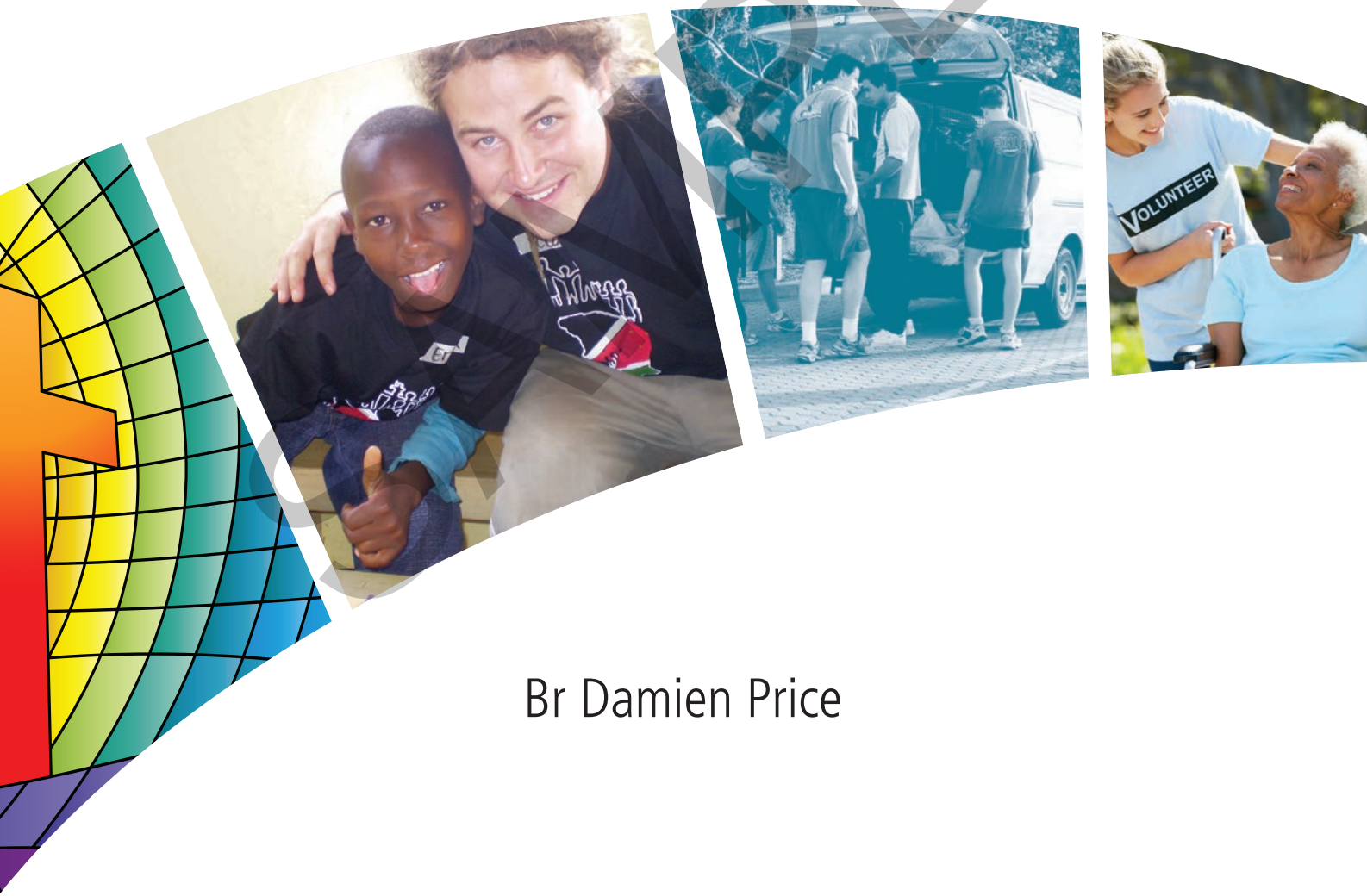


EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO

Service Learning

SERVICE LEARNING, EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING,
AND WHOLE-SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION



Br Damien Price



VAUGHAN PUBLISHING

The Educator's Guides

The Mission and Education Project of BBI-TAITE (The Australian Institute of Theological Education) includes a series of Guides designed to serve the educational mission of Catholic schools in Australia and beyond. The Guides introduce educators to ways in which mission and education may be integrated in the life and work of Catholic educators and students.

The mandate given to the expert writers who create these Guides is to tap into the best available treatments of mission, particularly as readily accessible from major Church documents, and also to ground their work in quality practice.

'Mission' in post-Vatican II Catholicism is a very rich concept. As baptised Christians we commit ourselves, individually and in community, to carry out the mission of Jesus in the world. This missional mandate takes us into some very demanding areas, calling for faith, expertise, prayer, and the support of our fellow Christians, as well as that of other partners beyond our communities.

We at BBI-TAITE are privileged to be at the service of the Church and offer these Guides as an element of that educational service.

Therese D'Orsa

Professor Mission and Culture

BBI-TAITE



VAUGHAN PUBLISHING

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Br Damien Price provides a prophetic yet practical guide to service learning and experiential education. His wisdom distils over forty years of experience and innovation that is both compelling and inspiring for the staff, students and communities it seeks to challenge. Br Damien Price has produced an extraordinary resource that reveals the insights behind his proven track record to deliver individual and community transformation. Indeed, this guide is a 'must have' for educators from any context who wish to have a positive impact on students' academic outcomes, personal efficacy, spiritual growth and moral development.

Dr Conor Finn
Dean of Formation
Ambrose Treacy College

Br Dr Damien Price has made a significant, ground-breaking contribution to Service-Learning in the K – 12 Sector in Australia. His theological insights and wisdom challenges all to explore Service-Learning's significance and purpose in a variety of contexts. His doctoral research sheds light upon the psychological aspects of a conceptual approach to Service-Learning. His narratives-of-practice demonstrate the power of experiential learning. Br Damien has worked for a number of years supporting Service Learning Champions in differing school sectors. Amongst educators in Lutheran Schools he is an engaging and popular key-note speaker and workshop leader at whole-of-staff retreats, network meetings, post-graduate short-courses and at state-wide conferences. Br Damien's work is highly valued and has been a transformative influence for many.

Dr Meg Noack,
EdD, MEd, GradDipArts (Children's Lit), GradDipRE
Australian Lutheran College Sessional Lecturer/
University of Divinity

Br Damien Price's life has been dedicated to building global communities that allow people to live with dignity and choice. A key component of his work has been focused upon creating opportunities for people to immerse, listen and collaborate so that true community can be established. This lifelong passion has culminated in the formation of this book and challenges each of us to 'take off our blinkers' and to live with more presence and compassion.

Anthony Ryan
Chief Executive Officer Youngcare
Founder of Eddie's Van

Br Damien's work in the area of Service Learning gives heart to school culture and learning. His balance of research and practical application allows for a richness of engagement by both staff and students. Damien's capacity to engage the head, heart and hand and to inspire young people to serve community beyond the school gates is what education should be about.

Jodie Hoff, Principal LORDS
(Lutheran Ormeau Rivers District School)

It has been my privilege to know both the heart of the person, Damien, and the heart of the work he has been doing over many, many years. Br Damien Price cfc PhD is a rare teacher, an everyday prophet and a steadfast advocate for the many young men he has helped to grow into their own sense of being in the world. He has been at the leading edge of the work in Service Learning and Student Formation in Australia and it is wonderful to see this book bring to life his research, experience, passion and wisdom. This Guide is essential reading for all those educators involved in the structuring of service learning programs for students that are effective and sustainable with impact far beyond the school years.

Dr Jill Gowdie PhD GAICD
Founder and Director of Wisdom Works International

Census data indicate that Catholicism is in decline and 30% of Australians identify themselves as having no religion. Br Damien's book acknowledges this reality and offers reflective and pragmatic responses to assist students to serve those who hurt and who are ignored. Society's nobodies become somebodies to students, who commit themselves to service learning. The framework is a catalyst for the young to grow as caring humans, who want to make a difference to their slice of the world. If you can't recognise Jesus in the streets from Monday to Saturday, you sure won't on Sunday.

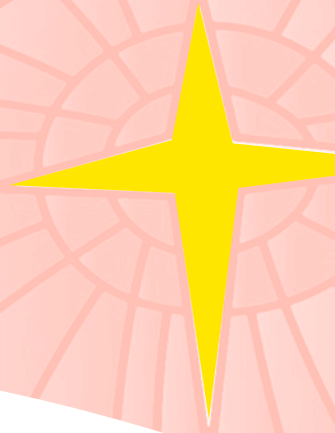
Assoc Professor Denis McLaughlin,
Australian Catholic University

Damien is a true champion in the field of Service Learning. I make this endorsement from both the perspective of adolescent student participant and adult learner, teacher, leader and facilitator in and of Service Learning. Whilst well intentioned efforts are often made in schools, striking the balance of mutual benefit, authentic participation, and embedded practice is not easy. Damien believes in the power of encounter through experience and deep and genuine connection with another. It is with his holistic approach that we move beyond simply participating, to having minds and hearts transformed – and for me it is in these moments that we experience 'fullness of life' (John 10:10).

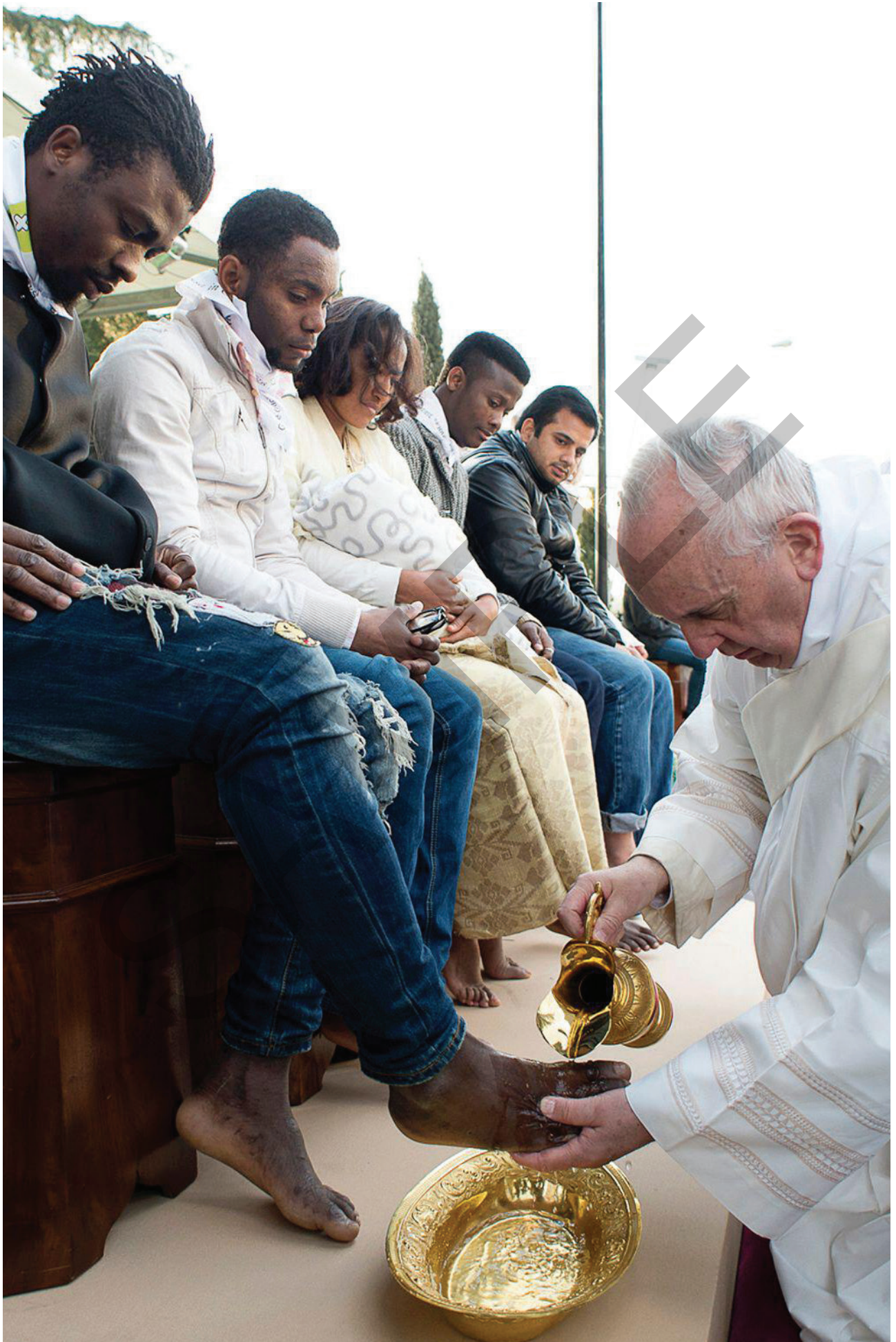
Joshua O'Keeffe
Assistant Principal Religious Education
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Service and the Gospel

Modern humanity listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if they do listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.

Saint Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975

This Guide begins by asking, “What is Service Learning?” Sadly, Service Learning is one of the most misunderstood academic and professional pursuits within schools. Too many label one-off, isolated community support experiences as Service Learning. While there may be some element of service in these experiences, the true and potentially transforming power of Service Learning occurs when that experience is intimately linked to the culture and curriculum of the school community. Such a community becomes the ‘cloud of witnesses’ that Paul VI refers to in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.

I would like to believe that it was no accident that on 14 October, 2018 Pope Francis canonised Pope Paul VI alongside Archbishop Oscar Romero. Both men, believing passionately in a better world for all, and in the missionary call of the Church to be an instrument for enabling this better world, were witnesses to the power of the Gospel. It was Paul VI who oversaw much of the Second Vatican Council after John XXIII had invited the Church to open wide its windows and engage with the people of God in the “joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age” (*Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World). Romero, responding to the needs of the people of God in El Salvador, spoke out against poverty, systemic violence and injustice, and invited the people of God to be instruments for this better world for all. Many would claim that the following homily written by Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw, Michigan, captured the heart and the spirit of Romero. He wrote:

This is what we are about.

*We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted, knowing
that they hold future promise.*

We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities. We can't do everything – there is a sense of liberation in realising that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it's a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that's the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.

Much of what inspired Paul VI and Romero also led Pope Francis to gift the Church and the world with his 2013 Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*, *Evangelii Gaudium*. In this Apostolic Exhortation Pope Francis says,

I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and then ends by being caught up in a web of obsession and procedures.

(Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, *Evangelii Gaudium*, p. 49.)

We live at a critical time in the history of the Church. In so many ways institutions, among them the Church, have lost so much credibility, especially in the eyes of the young. Young people are longing for meaning, for purpose, and to claim their agency as citizens for a

new world (their civic identity) and their birthright by baptism as children of a loving God.

In this critical time the Catholic School stands out as a possible beacon in the darkness. While churches are emptying and ageing, and materialism and consumerism appear to be all pervasive, Catholic Schools are attracting an increasing number of families. These families are seeking an educational partnership that will not only skill their children for the life of commerce, but engage them in developing a worldview that will give their lives meaning.

It is in this context that Service Learning has so much to contribute.

After asking, "What is Service Learning?" Chapter 1 paints the background of Service Learning in the professional field of experiential education. Inspired by the work of Paulo Freire and John Dewey, Service Learning practitioners have continually refined the rich interplay between experience, reflection and learning. The latter sections of Chapter 1 introduce the reader to a model of Service Learning and invite them to reflect on how we learn, and especially the role that both Semantic and Episodic Memories play in this process. Semantic memory holds the internal 'map' we have developed over time by which we negotiate our everyday experiences. Episodic Memory is the immediate storage and sorting house that holds a particular experience. It is in the interplay between these two where new meaning-making happens and values and attitudes can change.

In Chapter 2 the psychological processes at play in quality Service Learning are unpacked, as it is an understanding of these processes that will enable the creation of program guides to lead participants to a more transformative level of experience within service. For Service Learning to be truly effective not only must it reflect the core values of the community, and be intimately linked to the curriculum and culture of the community, but it must also engage continuous reflection upon experience. Chapter 3 invites readers to engage with this reflection upon experience, as the personal worldview of participants will be engaged, challenged, and perhaps modified and transformed. It is in these processes that the hopes and dreams expressed by Paul VI, Romero and Pope Francis, come to life.

Chapter 4 provides a way to ensure deeper meaning-making linked to the experience students are having. It is through direct relationship with those we serve,

time in service, the active engagement of program mentors, critical analysis, reflection upon experience and wrapping the whole dynamic in a credible theology and spirituality, that participant's worldview is hopefully expanded and transformed, and students learn to live into a 'culture of encounter'.

Chapter 5 offers a range of best practice techniques for student reflection and engagement. These are invaluable for the service learning practitioner. (Appendix A places before us a series of critical analysis questions that will assist in unpacking understanding linked to experience.)

The guide concludes by affirming the power and possibility of Service Learning in assisting educational practitioners bring about the reign of God within our world.

Our goal in every Catholic School ought to be to graduate students with the core values and associated concepts of that school deeply understood and owned. When experiences of a core value are woven through the culture, curriculum and Service Learning program of a school, and these experiences are reflected upon, then that value will be deeply internalised.

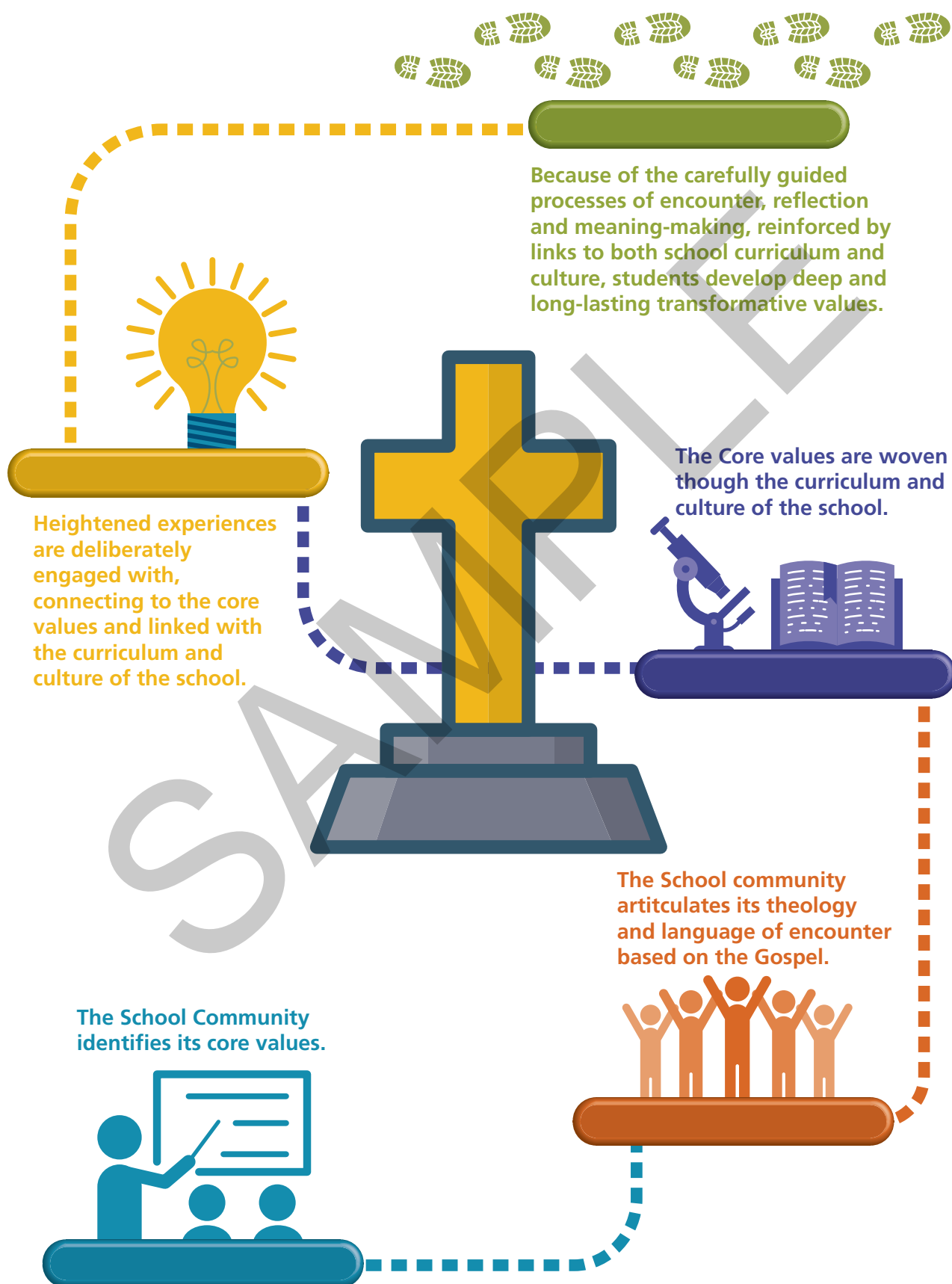
This dynamic applies especially to the learnings of our heart – our values and beliefs. This dynamic is at the very heart of what we are doing in Service Learning. When we experience and reflect upon our experience through the lens of our values and beliefs, we learn and grow.

It will be this kind of internalising and ownership of core values that will mission the student forth, not only deeply aware of their baptismal call to make a difference but also aware of their personal agency to do so.

As we begin the journey of engagement in an authentic process for Service Learning, the diagram following provides a map of the student journey. Use this map as you reflect on your own school or college community's capacity to enrich your student's world view in the transformational work of Service Learning.

Note: During this guide many direct quotations are used from students reflecting on their experiences of working with and building relationships with the homeless. These quotations are linked to Eddie's Van, a ministry of St Joseph's College, Gregory Terrace in Brisbane. **The coloured photos used in this guide are used with permission from St Joseph's College, Gregory Terrace. The black and white photos are used with permission of the photographer, Mr Chris Rix.**

The Service Learning Journey Map



What is Service Learning?

I was chatting to Len, a homeless guy that I knew well. He came over to me quite disturbed. He told me to be careful as “they were watching us, they have cameras everywhere!” “Who are watching us Len?” “They are, the Government, the City council, the army, they are everywhere, they are on the top of every building and they have cameras watching our every move!” For the rest of that time Len was sharing with me his fears and the fears we should all have as our every move was watched. At one point, a small voice in my head clicked in, “Len is crazy, he has lost the plot!” Then almost as quickly another voice in my head came into play, “No this is just Len’s mental illness, it is part of his paranoia, part of his story of abuse and substance abuse and resultant mental illness. I will just be present to Len, to his story, to him beyond the presenting mental illness!

Journal reflection from James on Eddie’s Van

The journal reflection above points to the value of Service Learning. In this instance, James has deeply encountered Len, one of the homeless men who lived in a park in inner city Brisbane. What had James learned? James’ initial response that Len was crazy was very quickly reframed in the context of the core values of his Service Learning program and the content of the relevant curriculum. James has learned about mental illness and substance abuse through curriculum input. James then placed this curriculum framing into the context of the school’s values, including the innate dignity of every person, their story and their presence, and our presence to the person as distinct from their presenting behaviour. Such learning is liberating and deeply influenced James’ worldview.

While the reflection above is significant it also points to a major difficulty facing Service Learning – that is a tendency to equate Service Learning only with powerful encounters such as that which James experienced. This guide would suggest that James’ was a heightened experience that was truly transformative but one that very few in a school community would have the opportunity to experience. For Service Learning to reach its fullest potential within an educational community it must consist of both heightened experience (deliberate and targeted experience associated with our core values) and normative experiences (experiences woven

through the day-to-day fabric of the school community that reflect our core values).

Service Learning is when, as part of its curriculum and culture, the members of a school community are invited to engage directly and indirectly in service experiences with the wider community. Through reflection upon their experience associated with the core values of the community, participants are challenged to evaluate or modify their worldview.

This guide deliberately takes a holistic view of Service Learning. This first chapter of our study guide helps the reader to be clear as to what Service Learning is, and its worth and place in educational theory.

For an activity to be Service Learning it must be both ‘service’ and ‘learning’. Many communities show this by expressing the term using a hyphen; Service-Learning.

Experiential Learning

The theoretical home for the approaches undertaken in this guide can be found in the work of Paulo Freire and John Dewey. Freire’s work challenged a ‘jug-mug’ approach to education with his emphasis on a dialogical approach to the learning dynamic.



Paulo Freire

For Freire, dialogue in the learning dynamic had to be based upon respect, not “one person acting on another, but rather people working with each other”. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Freire is critical of a ‘banking’ approach to learning where the educator makes deposits in the one being ‘educated’.

Of particular importance for our work here, Freire was deeply concerned with praxis – where action is informed and linked to certain values. Freire’s approach to learning not only sought to deepen understanding within the student but to lead them to be part of making a difference in the world through dialogue and cooperative activity that involves respect. This awareness of one’s ability and call to make a difference in our world we will refer to as agency.

John Dewey

The American educationalist and philosopher John Dewey, writing in the 1930’s, was passionate about reflected upon experience as being a prime facet of true learning. Dewey experimented with the links between experience, inquiry and reflection. But this experimentation always took place in the context of society, and the civic identity of youth taking their

place in society with a sense of their own agency. So, while Dewey was concerned with how learning took place and what the learning actually was, he was focused on asking how that learning led to action within society.

Dewey’s great contribution that has significantly influenced Service Learning is insight into the power and importance of reflection on experience.¹

The Power and Potential of Service Learning

The power and potential of Service Learning is reflected in James’ journal entry that began this chapter. James came to insights about mental illness and about the power of presence to a depth that he may never have reached through simply listening to a guest speaker or reading about homelessness in a book. Furthermore, James’ insights about mental illness and presence will hopefully remain with him on his life’s journey.

Service

Service Learning first requires that the action be one of service. This service brings about the reign of God, a more just and whole experience of life to the full for all.

¹ Giles & Eyler, 1994.

In Service Learning in schools, the school community will break open the concept of service and ensure that the student does not see it as charity or giving.

Other-centred encounter

Service is intimately linked to the culture of encounter that Pope Francis frequently refers to. The service encounter is a reciprocated encounter in which one both gives and receives. And it is respectful in that it focuses on the innate dignity of the one encountered and liberating in that it in some way frees both parties to the encounter.

Service is other-centred and in the paradox of the Gospel it gifts the one who serves. Service will enhance the quality of life of all involved in the encounter. However, service is not necessarily about fixing or even helping. Certainly in the other-centred encounter the one who serves may also assist the other. But ultimately in the service encounter you come as a guest to the sacred space and story of the other, you choose to be deeply present, and you allow your heart to open in compassion.²

Service needs to be engaged within a broad understanding. Too many images of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples come to mind, and while that image from the Gospel of John is a great compass point for us, it is only one understanding of service. Perhaps it may be better to see service as an 'other

centred' encounter whether the other be the earth itself, the elderly, the stranger, the differently abled, a minority group or even our peers.

Service does not stand alone

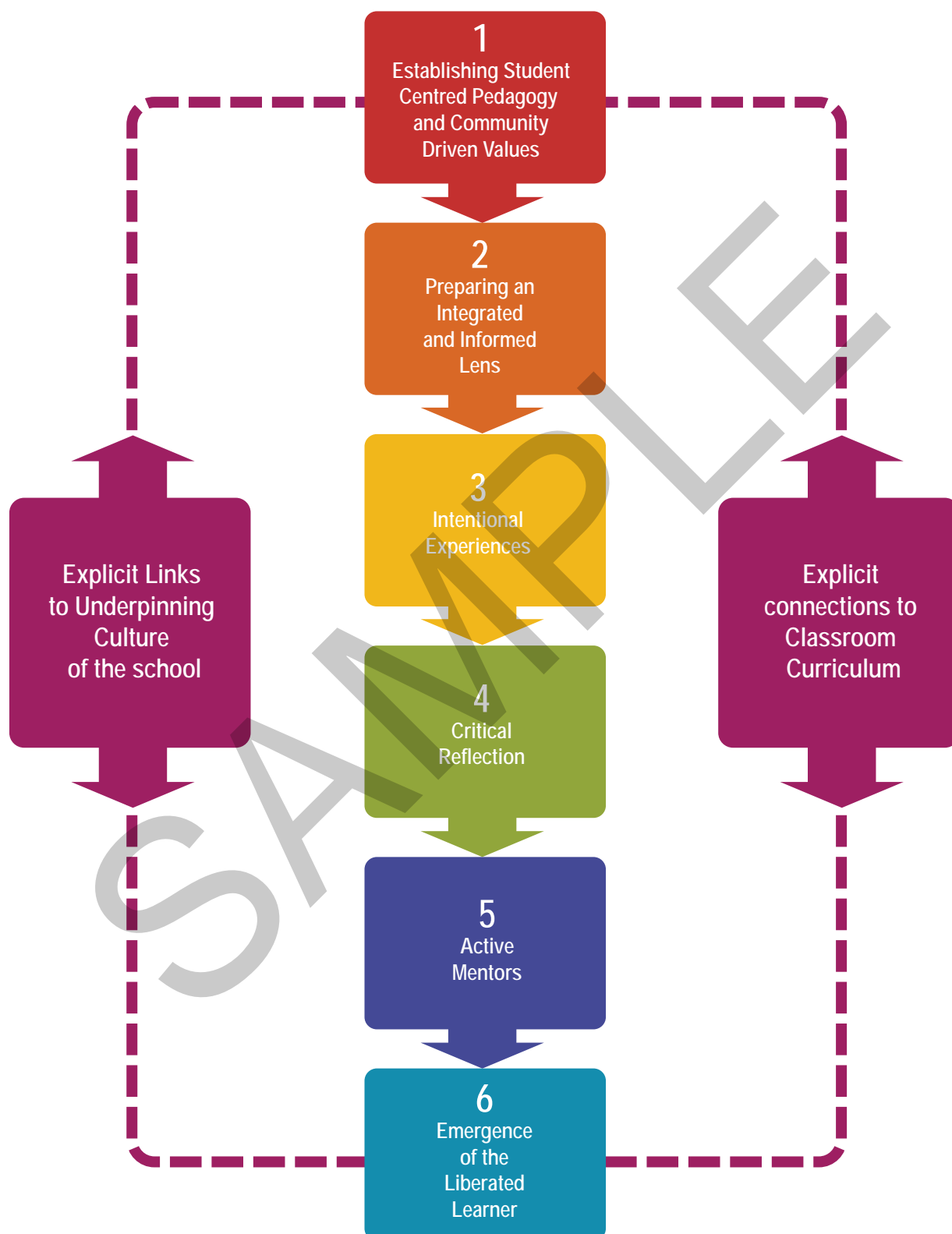
The Service we are speaking about reflects and links in to the culture, curriculum and core values of the community. Service does not stand alone nor is it a one-off 'feel good' experience. When a school community is engaging in an experience of service that is in isolation from the curriculum and/or culture of the community it can do harm, ingrain stereotypes, enhance dualistic thinking and undermine the core values of the community.

The experience of service that the community deliberately and professionally engages with will be clearly linked to aspects of the curriculum and or culture of the school. A unit of work in Biology may result in the experience of regeneration of an area of bushland overtaken by weeds and introduced species. A unit of work in Language Arts focusing on biography and storytelling may find the class interviewing students from a refugee school and together engaging in a creative writing piece. A unit of work in Geography focusing on liveability may result in students building relationships with homeless people and growing in their appreciation of the concept of cause and effect.

² Nouwen, 1975.



The Service Learning Space





Learning

The distinguishing feature of Service Learning however lies in the learning aspect of these encounters. We desire for the encounter to be transformative, to challenge, modify and/or change our worldview. Learning occurs when a concept placed in Semantic Memory is experienced in Episodic Memory and that experience is then reflected upon.

The learning in Service Learning will be aligned to a deliberate engagement with particular curriculum content. Using the Biology example cited previously, a teacher may engage with students in a unit of work that breaks open the content around ecosystems, interdependence and interconnectedness. When this content is then taken to students to research what types of plants and shrubs should be purchased or grown to regenerate an area of land, and then the students are actually engaged in the planting and upkeep of these plants and shrubs, learning occurs at a deeper and more transformative level.

Of course, concepts such as interdependence and interconnectedness can be applied in many other areas of the curriculum, and would deeply link to an

understanding of what Pope Francis was inviting us to through his encyclical *Laudato Si*. Service Learning invites a creative approach to both the school curriculum and culture. This approach asks for much lateral thinking, but gifts the learning process with great potential for transformation and worldview.

In many ways Service Learning, when allied with other aspects of experiential learning and when linked to ritual and symbol, forms community, and promotes acceptance and welcome. All this leads to a communal sense of mission which can be where the 'rubber hits the road' in Catholic schooling.

Service Learning is closely linked to our sense of mission. Service Learning equips students with a profound sense of their own agency (their ability to make a difference) and a sense of their civic identity: and associated with this a sense of being Church for our world.

Service Learning can contribute much to the Catholic Identity of the school. For youth in their adolescent years setting out on the adventure of developing a sense of their own identity, challenging boundaries and seeking meaning and purpose, Service Learning

can be one of the primary contexts in which this adventure can unfold.

Service Learning that strengthens the Catholic Identity of schools has the following characteristics:

1. Service Learning is underpinned by the Gospel principles highlighted in the *Church's social justice documents*.
2. Service Learning must be experienced over an *extended period of time*. Having one-off experiences does not reflect best practice nor nurture deep and transformative learning.
3. Service Learning includes processes of *briefing and debriefing*, both of which are highly reflective.
4. Connecting Service Learning to *the broader Jesus story* transforms the experience from secularised goodwill to strengthening the Catholic identity of a school.
5. Service Learning is *connected explicitly to the curriculum and culture* within a Catholic school or College. Service Learning, along with retreats, immersions and outreach activities, forms part of an integrated student formation plan in every Catholic school (Brisbane Catholic Education guidelines).

The Mission of the Catholic school is beautifully reflected in Service Learning. When the faith community identifies its core values and these find

expression in the culture, curriculum and Service Learning program of the school, we create a synchronicity across all aspects of school life that has integrity and speaks to the heart of what we are about.

When the values and concepts inherent in the Service Learning experience (reflecting the core values of the school) are broken open with students, experienced within the heightened experience and then reflected upon, deep learning occurs. When these processes occur regularly and become part of the culture of the school, Service Learning can contribute significantly to worldview change and personal transformation. Service Learning can truly be the Gospel in Action.

The Service Learning model shown above is linear and as such does not reflect accurately the spiral nature of service and particularly of learning linked to service. The model is based upon the Lens Model of Cone and Harris.³

The Service Learning Model

In this next section of the guide the stages of the model are broken open. Too many schools go straight to the 'Experiences' section of the model, thus tending to disconnect the experiences of students from the overall learning dynamic. However, fundamental to an authentic and effective Service Learning model is an engagement with each aspect of the model.

3 Cone & Harris, 1996, p. 45.

