



Edition 2 – April 2019

Living Spirit News

Dean's reflection

The area of the school curriculum we currently call religious education has been variously named over the years: religious instruction, catechetics, religion and Christian doctrine, to name some. These different names were usually associated with changes in pedagogical practices or emphases: catechesis, kerygmatic renewal, experiential approach, and shared Christian praxis. At the present time what we are doing in the space we call religious education is in a state of flux. Some would say confusion. Cognisant of this context, two years ago, the National Education Commission, through its RE and Faith Formation Committee produced the document, *Religious Education Framing Paper*.

In evaluating and designing new religious education curriculum many have found this document useful; an effective compass in a somewhat confused landscape. But what we all continue to grapple with is that religious education as we currently define it is anchored on two fragile premises. One, that school RE builds on the catechetical experience of the home and parish, and secondly, that RE teachers are themselves well formed, committed people of faith. We are on shaky ground. More students than ever do not have the experience of explicit faith practice in the home and just as many, if not more, have no connection with parish life. Similarly, while Catholic schools are staffed by teachers who are intuitively inclined to the *raison d'être* of the Catholic school, and indeed explicitly contribute to its religious identity and character, they do not engage in the life of faith beyond the school in which they are employed.

This reality sits within a cultural context where 'faith and life', as Pope Paul VI framed it, have little to say to one another. What does one do? Despair? Retreat to an enclave where the informed and the committed lament the fall around them? I think not. We inhabit a space of exploration and opportunity, a space that calls us to imagination, risk and deep trust in the Spirit who will guide us and enthuse us, if we but only listen and trust.

It was in this spirit that the ACU La Salle Academy convened its National Religious Education Colloquium to explore, what has become the title of the report of the proceedings: *Ways Forward in Religious Education*. A link to the report appears elsewhere in this newsletter and it is a document which will shape the work of the La Salle Academy as it seeks to more effectively inform the way ACU prepares and develops teachers and leaders for Catholic schools.



*Professor Br David Hall fms
Dean, La Salle Academy*

The invitation and challenge from Pope Francis:

"The Catholic school is a place for dialogue and serene exchanges to encourage attitudes of respect, listening, friendship and spirit of collaboration."

La Salle snapshots

Cultural leadership

Postgraduate students from Queensland, New South Wales and Northern Territory travelled to North Sydney for their intensive to complete the Indigenous leaderships units in their Master of Educational Leadership course.

These units define the differences between Indigenous leadership and Western leadership styles. It unpacks First Nations knowledge and how Country and story provide guidance in leadership for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The course is experiential and will have Aboriginal and Torres Strait leaders guide students. These units are open to all postgraduate students completing the Master of Educational Leadership course.

Danielle Armour
Lecturer – Indigenous Education

Resourcing Catholic school identity

The La Salle Academy has released a timely resource for understanding and advancing mission within Catholic school communities. *Voices and Visions: Catholic schools in conversation* is a conversational resource designed specifically for the use of Catholic schools in Australia.

Commenting on the production, Dean of the La Salle Academy, Professor Brother David Hall fms noted that the resource is “of particular value to the ongoing formation of teachers, school principals and other staff, it may also be profitably used with boards, clergy and groups of parents.”

Professor Hall added: “The overall aim is to encourage greater understanding and engagement in the common collaborative task we share — that of the Catholic education and formation of young people.”



Exploring the essence of Mission: A second La Salle publication

Congratulations to David Hall, Bill Sultmann and Geraldine Townend in piecing together a substantial body of writing from the Congregation of Catholic Education.

Constants in Context is a milestone work which will support teaching and learning in Catholic schools nationally and internationally. Shared with Vatican officials, the publication received significant appreciation for identifying those constants that have guided the mission of Catholic school around the world.

The publication is offered in digital and hard copy form by the Academy via its website or on request.

Please find links to the publications below

[La Salle Academy Publication No 2 – “Constants in Context”](#)

[Voices and Visions: Catholic schools in conversation](#)

An occasion of promise – religious education colloquium

Catholic educators and staff of Australian Catholic University gathered in Canberra for three days (12 – 14 November 2018) to dialogue on *Ways Forward in Religious Education*.

The national colloquium was a project initiative of the La Salle Academy, which built on mission partnerships within and beyond the University. The Dean of the La Salle Academy, Professor Br David Hall fms, described the forum as an 'occasion of much promise.' He noted, "Our dialogue was designed to awaken, celebrate and imagine possibilities and contribute to streams of thinking and practice in support of religious education as the foundational educational discipline of the Catholic school."

The model of discernment drew from what has inspired and gives life, what might need to be let go, and what might emerge to give new life in the arena of religious education. Central to the flow of the program were keynote presentations by Dr Dan White and Reverend Dr Kevin Lenahan together with 22 individual presentations to showcase best practice and draw ideas and inspiration from a diversity of contexts.



Bill Sultmann speaking at the launch of his text – *Cornerstone: Encountering the Spirit of Christ in the Catholic School*.

**A Report on the colloquium
*Ways Forward in Religious
Education* is now available
on the La Salle Academy
website.**



Our people

Peter Woods

Peter Woods is the Director, Teacher Formation Programs at La Salle Academy. He has worked extensively with Catholic schools and dioceses across Australia and overseas. His work has largely focused on the development of youth ministry curriculum within secondary schools, junior ministry within primary schools, and staff formation. These initiatives have become collectively known as the Catholic Schools Youth Ministry Australia (CSYMA). This program is now being rolled out in New Zealand, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Uganda, Rwanda and England.

Peter also oversees our newly developed course: Graduate Certificate in Education (Leading the New Evangelisation) (LNE), as well as the pre-service teacher development initiative of *Signum Fidei*. Both programs are focused on the formation of teachers for Catholic schools. *Signum Fidei* includes an offering to early career teachers and youth ministers in school and parish positions across Australia. The LNE program is to be delivered in London with St Mary's University and the ACU Rome Campus in July 2019.

Complementing formal learning, Peter oversees the recently developed Catholic Leaders Formation Network (CLFN), an initiative designed to network teachers and church leaders with the goal of being formed in evangelisation. The CLFN network was recently launched by Archbishop Mark Coleridge at *Proclaim* in Brisbane.

Peter is married with three daughters and lives in Canberra. He is an avid cricket follower and Canberra Raiders supporter.



JRE news

Journal of Religious Education, Vol 67/1, April 2019

Constants in context: an exploration of conciliar and post-conciliar documents on the Catholic school (David Hall, William Sultmann & Geraldine Townend)

Retaining young catholics in the church: assessing the importance of parental example (Leslie J Francis & Ann Casson)

Ethics and religious culture: an inspiring example for religious education in Flanders? (Leni Franken)

Making minority faith (in)visible through religious education: parents' experiences of the identification of their children's Orthodox identity in Finnish public schools (Pekka Metso)

Further articles can be found at [*Journal of Religious Education*](#)

Submit now

If you've read a good book on religious education, submit a book review so others can enjoy it too. editorJRE@acu.edu.au

If you've done recent masters work and would like to have this published in a JRE issue, contact Bill Sultmann for advice on academic writing. William.Sultmann@acu.edu.au

Contact us

Comments to editor

We welcome your feedback on this newsletter to:
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