



Religious
Education
- a Sacred
Quest at
the Heart
of the
Catholic
school



What do you suggest might be the starting-point or bed-rock of Catholic school RE?

What about: joining God in believing in the fundamental goodness of children?

i.e. not our faith in God,
but God's faith in us –
and in the young in particular.

cf: "In this is love: not as if we had loved God, but that he first loved us" (1 John 4:10)

RE is for every
child's needs...

(not just Catholics, or
Christians, or the religious.)

Faith is an everybody thing:
it's about how we make sense of things
...how everything hangs together for us.

The spiritual is simply a dimension
of being human.

What are young people's educational needs?
Unlocking their full potential – including their spiritual
muscles – exercising, stretching, cultivating these.



SPIRITUAL GYM



In a noisy and confusing world, RE offers
silence and space –
for quiet reflection,
for growing in awareness & appreciation,
for consciously choosing values,
for learning to pray.

A multi-level approach
to accommodate multiple levels of need:

- for the doubtful as well as the convinced
- for the sceptical as well as the starry-eyed
- for the churched and the unchurched
- for the head-led and the intuitive
- for both our feminine and our masculine sides
- for those from all walks of faith...



Todos! Todos! Todos!

Catechism class
Religious Instruction
Religious Education

Humanity

RE is for every
child's needs...

...but it needs
to be relevant.

(not prescribed and
predictable and prehistoric.)

RE is for every
child's needs...

...but it needs
to be relevant.

What do you think is the agenda of
childhood and adolescence?

working out one's identity

discovering one's talents and strengths

discovering one's aptitudes and passions

learning to relate, to cope, to thrive,
to find meaning and hope...

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. (opening words of Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes*)

So too the agenda of RE needs to be set by the agenda of childhood and of adolescence.

Catholic 'thing' traditional meaning a meaning open to all

Ascension	'taken up into heaven'	God's presence everywhere, to everyone
Easter	Jesus risen from the dead	In God, life doesn't end; it changes.
The Sacred Heart	Jesus had a human heart	God feels our human experience with us.

Try one of these: Lent, Advent, the Rosary, St Francis, the Annunciation to Mary, Christmas, the Assumption of Mary.

Christmas	God's Word became flesh	God's nearness to us – esp. in dark times.
The Annunciation to Mary	Mary's invitation to virgin-birth	A model of surrender to God's proposals.

What about some **original 'feast-days' for youth?**

Grandparents' Day?

All Creatures Day?

Litter-free Day?

Simplicity Day?

Kindness Day?

Artistry Day?

Home Day?

RE is for every
child's needs...

...but it needs
to be relevant.

Respect & value
the Church...

(while bearing in mind its
history of mistakes & growth.)

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...but it needs
to be relevant.

Remember Galileo...
“Holier than thou”...
“More Catholic than thou”.

Be aware of what the Church upholds,
and also why (the history of it),
but use your elbow-room.

Respect & value
the Church...

‘some elbow room’

- Using inclusive language.
- ‘sisters and brothers’ not always ‘brothers and sisters’.
- Creed: not ‘became man’ but ‘became human’.
- Approved Eucharistic Prayers (e.g. for children).
- Find Priests with a flair for youth
(and beware of those who put them off with rigidity).
- The flexibility of paraliturgy – don’t *always* have Mass.
Do we overdo it? If Mass is “the source and summit”,
shouldn’t a school spend much time climbing the slopes?
- The many doors Pope Francis opened...

RE is for every
child's needs...

...but it needs
to be relevant.

...but take your
lead from Jesus.

(though not a Jesus made in
your own image & likeness!)

Respect & value
the Church...

RE is for every
child's needs...

...but it needs
to be relevant.

Jesus didn't come with dogmas, or narrow rules, let alone liturgical strictness. When the Church gets too stuck in these, even if its motive is faithfulness, ironically it can become unfaithful to Jesus.

The simple message of Jesus – few rules, but “Do not judge” and “It is not those who say to me ‘Lord, Lord’ who will enter the Kingdom of God, but those who do the will of my Father in heaven.”

...but take your
lead from Jesus.

Respect & value
the Church...



THE PARABLE



OF THE SOWER



OR THE PARABLE OF THE FOUR TYPES OF SOIL

So much depends on the kind of soil that the seed of Jesus' Gospel falls upon.

A key task of RE is to work on the soil, to prepare it to receive seeds.

RE is for every
child's needs...

...but it needs
to be relevant.

RE is primarily
experience.

(Not so much information
or training.)

...but take your
lead from Jesus.

Respect & value
the Church...

RE is for every
child's needs...

...but it needs
to be relevant.

RE is primarily
experience.

St Francis:
“Share the Gospel; if necessary, use words.”
This holds truth for all teaching...

Teaching is not talking,
but providing the experiences
that best enable learning and growth.
This is especially true for RE.

...but take your
lead from Jesus.

Respect & value
the Church...

- If Maths & Accountancy are about cultivating a mentality,
- and Languages are about building habits (at first conscious, and later unconscious),
- and History & Geography & Sciences are about guiding journeys of exploration,
- then Phys. Ed. and Music and Art and RE are mainly exercise and experience:

RE is the **exercise** of the moral & spiritual muscles,
the **experience** of discovering inner life,
exposure to encounters with the Divine.

So: offer experiences/exposure/experiments/expression/exercise.

The question is: **What can I get them to do/try/experience that will connect with them?**

Only one of those things is 'to listen to me talking',
and it's only sometimes the best way.

RE is for every
child's needs...

...but it needs
to be relevant.

RE is primarily
experience.

Your role is
to educate.

(Not to indoctrinate,
inculcate, or persuade.)

...but take your
lead from Jesus.

Respect & value
the Church...

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Respect & value
the Church...

...but take your
lead from Jesus.

'Education' = leading out
'Indoctrination' = shoving in
'Preaching' doesn't belong in the classroom.

The key is LISTENING to them.

The importance of accurate knowledge –
about Christianity and other faiths.

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Your role is
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Respect & value
the Church...

...but take your
lead from Jesus.

RE needs to be supported.

(By ethos and by
home-upbringing.)

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to educate.

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lead from Jesus.

Respect & value
the Church...

RE needs to be supported.

10 : 20 :: 13 : 26 :: 6 : ...?

English teaching : hearing good English :: RE : ...?

ETHOS

how you relate,

how you greet,

how you respect children & parents & each other

how you win & lose

how you handle

mistakes/transgressions/shortcomings

how you affirm youngsters

how the school's values and faith show

Ethos Committee

Have you got one at your school?

It's an opportunity to take RE beyond a programme of lessons into the life of the whole school.

It's also an opportunity for staff beyond RE Teachers to share responsibility for this (including Support Staff and Admin Staff) as well as Student leaders and Past Pupils...

Some test questions...

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...but it needs
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RE is primarily
experience.

Your role is
to educate.

Respect & value
the Church...

...but take your
lead from Jesus.

Assert the place & value of RE - don't let it
get squeezed or squashed or squished.

RE is the heart of the Catholic school.
It's the goose that lays the golden eggs.

*In that story... Why do you think they killed
the goose that laid the golden eggs?*

RE needs to be supported.