education.



SOME KEY INTENTIONS

The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life.

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 169

The intention of formation for mission is to enable:

- deeper faith relationships with God, Church, self, others and creation
- greater engagement between individuals’ lives marked by “accompaniment” in the service of others
- a culture of dialogue
- stronger commitment to the ministry of teaching and parenting
- a deeper call into missionary discipleship.



These intentions come to life when formation for mission is a key strategic priority in school and system leadership and governance. They would be evident when there are systematic, differentiated formation opportunities provided by schools and systems with accountability identified in school and system annual plans, budgets

and review and school improvement cycles. At the level of the individual leaders or members of staff, there would be inclusion of formation in annual professional goals, widespread participation and positive evaluation data on its impact on them as individuals and in their ministry in Catholic education.

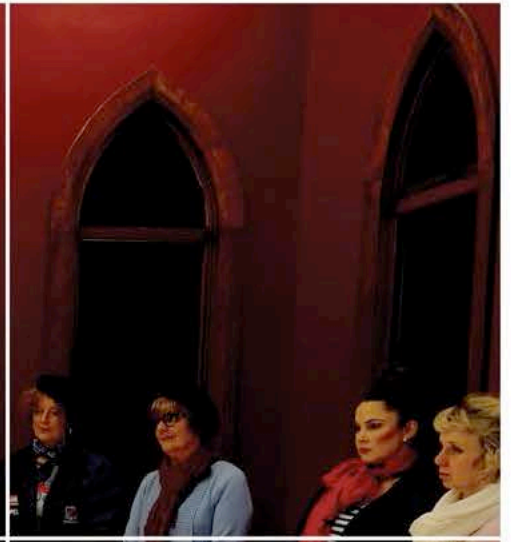
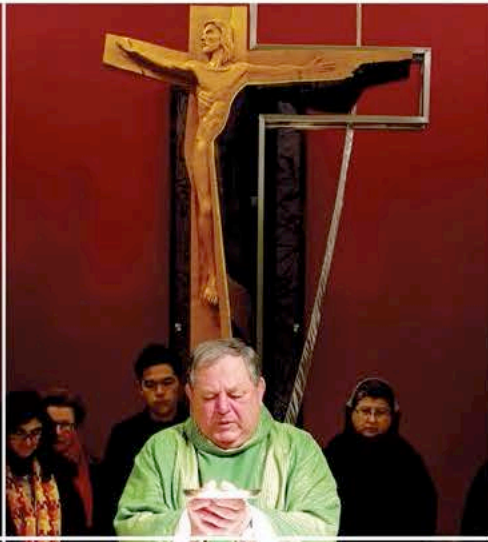
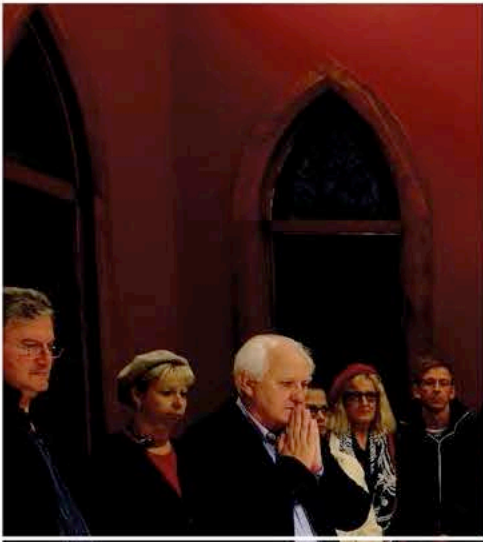
DESIGNING AND FACILITATING FORMATION

Formation takes many forms, operating in diverse situations, both formal and informal, with a range of subjects. At times, it may be integrated with staff professional learning. Often it has a facilitator or formator; sometimes it does not. There is a range of processes for formation and there is no one way of designing it. However, there are certain fundamental considerations.

The participants are the key resource in formation. The program facilitator or formator is not bringing God to people, for God is already there. Each person's life is sacred and their life experiences already contain the story of life, death and resurrection.

Formation builds on the experience of the participants through processes of input, reflection, sharing and application. The facilitator does not know everything but instead lets the process, participants and Holy Spirit do the work.

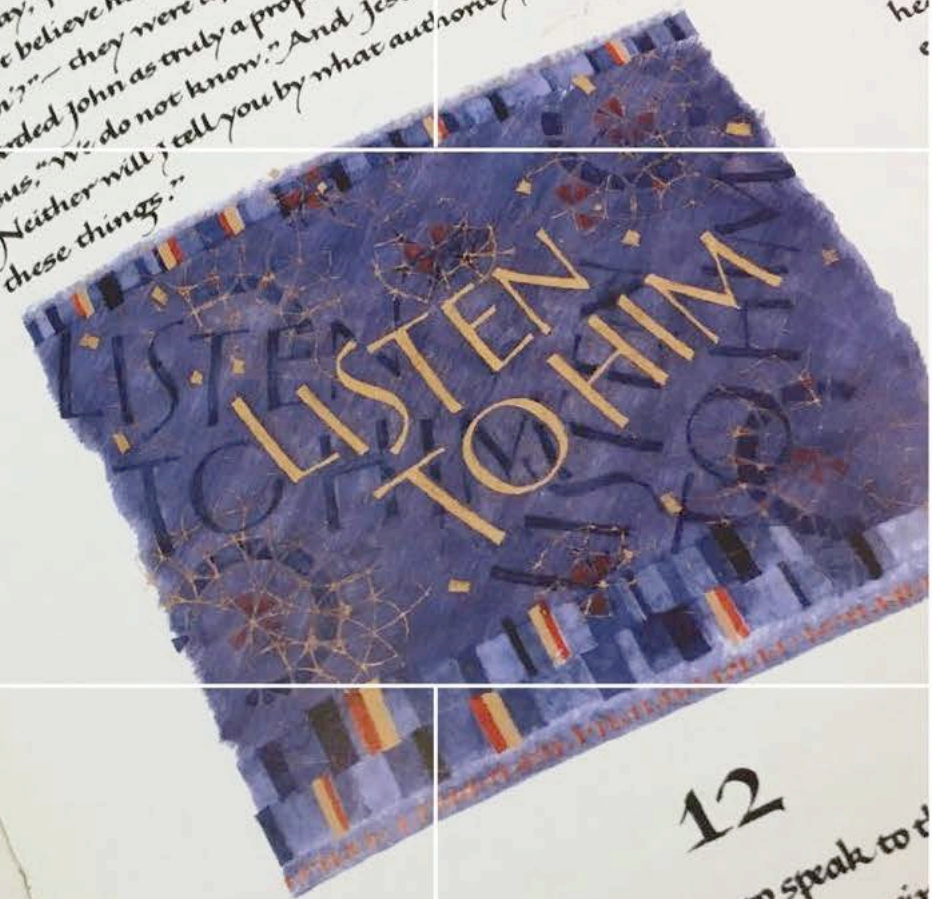
Each aspect or session of formation builds on the past and has a context ahead, so each aspect or session builds into the next. This reflective, developmental process enables participants to apply the experience to their everyday life and their ministry in Catholic education.



he
for in
it will be
forgive, if you
your Father in he
trespasses."

27 Again they came to Jerusalem.
In the temple, the chief priests, the scribes,
elders came to him 28 and said, "By what authority
are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority
to do them?" 29 Jesus said to them, "I will ask you
one question; answer me, and I will tell you
by what authority I do these things. 30 Did the baptism
of John come from heaven, or was it of human
origin? Answer me." 31 They argued with one another,
"If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why then did
you not believe him?' 32 But shall we say, 'Of human
origin?'— they were afraid of the crowd, for all
regarded John as truly a prophet. 33 So they answered
Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them,
"Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing
these things."

15 Then they
Herodians to trap him.
came and said to him
are sincere, and should
do not regard the
way of God in
to pay taxes,
them, or should
he said to
test? But
they
he



into the
at every
to Bethany
y, when they
Seeing in the
see whether
it. When he came
it was not de
no one ever cat
sciples heard it.
And he entered
at those who were
ng in the temple,
the money changers
id doves; 16 and he
rry anything through
g & saying, "Is it not

e of prayer for all the
of robbers."
sts & the scribes heard
a way to kill him; for they
the whole crowd was
And when evening
of the city.

12
Then he began to speak to them
"A man planted a vineyard
around it, dug a pit
built a watchtower; then he
went to another country.
he sent a slave to the tenants
his share of the produce,
seized him, and beat him
empty-handed. 4
to them; this one
ed. 5 Then he sent

CONCLUSION

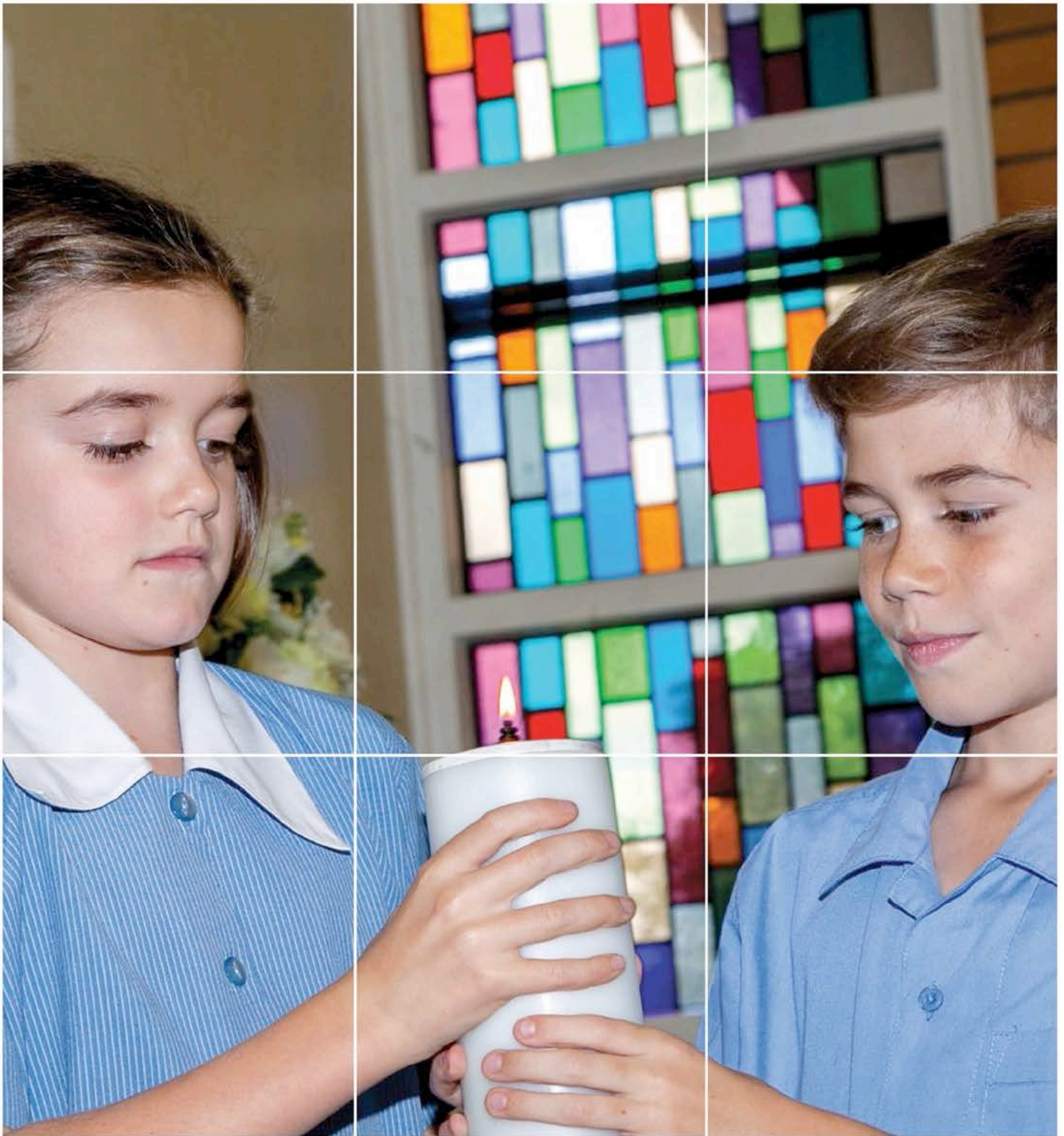
We have come to believe in God's love: in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.

Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 1

The National Catholic Education Commission encourages those with responsibilities for the formation of leaders and staff in Catholic education to reflect on this document and share it as a resource for the evaluation of current practice and as an enabler of ongoing development of systematic formation of leaders and staff that equips them for the mission of Catholic education.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Congregation for Catholic Education (1997). *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, n. 9.
- 2 Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977), *The Catholic School*, n. 34.
- 3 Miller, Archbishop M. J. (2006). *The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools*. Strathfield: St Pauls Publications, p. 23.
- 4 Congregation for the Clergy (1997), *General Directory for Catechesis*, 257.
- 5 Second Vatican Council (1965), *Gravissimum Educationis*, n. 8.
- 6 Pope St John Paul II (2001), *Ecclesia in Oceania*, n. 33.
- 7 Catholic Education South Australia (2015), *Children: Close to the Mystery of God*, p. 6.
- 8 Pope Francis (2013), *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 120.
- 9 *The Catholic School*, n. 37.
- 10 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 27.
- 11 *Gen 1:27*.
- 12 Second Vatican Council (1965), *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.
- 13 A dictum commonly repeated by the Church Fathers, originating with Irenaeus, *Against the Heretics*, IV, 28.1.
- 14 Pope St John Paul II (1993), *Veritatis Splendor*, nn. 74-75.
- 15 See Pope Francis (2015), *Laudato Si'*.
- 16 For example, as described in Mackay, H. (2016), *Beyond Belief*. Sydney: Pan MacMillan Australia.
- 17 Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 41.
- 18 In 2015, Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) undertook a survey of all staff in schools and offices to understand their faith needs. An external research company, Painted Dog Research, conducted the research and presented a report in 2016.
- 19 Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Pastoral Research Office, *Pastoral Research Online*, October 2015.
- 20 Pollefeyt, D., and Bouwens, J. (2014) *Identity in Dialogue: Assessing and enhancing Catholic school identity*. Research methodology and research results in Catholic schools in Victoria, Australia. Berlin: LIT Verlag, p. 123 & p. 136.



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