

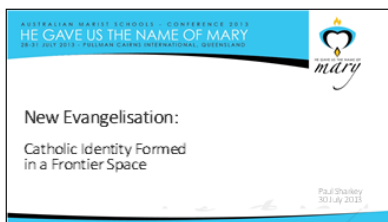


New Evangelisation: Catholic Identity Formed in a Frontier Space

Paul Sharkey

30 July 2013

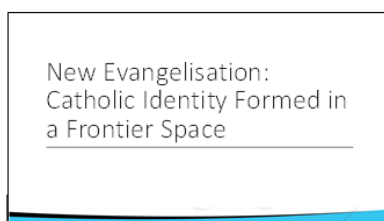
Slide 1



- thank you for your kind introduction [xxxx] well good morning everyone and it is a privilege to be invited to speak with you on the topic of forming Catholic identity in the context of a Catholic school
- I think I should say a few things about my background before I begin ... I was educated by the Christian Brothers, I studied for the Priesthood with the Redemptorists and I worked for a number of years with the Jesuits at Xavier College and I ended up writing my PhD on the response of teachers to the charism project in Jesuit schools
- I believe the charisms of religious orders enrich us as a Church and this is especially evident to me in Catholic education when we look at the variety of schools that are inspired by a religious Congregation
- I value the work of all our Catholic schools very highly and I believe they are the jewel in the Australian Church's crown – the work that school leaders and staff do in our schools is at the forefront of the ministry of the Australian Church in my view

- Having said this, I believe we need to make some important shifts in the way that we work with staff to co-construct the Catholic identity of our schools with our students and their families
- Before I move into that point, I need to offer a disclaimer about my knowledge of the Marist charism. Although I have a deep appreciation of the contribution religious institutes make to the Church, I do not claim any expertise in relation to the Marist charism although I must say on a personal level I feel positively disposed towards your schools.
- My father went to a Marist school and they took him in despite the fact that there was very little money in the home. I find it hard to think of the Marists without remembering the dedication of the Brothers and their commitment to their students even in very trying conditions with very few resources to work with.
- I am however happy to be talking to you today, despite the fact that I am not an expert on the charism which flourishes in your schools – I believe any school's religious identity is not formed by an outside expert, it is formed daily by the people who work in it and especially by those who lead it and I think the perspectives I have to share are as relevant for Marist schools as they are for any Catholic schools.

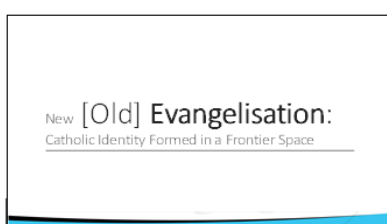
Slide 2



- Here is the title of my presentation this morning
- I think a good starting place for the presentation this morning is to just touch base with each of the key terms in the title
- We could spend the whole session doing that because I think one of the things that Catholic schools in Australia need is greater conceptual clarity about some of these terms and their implications for what happens in the life of the school
- Having said that, I find for myself that one of the best ways to achieve conceptual clarity is to look at some examples and to consider what the theory looks like in practice – my hope for this session is that we spend a moment or two looking at some of the important Catholic identity concepts and then we move into some examples that I hope lead you to consider how the concepts play out in the life of your school

- I have already said that I am not an expert in the Marist charism but even if I was, I still think that the only people who really know what they are talking about when it comes to the Catholic identity of the school are the people who lead it, the staff who work in it, the students who study in it and their families who entrust their children to the school's care
- My hope in this presentation is that it opens up a space where you are thinking about your school and what is happening in it

Slide 3



- Evangelisation – is a word that makes some of us feel uncomfortable because it can carry the connotation of preaching without listening or respecting the cultures and integrity of the hearers
- The Greek word *evangelion* means “Good News” literally in Greek (derived from *eu*=good and *angelos*=messenger)
- We could spend this whole session on what it means to evangelise and the story of how the Church has deepened its understanding of the process and meaning of evangelisation even over the past four decades is certainly one that is worth telling
- from a simple perspective, we could say that evangelisation for Catholic educators is the process where we share with our students what is good about life from the perspective of the Gospel and from the experience of the school as a community of faith
- I will simply say at this point that from my perspective evangelisation has to be seen as an ongoing process of conversion that is life-long, life-wide and life deep – it touches the whole human person
 - Religious
 - Affective
 - Intellectual
 - Moral
 - Socio-political

- Not just individual but collective

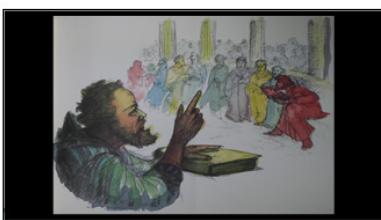
Evangelisation

- We could spend the whole morning on the meaning of this term alone but I will resist that temptation and simply say that for me 'Evangelisation' is a word that has a very broad meaning and it is fundamental to the life of the Church
- In fact, at one point in one of the Church documents, the very bold statement is made that the Church exists to evangelise
- This statement appears in an Apostolic Exhortation signed by Pope Paul VI in 1975 after a General Synod in Rome the year before – you may be aware of the Synod last year on New Evangelisation where we are still waiting for the statement afterwards???
- Going back to the 1975 statement however it is clear that evangelisation is a process that is life-long, life-wide and life-deep – it reaches into the core of a person's being
- The process is not just an individual one however, it reaches into the collective conscience of humanity and all of the activities in which we are engaged, affecting our whole lives and even the environment in which we live ...
 - "The Church may evangelises when by proclaiming the gospel she seeks to convert both the individual consciences of men and their collective conscience all the activities in which they are engaged in and finally their lives and the whole environment which surrounds them (Evangelii Nuntiandi, n. 18)
- I know that the term 'evangelisation' is not one that everyone cares to use as we easily think of people who take a crusading approach to the proclamation of Christian faith
- In Adelaide for example the Adelaide City Council has a running battle with a group of radical preachers who confront passers by in the city mall aggressively with their denunciations of contemporary culture and the virtues of their understanding of Christian faith
- As I have said however, my understanding of the process of evangelisation is that it is life-long, life-wide and life-deep – I like the process that is outlined in the General Directory for Catechesis (1997) as I think it captures well the process that each of us moves through over the course of a lifetime as we become evangelised – the Directory uses the expression "moments" for each of these four elements and I like this as I think rather than steps of stages, the idea of a moment means

that we can keep returning to previous moments even as we are moving through later ones

- The four moments mentioned in the Directory are as follows:
 - *Interest in the Gospel* - The first moment is one in which, in the heart of the non believer or of the indifferent or of those who practise other religions, there is born, as a result of its first proclamation, an interest in the Gospel, yet without any firm decision.
 - *Conversion* - This first moment of interest in the Gospel requires a period of searching to be transformed into a firm option.
 - *Profession of Faith* - Abandonment of self to Jesus Christ arouses in believers a desire to know him more profoundly and to identify with him.
 - *Journeying towards perfection*. The basic maturity which gives rise to the profession of faith is not the final point in the process of continuing conversion. The profession of baptismal faith is but the foundation of a spiritual building which is destined to grow. The baptized, moved always by the Spirit, nourished by the sacraments, by prayer and by the practise of charity, and assisted by multiple forms of ongoing education in the faith, seeks to realize the desire of Christ: "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect". (169) This is the call to the fullness of perfection which is addressed to all the baptized.
- As I said, we could spend the whole morning just on what we understand by the term 'evangelisation' but I will resist that temptation and move on to the next term in my title

Slide 4



- The expression "New evangelisation" raises the question for me – What was the "Old Evangelisation"?
- The slide I have here depicts one of the oldest moments of evangelisation in our tradition – it depicts a moment of evangelisation that took place in about the year 50AD, 15 or so years after Jesus

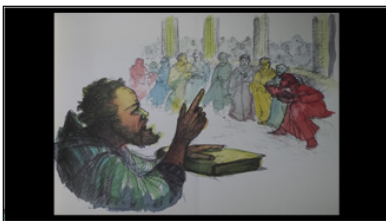
- The scene is a famous one in the Acts of the Apostles where St Paul engages with the Areopagus Council members – the Areopagus is the place where one of the Councils met in the city of Athens

Slide 5



- This is a photo I took of the Areopagus like when I visited it a few years ago during a Bible lands study tour where we travelled in the footsteps of St Paul as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles
- If you have been to Athens you may have stopped at the Areopagus which is halfway up the hill as you walk up to the Parthenon

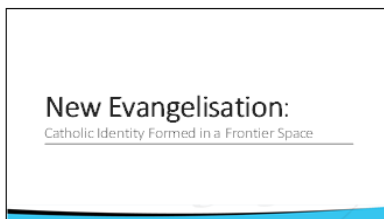
Slide 6



- I found it easy to imagine Paul engaging with the Greeks in this place and struggling to translate his Christian faith into categories that would connect with his Greek listeners
- You may be familiar with some of the controversies recorded in Acts about the extent to which people coming into Christian faith needed to also embrace Jewish religious practices
- Although Paul was steeped in the culture, faith and practices of Judaism, he was adamant that Christian faith needed to be allowed to find new expressions beyond its Jewish cultural origins in Judaism to be born again in each of the cultures where the Gospel was proclaimed
- My sense is that the controversies recorded in Acts have continued on in each generation and each culture where the Gospel has been proclaimed

- There is always a tension as the next generation receives and appropriates the faith as it is handed on to them from the previous one
- Of course as Catholic educators we see this process unfolding in our schools when we open up spaces where Catholic faith can be appreciated by the next generation
- This image is taken from a book “Paulus” produced for the *Pauline Year* 2008-2009, celebrating 2,000 since the birth of St Paul
- The artist is Alessandro Romano and the image spoke to me of the effort Paul was making to engage with his dialogue partners – the image conveys to me something of the robust nature of the engagement between Paul and the members of the Areopagus that comes through in Acts

Slide 7



- Having reflected for a moment on what “Old Evangelisation” means we can do the same with the term “New Evangelisation”

Slide 8



- This photograph of Pope John Paul II was taken at a General Audience in 1998

John Paul II

- New Evangelisation is a phrase coined by John Paul II in 1979 when he said that new methods and expressions are needed to engage people with Catholic faith
- John Paul kept repeating the call to a new evangelisation throughout his pontificate because he recognised that entire groups of baptised people have lost

‘a living sense of the faith’ or perceive Christian beliefs and practices in a superficial and exterior way (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 33)

- The Pope recognised that people in need of a New Evangelisation have been sacramentally initiated into the Church, but they do not make connections between what happens in the Church and what matters most to them in their lives – ‘the great moments of birth, suffering and death’ (*Christifideles Laici*, n. 34).
- Archbishop Mark Collieridge said recently that in a sense you could see John Paul II’s papacy as a ‘single long exegesis of that phrase’
- The term ‘New Evangelisation’ is used in a variety of ways by people who come from very different places as far as their understanding of ecclesiology and missiology – I don’t intend to review those differences here – I will simply give you my view of the challenge that I believe the call to New Evangelisation offers us at this time

Paul Sharkey

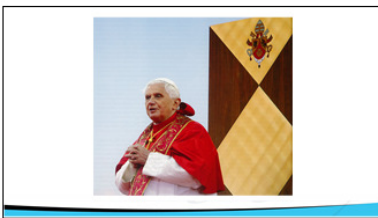
- For me the challenge of New Evangelisation for today is that calls us to operate in quite different ways in our parishes, in our dioceses and in our schools
- I say this as someone who deeply appreciates what is being done in my own parish and in the schools in the State where I have sector leadership
- Even though I appreciate what is happening, I believe we need to work in quite different ways
- I say this because I believe many of the traditional strategies we have used to invite our students into Catholic faith are not working as they once did. The culture has shifted and our strategies of engagement need to move with the shifts in culture.
- based on the cultural analysis and theological reflection coming out of the Catholic University of Leuven, I believe we need to engage more explicitly and particularly with our Catholic faith, even as we show greater respect to the culture and worldviews of our students
- showing more respect to the tradition and to the worldview of our students both at the same time, might sound like something of a contradiction in terms and I admit that it does present us with a paradox
- I believe this paradox is the place we need to be in as Catholic educators and that we not only survive in it, we flourish in the paradox when we reflect theologically in a disciplined and sustained way
- I also believe that whilst it might sound daunting to say that we should all be reflecting theologically, that there is a simple method we can use that makes theological reflection very accessible for each of us – more of that later

- I know that there is nothing new in what I am saying and that each of you focuses every day on creating expressions of Catholic faith in your school which connect for students
- If you believe that what we are doing now with students in relation to their formation as Catholics is basically OK, then you do not believe in the need for a New Evangelisation.
- If you believe we need to make some radical shifts in the way we invite students into Catholic faith and what we offer them as a Church when they move from our schools out into the wider world, then you believe in the kind of New Evangelisation that I see being advanced in what recent Popes have written on the topic.

- (Mark Coleridge ABC *Religion and Ethics* 11 Oct 2012)
 - The phrase "new evangelisation" is found nowhere in the documents of Vatican II. Yet it points to what Vatican II is really about.
 - The phrase was first coined by Pope John Paul II when he visited Poland in 1979. He used it almost in passing and without explication. He used it more deliberately when he spoke to the Latin American Bishops in Santo Domingo in 1979, and there he explained that it had to be "new in ardour, in method and expression."
- Up until the 1980s, two basic situations were depicted in the Church's reflections on the evangelisation process:
 - the situation of the established 'mature' Church
 - and the situation of the mission '*ad gentes*' to peoples or groups who do not believe in Christ.
 - This two-situation paradigm is evident for example in the Vatican II Decree on the Church's missionary activity – *Ad Gentes Divinitus*. In the mission *ad gentes*, the task for missionaries is to translate the texts and beliefs into terms that are faithful to the received tradition at the same time as they speak meaningfully to those in the receiving culture. In the second situation of the established Churches, the potency of traditional symbols, rituals and doctrinal formulations was taken somewhat as a given, and the need for translation or inculturation was less emphasised.
- At least since the 1987 Synod of Bishops, the Pope has been speaking of a third intermediate pastoral situation called 'New Evangelisation' (*Christifideles Laici*, n. 34).

- New Evangelisation is necessary when entire groups of baptised people lose 'a living sense of the faith' or perceive Christian beliefs and practices in a superficial and exterior way (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 33).
- In the intermediate situation of New Evangelisation, watertight distinctions can no longer be made between the mission *ad gentes* and the evangelisation of those who are already baptised (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 34). The subjects of New Evangelisation are people who, despite being sacramentally initiated into the Church, do not make connections between what matters most to them – 'the great moments of birth, suffering and death' – and the symbols, teachings and rituals of the Catholic Church (*Christifideles Laici*, n. 34).

Slide 9



- Those of you who were at World Youth Day in Sydney might recognise that This image of Pope Benedict XVI comes from the Opening Celebrations at Barangaroo 2008.07.17
- You may also recall that during this Opening Celebration Benedict referred to the Apostle Paul and the Areopagus that I mentioned earlier

Pope Benedict

- Benedict continued the John Paul II's commitment to New Evangelisation by creating a Pontifical Council for New Evangelisation
- When he established the Council he gave it tasks such as the following
 - To examine in depth the pastoral and theological meaning of what the process of evangelisation means for us in our time
 - To make known and support initiatives linked to the new evangelization that are already being put into practice in various particular Churches
 - ((for me that this next task is interesting because that is what we are doing in this Conference)) to promote the realization of new projects by actively involving the resources present in Institutes of Consecrated Life and in

Societies of Apostolic Life, as well as in groups of the faithful and in new communities

- to study and to encourage the use of modern forms of communication as instruments for the new evangelization
- Our new Pope has not written anything substantial on New Evangelisation yet as far as I am aware but he recently addressed the editors of a 163 year old Catholic Journal called *Civiltà Cattolica* and I would like to organise the rest of the presentation around the three words that Pope Francis used in his address to the Journal editors
- By one of those almost spooky coincidents the three words Pope Francis used lined up beautifully with the work I have been doing on Catholic identity for a number of years now

- Those of you who were at World Youth Day might remember that Pope Benedict referred to the Apostle Paul's speech the Areopagus in that opening address (... \Church Documents\Benedict XVI Arrival speech - Barangaroo.doc)
- Benedict continued to use the term coined by his predecessor and went on to establish a Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelisation
- I don't know if you were as apprehensive as I was when Cardinal Ratzinger was appointed Pope – his reputation in his previous role was one of a hard liner – I must admit to being pleasantly surprised when I read his encyclical "Deus Caritas Est" – God is love
- The opening words of the Encyclical are "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1 Jn 4:16). These words from the First Letter of John express with remarkable clarity the heart of the Christian faith"
- In 2010 when he established the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelisation, Benedict referred back to his first Encyclical and re-emphasised the point he made there that 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" (n. 1). Likewise, at the root of all evangelization lies not a human plan of expansion, but rather the desire to share the inestimable gift that God has wished to give us, making us sharers in his own life.

- If our Catholic schools are to be places of New Evangelisation, we are challenged to lead schools that are places where we share the life of God, where rich strategies and methods of sharing our faith are enacted – where a strong witness is given to the God who is love and where students are invited to share in the life of God
- When he established the New Evangelisation Pontifical Council he gave it tasks such as the following
 - To examine in depth the pastoral and theological meaning of what the process of evangelisation means for us in our time
 - To make known and support initiatives linked to the new evangelization that are already being put into practice in various particular Churches
 - ((for me that this next task is interesting because that is what we are doing in this Conference)) to promote the realization of new projects by actively involving the resources present in Institutes of Consecrated Life and in Societies of Apostolic Life, as well as in groups of the faithful and in new communities
 - to study and to encourage the use of modern forms of communication as instruments for the new evangelization
- So New Evangelisation is about developing new strategies of pastoral engagement and new expressions of our Catholic faith that make sense to people in our time, standing in the same evangelical spirit of St Paul as he stood in the Areopagus and engaged with members of the Council there

Slide 10



- The three words Pope Francis used as headings in his address were: **dialogue**, **discernment** and **frontier**

Dialogue

- Pope Francis began his address by pointing out that at various points in its 163 year history the attitude of the *Civiltà Cattolica* journal was combative and even harshly combative, in tune with the general atmosphere of the time
- He told the editors that whilst your fidelity to the Church requires that you be hard against hypocrisies - your main task is not to build walls but bridges
- The Pope indicated that the task of the editors was to establish a dialogue with all people, not just with Catholics but also with those who do not share the Christian faith and even with those who oppose the Church and persecute her in various ways
- Francis said that to dialogue means to be convinced that the other has something good to say, to make room for his point of view, for his opinion, for his proposals without falling, obviously, into relativism
- to dialogue it is necessary to lower one's defences and to open the doors
- he urged the journal editors to continue their dialogue with the cultural, social and political institutions, also to offer your contribution to the formation of citizens who have at heart the good of all and work for the common good
- as Catholic educators I think there is much that we can take from these words for our own ministry in the Church

Discernment

- Given the pope's formation as a Jesuit it is probably not surprising that he would mention discernment in his analysis, particularly when he was speaking to the editors of a Jesuit Journal
- Francis said: Your task is to gather and express the expectations, the desires, the joys and the dramas of our time, and to offer the elements for a reading of the reality in the light of the Gospel. The great spiritual questions are more alive today than ever, but there is need of someone to interpret them and to understand them.
- With humble and open intelligence, "seek and find God in all things," as Saint Ignatius wrote. God is at work in the life of every person and in the culture: the Spirit blows where it will. Seek to discover what God has operated and how His work will proceed. A treasure of the Jesuits is in fact spiritual discernment, which seeks to recognize the presence of the Spirit of God in the human and cultural reality, the seed of God's presence already planted in the events, in the sensibilities, in the desires, in the profound tensions of hearts and of the social, cultural and spiritual contexts.
- seek God in all things, in all fields of knowledge, of art, of science, of political, social and economic life, studies, sensibility and experience are necessary

- All this requires keeping the heart and mind open, avoiding the spiritual sickness of self-reference. Even the Church, when she becomes self-referencing, gets sick, grows old.

Frontier

- Pope Francis challenged the editors to enter the contemporary cultural debate and propose, in a serious and at the same time accessible way, the vision that comes from Christian faith

Pope Benedict

- Pope Francis referred back to an address given by Pope Benedict when he addressed the 35th General Congregation of the Society Of Jesus in 2008. During the Address he echoed the words of Paul VI more than 30 years earlier when he described the mission of the Jesuits as unfolding in the frontier
 - Benedict said to the Jesuits that when they were founded in the sixteenth century they were sent to proclaim the Lord to peoples and cultures that did not yet know him
 - Today it is not oceans or immense distances that challenge those who proclaim the Gospel but the boundaries resulting from an erroneous or superficial vision of God, inadequate understandings of the human person or the false dichotomies that have been created between faith and human knowledge, faith and modern science, and between faith and the commitment to justice.
 - The Church thus urgently needs people who dedicate their lives to being on these frontiers to bear witness and to help people understand the profound harmony between faith and reason, between the Gospel spirit, the thirst for justice and initiatives for peace

Pope Francis

- Please, be men and women of the frontier – but do not fall into the temptation of taming the frontiers: you must go to the frontiers and not bring the frontiers home to varnish them a bit and tame them. In today's world, a courageous commitment is urgent to educate to a faith of conviction and maturity, capable of giving meaning to life and of offering convincing answers to all those seeking God.

Sharkey

- As I have said, I think the three words that Francis used in his address are excellent organisers for us today as we consider the identity question in our schools

Slide 11



- Bishop Michael Putney said when he was addressing an ACU Colloquium that Catholic identity is far more complex and profound than sometimes is realised
 - one can claim that one is identifying the heart of Catholic identity by pointing to different beliefs or texts in Scripture or Tradition
 - or one can point one or other facet of Catholic experience and claim that this is the key to interpreting Catholic identity
 - another approach is to argue from one's own experience of being a Catholic and expect to find a resonance in all others who identify themselves as Catholics
 - such efforts do not do justice to the question – we need to avoid being too narrow or too sure of the priorities or too quick when giving an account of Catholic identity
- Putney mentioned "Taliban, Catholicism" that has been in the ascendancy in some quarters, an assertion of Catholic identity 'that knows only how to excoriate and condemn'
- We have already seen with Pope Francis that he is not interested in a Catholic identity that is "harshly combative" – the task is to not to build walls but bridges
- Putney challenged his listeners, many of whom were Catholic educators to find a middle path between continuity and discontinuity with culture as a Catholic identity is forged
 - *continuity*: dialoguing and listening to culture
 - *discontinuity*: proclaiming and critiquing the culture
- those who take the continuity approach to Catholic identity listen carefully to culture and have a sense that the boundaries of our faith need to be expanded and new expressions of our faith developed
- those who approach culture from the perspective of discontinuity feel the need to stress Christian differentness and to establish boundaries – the distinctiveness of the Catholic school ... different from the one down the road

- in Gospel terms, we are invited to be in the world, but not of it, to be both the doves and serpents in our interpretations and responses – being a serpent means judgement, dialectic, taking a stance, the courage of critique and of self-critique ... being a dove means understanding before one can judge

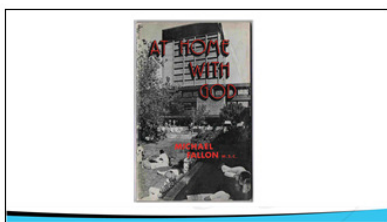
Gerald Arbuckle:

- Some of you may know Fr Gerry Arbuckle SM (a priest in the Marist family) – as I have said, I am not an expert on the Marist charism so don't know whether the Marist Fathers are close relations to the Marist Brothers or whether they are the relatives you don't see so often
- as well as being a Catholic Priest Gerry is a cultural anthropologist who has worked for many decades with Catholic institutions helping them to clarify mission and identity questions
- In an article published earlier this year in the Australian Catholic Record, Gerry said that how people or institutions act, not what they say, realistically defines their identities

Sharkey

- As I mentioned earlier, I have become convinced that it is more useful to look at the Catholic identity question through an action lens, rather than a philosophical lens in the first instance
- In the past I think we have tended to look at Catholic identity from the perspective of content or key characteristics. In this presentation the focus is on HOW Catholic identity is fostered and WHERE and WHEN it might be seen, rather than WHAT its key characteristics are
- As this presentation is unfolding it will become obvious that Catholic identity is always unfolding in a frontier space, it is never closed, static or finalised – it is always a living work in progress
- I thought I might provide a personal example to make this point

Slide 12

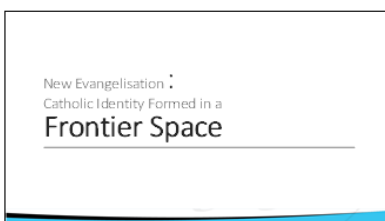


- When I was studying for my degree in theology 30 years ago, I remember being very taken with a little book written by Michael Fallon in 1977 called “At Home with God”
- The book is out of print now but I remembered it recently and thought that it would be interesting to track it down and re-read it
- As you might perhaps have guessed, I was disappointed with what I found – the book no longer touched me in the way that it did 30 years ago – I will choose one paragraph as an example because I remember being inspired by it years ago
 - The Catholic view of life is ‘Incarnational’: God comes to us in and through everything. He comes to us through oil and wheat and water and wine and bread; candles can speak God to us; and so can gothic spires and bells and the faulty voice of a man chosen to speak with authority. The essential thing is that we are offering our lives to God. If it is a Baptismal Mass we offer the life of our child. If it is a Nuptial Mass we offer the love that has been pledged in our midst. If it is a Requiem Mass we offer the life of the friend who has just died. If it is a Mass celebrated in time of war, the bread becomes the ‘bread of affliction’ and we offer to God our hope for peace.
- Now there is nothing wrong with these words, it is just that I have moved on and these words no longer spoke to me as they once did
- Given my disappointment with the 30 year old text I thought it might be interesting to return to a more recent one – I turned to a statement I developed myself three years ago in the written application I submitted for my current job
 - There are a thousand ways to describe what Catholic faith might mean in our day. I will focus on just two: *discipleship* and *liturgy*. Discipleship means becoming friends with God over a lifetime. Discipleship means discovering grace in the midst of one’s relationships, one’s challenges, one’s ordinariness, one’s loves, one’s hates, one’s disappointments, one’s suffering and one’s elation. Discipleship is personal. As Christians we do not believe in a series of abstractions, we believe in an incarnate God, a God who became one of us in Jesus, a God who chooses each one of us in love and covenant.
 - Being Catholic is not just a ‘me-and-God’ endeavour however and that is why I turn now to the liturgy. Liturgy literally means the work of the people and this work of the people of God keeps me in communion with the Church. I need the Church. I need to be enriched by its deep and diverse traditions, by its doctrines, by its faith and by its sacramental life. The liturgy draws me rhythmically and ritually into the mystery of Christ – into the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The death and resurrection of Jesus becomes my death and my resurrection in liturgy. I am catechised by the liturgy. In this Lucan year I will be drawn week by

week into the stories of Luke's journeying Jesus and I believe that my story and his will become more deeply entwined as a consequence. My parish is led by a pastoral, prayerful and skilled liturgist and it is comprised of a vibrant mix of African, Vietnamese, Indian and other cultures. I have joined the choir that sings in Swahili every other week and I am becoming a better person for it. My Church and my parish are not perfect and neither am I. But we are working on it. I cannot imagine the liturgy, the work of the people, being anything other than a scandal if we were not grounding our lives in it. The liturgy unmaskes our injustice, it denounces our unauthenticity and it subverts our complacency. The liturgy graces our finitude, it balms our woundedness and it deepens our mystery.

- I find these words of mine speak to me more powerfully about Catholic identity than the words from Michael Fallon's text three decades ago
- I hope though that in three decades time, these words that I wrote three years ago might also seem incomplete and inadequate to describe the mystery of Catholic faith and what it means for me – for example although I have touched on justice in this text, would I make it a key theme in my next text?
- There is no reference here to the environment or creation – would this be the case in three decades time?
- The point I am making here is that Catholic identity is always being forged on a frontier – it can never be something that is fixed and static
- With that in mind, I would like to explore the notion of frontier a little further

Slide 13

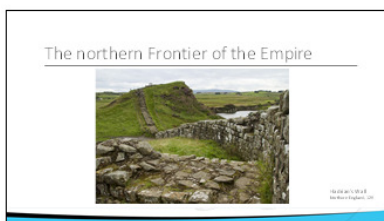


- We have seen already that a number of Popes have used the expression 'frontier' in their reflections on the mission of groups such as the Jesuits
- I believe the idea of the frontier is especially applicable to the experience we have today as Catholic educators and I am not alone in holding this view

Jim and Therese D'Orsa

- Jim and Therese D’Orsa in their book called *Explorers, guides and meaning makers: mission theology for Catholic educators* use the image of the frontier in their reflections on the contemporary environment in which Catholic education unfolds
- A feature of life on a frontier is that there are no pre-existing roads or bridges. On the frontier the choice is between the known and the unknown. There are no fully developed maps to consult, except those that are created as the journey proceeds.
- Jim and Therese pointed out that in the United States, the frontier marked the division between “settlement” – the known world – and “wilderness” – the unknown world.
- They argued that that today Catholic educators find themselves at a frontier of meaning – the meanings that have characterised Catholic “settlement” in past generations fail to make sense to an increasing number of people inhabiting the new wilderness created by forces such as globalisation and detraditionalisation
- Making sense of life on the frontier in a comprehensive way is difficult. However we believe that this is the heart of the leadership task facing educators today.
- A premise of our book is that the essential skill in coping with the “frontier” is the ability to “do theology”. To the extent that we reflect on our experience in the light of faith, we are all grassroots theologians.
- I will explore this notion of doing theology in the frontier further in this presentation
- I don’t have any intention to tell you what a Catholic identity looks like in your schools because you are the person as the school’s leader who has the deepest appreciation of its identity

Slide 14



- One of the images that comes readily to mind as I think about the frontier is the notion of a boundary

- This slide shows a part of Hadrian's wall- 118 km long and built in the Second Century in northern Britain under Emperor Hadrian
- Hadrian's wall was part of a fortification complex stretching over 5,000 km from the Atlantic coast of northern Britain, through Europe to the Black Sea, and from there to the Red Sea and across North Africa to the Atlantic coast.
- One of the purposes of these walls was to separate the Romans from the barbarians
- Barbarian was a word coined initially by the Greeks for the foreigner and the stutterer – it comes from the Sanskrit word 'barbara' which means to stutter - the uncouth barking sounds the stranger uttered were considered by the ancient romans to be a parody of human speech
- The traditional understanding of structures like Hadrian's wall is that they were a line between civilisation and the barbarians who were on the other side
- in this context I find it interesting to consider the expression "Churched / Unchurchd" – there is something worth exploring in this division of humanity into these two groups
- In more recent archaeological research the Roman frontier is seen much more as a zone, rather than a line
- For example, it is thought that many of the gates through the wall would have served as custom posts to allow trade and levy taxation
- As archaeologists have studied the artefacts in the regions on both sides of the wall, they have seen that there was a great deal of cultural exchange across the frontier – the frontier was much more a zone than a line
- once again when the frontier line between Churchd and UnChurchd is thickened we open up the possibility of an exchange on the borderline

Jacques Haers

I want to pick up on this notion of the frontier as a zone by referring to the work of Jacques Haers, one of the Professors in the Theology Faculty at the Catholic University of Leuven

- A frontier is a space where people are facing one another (*'frons'* is the latin word for face)
- such frontiers can be looked at in a variety of ways. They can be understood as borderlines that mark a clear distinction between 'me' and 'you', often leading up to the exclusion of 'you' as not belonging to me or to my world

- The frontier might be perceived as a limit that has to be crossed, leading up to the invasion of your territory so that 'you' becomes 'me'. In both cases of borderlines, there are victims: those who are excluded and those who are subjected.
- When a 'line' approach is taken to the frontier, there is no real encounter with the 'strange other' who lives on the other side of the wall from me
- A frontier space constitutes another approach: the borderline has a thickness in which people can dwell and meet and discover the community to which they already belong by their shared humanity
- When the frontier space is reduced to a borderline, the people dwelling in the frontier space become homeless refugees. I believe that in their suffering a creativity can develop that will force the line to open up again as a space. Here I apply this framework which I originally developed to gain an understanding of 'globalisation' in the context of schools. My suggestion is to allow schools to develop into border spaces, where encounters and conversations become a real possibility.
- I want to ask you in a moment to consider whether this notion of the frontier is a useful way to frame the Catholic identity of your school. Before asking this question though I thought it might be helpful to show a few different images of frontier
- This next image is at the other end of the extreme from the Roman Empire

Slide 15



- Here we see Neil Armstrong walking on the moon in 1969
- Those of you who were alive then will recall how this moment took humanity into a new frontier
- The technological frontier has obviously kept moving forward exponentially since the moon landing – there would be far more computing power in the average smartphone today than the early computers used in this mission to the moon

Slide 16



- the two frontier images so far have shown the Roman Empire in Europe and a United States astronaut landing on the moon
- This image is a depiction of an iconic Australian experience - the Burke and Wills expedition in 1861
- I think it captures some of the more difficult dimensions of being on the frontier – the experience of searching, not knowing, striving, struggling
- I don't know how you see it but for me, the picture captures something of the bleakness and hostility that can also be part of the experience of being on the frontier – not knowing where you are going, what is out there, whether you will get back home
- The image also makes me wonder about the indigenous peoples who were the traditional owners of this land and what happened to them as our frontier widened and we colonised their lands
- This reminds me that our work in the frontiers in our schools can easily degenerate into violence and colonisation

Slide 17



- This next image is closer again in time and place
- It is an image of the T Model Ford that a man called Alec Duncan drove in 1927 from Moonee Ponds in Melbourne up to the Millewa in the top north western corner of Victoria –
- Alec Duncan was my uncle's father

- The Millewa is marginal country where the average rainfall is only 250mm annually and Alec took up one of the 750 acre blocks being offered to settlers in the 1920s
- by the end of 1927 Alec had built a house on the farm block and he and Mary Burke of Essendon were married that December, and spent their honeymoon working on the farm
- Alec and Mary lived in a tin shack with the two children while their house was moved board by board to a new farm they bought not many years later
- The following quotation from a history written of the area gives you a feel for the early days
 - Some of the land was cleared, but Alec and some Italian workers cleared the rest with axes and a Ma. The dead trees were later burnt, with Mary helping to stoke up the fires when she could. As each paddock was cleared it was sown to wheat or oats.
 - Sometimes the years were good; others were droughts and it was a big struggle to keep going. Barbara was born during these hard times. Later as the grain prices improved and there were more good years than bad, Mary announced she was pregnant again. "But we cant be having a baby" said Pop - "Its not a drought!"
- I know that there were many rewarding elements about being in this environment because I have experienced it first hand – I wonder though what it was like being a Pioneer as this frontier was being opened up
- Once again the question of the traditional owners of these lands also arises – How were they dealt with as their lands were settled and colonised
- What happened to their culture and heritage?
- If we are working in a frontier in our schools, what does this say to us today about working with our students who live in worlds that have their own integrity – an integrity which needs to be respected even as we invite them to create Catholic spaces in those worlds with us
- As a father of three teenage sons I am aware that the worlds our young people live in are remarkably different when it comes to Catholic identity from the one that I grew up in
- How do we work in the frontier with the students who are in our schools?
- Having looked at an image that comes from the early years of white settlement, I want to move now to some other images that were only made last week – this set of images is of lands that were formed millions of years ago but they provide a

window on a frontier experience that I had in the Finders Ranges with Jack a delightful 14 year old boy who is my youngest son

- Jack and I went on an adventure together in the break just before the current term began

Slide 18



- This is a panoramic shot of the view from the edge of Ikara as it is known to the traditional owners of Wilpena Pound in the Flinders ranges
- We are standing here on Bridle Gap and we are looking southwest to the Bunbinyunna Range in the foreground and the Red Range sitting further back
- PLAY VIDEO CLIP

Slide 19

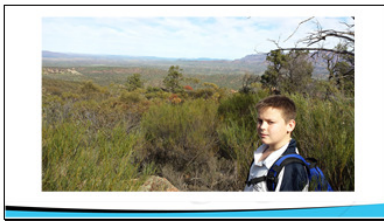


- I thought I would begin these reflections on the frontier experience by pointing out that it is often beautiful to be in a frontier, even it is sometimes a disturbing and challenging place to inhabit
- If you are familiar with the Flinders Ranges you will know how beautiful they are, in their ruggedness
- some years ago I travelled through them with an indigenous guide and found the deep spirituality of these lands and the stories associated with them to be irresistible and humbling

Slide 20



Slide 21



- the view from the top of Ikara

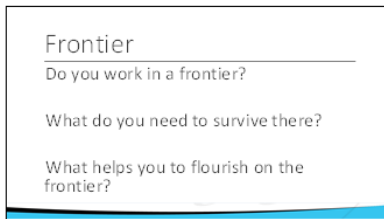
Slide 22



- When you are on the frontier, there are often moments when you wonder whether you are on the right path or whether you will reach your destination
- This picture refers to one such moment
- I had been told of a back track to use to get into the Pound from a little used part of the Heysen Trail
- For quite a while as we were using this back path to climb up into the rim Jack and I were wondering whether we were on the right track
- We knew that our path split in two at one point and as our walk unfolded we were beginning to wonder whether we were walking around the Pound, rather than up into it
- None of the signs on the way told us which trail we were on – we had to trust that we were heading in the right direction
- Did we miss a sign? Had we taken the wrong path?

- When we reached the top, we went a little further into the Pound and had our lunch
 - On the way back Jack found this sign and you possibly can't see the picture well enough to read the message that he is giving you in this image – he has a pretend frown on and he is pointing to a sign that says "Bridle Gap 600 m"
 - Jack became quite exasperated at this point because he said that it would have been great to have had this information an hour or so earlier as we were climbing the mountain so that we would have had some assurance that we were on the right path
 - I think I will let Jack speak to you in his own words now about what it was like for him being in this frontier space in the Flinders Ranges
- PLAY SOUND CLIP
- I think we often only really know what we are doing on the frontier when we look back and appreciate more deeply the territory that we have been moving through
 - Of course we are aware of what we are doing when we are in the moment and often there are moments of deep insight and beauty
 - In some ways though we make sense afterwards of the frontier space we have been inhabiting
 - Along the way I think we survive by reading whatever signs are available to us, reflecting on them and by sticking together and helping each other, encouraging each other along the way – that certainly was my experience climbing up the mountain a week ago in the Flinders Ranges
 - There was a period of time when both Jack and I really began to wonder whether we had taken a wrong turn and whether we would get to our destination so that we could see inside the Pound
 - As a leader in this space I was challenged to find ways to encourage Jack to keep going in this frontier, without promising him that we would reach our destination
 - As a leader in Catholic education, I think we are in the same space with each other – none of us can promise that we are on the right track, or that we will not have to retrace our steps – all we can do is to work with each other, reading the signs as carefully as we can, helping each other along the way
 - And of course taking every moment we can to appreciate the beauty of what is unfolding around us
 - In some ways I think if we are working as closely and carefully as we can in dialogue with our staff and student, I think we have to leave the rest up to God

Slide 23



Slide 24



- I have chosen some examples in the slides which follow that are taken from schools that are obviously working in the frontier for one reason or another – as you will see, I end up arguing that every one of our schools needs to be working on the frontier, even our most established and traditional schools
- When I think about a school working in the frontier one that comes easily to mind is a school we opened about a decade ago at the southern metropolitan fringe (FRONTIER) – Galilee Catholic Learning Community

Slide 25



- As you can see the school is approximately 43 K's from the city and about 2 K's from the Gulf of St Vincent

Slide 26



- I have highlighted the Metropolitan area to give you a feel for how the school is located just beyond the reach of the city limits – it is in a frontier location

Slide 27



- this slide gives you an aerial view of the school with the Gulf located to the west and vineyards and the Adelaide Hills to the east

Slide 28



- the hills in the background
- Christmas carols event gives a good feel for the community making dimension of the school
- the suburb is so new that there are very few amenities and a school centre easily becomes a site for community building

Slide 29



- a fragment from a prayer service in the chapel
- *Reader 1:* Whenever we gather as a community we begin with an acknowledgment of the Indigenous people of this land at Aldinga, the Kaurna people. We do this out of respect for the first people who cared for this land and as a reminder of our commitment to the journey towards Reconciliation.
- *Sr Margaret Ann:* We use the symbol of sand to acknowledge our connections to this land and community, and its history. We are held in this place. We give thanks for the reef, the beaches and the hills that surround us. We think of these hills as hugging us and holding us as the love of God holds us.

Slide 30

- the boundary between the classroom and the 'playground' is deliberately thickened into a frontier zone
- learning happens outside in the playground and play happens inside the classroom
- many students from this community come to school with few relational skills and poor oral language facility
- in this context, relationship building, creativity, cooperation and imagination provide important learning goals

Slide 31



- our pedagogy creates spaces where we make time for slowing down, allowing children to truly observe and inquire

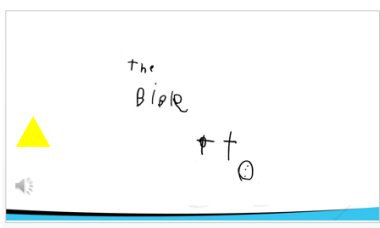
- the value of small things – the value of being in the moment, wondering, appreciating – staff name the natural world as God's creation

Slide 32



- the learning spaces are more like a home than a classroom – the furniture and classroom design has been established this way
- staff sit around a table in this area at Morning Tea

Slide 33

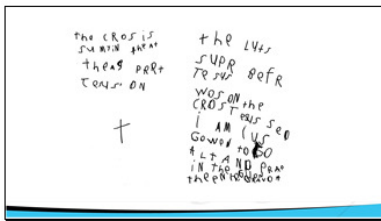


The Bible.

- I would like to show you now the literary work of one of the students who has had no previous home experience of any religious literature
- his easy going parents made the relatively last minute decision to send him to Galilee and they were somewhat wary of 'the Catholic bit'
- however it is 'the Catholic bit' that seems to have captured this student's attention and imagination – this is a language he is interested in and uses well
- the student spontaneously offered his R.E. teacher this Bible saying 'Mrs Doyle liked my Bible, so I will make her one too'
- I have asked a narrator to read the text to you in case you are having trouble reading them yourself from the slides – you might recognise the voice as belonging to the young man on the Flinders Ranges frontier that we heard from earlier

PLAY AUDIO

Slide 34



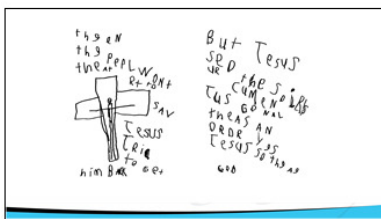
The cross is something that they put Jesus on. The Last Supper before Jesus was on the cross Jesus said I am just going to go out and pray in the garden then he grabbed a ...

Slide 35



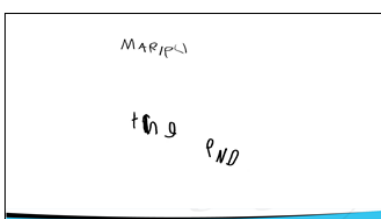
... cloth and washed people's feet. He prayed in the garden. Then the soldiers came and got Jesus.

Slide 36



Then the people that wanted to save Jesus tried to get him back. But Jesus said the soldiers are coming. Jesus got nailed there and died. 'Yes Jesus' so they went.

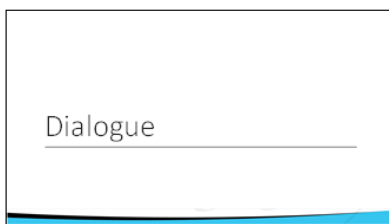
Slide 37



Mary – the end

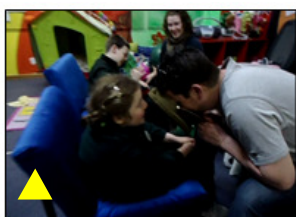
- I have learned since this narration was done that the author of this text may have been writing his name, rather than making a Marian reference at the end of his Bible. Given the fact that we are at a Marist conference though, I am happy to leave it in!
- this error on my part makes me wonder how many Church doctrines developed from misinterpretations of the foundational texts!

Slide 38



- Having spent some time reflecting on the frontier, I would like now to turn to DIALOGUE - the second of the words that Pope Francis used in his speech to the editors of Civiltà Cattolica
- I thought I would begin these reflections by showing a short video clip of a dialogue that I think is quite profound, even though not a word is spoken

Slide 39

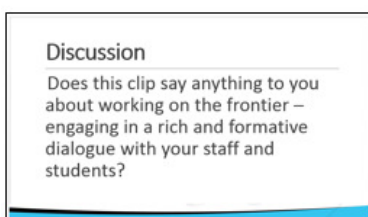


- I think the clip is an excellent example of working in a frontier space in the sense that Jaques Haers uses the term as I mentioned earlier:
 - A frontier is a space where people are facing one another (*'frons'* is the latin word for face)
 - When the frontier is a line, there is no real encounter with the 'strange other' who lives on the other side of the wall from me
 - When the frontier is moves on from being a borderline to become a zone, it has a thickness in which people can dwell and meet and discover the community to which they already belong by their creational togetherness

- My suggestion is to allow schools to develop into border spaces, where encounters and conversations become a real possibility.
- Some of you may be familiar with the technique being used here called “Intensive Interaction” which teachers in a Special School can use to teach the fundamentals of communication to students who are pre-intentional communicators – the teacher needs to learn the ‘intensive interaction’ technique and it is used under controlled conditions
- I think the interaction that unfolds in this brief video provides us with a profound example of a dialogue in a thick frontier space
- I invite you to watch out for the end of the video where one of the students off camera makes a surprising intervention with the teacher

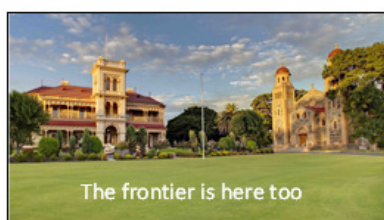
PLAY VIDEO

Slide 40



- Does this clip say anything to you about working on the frontier – engaging in a rich and formative dialogue with your staff and students?

Slide 41



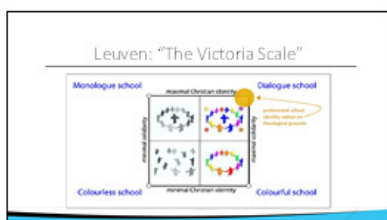
- It is perhaps easier to see the frontier opening up in an educational facility like a Special School
- If however the cultural analysis that underpins the concept of New Evangelisation is accepted, then all of need to be working in the frontier space, not just some of us

- I know that those who lead an established school like this one are working at the frontier because they understand that students will only experience their Catholic faith as being meaningful if we can co-create new spaces with them where Catholic beliefs, rituals and spirituality speak directly to what matters most in the students' lives

Slide 42



Slide 43

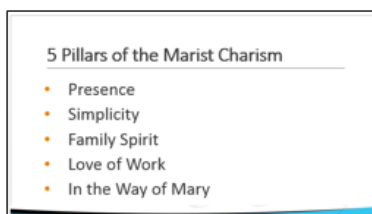


- Some of you know the research instruments that have been developed in a very fruitful partnership between the Catholic University of Leuven and the Commission for Catholic Education in Victoria
- I know that a number of Marist schools are participating in the research and that there is even some work being done with the Leuven faculty to develop a scale for use in charism based institutions
- There is not time in this presentation to discuss this research project in any depth but our I want to touch on one or two key points from the research
- The Scale in this slide was developed by Professor Didier Pollefeyt and Dr Jan Bouwens on the basis of a typology created by Professors Hurst and Hermans
- The central challenge that I have heard many school leaders take from this scale is that our schools need to move from being colourful institutions to being dialogue institutions
- The colourful school is a place a thousand flowers bloom, a place where students freely discuss their views of the world but there is no explicit or sustained engagement with Catholic faith as they do so

- the particularity of the Catholic voice is easily lost in this kind of school particularly when the tradition is reduced to abstract themes, rather than inviting the students to engage explicitly with particular narratives, rituals and beliefs from our Catholic faith
- The Dialogue school respects the worldview of the students and does not impose a point of view on them (Monologue School) but in the dialogue school the student is brought into an explicit and sustained encounter with Catholic narratives, texts, beliefs and practices in their particularity, rather than as abstractions one or two steps removed from the tradition
- Belonging to a religion is similar to speaking a language and acquiring cultural skills
- Just as people never speak language in general but speak Dutch, German or French, neither is there something like 'faith' in general
- Believing is particular and concrete, not abstract and thematic – we believe because we have experienced particular rituals, texts and doctrines as they have been understood and lived by the faith community
- There are many theoretical frameworks for understanding identity construction – one of the richest approaches for our present reflections is French philosopher Paul Ricoeur's analysis where he argued that a person acquires an identity only through their engagement with narratives, symbols and metaphors – similar dynamics unfold at a communal level
- one of the privileges of being a Catholic educator and one of its biggest challenges is to create spaces where students can draw upon Catholic narratives, symbols, doctrine and ritual as they form their identities in childhood and adolescent years
- *David Tacey*: It is because religious institutions fail to generate a sense of spiritual wonder and delight that our young people are attracted to superficial and incoherent spiritualities.
- as anyone who has worked with young people knows, religious traditions can be dismissed as being irrelevant to the world of meaning that young people live in – this is not only true of young people as Tony Kelly has noted
- *Tony Kelly*: theology has been so negative about the Church that people could be excused for thinking that the integrity of Christian faith was found despite the Church, rather than being inspired by it. The supposedly free spirit of faith is always being compromised by 'the structures', or the Curia, or this or that ecclesiastical policy or decision:
- *Schneiders*: It can require uncommon faith and integrity to find in the Christian tradition the resources for a genuine Catholic spirituality by participating in the life of an institution that is often a very poor vehicle of that tradition.

- With these difficulties in mind, Catholic educators can be tempted to de-emphasise the Church or elements of Catholic faith such as liturgy, Scripture or doctrine and to emphasise values that might be more appealing to students. In this context sometimes spirituality is emphasised more than religion.
- Religious commitment without spirituality is sterile. Spirituality without religious commitment lacks a tradition of meaning which draws upon the rich resources of language, symbol, history, theology and ritual.
- Br Emili's analogy of the glass and the water said it beautifully for me – we need the water to satisfy our thirst for spirituality but without the glass there is nothing to hold the water in – not a matter of either/or, a matter of both/and
- Those who lead Catholic schools need to engage in theological reflection if they are to draw upon the tradition to create Catholic spaces which are formative and life-giving and which resonate culturally for our students
- I think an example might be important here to show how the dialogical school will be looking to draw explicitly from the tradition in an authentic and real way, rather than just skating across the surface of student experience to create a Catholic identity with students

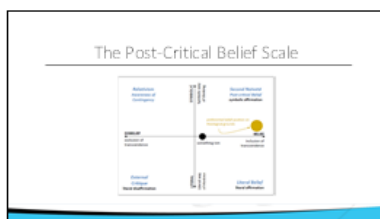
Slide 44



- I think it is very helpful to provide staff and students with scaffolding that gives them easy access to the faith tradition that animates the school
- The challenge is though to ensure that this scaffolding does not become a substitute for that faith
- I believe the Leuven research has something important to tell us about how we need to create many more opportunities for our staff and students to directly encounter the stories, rituals and beliefs of our Catholic faith. If we reduce our Catholic faith to culturally acceptable values, we hollow out the Catholic identity of the school and it eventually becomes a shell rather than an authentic, rich, life-giving, communal expression of Catholic faith.
- The Schools in Belgium have mostly gone down the values path and now you will find very few of them with a religious identity that we would affirm as being authentically Catholic

- In this context, there is nothing wrong with scaffolding like the “5 Pillars of the Marist Charism” so long as they are grounded in a living experience of Catholic community that explicitly prays in liturgy, imagines in the narratives of our tradition and grapples with Catholic beliefs and values in all their richness and even as I will say later in their presentation, in all their strangeness
- I know that some of your schools are currently taking down values posters and replacing them with texts and images that provide students with more explicit engagement with Catholic faith
- In just a moment I will highlight the importance of theological reflection as each of you engages with your leadership teams, staffs and students to create new and more explicit expressions of our faith that are authentically Catholic and at the same time more culturally resonant for your school communities
- before looking at the issue of theological reflection though, we need to touch upon a second of the instruments developed by our Leuven colleagues

Slide 45



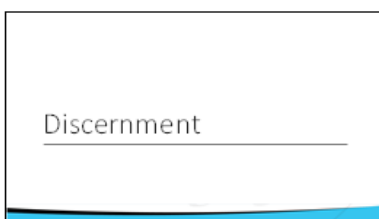
- The Post-Critical Belief Scale was developed by Professor Dirk Hutsebaut from KU Leuven on the basis of a typology created by Professor David Wulff
- Once again, I do not intend here to explore the PCB Scale at any depth or to consider the ways it is used in the schools that participate in this research
- the central message I take from the Scale however is the challenge of moving students from Relativism into Post-critical belief – this entails a movement from being critical about the faith to moving into a post-critical space or a second naïveté
- in this schema, engaging critically with the tradition is seen as being a necessary phase but not a final one – the goal is always to move into a critical engagement and then out through the other side into new commitment and understanding

Slide 46



- Growing marigolds is one way students are helped at Galilee to experience and interpret the Easter mystery
- Each Year in the lead-up to Ash Wednesday staff encourage the students in a particular year level to notice that the half wine barrels which once contained beautiful miniature gardens are apparently dry and dead
- In the context of an Ash Wednesday liturgy the students move outside to plant the seeds into the barren tubs
- During Lent the students learn about the resurrection of Jesus and the promise of new life with God and how despair turned to hope and courage for the followers of Jesus
- By Easter Sunday the once barren barrels and apparently dry seeds are in full bloom
- It would be easy for the teachers in the school to stay at the level of marigolds but they are quite clear that this is a unit about resurrection, not biology or even aesthetics – the challenge is to create a space where students authentically dialogue with the tradition as they engage in the learning activities

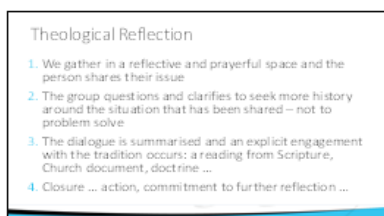
Slide 47



- How do we open up these frontier spaces in our schools?
- I mentioned earlier that the work of Jim and Therese D’Orsa in the Broken Bay Institute Mission and Education series is based on the belief that an essential skill for working in the “frontier” is the ability to “do theology”. They argue that to the extent that as school leaders we reflect on our experience in the light of faith, we are all grassroots theologians.

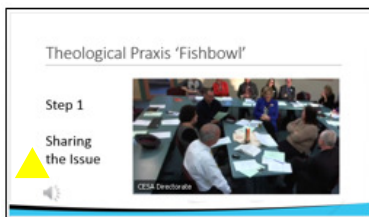
- I believe one of the most important things school leaders need to be able to do if they are to focus and strengthen the Catholic identity of their schools effectively is to discern what is happening in their school communities
- For me, discernment requires deep listening and reflection on what is happening in the life of the school
- It means moving underneath the functional level to listen deeply, attend carefully and reflect prayerfully on what is happening in our schools
- We need to engage in this kind of discernment if we are to develop the new strategies of engagement and new expressions of Catholic faith that we need to invite our students more cogently into their Catholic faith at this time
- I am aware that this kind of process may sound a little bit unrealistic or even pious for busy school leaders to achieve
- I want to show you an example of some initial attempts we are making in our State to develop a model of theological reflection for school leaders to use as they discern issues in their school and decide how to approach them from a Catholic perspective

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- We gather in a reflective and prayerful space and the person shares their issue
- The group questions and clarifies to seek more history around the situation that has been shared – not to problem solve
- The dialogue is summarised and an explicit engagement with the tradition occurs: a reading from Scripture, Church document, doctrine ...
- Closure ... action, commitment to further reflection ...
- there is nothing revolutionary about this method and we are only at the very early stages of developing it
- I believe however that it is very important that we commit ourselves to exploring how we can be more explicit in our engagement with the tradition, even as we develop new forms which are more culturally resonant for our students

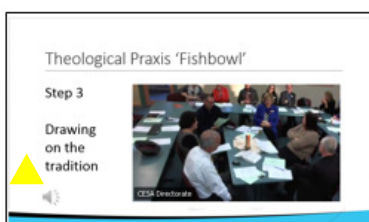
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- This is a still shot of a fishbowl exercise I did a couple of weeks ago with a praxis group
- we used a fishbowl technique where the inner group did the initial reflection and the outer group joined in
- You might notice the candle in the middle where we began with a prayer and tried to keep the reflective atmosphere going
- The audio is a voiceover of the presentation of the issue by the principal in blue towards the top of the screen – the microphone we were using did not pick up her voice well enough to use in this presentation
- as you watch this clip, I invite you to think about your own school and consider how you would draw explicitly from Catholic faith if this situation arose and you were leading the response to it

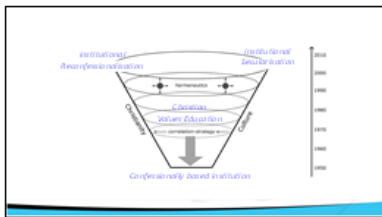
PLAY AUDIO

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- After the issue had been shared in the first stage we moved into the second stage where members of the group asked questions and sought more contextual information about the situation that had been shared
- In the third stage one of the co-leaders of the session summarised the issues and invited the group to draw from the Scriptures or some other element of the Tradition to add to the dialogue that had been opened up

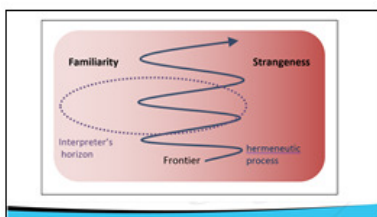
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- Those of you who are familiar with the Leuven research recognise this diagram from the Melbourne Scale
- The scale is based on a typology of identity options for Catholic institutions developed by Prof. Lieven Boeve, Dean of the Faculty of Theology at KU Leuven and was developed by Prof. Didier Pollefeyt and Dr Jan Bouwens from KU Leuven
- Once again, there isn't time in this session to discuss the typology in detail but you could talk with leaders from your own schools participating in this research to see what they think of it
- The only point I wanted to make was that I believe there is a deep insight in the analysis that has been undertaken by our Leuven colleagues – they are arguing that as the gap between Catholic faith and the broader culture widens, we see a number of identity options being taken up in our schools
 - The school becomes more secular
 - The school seeks to impose a particular version of Catholic identity on the students – without neither dialogue, discernment nor a sense of being on the frontier co-creating a Catholic identity that is authentic in terms of the tradition and resonant in terms of the culture of the students
 - The school reduces its Catholic faith to a values approach so that its identity is more acceptable for students
 - The only viable option in this model is for new Catholic expressions to be created that suit the new context of our day – these new Catholic strategies and expressions allow Catholic faith to be born again in this generation of students
- the challenge that I hear many school leaders taking from the report they receive when their school participates in the research is to shift from a values approach to a recontextualising approach
- you will recall from the student responsibility poster that I mentioned earlier that the Leuven analysis is that if we take a values approach to Catholic faith, we hollow it out and the Catholic identity of the school eventually becomes a shell of Catholic identity rather than living expression of communal faith

- I believe that a capacity for theological reflection lies at the heart of the school leader's ability to recontextualise Catholic faith with their staff and students
- rather than reducing Catholic beliefs, rituals or prayers to forms and expressions that the students are comfortable with, recontextualisation takes a traditional ritual or belief or text and creates a new form that challenges the students to engage with a sharp expression of Catholic faith
- the goal is not to alienate the students but neither is it to reduce the Catholic expression so that it sits comfortably within their worldview
- this challenge of recontextualising Catholic faith lies at the heart of the identity question for our schools at this time as I see it
- school leaders who want to work in the recontextualising frontier need to be able to reflect theologically together if they are to be equipped to develop new Catholic forms and expressions with their students that are authentic to our tradition and resonant with the cultures of our staff and students

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- From my perspective, the theological reflection needs to happen in the frontier between familiarity and strangeness and it needs to anchor itself in the mystery of Christ which lies at the heart of our tradition
- John Paul II wrote in his Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* that it was the Church's task to reflect the light of Christ in every historical period, to make his face shine also before the generations of the new millennium. He points out however that our capacity to witness would be hopelessly inadequate if we ourselves had not first *contemplated the face of Christ*. He lists a number of ways in which we do this in our day:
 - Scripture, particularly the witness of the Gospels
 - we cannot come to the fullness of contemplation of the Lord's face by our own efforts alone, but by allowing grace to take us by the hand. Only *the experience of silence and prayer* offers the proper setting for the growth and development of a true, faithful and consistent knowledge of that mystery of Christ in our midst

- We have just finished in Australia a Year of Grace: Spiritual Journey, setting some time aside to contemplate the face of Christ ... In each moment there is a divine presence and our task is to be open to that divine presence. We can do this by praying daily, listening to God's word, celebrating the Eucharist, repenting for our failures and seeking forgiveness and seeking the wisdom of the Spirit for our lives
- I have mentioned already the opening words from Benedict's first encyclical about the God of love who is at the centre of our faith: "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."
- Anyone who wants to impose these traditional elements on students will see them rejected by them – monological school
- the task is to work with staff and students to develop new strategies of engagement and new Catholic expressions with staff and students
- these strategies and forms need to be accepted and received by the school community – but the traditional elements can never be tamed or domesticated – they need to remain as a confrontation and a challenge
- I have developed this diagram to represent what happens when the Catholic identity process is working well in a school
- On the left hand side, we have the world of the student or the staff member – the world that is familiar to them – inside this world are their beliefs, knowledge, understanding, attitudes and ways of seeing and being in the world
- Increasingly as the gap between the Catholic world and the worlds of our students grows, we are finding that Catholic faith, at least as it has traditionally been expressed, is increasingly strange for students and even staff
- As I have mentioned, in the Leuven model, there are a number of responses to this gap between what is familiar to the students and what is present in Catholic faith
 - One response is to assert a particular version of Catholic faith and insist that students take it up – as we know students reject this strategy, and rightly so as even in Canon Law it is recognised that faith cannot be imposed on people, it must be taken up freely
 - Another response is to de-emphasise the Catholic identity of the school because it is strange to the students and their families – this option leads to the secularisation of the school
 - Another response is to translate key elements of Catholic faith and make those elements familiar to students – typically this involves expressing the faith in values terms such as compassion, trust, friendship etc – this has the effect of hollowing the tradition out and draining it of its meaning

- The response that is advocated in the Leuven analysis is to recontextualise Catholic faith – this means developing new expressions of Catholic faith that are culturally relevant for students but also authentically grounded in the tradition and challenging for all who encounter them
- Recontextualisation is a sophisticated process and it requires dialogue, discernment and a preparedness to work in the frontier space with the school community
- In the words of the hermeneutic philosopher Paul Ricoeur, the challenge of being in this frontier is to make the strange more familiar and the familiar more strange
- I wish you every blessing in your work in this frontier as familiarise the strange and strangeify the familiar
- I thank you for your attention during this presentation