



FORMATION FOR MISSION CASE STUDY
Maitland Newcastle Catholic Schools Office
We are called -we are challenged: Making Music

Target Participants

Newly appointed executive in Primary and Secondary Catholic Schools in their first five years of Leadership.

Aim of the Program

What does the program intend to achieve?

This program focuses on assisting newly appointed educational leaders to explore the educational and ecclesial functions of the Catholic School. It aims to break open their role in supporting the nature and purpose of Catholic Education. It strives to provide systematic, prioritised and regular formation to nurture their personal faith and to assist them to see beyond the practical functions of the school and to look to the horizon of evangelisation through genuine witness to faith.

Description of the Program (design, content, processes)

The soul of the program:

The intersection of the two functions (educational and ecclesial) is the moment of deep moral purpose where information becomes formation. This transformation changes the approach to learning from job, to a life vocation. In the combining of our best professional self, with our most mature spiritual character, through an encounter with the person of Christ, all action becomes moral, indeed it becomes holy. This encounter calls leaders to move from a transactional style of leadership, which is the default when under siege from a plethora of competing managerial agendas, to one which is transformational. In fact, through deep relationship, it is transfigured, changed from leadership into Catholic Leadership. "It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me." (Eph 3:19) Transfigured Leadership frees leaders to lead, and to ensure that learning and practice is relevant, purposeful, meaningful and testimonial. Underpinned by sound theological reflection, decisions become ethical, action becomes moral, learning is transformed and all relationships are imbued with a sense of the sacred. Thus, **every interaction**, is open to a personal encounter with Christ.

The program removes newly appointed leaders from their schools for two nights and two days, to provide a time of prayer, reflection and formation. It provides them with the time to "attend." This term coined by Lonergan suggests the importance for those on a spiritual journey to have space to attend to a spiritual moment in their life. It aims to provide a moment of awakening of leaders to the spirit beyond the managerial.

The over-arching program is entitled: **We are called – we are challenged**. Leaders in their first five years are prioritised to attend and are expected to attend all three parts. The second and third parts of the programs are still being written.

Part 1 is called: Making Music.

This program is scripturally rich with a focus on the metaphor of leadership as shepherd. Participants reflect on the times they are shepherd, gatekeeper, gate and indeed part of the flock themselves (Mark 6:30-34; John 10: 1-7; John 21:15-17). It promotes life- long learning, and life-long faith. It provides many moments of prayer and reflection: Prayer styles include: lectio divina, an examination of conscience, partner prayer, contemplation, formational reading and the celebration of Eucharist. The program unpacks what Canon Law says about education in faith, it traverses key Church documents on the Catholic School from 1965 and concludes with a commissioning by the Director of Schools.

Each day has a significant key note presentation:

Day 1: The Essential Dimensions of the Catholic School: Moral Purpose

Day 2: We are called, we are challenged

Part 2: is entitled *Sentinels*

Prayer styles will include an examination of conscience, partner prayer, icon prayer (unpacking the Damiano Cross, which was gifted during the commissioning in part 1 and Eucharist.

Keynotes:

Day 1: Eight core Catholic Principles to consider in decision making/ Revisiting Catholic Social Teaching and introducing the Creed.

Day 2: A focus on Theological reflection and its use in making ethical decisions. Workshop using examples from school setting to assist in the decision- making process.

Part 3: *Yet to be named and written*

Focus on The Creed and leadership transfigured by Faith/ and or leadership in the scriptures.

Focus on Lumen Fidei

In between each retreat experience, participants will participate in formational and spiritual exercises and will have a visit from the presenters to discuss ways that the formation is / has assisted them, insights and learnings.

Four principles of formation (*Framework*, p14) that are most evident in participant evaluation of this case study.

#3 Is explicitly Christological, scripturally rich and ecclesial grounded.

Scripture plays a central part and is essential to the insights being explored for leaders specific to their role. Church documents are woven into prayer, used for formational reading, and are crucial to unpacking the nature and purpose of the Catholic School. The life, death and resurrection of Christ is central to a core understanding of leadership in the Catholic School. This is mentioned regularly throughout the evaluations, at times with specific reference to scriptures that were used.

#5 Has substantive theological content.

This is the understanding of theology which the program unpacks:

“Theology is the human taking hold of the Word of God, the kneading of it, the shaping of it into human words and images, and the baking of it in the fire of critical thought, so that it can be received as the bread of life by God’s people. It cannot be the voice of only one group of the human family. If it is that it becomes unbalanced, it risks becoming an instrument of mind control and can lead to alienation of those who do not belong to that group. Theology needs to have the full range of human experience in it – to be the voice of the poor as well as the rich, of women as well as of men, of lay people, as well as of the ordained...” (Liam Walsh OP, *In building Bridges-Dominicans doing theology together*, Dominican Publications 2005, p.202)

Listed but not limited to are these theological principles:

- Catholic Social Teaching
- Mission
- Evangelisation
- Canon Law, Church Documents on Education, also references to a number of Encyclicals and letters.
- A trinitarian approach to leadership.
- Formation and faith
- Witness
- Proclamation

Participant comment:

- * Discussing what we think it is, how it relates to school and Church and others. Listening to others and their insights. Being part of a collective group who have similar visions / missions

Formation principles continued

#8 Promotes personal vocation, connection with the Catholic tradition and responsiveness to mission

Participant Comments:

- * Time to reflect on my mission and calling. Time to share the story of others. Time to learn from “giants”
- * The exploration of moral leadership and the discussions associated with this. The requirement for “Catholic “and “Educational” moral purpose
- * A great reminder of what it means to work in a Catholic School/ the reading was an excellent summary of the essential requirements of a thriving school
- * Our Catholic identity is a proud one and must be seen as a badge of honour – we need to promote this in a way that it clearly separates us from the other schools remember I am not alone. We are community made up of people who make mistakes yet the best I can do is to do my bet to bring the gospel values to others and the teachings of Jesus
- * My faith is at the corner of everything I do and I am willing to share it, model and reflect on it. As a leader I hope to “lead the sheep” but more importantly to “tend them”, through love, compassion and understanding

#9 Develops the willingness, confidence and capacities of participants in their roles to serve the evangelising mission of Catholic School education

- * Ways to offer and promote faith formation to staff. I feel this is a need and as a leader I need to encourage staff in participating in opportunities to nourish faith and Catholic spirituality. Making time and commitment to Catholic Social teachings in my leadership
- * The need to verbalise my Catholicity more and relate my actions to Jesus. Verbalise God Moments to provide link between words and actions
- * Where is our moral purpose evidenced in our commitment to the poor and marginalised? Who do we mission to? How can I prioritise my own faith formation with a view to articulating and strengthening this for my staff and parents?
- * Ensure that the teachings and love of Jesus is explicit to all those I meet. Ensure my community understands why we strive to be people of peace, faith, harmony and integrity. Moral purpose – is to be witness and serve the Good News and Jesus Christ. To bring others to formation, challenged to be explicit about what makes us Catholic
- * How can I better articulate to my community our moral purpose in a Catholic school? How can I do this in a meaningful, powerful way that ensures we, at all times, promote our Catholic identity in a proud way. How can I strengthen the faith formation of staff in a practical and inspiring way?

Selection of participants

Participants were targeted by the Assistant Directors and had to complete an expression of interest and be newly appointed.

Modes of Delivery/Facilitation

Central facilitator: Education Officer in Formation and Spirituality

Keynote speaker: Director of Schools.

Whole group, small group, individual, pairs.

Keynotes, workshops, media, formational reading, discussion, reflection.

Central to this, is the awareness that from the beginning, this experience is framed within the context of a retreat, the entire time is considered a moment of prayer and encounter. It is not a conference or professional development. The design of the retreat is critical to maintain this sense, and the ability to present and use a variety of spaces to achieve different purposes.

Frequency of Program

This program will be provided once a year. Parts 2 and 3 will be completed over the following four years, preferably over a three- year process. This is however dependent upon participants availability.

There are connecting activities which will take place during this time.

Program funding/costs

The CSO covers all release from schools and the cost of facilitators, resources and accommodation requirements.

Identification of participants' needs

The primary criteria is the appointment into a new senior leadership position in the Diocese.

Methods of evaluation and broad results of evaluation

Reflection rather than evaluation was encouraged throughout the retreat. This was felt to be preferable than a 'fill in the form' approach at the end of the two days.

The reflections were utterly astounding, with responses that reflected the aims of the program specifically.

Evaluations are ongoing and will, time permitting also include bridging activities between the different parts.

Essentially the greatest piece of evaluation is when Ranson's cycle of spirituality moves into the "acting" activity.

1. Attending
2. Inquiring
3. Interpreting
4. Acting.

This is the moment of metanoia, when your heart changes and spirituality is not only internal, it is the communal expression of your faith in life.

The most exciting to date, is the commitment of two of our participants from a secondary school to a planned, systematic, intentional development of a retreat program for formation for all their staff that will be developed from scratch to meet specific formation needs.

Further evaluation occurs when participants begin their bridging activities, and participate in theological reflection opportunities from the Education Officer in Formation and Spirituality.



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