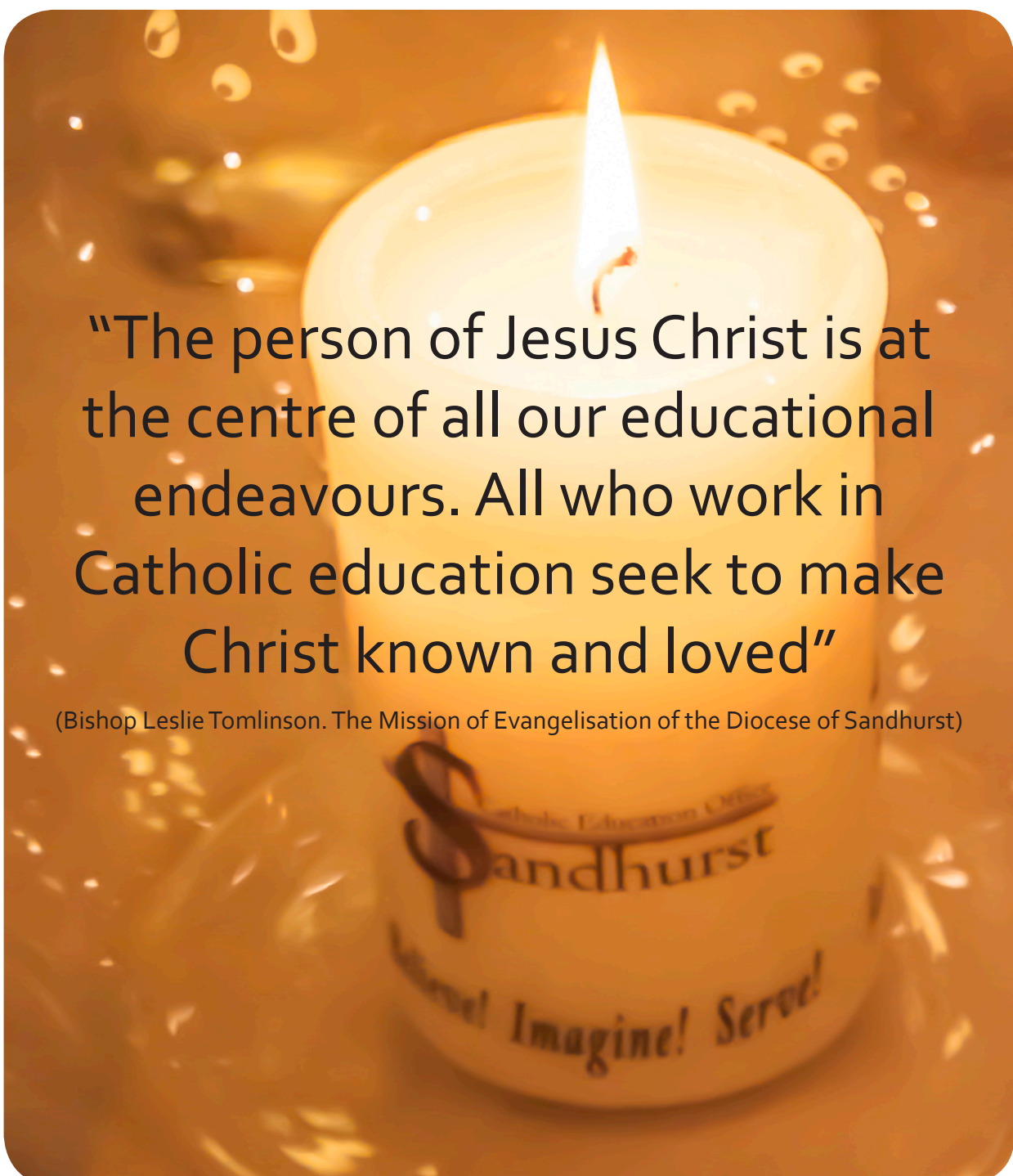


Inflamed by the love of Jesus

Faith Formation in
Catholic Education Sandhurst
Diocese of Sandhurst
(A document for CEO and School Staff in Sandhurst)

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly”
John 10:10

A lit candle in a glass holder, with the text "Catholic Education Office Sandhurst" and "Learn! Imagine! Serve!" on it. The candle is lit, and the flame is visible. The background is a warm, golden-brown color with a pattern of small, glowing circles.

“The person of Jesus Christ is at the centre of all our educational endeavours. All who work in Catholic education seek to make Christ known and loved”

(Bishop Leslie Tomlinson. The Mission of Evangelisation of the Diocese of Sandhurst)

Our work as educators in a Catholic context carries with it an awesome calling and a responsibility to honour that calling. At every level of learning and within every celebration of our Faith there must be a balance of a heartfelt response and an intellectual understanding of how the Church offers us an intimate relationship with God. Our need to know our story, our histories and cultures in a contemporary context while developing an understanding of our Teachings and sacred rituals (and the transformational power of each) require us to be strategic around faith formation.



Inflamed by the Love of Jesus offers all educators within the Diocese of Sandhurst a structure that will facilitate deeper learning and therefore, increased capacity. Our aim is always to ensure that our students, our young people and our adult learners have the very best in contemporary thinking as the Church moves within the modern world.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Desmond". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Paul Desmond
Director of Catholic Education Sandhurst

At the heart of Catholic education there is always Jesus Christ: everything that happens in Catholic schools and universities should lead to an encounter with the living Christ. If we look at the great educational challenges that we will face soon, we must keep the memory of God made flesh in the history of humanity - in our history - alive.

(Educating today and tomorrow: A renewing passion, 2014)

Rationale

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly”

John 10:10

In Sandhurst our foundational scripture text (John 10:10) for our Source of Life RE curriculum highlights our strong belief that **“the whole of education is a work of holiness”** (Core Document p.i). That we want all members of our school communities to flourish, reflects our desire for each of them to grow closer to God for “whatever makes us more genuinely human also makes us more like God” (ibid). Throughout history humanity has reflected on life’s “big questions” e.g. Why am I here? What happens when I die? As individuals develop their responses to such matters they in turn form and foster their faith lives.

Furthermore, we believe that as human beings **we are relational and by our nature we are worshipping and spiritual beings**. In the context of our society there are many different ideologies competing for our attention. The internet and the media exert strong influences on our interests, attention and desires. As a Catholic community, our longings and our spirituality have been shaped by the Catholic Church



I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since “no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord”.

(Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel* #3, 2013)

over 2000 years. **We continue to discover what it means to be human, in relation to others and God through reflection and practice within the faith community and in dialogue with the world around us.**

As educators, we are called to care for and educate the students in our schools paying attention to the academic, social, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects and needs of each individual. As Catholic educators we also introduce students to God and the Catholic Faith or continue to build on the work of the Catholic family. **In all areas of teaching there is an expectation that we are competent, reflective and committed to professional learning.** According to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) teacher standards, educators should “Know the content and how to teach it” (Standard 2), “Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments” (Standard 4) “Know and use strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students” (Standard 1.4), “Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians” (Standard 2.4) and “Engage in professional learning” (Standard 6).

Catholic educators are expected to be witnesses to the Faith, be able to dialogue with students, to create spaces for students to explore the meaning of life, and present the Catholic faith teachings, Tradition and practices. Educators can only engage with students in this way if they are confident in their knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith. As with other learning areas, educators are expected to know the content of Religious Education, Catholic Social Teaching (CST), Indigenous Perspectives, Sustainability and Creation Spirituality and how to teach it.

Formation in the Catholic Faith is a lifelong process involving, prayer, reflection and study. Formation for Catholic educators has a component of content or knowledge but also a component which helps and encourages them to deepen their faith and commitment to God and the Church. Leaders are challenged to create formation opportunities for staff which are invitational, dialogical, inspirational and informed.

Principles of Staff Formation in the Catholic faith in Sandhurst Diocese

Formation of staff in the Catholic faith in Sandhurst ...

- invites a relationship with a Trinitarian God
- is Christ-centred, focussed on developing a relationship with Christ
- is grounded in the Gospels and based on a positive anthropology (Imago Dei- all people are created in the image and likeness of God)
- is formation of the whole person
- is central to Catholic education
- is a lifelong journey
- can be challenging
- is strategic, intentional, systematic, collaborative, graduated and ongoing
- is respectful, engaging and dialogical
- deepens understandings of the relationships we form with God others, and creation
- respectfully discerns individual and community needs and contextualises to personal stories and everyday reality

Formation must focus first on the heart, not on the mind, as personal experience is often a necessary condition for nurturing knowledge.

(Sharkey, 2015 p.32)

“We recognise that every aspect of human knowledge and activity, to the extent that it is truly human, reveals something of the mystery of God and God’s creative intention for the world.”

(Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB)

- enhances personal spiritual development, enriching vocation, connecting with the Catholic Tradition and strengthening mission
- is invitational and calls for a response
- connects life and faith, faith and culture
- is grounded in scripture and Tradition
- develops and supports enthusiasm, confidence and capacity to contribute to the evangelising mission of Catholic school education
- provides a safe learning environment where learners are free to explore ideas, question and construct meaning
- informs moral and ethical decision making
- is purposeful and goal directed.

Faith Formation and Education in the Diocese of Sandhurst

Faith formation is both an individual and a communal experience. There will be times when staff members are supported to develop their personal faith lives as well as opportunities for reflection and growth within the faith community of the school and Parish.

Thomas Groome's description of the learning outcomes of Christian religious education forms the foundation for adult faith formation which would also desire to engage the whole person, increasing knowledge, capturing the heart and influencing actions for service:

*'I have been convinced for some time that the learning outcome of Christian religious education should be more than what the Western world typically means by knowledge, that it is to **engage the whole being** of people, their **heads, hearts and life styles**, and to **inform, form and transform their identity and agency in the world'***

(Groome, 2011).

The Enhancing Catholic School Identity Project (ECSIP) urges us to develop religious education and faith formation programs based on respectful dialogue. Through dialogue we promote both shared reflection regarding our common human experiences (and faith) and the articulation of new questions concerning the essence of our existence and moral purpose. In grappling with matters of faith and life, our pluralised society requires us to adopt an open, searching approach to make meaning of our lives. We must continually look imaginatively and with open minds for new insights into what it could mean to be a Catholic living and working in our contemporary culture.

ECSIP also tells us that dialogue leads to recontextualisation. In every new historical context the Catholic faith has needed, and continues to need, to be reimagined and re-presented, ie to be recontextualised. Recontextualisation accepts and appreciates many possibilities (beliefs, values, cultures, faiths) while recognising and preferencing Catholicism as the host Tradition. According to "Dialogue as the Future" (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2014), the best ways to recontextualise are (i) for educators to love their students and accept them for who they are (ie to build healthy relationships) and (ii) for educators to be the best witnesses they can be. This presupposes sound formation – in identity, faith, pedagogy, etc. In Sandhurst we provide experiences and formation opportunities which assist staff to recontextualise faith for their (i.e. this) time.

There are many times in people's lives when they need to make decisions of varying degrees of difficulty. As followers of Jesus, a key practice for decision making is discernment. Discernment, from the Latin word *discernere*, means to "separate or distinguish between" what are good and bad choices. Discernment requires us to be open to the Spirit of God in us. Often Catholic discernment is between two good options trying to find which will be the most life giving and true to our calling.

St. Ignatius of Loyola developed a process to help us determine how to make good choices, especially when faced with large decisions in our lives. This process helps us to become more receptive to the will of God, guiding us to the right choice. Staff in schools in the Sandhurst Diocese have the opportunity to understand and develop the skills and practices of discernment. These practices enhance personal reflection and contemplation.

What is the faith formation approach of Catholic Education Sandhurst?

Faith formation of staff in schools and the Catholic Education Office in the Diocese of Sandhurst is supported by Adult faith formation in the diocese.

"The ministry of Adult Faith Education in the Diocese of Sandhurst responds to the Church's expressed need for programs and resources to support Faith Education, Spiritual Formation and Ministry Skills Training, recognising that all the baptized are called to share Christ's mission in the Church for the world:

"We will be learning communities providing diverse, flexible and accessible opportunities for adults across the diocese to explore scripture, Vatican II, theology, Catholic Social Teaching, and a spirituality which connects prayer, faith, life, culture and mission."

<http://www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au/index.php/about-adult-faith-education>

Aboriginal Spirituality

The Sandhurst Diocese is committed to integrating Aboriginal spirituality and rituals into our faith formation experiences (e.g. message stick, smoking ceremony and acknowledgement of country). Aboriginal people, being the First Australians, hold a unique place in Australian society. We, as a Church and as a nation, can gain greatly from knowing and valuing the significant history of the First Australians and the legacy of past wisdom. Aboriginal people invite us to incorporate their rituals and symbols into our experience of faith. Through this process of inculturation the Church is becoming uniquely Australian. The fourth instruction of the Conciliar Constitution on the Liturgy states: "by inculturation, the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community".

Pope John Paul II, in his address at Blatherskite Park in 1986, spoke to all Australian Catholics when he stated, "You are part of Australia and Australia is part of you. And the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others." With Aboriginal contributions becoming integrated into our faith formation one of the ways we recontextualize our Australian Catholic faith story is through the integration of Aboriginal contributions into our faith formation.

We are also mindful of the participation of Aboriginal staff members in our diocese.

Aboriginal Australians invite us to acknowledge, honour and celebrate a spirituality and a way of being which embraces symbols, rituals, customs and their journey. In living Gospel values we are called to be people of reconciliation and inclusion because of our shared history and our shared humanity.

Resources

(Updated in the online version)

Catechism of the Catholic Church - http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM

Congregation for Catholic Education (2014). Educating Today & Tomorrow: A renewing Passion. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20140407_educare-oggi-e-domani_en.html

Congregation for Catholic Education (1997). The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium.

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_27041998_school2000_en.html

Employment in Catholic Education - <http://www.ceosand.catholic.edu.au/employment-main>

Framework for Formation for Mission in Catholic Education and accompanying website

<http://www.ncec.catholic.edu.au/resources/faith-formation-re>

Groome, T. (2011). Will there be faith? US: Harper Collins.

Instruction: Inculturation and the Roman Liturgy. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments Fourth. instruction for the right application of the Conciliar Constitution on the Liturgy issued on March 29, 1994.

Pollefeyt, D., & Bouwens, J. (2014). Identity in dialogue: Assessing and enhancing Catholic school identity. Research methodology and research results in Catholic schools in Victoria, Australia. Berlin: LIT Verlag.

Pope Francis (2013). The Joy of the Gospel. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html

Pope John Paul, (1986) Pilgrimage in Australia Address to the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Blatherskite Park Alice Springs (Australia).

NCEC. (2017). A Sharkey, P. (2015). Educators Guide to Catholic Identity. Mulgrave, Victoria: Vaughan Publishing

Tomlinson, Bishop L. (2015). The Mission of Evangelisation of the Diocese of Sandhurst. Bishop's Statement.

Faith formation opportunities are available through:

The Catholic Education Office

URL (link to a page which is updated with opportunities)

Adult Faith Education Sandhurst

<http://www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au/index.php/directory/adult-faith-education>

‘Our great spiritual reservoir is the human heart with all its desires and longings. When we probe our human desires for truth, goodness and beauty we foster our spirituality.

(Educating For Life. Groome, T. p. 329)