

LEADING CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR EMERGING LEADERS

Angelo Belmonte & Richard Rymarz



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QR Codes

The aim of an ideal book on education will have three qualities: the problem to be discussed will be professionally identified; paths for its resolution will be clearly stated; and the book will engage the reader in reflecting on their own experience. The co-authors, Angelo and Richard, eminently achieve this aim. The challenge confronting the future of Catholic schools is how to maintain their unique identity for the benefit of pupils, families and nation. The person of Jesus Christ and his mission are the foundations of this identity. Teachers must not only know these foundations but be committed to living them. If they lack a personal relationship with Christ the leader, teachers will “be no more than a gong booming or a cymbal clashing” (1 Cor13:1). By the use of case studies the authors move readers to reflect on their own experience as educationalists and what they can do to enhance this experience. In so doing they will be more effective as leaders in building a vibrant Catholic culture in schools...I wholeheartedly recommend this urgently needed praxis-oriented book by two highly skilled and committed educationalists.

- Gerald A. Arbuckle, SM author: Intentional Faith Communities in Catholic Education: Challenge and Response

Now, more than ever, our Catholic schools require leadership that builds strong relationships and empowers all key stakeholders to ensure that we never lose focus on why we have Catholic Education for our children. I congratulate Angelo and Richard for this insightful, challenging, and thought-provoking look into being a leader in our Catholic Schools. I strongly encourage all staff and leaders in a Catholic School to ensure that this book is a compulsory, and often referred to, component of their professional library.

-Tony Hunter, Catholic School Principal

(Leading Catholic Schools) has been written as a ‘work’ book, with the stories and anecdotes adding a personal touch to the historical background of Catholic Education. The questions and reflections add the opportunity for educators to further reflect on their own learning journey, in addition to providing a practical element and valuable resource material for students and teachers alike.

- Dr Sandra Harvey Assistant Director: System Improvement Catholic Education Office, Ballarat

A very attractive production...and comprehensive in its coverage of key leadership dimensions in a context of the contemporary Catholic school. A very positive contribution to the discourse of integration of faith, life and culture in a way that honours the legacy from earlier generations of Catholic educators. I feel privileged to be associated with this worthy project and I hope Leading Catholic Schools gets the patronage it deserves.

- Blessings, Aengus Kavanagh

The school leadership landscape is replete with books offering suggestions as to how one should lead in contemporary times. Few, like Leading Catholic Schools, take these messages directly into educational systems and schools that are special and different, such as those in the Catholic sector. The book makes a valuable contribution for the practitioner as well as potential researchers of Catholic school leadership. Importantly, it takes seriously the need to ground school leadership discussions “in context” to reflect the uniqueness of each school and its leadership challenges. The book is authentic, building on the extant research as well as the practical insights of the authors. Leading Catholic Schools is a must-read for senior and middle levels leaders in Catholic schools and those aspiring to such positions.

-Dr Neil Cranston, Former Professor, Educational Leadership & Curriculum, University of Tasmania



Contents

Forward	1
Introduction	3
Chapter 1	
The Story of Catholic Schools in Australia	5
Chapter 2	
Secularisation, Culture, and a Changing Era	11
Chapter 3	
Understanding the Community in Catholic Schools	17
Chapter 4	
Charism and Identity: Responding to a New Context	23
Chapter 5	
Culture of Catholic Schools	29
Chapter 6	
The Mission of Catholic Schools	39
Chapter 7	
Perspectives of Leadership	49
Chapter 8	
Leading the Catholic School Mission	57
Chapter 9	
Servant Leadership: Leading Like Jesus Did	67
Chapter 10	
Leading Religious Education	73
Chapter 11	
Formation for Leadership	79
References and Further Reading	84
About the Authors	90



HOLY
BIBLE

Foreword

History claims that the first Catholic school in Australia opened at Hunter St, Parramatta, in 1820. This school carried out its mission under the patronage of Fr John Therry, with layman George Morley as possibly the only member of staff, and an enrolment of about 30 students. Two hundred years later and the Catholic sector of the Australian education landscape is flourishing with over 1750 Catholic schools educating over 760,000 students.

From 1820 onwards the number of Catholic schools expanded, mainly small in size, often but an annex to the local parish church, and generally staffed by one or two committed lay Catholics. Small government grants were given to the Catholic and other denominational schools emerging, enabling the payment of modest salaries to staff.

The promulgation of the Public Instruction Act by New South Wales Premier Sir Henry Parkes in 1880, confronted Catholics with a serious challenge. The Act decreed that all school education in the State would now become compulsory, free, and secular. Baulking at the term 'secular' and with the support of local Catholic communities, the clergy of the day took the bold decision to go it alone and establish a separate Catholic system of schools. This was a courageous and faith-filled initiative, entailing as it did that Catholic schools would henceforth forfeit any entitlement to Government funding. And thus it was, until a first trickle of government funding recommenced in the late 1960s.

By coincidence, good fortune or Providence, the 19th century witnessed the foundation of a number of religious congregations, mainly in Ireland and in France, whose main mission was Catholic school education. In the late 19th century and up to the mid-20th century, many religious sisters and religious brothers came to Australia to staff Catholic schools. Together with the locally founded Sisters of St Joseph and Good Samaritan Sisters, these constituted the bulk of the unsalaried workforce that maintained and expanded the Catholic system of schools. In 1965, less than 60 years ago, Catholic schools in NSW

were staffed by 3,500 religious sisters, brothers, or priests. From the 1880s up to that time, no Catholic school had a lay principal.

This historical snapshot is given here as it recalls foundational and defining events in the story of Catholic schools in Australia. The existence of Catholic schools as a separate sector is justified to the extent that they bear witness to the sacrifices made by Catholic communities in times of hardship. These sacrifices were made from the conviction that the religious dimension is an integral part of a balanced education. And besides, to honour the legacy of the generations of religious sisters, brothers and priests who carried the schools through the decades of non-government funding, and for whom Catholic education was beyond a career or a profession, it must be mentioned that their work was truly a vocation.

Those two features – the decision to forego government funding and to go it alone in the 1880s, and the generations of consecrated women and men who devoted their entire lives to the mission of Catholic schools – gave Catholic education in Australia a unique identity and a rich legacy. A question to continually inform, to challenge, and to inspire present and future generations of Catholic educators is – WHY DID THEY DO IT? Certainly not to replicate what any good State school could offer!

Circumstances have changed dramatically in the story of Catholic schools. There has been an ease in the complete transition of staffing and leadership from religious to lay. Cohorts of women and men of faith have stepped forward to grow what is best in the story. Never in their history have Catholics schools been so well resourced. Never have school leaders, teachers, and non-teaching staff been so professionally qualified. And generally, Catholic schools project a positive

face of the Catholic church across a diverse urban SES range, in regional settings, and in small rural communities.

Given the professionalism and confidence of staffs generally in Catholic schools now, there is every reason to assume that Catholic schools will not be found wanting in keeping abreast of the rapidly changing landscape of contemporary pedagogy. Their greatest challenge will be to hold onto the foundational convictions which justify their continued existence as a separate sector. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Learning (AITSL) has published an enlightened and comprehensive articulation of national standards for all teachers in Australia. The why, the what and the how of teaching are named in great detail. However, there is very little mention of the who of teaching and yet it is probably the 'who' of the teacher that makes the most difference.

Reputed USA educator and author Parker Palmer, in his book *The Courage to Teach*, makes a bold claim which resonates with conventual wisdom: 'Good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher ... as I teach I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together ... my teaching holds a mirror to my soul.' If this claim points to a possible weakness in the AITSL standards it poses a more serious challenge to Catholic schools who profess to be Gospel communities.

For many decades now there has been a globalisation of indifference to institutional religion. Along with the sexual abuse scandals of the Catholic church, this trend has impacted seriously on the number of baptised Catholics who continue to practise their faith. Hence, a majority of staff in Catholic schools, especially secondary schools, are no longer culturally Catholic. Good human beings yes, and mostly Catholic at heart and at ease with the ethos of Catholic schools. Whereas many may have problems with some church policies and practices, few will have problems with the fundamental mission of the Catholic school which is to be the continued transforming presence of Jesus in society. What person of goodwill could have problems in promoting the Jesus of integrity, of compassion, of justice, of hope and of love, in a world desperately in need of such values?

The greatest priority for leaders in Catholic schools and systems now is the provision of a range of faith and spirituality formation opportunities to enable staff to come to this understanding of, and commitment to, the mission of the Catholic school. Anything short of this may easily degenerate into a veneer of box-ticking religiosity.

In the context of foregoing contentions, the publication of this well-crafted and reader-friendly book, *Leading Catholic Schools: A Practical Guide for Emerging Leaders*, is heartening and timely. While rich in its capture of the story and in its fresh enunciation of enduring principles of good education in a Catholic context, the book is intentional and strategic in its invitation to the reader to embark on a formation journey in bringing concepts and practices expressed into conversation with one's lived experience. Relevant QR scans, YouTube links, and structured reflection prompts are scattered throughout. The book is an interactive resource inviting application of sound adult education principles conducive to lively dialogue and reflective practice.

Co-authors Angelo Belmonte and Richard Rymarz bring a wealth of experience and scholarship to this production. For 25 years Angelo Belmonte has been associated with the Bathurst Diocese's Catholic Education Office, where he is the Religious Education Consultant. In this capacity he has developed a seasoned sense of what Pope Francis calls 'the smell of the sheep'. From his long-term association across Catholic schools ranging from small and remote primary schools to large regional secondary schools, he has become acutely aware of the factors affecting religious education and faith formation in present realities.

Richard Rymarz has a distinguished career in Canada and in Australia, as a researcher, an author, and a lecturer. He has been a prolific publisher in themes exploring religious education in schools, and in Catholic school identity. Together, Angelo and Richard bring to Catholic schools and system authorities a rich contemporary resource in putting the spotlight afresh on enduring priorities.

Bro Aengus Kavanagh

Introduction

In brief, the following characteristics [of Catholic schools] stand out: harmony with the formative aims of secular schools; the originality of the educational community permeated by evangelical values; attention to young people; concern for teaching the integration of faith, culture, and life. Directory of Catechesis, 2020, 309.

Contemporary Catholic education is an important and serious concept. This is particularly the case for Catholic parents and their children, but also for families who are not Catholics. Thus, contemporary Catholic education is of critical importance to communities and the Church as a whole, and what follows from this is that good leadership within Catholic schools is crucial.

Catholic education has changed over time as many things have in our world. In contemporary education, let us take as the lofty goal for Catholic schools what is spelt out above with, “... the integration of faith, culture, and life”. This is not a time-bound aspiration but is a dynamic concept which recognises that the cultural context in which schools operate can change.

Catholic schools have been intrinsically bound over the centuries by the religious traditions of the Catholic Church, and they served as a firm framework for the building of an authentic educational and faith community. At the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) the Australian Catholic school was clearly seen as being in alignment with the home and the parish. It was a cultural milieu that supported the religious faith and practices of the Catholic family, many of whom belonged to and actively participated in a local parish under the leadership of the clergy and the authority of the local bishop. Such an environment provided a strong sense of identity and purpose for members of the Church and its school. The school was the cultural agent of the Church, entrusted with the task of handing on the Catholic faith, its beliefs, traditions and practices to the next generation.

Since the establishment of schools 200 years ago, however, we have had an unprecedented era of social, educational and ecclesial change. Catholic schools have been challenged to redefine and re-articulate their Catholic character and identity. Australia, like many other western cultures, is a pluralistic and secular society. As a society and as individuals, Australians are struggling with issues of national identity, religious disaffiliation, multiculturalism, racism, fear of terrorism, fragmentation of human relations and dysfunctional family patterns, unemployment and underemployment, recognition

of Indigenous peoples, widening gaps between rich and poor, environmental responsibility, and the information and technology explosion. We can now add to this our vulnerability to global pandemics. Within this ferment, both family and church now compete with strong cultural factors such as media, both traditional and social, and new patterns of socialisation and globalisation. With old securities and patterns of belonging now greatly diminished, the mission of the Church, and thus the nature of Catholic schools, are clearly under stress. Yet, despite the difficulties, Catholic schools have continued to be a major expression of the Church’s presence in society and attract support from wide sections of the Australian community.

This support and the longevity of Catholic schools are to be celebrated but always with a view to being cognizant and responsive to new challenges and possibilities. For Catholic schools to successfully address these new challenges and possibilities, the role of the school principal, and that of all school leaders, is of critical importance. Therefore identifying, nurturing and supporting emerging leaders are key tasks.

This book has two main purposes in mind. The first is to guide the professional learning and development of aspiring leaders and to encourage teachers to consider movement into leadership positions. The second is to unite Catholic schools around a vision of agreed leadership practices – ‘the standards’ – and to provide a foundation for formalised assessment against these practices.

Leading Catholic Schools looks briefly at the story of Catholic schools in Australia. In the process of doing so it explores secularisation, culture, community, charism and identity, before re-examining the mission of Catholic schools and leadership. Servant leadership is explained and explored in detail, as is the very important topic of formation for leadership.

Leading Catholic Schools is a book that will equip you and your community for the most effective Catholic school education. It is a contemporary approach guided by history, life and education in the modern world, as well as the resources available to the church in its mission to educate. Above all it is a scholarly approach grounded in the earliest teachings of the Church.

Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, *Directory for Catechesis*.
Strathfield, NSW: St Paul Publications.



Chapter 1

The Story of Catholic Schools in Australia

Catholics do not believe that the education of a child is like a thing of mechanism that can be put together bit by bit. Now a morsel of instruction of religion, then of instruction in secular learning – separate parcels. We hold that the subjects taught, the teacher and his [sic] faith, the rule and practice of the school day, all combine to produce results that we Catholics consider to be education.

(John Bede Polding: First Catholic Bishop of Australia)

This chapter provides a short history of Catholic education in Australia. In the process of doing so it examines the historical development of the leadership and staff of Catholic schools, while also providing an account of the transition from religious to lay personnel. In these contemporary times when Catholic school identity is constantly being challenged, the changing context of Church, society and school in Australia is seen as very relevant.

At the time of the Second Vatican Council (1963–1965) the Catholic school was clearly seen as an extension of the home and the parish. It was a milieu that supported the religious faith and practices of the Catholic family that also belonged to, and actively participated in, a local parish under the leadership of the clergy and the authority of the local bishop. Such an environment provided a strong sense of identity and purpose for members of the Church and school. The school was the cultural agent of the Church, entrusted with the task of handing on the Catholic faith and its beliefs, traditions and practices to the next generation.

Since the Second Vatican Council there has been an unprecedented era of social, educational and ecclesial change, and Catholic schools have been challenged to redefine and re-articulate their Catholic character and identity. The decreasing number of religious personnel in schools in particular has caused the distinctiveness of Catholic schools to be scrutinised with scepticism by Church leaders. As teachers and principals of school communities, it was

Kindergarten Sacred Heart, Orange 1940s

assumed that the religious had a strong faith life through their own religious training and that they emphasised the mission, spirit, culture and charism of Catholic education. Such an assumption today cannot be made of lay staff and principals who predominantly staff these schools.

Catholic schools have been a major component of Australian education for over 200 years. During that time, they adapted to changing circumstances and changing times; but at a time of profound change in society and the Church we are, as Pope Francis reminds us, not in an era of change but a change of era.

The Development of Catholic Education in Australia

Brian Croke (1996) has framed the journey of Catholic education around four phases:

Phase 1 commenced with the early settlement of convicts including many Irish Catholics. Religious denominations such as Anglicans and Catholics received subsidies for schools following the promulgation by Governor Bourke in 1832 of the Irish National System of schools.

By 1839 the government was giving funds to 19 Catholic schools, as well as 37 Anglican, 17 Presbyterian and 5 Methodist schools. Catholic schools multiplied in the 1840s and 1850s with free Catholic settlers arriving in New South Wales to escape famine in Ireland or to join the gold rushes. In 1863 there were 122 Catholic schools in New South Wales alone.

By 1870 however, secularism and sectarianism led to the abolition of all aid to Church schools. From the 1870s, each colony took responsibility for schooling through an Act of

Parliament, and education was to be free, secular and compulsory.

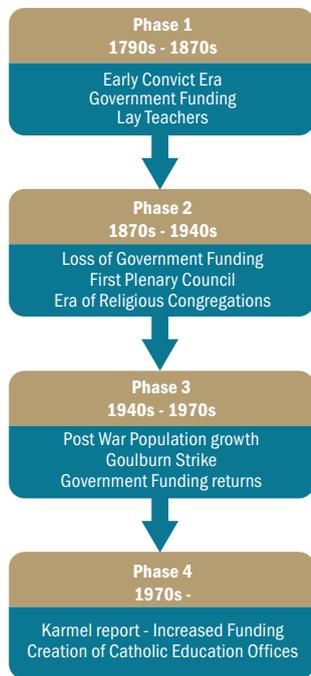


Fig 1: The Story of Catholic Schools in Australia: a snapshot of key phases

Phase 2 was initiated by the loss of government support and the Bishops' response of establishing a system of schools. In 1885 at their first Plenary Council, the Australasian Catholic Bishops declared that the first priority for parishes should be the provision of Catholic schools.

With the large numbers of children to be educated, the bishops sought teachers from religious congregations – the great majority Irish – to replace lay teachers, whose salaries were much higher than those of teachers from religious orders. In many cases, religious brothers and sisters worked without pay and had to support themselves by taking in boarders and giving music lessons.

Phase 3 included the periods from the Second World War to about 1970. There was a post-war school population explosion with rapid growth of the Catholic population, a high proportion of which were immigrants. Increased enrolments, teacher shortages and rising costs resulted in pressure to build and equip new schools. By the 1960s, many Catholics grew tired of the burdens of sustaining a system of Catholic schools on their own. Consequently they became more radical in their demands for State and Federal governments to help support Catholic schools. The most dramatic action in gaining state funding was the school strike in 1962 in the New South Wales town of Goulburn (see below).

In 1964 Commonwealth capital grants were introduced for all Secondary schools to fund Science laboratories and equipment. In 1969 capital grants for libraries in the Secondary schools of both government and non-government sectors were extended.

At the same time, the Catholic Church itself underwent internal reform following the Second Vatican Council. One of the many changes in Australia was the decline of religious and the beginning of lay teacher responsibility for schools. After having been for a century the main stay of Catholic schools in Australia, schools were now returning to their situation prior to the Education Acts of the 1880s, when they were predominately staffed by lay teachers.

The period from the 1950s through until the 1970s in particular, saw a rapid transition from religious to lay. In 1950, for example, brothers and nuns made up 95% of the teaching force in Catholic schools in Australia. By 2003, religious made up only 1.27% of teachers.

The Goulburn Strike 1962

The Video documents a turning point in the history of Catholic schooling in Australia.
<https://youtu.be/9xVgWYCKb5g>

The Goulburn Strike of 1962 fuelled the campaign for educational justice for parents with children in Catholic schools. Enrolment pressures were placed on all schools due to post-war immigration and the result was the return of government funding.



Croke's final phase was initiated by the recommendations made by the Karmel Committee (1973), resulting in Catholic schools receiving a substantial injection of funds. Building programs could be undertaken with confidence, class sizes were reduced, and various administrative services such as Catholic Education Commissions and Catholic Education Offices were established or extended.

Additional assistance was given to disadvantaged communities, library facilities and other educational innovations. In the years that followed, State and Commonwealth governments extended more and more funds to Catholic schools – leading to a situation today where without it, Catholic schools would cease to exist.



The Goulburn Evening Post, 1962

The Church Since Vatican II

As we will also note in other chapters, Australia, like many other western cultures, is a pluralistic society. As a society and as individuals, Australians are struggling with issues of national identity, multiculturalism, racism, fear of terrorism, fragmentation of human relations and dysfunctional family patterns, recognition of Aboriginal people, widening gaps between rich and poor, and environmental responsibility. And issues such as divorce and remarriage, birth control and sexuality, the ordination of women and married clergy, are still areas of contention for Catholics. The scandals of sexual abuse by clergy and an administration which appears to have been less than honest, have caused further suspicion of the Church.

Within this, both family and church now compete with the power of the media in forming values. With old securities now gone, the mission of the Church – and therefore the nature of Catholic schools – are clearly under stress from the growing materialism and secularisation of Australian society.

In the pre-Vatican II Church there existed a homogenous Catholic subculture of practising Catholics who sent their children to Catholic schools to support and affirm the values that had been nurtured at home. Now, however, as Engebretson (2014) suggests, the situation has changed. The enrolment of a significant number of non-Catholic students may have nothing to do with a belief in the teachings of the Catholic Church or a desire to embrace the Catholic way of life. Yet such a situation has an impact on the delivery of the religious education curriculum. Although academically able in terms of the formal teaching curriculum, the same students generally are illiterate and uninterested in matters relating to Catholic traditions and teaching.

Of concern in the role of the Catholic school in the nurturing of faith, is the rejection of the institutional Church by young people and schools' reliance on enrolment of non-Catholic students. Data from the National Catholic Education Commission (2017) showed that there were 766,088 students in 1741 Catholic schools in Australia. Sixty-seven per cent (513,278 students) were Catholic while 33% (212,000) were from religious denominations other than Catholic. While there was an overall increase in the total number of Catholic students by 1000 over the years 2012–2017, in the same period the numbers of non-Catholic students increased by 32,000. At the same time Catholic schools have also experienced increases in the number of non-Catholic teachers teaching in Catholic schools, and teachers who are baptised Catholic but who have little to do with the Church or its teaching. Within this milieu, only time will tell how contextual changes in society, the Church, and the education system will affect the special identity of the Catholic school.



Santa Maria College, Orange 1969



Santa Maria College, Orange 1974

The two photos above show the transition from religious to lay. In most schools this was gradual, but as these two staff photos testify, in some cases it came quite quickly. The vast majority of the lay teachers were taught by religious and were active in the parish community.

What profiles and characteristics of teachers could we expect from a staff photo from the same school in 2020? In 2030?

Michael Stewart: Leadership in a Changing Era

Michael's cultural heritage emanated from a strong Catholic background. As the second son of a devout Catholic father and mother, Michael was immersed in the Catholic faith and its practices. It was rare for the family to miss Sunday Mass and his parents were active members of Catholic organisations such as the Saint Vincent de Paul Society and the Catholic Women's League. As a young man he was a member of the local CYMS (Catholic Young Men's Society) cricket and rugby league teams and regularly engaged in recreational activities that were organised by the Catholic Youth Group. Michael's Catholic education was formed predominantly by the Sisters of Mercy in his primary years, and later in high school with the De La Salle Brothers at a time when few lay teachers staffed Catholic schools.



First Holy Communion 1962

After leaving school and wishing to teach in Catholic schools, Michael earned his Diploma of Teaching from a Catholic institution and entered the novitiate as a De La Salle Brother. Michael then left the order and began his teaching career in a small rural community in northern New South Wales. After his initial appointment as a classroom teacher, Michael moved to a larger Catholic school where he held the special responsibility of being the Religious Education Coordinator. Later he was appointed as assistant to the principal at his current school before promotion as the second lay principal of that school.

In 2019, Michael celebrated 40 years of service to Catholic education. Michael contended that his decision to teach, and eventually lead in Catholic schools, was primarily motivated by the example of the Brothers who had taught him throughout his schooling and whose works led him to seek to become a member of the order. In speaking of his teachers and his experiences of school life, Michael indicated:

Reflection

- Within your own school context, to what extent would you agree with each of these issues.
- What challenges do these present to you as a leader of a Catholic school?
- Find out about the history of your own school and some of the stories told of your own school's establishment and growth.
 - Ask one or more long-serving members of staff to tell you some of the school's story as they know it from their time at the school.
 - Look through some school magazines, photograph albums or literature written to commemorate significant anniversaries in the history of the school.

There was just something about the place and the Brothers that I liked to be involved in, being part of a community. Now, as a Catholic teacher and principal, I want to be part of that same type of community as a life-long commitment. That's probably the main thing that motivated me to stay in the Catholic system about which I have no regrets.

As a trainee Brother in the 1970s Michael had been instilled with the Lasallian spirituality whose key educational apostolate is a preferential option for the poor. Through their motto 'Signum Fidei' or 'the sign of faith,' the Brothers embody the values of their founder, St John Baptist de la Salle, "to touch the hearts of the young and to inspire them with the Christian" (St John Baptist de la Salle, quoted in Donovan, 2000), an assertion that Michael maintains in his leadership today even though he is no longer a member of the institute.

Now married with four children, Michael plays a significant role in the life of his parish through his involvement as a reader and commentator at Masses. He has been a member of the Parish Finance Committee and has been instrumental in establishing a Men's Group in the parish where men are provided with opportunities to share friendship and reflect on the Gospel message.

In addition to parish involvement, Michael was at one time appointed by the Bishop as a member of the Diocesan Liturgical Commission and the Diocesan Pastoral Consultation Committee, both of which assist the Bishop in his decision-making process for the diocese.

For Michael, the transition from Religious to Lay teachers will be ongoing until a generation of teachers, and particularly principals who have had little or no association with religious congregations, enter the teaching force. As he observes:

My generation of teachers is perhaps the last that was taught exclusively by religious men and women. Young teachers entering teaching today do not have the same nostalgic link and instinct with the work of the brothers and nuns that we have.

Amid his sincere intentions and the ability to articulate his mission of Catholic school leadership, Michael vividly articulates the current realities of Catholic schools. He sees this reality as one where parents and students have little interest in the religious nature of the school, but rather are more interested in other elements of what the school has to offer:

Reflection

1. Reflect on Michael's background growing up, particularly the influence of the Mercy Sisters and the De La Salle Brothers at school. How is Michael's experience different to yours?
2. Do you believe lay teachers today are able to have the same influence on their students' faith life as the religious brothers and sisters did in years gone by? Why or why not?



Opening of extensions to De La Salle Orange in 1966.
Bishop Albert Reuben Edward Thomas and Monsignor James Sheahan leading the procession.

Our Catholic culture is getting harder and tougher. It would almost be easier to say that Catholicism for most of these parents has become irrelevant. They want their children in a good school; they're not totally sure what a Catholic school means.

Summary:

The Contemporary Australian Catholic School

Of today's Australian Catholic systemic school, typical developments are:

- It is being staffed entirely by lay teachers who generally display a commitment to the teachings of the Catholic Church but may not have studied Catholic history and theology or faith formation.
- It has high levels of parent support and participation, but many have chosen a Catholic school for other than religious reasons.

- It has an increasing percentage of non-Catholic, or non-practising Catholic teachers and pupils. The attendance of a significant number of non-Catholic students may have little to do with a belief in the teachings of the Catholic Church or the desire to embrace the Catholic way of life.
- It is becoming the major experience of Church for many students and their families – a result of the decline of participation in worshipping communities of parishes and the secularisation of Australian society.
- It is increasingly seeing the evaporation of an Irish-Catholic, socio-political identity, with recent large numbers of migrant families moving into rural areas.
- There is a dependence on government funding to the extent that it could not exist without it. This has led to the need to satisfy the requirements of the Church, and at the same time conform to government accountability.

Growing the Story

This activity could be used for personal reflection or for gatherings such as a staff meeting, a staff reflection day or a parent body gathering.

Watch the video on the history of Catholic schools in Australia:
<https://youtu.be/nx-oWhZ5Jh0>

Ask people to share their experiences of Catholic Schooling as a student. Do many relate to the stories shared in this video, especially being taught by religious men and women?

- Has the task of Catholic schools really changed in its 200-year history?
- Following Croke's (1996) four phases of Catholic Education, would you suggest Catholic schools may be entering a new and fifth phase? Why? Any other insights?



Activity

FROZEN *Meat & Fish*



FRESHBAKE
sandwich
FRESHBAKE

FRESHBAKE
sandwich
Salsita
OUTLET BAGS
EPS

NO OPENING PLEASE