# EDITORIAL

The Professional Society was launched in 2008 at the first National Religious Education Conference *Gathering at the Well* in Durban. It is now 7 years old – an age in human life where significant changes become apparent. The young person attains the age of reason and goes to school.

In a similar way the signs are there for the Professional Society to take on a new look and a new identity. The main changes you can look forward to are threefold:

1. The periodical of the society will change name from *The Well* to *Roots and Wings*, following the name of the second National Conference in 2013.
2. Roots and Wings will not appear in print, but will be sent to members electronically via email. It will also be available on the CIE website.
3. There will, as a result, be no subscription fee.

The periodical will appear FIVE times a year. It will contain the following regular features:

- An article featuring an aspect of the nature of Religious Education
- An article relating to some aspect of Religious Education practice
- A news column
- Resources and ideas for the classroom
- A book review
- A website review

The choice of materials for each issue will keep both primary and secondary teachers in mind.

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# REFLECTION

## Mystic or Unbeliever

(Ron Rolheiser)

A generation ago, Karl Rahner made the statement that there would soon come a time when each of us will either be a mystic or a non-believer.

What's implied here?

At one level it means that anyone who wants to have faith today will need to be much more inner-directed than in previous generations. Why? Because up until our present generation in the secularized world, by and large, the culture helped carry the faith. We lived in cultures (often immigrant and ethnic subcultures) within which faith and religion were part of the very fabric of life. Faith and church were embedded in the sociology. It took a strong, deviant action not to go to church on Sunday. Today, as we know, the opposite if more true, it takes a strong, inner-anchored act to go to church on Sunday. We live in a moral and ecclesial diaspora and experience a special loneliness that comes with that. We have few outside supports for our faith.

The culture no longer carries the faith and the church. Simply put, we knew how to be believers and church-goers when we were inside communities that helped carry that for us, communities within which most everyone seemed to believe, most everyone went to church, and most everyone had the same set of moral values. Not incidentally, these communities were often immigrant, poor, under-educated, and culturally marginalized. In that type of setting, faith and church work more easily. Why? Because, among other reasons, as Jesus said, it is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven.

To be committed believers today, to have faith truly inform our lives, requires finding an inner anchor beyond the support and security we find in being part of the cognitive majority wherein we have the comfort of knowing that, since everyone else is doing this, it probably makes sense. Many of us now live in situations where to believe in God and church is to find ourselves without the support of the majority and at times without the support even of those closest to us, spouse, family, friends, colleagues. That's one of the things that Rahner is referring to when he says we will be either mystics or non-believers.

But what is this deep, inner-anchor that is needed to sustain us? What can give us the support we need?

What can help sustain our faith when we feel like unanimity-minus-one is an inner center of strength, meaning, and affectivity that is rooted in something beyond what the world thinks and what the majority are doing on any given day? There has to be a deeper source than outside affirmation to give us meaning, justification, and energy to continue to do what faith asks of us. What is that source?

In the gospel of John, the first words out of Jesus' mouth are a question: "What are you looking for?" Essentially everything that Jesus does and teaches in the rest of John's gospel gives an answer to that question: We are looking for the way, the truth, the life, living water to quench our thirst, bread from heaven to satiate our hunger. But those answers are partially abstract. At the end of the gospel, all of this is crystallized into one image:

On Easter Sunday morning, Mary Magdala goes out searching for Jesus. She finds him in a garden (the archetypal place where lovers meet) but she doesn't recognize him. Jesus turns to her and, repeating the question with which the gospel began, asks her: "What are you looking for?" Mary replies that she is looking for the body of the dead Jesus and could he give her any information as to where that body is. And Jesus simply says: "Mary". He pronounces her name in love. She falls at his feet

In essence, that is the whole gospel: What are we ultimately looking for? What is the end of all desire? What drives us out into gardens to search for love? The desire to hear God pronounce our names in love. To hear God, lovingly say: "Mary", "Jack", "Jennifer", "Walter".

Several years ago, I made a retreat that began with the director telling us: "I'm only going to try to do one thing with you this week, I'm going to try to teach you how to pray so that sometime (perhaps not this week or perhaps not even this year, but sometime) in prayer, you will open yourself up in such a way that you can hear God say to you – I love you! – because unless that happens you will always be dissatisfied and searching for something to give you a completeness you don't feel. Nothing will ever be quite right. But once you hear God say those words, you won't need to do that restless search anymore."

He's right. Hearing God pronounce our names in love is the core of mysticism and it is too the anchor we need when we face misunderstanding from without and depression from within, when we feel precisely like unanimity-minus-one

http://ronrolheiser.com/mystic-or-unbeliever/#.VPBxOvmUeSo

# WEBSITE

## RESource an online teaching and learning initiative of the catholic education office, Melbourne

http://www.resourcemelb.catholic.edu.au/
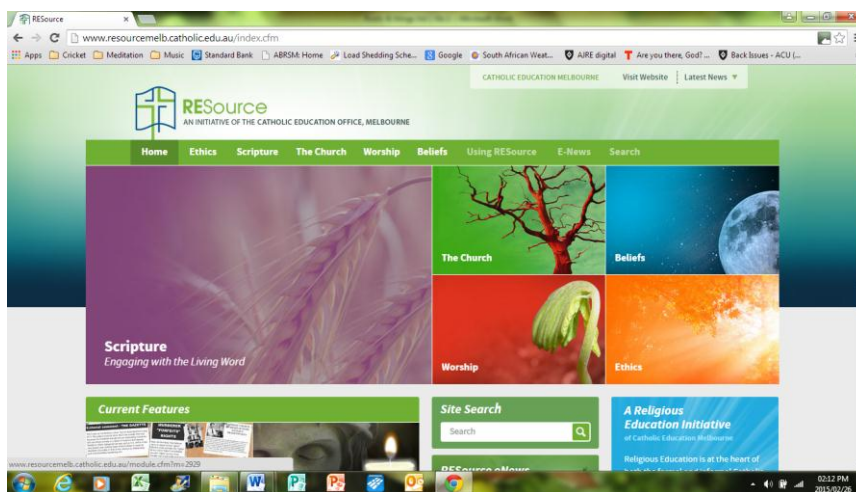


This website contains the following main sections:

*Ethics; Scripture; Church History; Worship; Beliefs; Using RESource*
Clicking on the pictures leads you to the area of your choice where you will find a number of useful and interesting video clips and text resources. The video clips are not downloadable but you can play them from a computer through a data projector.

Some resources on this site are not available without a password, but there is enough to make your lessons interesting. Primary and High school teachers can find curriculum units in some detail in the *Using RESource* section. The primary units contain the following headings: *Doctrinal Focus, Spiritual Reflection for Teachers, Links with Student Experience, Explanation of Scripture, Possibility for Prayer and Worship, Faith Concepts & Understandings, Unit Specific Learning, Religious Education Standards.*

These units for Years 7-10 are set out under the following headings: *Standards; Indicators of Learning; Spiritual Reflection for Teachers; Links with Students' Life Experience; The Church's Teaching and Lived Tradition; Catechism of the Catholic Church; Explanation of Scripture used in this unit; Celebration: Prayer and Liturgy; Possible Assessment Tasks; Resources; Unit Evaluation*

# BOOK REVIEW

## Nurturing children's religious imagination: the challenge of primary religious education today

Raymond Topley and Gareth Byrne. 2004. Dublin: Veritas 261 pp. *(To purchase this book online, go to* www.veritas.ie *. Use the search function with the book's title. The current price is 2 euros.*
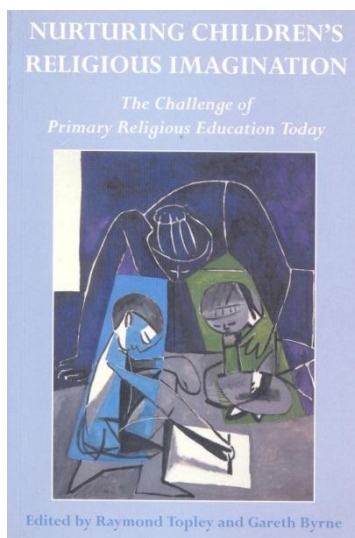
The article below features in the book *Nurturing Children's Religious Imagination* which is aimed at primary school teachers, parents and others as they set about responding to the challenges of religious education in the twenty-first century. It contains a number of very useful chapters, such as "The Wisdom of Friedrich Froebel and St Benedict: A Support for Teachers of Distressed Children Today" by *Carmel Scanlon*, "Awakening Children to New Ways of Seeing the World: Re-telling the Parables of Jesus" by *Gerry O'Connell*, and "The Imaginative, Caring and Hope-Filled Teacher" by *Rose Lynch*.

The book ends with a chapter by Gareth Byrne titled "Children's Religious Education: Challenge and Gift", which sets out a list of principles to guide primary school Religious Education in the modern world.

# ARTICLE

## Creating Space for Children's Existential Concerns

(Carmel O'Sullivan)

A four and a half year old boy called David asked me a surprising question in my fourth month as a teacher; the children had had a ten-minute 'chat time' and were free to talk to one another, draw or just listen in on the chat. David came over to where I was sorting flash cards for our next session and out of the blue he said: 'Teacher, isn't your soul yourself?' I remember it well. I was so taken aback at the profundity of the question and at the manner in which he expressed himself that it took me a little while to think what to say. I found myself loving the question and agreeing with him: 'Yes! I suppose your soul is yourself.' I wondered what had given rise to the question and where he would take it from there. David, on hearing my response took me by the hand and drew me towards his group. 'Well you better tell them because they are saying that it is not true.' The group were discussing God, your soul, heaven and hell and wanting or not wanting to go to heaven or hell. At that moment we were not in 'religion time' and we had not been discussing these issues at all. This was a great experience for me so early on in my teaching life, because it prepared me to be open to children's thinking and to expect to be happily surprised by what they might see and think and feel and say.

### Children's Talk

Teachers and educationalists are fascinated by children's talk. In 1977 a team of British researchers led by Clive and Jane Erricker working on 'The Children and Worldviews Project' set out to develop a methodology that would enable them to listen to children talk about what was important to them and how they constructed meaning in their lives. The first phase of their research is set out in *The Education of the Whole Child* (1). Analysis of the issues raised by the children in Phase 1 of the research pointed to the fundamental motif of narrative and storying across all boundaries of gender, race, age, social background and faith. To date the team has explored issues of children's social, cultural, spiritual and moral development; race and gender; emotional literacy (2); the role of religious education and religious nurture; how children deal with death and separation; and how adults relate to children. The project is currently studying how children can become more effective learners; how children develop, spiritually, morally, socially and culturally, in respect of religious education; how educationalists and other adults might engage with children's holistic development; and finally, how adults respond to and communicate with younger people.

When Jane Erricker began this research she was very surprised by the depth of the children's thinking and by the sophistication of their arguments. Erricker believes that the reason her expectations of the children's ability to think and argue was so limited was a consequence of the influence of Piaget on her approach to children (3).

Jean Piaget (1896-1980) was a Swiss psychologist who over a period of six decades conducted a programme of research that has profoundly affected our understanding of child development. Piaget was noted for his attention to cognitive structures, the increasing capacity of learners for knowledge, beginning with the sensory-motor level and progressing to abstract thinking. In Piaget's understanding the growth of

knowledge is a progressive construction of logically embedded structures superseding one another by a process of inclusion of lower, less powerful logical elements into higher and more powerful ones right up to adulthood. Therefore, according to Piaget, children's logic and modes of thinking are initially entirely different from those of adults.

Piaget's research has had a remarkable impact on the expectations teachers have of children of any given age. The problem with Piaget's stages of cognitive development is that they focus on a certain kind of cognitive or rational knowing. Consequently his stages of development refer to cognitive development. Subsequent to Piaget's research it has become clear that there are other kinds of knowing with their own intrinsic stages of development. Lawrence Kohlberg (4), for example, evolved a theory of moral development based on Piaget's model. Kohlberg, however, included moral knowing alongside Piaget's cognitive knowing. James Fowler's theory of faith development is also based on Piaget's structural model (5). Fowler, however, expanded the concept of knowing to embrace the imagination and the emotional dimension of knowing. Thus the concept of knowledge being considered has evolved to include the dimensions of the 'whole person' and not simply cognitive knowledge.

Erricker found that children as young as six were capable of existential knowing and were able to base their opinions on their own life experience. They were not limited in their ability to reason and think by lack of life experience. She makes the point that children today have a great deal of life experience. What Jane Erricker discovered as key to children exceeding our expectations of their level of rational and abstract thinking was that they be given the chance. She writes: 'I don't think they were exceptional I just think I gave them the time and the opportunity' (6).

Time is becoming a real source of pressure in teaching. There seems to be so much more to do and only the same amount of time available. So how do busy teachers give children the time they need to talk about the things that bother them and to do so in the presence of God? Experience shows it is worth taking the time to talk with children and to let them discuss issues that are important to them. There is no lack of opportunity for allowing them to express their opinions on important moral dilemmas. For example, issues that arise out of behaviour in the yard, or concerns expressed at prayer time, can be addressed later in the day.

As teachers we should never be surprised at the depth and maturity some children will show during such discussions. Erricker discovered this to be true but sounds a note of warning as to children's willingness to speak freely:

Of course children soon become aware of what sort of discourse the teacher wishes to take place in the classroom and will not reveal such experiences [a seven year old had discussed the loss of her grandfather and how it affected her] and opinions if the ethos created is not suitable (7).

### Acknowledging Children's Existential Needs

American religious educator, Jerome Berryman, writes about the existential needs of children and how these should be acknowledged and addressed by religious educators (8). Writing independently of Erricker, but affirming the findings of *The Education of the Whole Child,* he describes the non-cognitive knowing that children have and relates this to his own experience as a young boy. Tucked up in bed with his grandmother, he asked her:
'Grandmother! Why do I have to die?' He does not remember her answer; he only remembers his question and her presence in the darkness. 'She put me in touch with a larger presence that seems to grow to this day' (9). He became aware

of a presence greater than himself and greater than his own questions.

Berryman discusses the struggle experienced by children when they are caught in a conflict situation described by Carole Klein as 'the double bind' (10). This double bind occurs because of the wrong assumption made by many adults that children do not experience existential questions. This assumption leaves children with an impossible choice to make. They either deny their experience and accept the stance of adults or remain true to their experience at the risk of adult disapproval. Either way the children struggle. Berryman discusses how this double bind relates to the child's experience of the existential issues of death, aloneness, meaninglessness and the threat of freedom. Berryman finds two problems limiting the discussion on the existential concerns of children. These are the 'myth of the always happy child' and secondly a lack of evidence from literature and other sources describing how children experience existential issues.

Berryman describes his own experience with sick and dying children whom he has watched as they prepared each other and their parents for their imminent death. He observed children dealing with the existential reality of their own death and with helping others to do the same. His research affirmed that children do struggle with the meaning of life and death and other such existential issues. He has also shown how children struggling with existential issues defy the boundaries of the developmental stages set out by educational theorists. Children do struggle with life and death, separation and belonging, but they need adults to allow them the time, space and parameters to engage in the struggle in safety and with guidance.

## Teaching as Presence

Berryman advocates 'teaching as presence', living the questions as opposed to wasting enormous energy denying one's existential limits. He writes of two steps required for 'teaching as presence': respect for the child's needs and knowing or understanding the questions behind their concerns (11). Adults need to respect the religious experiences of children. He warns that the price of pretending that existential issues do not exist is to limit the possibilities of religious growth. Berryman suggests that we grow spiritually by engaging with the existential issues that belong to our human condition irrespective of age. Accordingly, religious and spiritual growth is dependent upon the acknowledgement of children's existential needs. Presence to these needs is vital for the spiritual and religious well-being of the child.

To honour children is to accept each one as unique, complex and spiritual beyond our imagination. Children tempered by the limitations of not having the' space' to be who they are and to express their existential issues may appear not to have such profound concerns as issues of life and death, loneliness and isolation. They quickly sense where and when they will be allowed to be who they are and where and when they will be allowed to express their real concerns. Given an opportunity to express themselves, however, children will far exceed our expectations.

## Let the Children Speak

Robert Coles is an example of an adult who let children show him just how much they reflect on and worry about existential issues. He had studied to be a child psychiatrist, but while serving as an air force physician in Mississippi in the late 1950s he found himself in the middle of a period of serious social unrest made famous by the Ruby Bridges' story. Ruby was a seven-year-old black child who against all the odds managed to single-handedly force the desegregation of black and white school children in New Orleans. She defied all theories of education regarding developmental stages and was the catalyst for Coles becoming a 'field worker' with children

from all over the world. He subsequently spent a good deal of time listening to and observing children. Eventually they confided in him. He learnt from them that children far exceed the limits set by developmental theorists, if adults give them an opportunity to speak. Coles' book *The Spiritual Life of Children* gives children a voice and in so doing encourages them to nurture and develop their spirituality (12).

## Creating a Sacred Space

The questions that begin to emerge are these: How can an ethos be created in a classroom context that allows children to share their stories? How are teachers to engage the deep existential questions of life and death, freedom, and meaning with children? The following example of how simply being present to children's needs can create for them the space necessary to work through their problems may be helpful.

Seamus, a child in my own class, was very close to his grandmother who lived in the northwest. She had been ill for some time and each morning Seamus prayed that God would make his granny better. I became concerned at his worry and spoke to his mother who was surprised that her mother's illness was affecting Seamus to such an extent. As the weeks passed and Seamus continued to pray for his granny; I realised that we had to somehow create a 'space' for Seamus where granny's healing could include God bringing her home to heaven and that this was a final healing.

An opportunity arose when we were making Mother's Day cards at art. Killian, whose mother had died, was feeling a bit sad and I chatted with him asking if he wanted to make a card for his sister who was so good to him and who had cared for him so well since the death of their mother. It was Daffodil Day that day and he had bought seven bunches of daffodils. He replied that he was bringing all the daffodils to his mother's grave. I intuitively felt that Killian was telling me something here about the Mother's Day card and so I took a risk and asked him if he would like to make a card for his mum too and bring it to her grave. His eyes lit up. Smiling he started to make his Mother's Day card. As a class we then talked about how people who have gone before us still know and love us. I spoke about my father, as that was 'safe' for the boys. I was not risking their emotions around someone they had let go to God. Seamus was listening to all of this, yet I knew that it did not yet apply to granny. Granny was going to get better.

As the weeks and days passed we talked about Easter and Christ's death, his resurrection, and the breakfast he cooked on the beach for his friends in Galilee. Seamus prayed for his granny to get better. One day I asked the boys to think about a dilemma God might have. Imagine, I said, if I was dying, and I knew that when I died I would meet God. That would be the most wonderful joy for me. I would not be in a hurry to die, and all my friends would be praying that I would get better and that God would help make me get better. What if 'better' for God, meant that God would allow me to be in heaven?

We talked about how no baby really wants to be born because it has such a comfortable place in its mother's womb. Yet look how much fun we have once we are born! I asked the boys to think about this and said that we would talk about it later in religion class. I hoped I had engaged the religious imagination of the children. Only time would tell. There was no further discussion about the matter until some three hours later. The comments from the boys were very interesting. The comments ranged from: 'Well if you were in pain I would let you die', to 'If you really wanted to I would let you die.' Responses such as the latter were a reflection on comments earlier in the day that no one really wants to die. We had a dilemma. I commented that sometimes dying is healing for the person who is dying even though it is very sad for the people who are left behind and who miss that person.

Time passed and one morning Seamus's prayer for his granny changed. He prayed that his granny would be happy in heaven. The following morning he went to see her for the weekend. He returned to school on Monday morning and prayed that his granny would be happy in heaven because she was not getting any better. That night his granny died. The boys then took over and prayed for Seamus's granny and they prayed for Seamus that he would not be too sad. We had never actually discussed Seamus and his granny. We just made space for God and Seamus to find a safe place where Seamus's prayer could change and where Seamus could accept that sometimes people do not get better, they go to heaven to God. We allowed room for that to happen, for the Transcendent to become immanent in the pain of a small nine-year-old boy and to grace him with a security about the grandmother he loved.

This story illustrates how children slowly adapt and make meaning from the existential issues in their lives providing we help them to face these issues and make meaning from them in the sacred space that we create around their pain. We need to meet children in the reality of their lives and culture and bring with us the light of God's love and care for them.

My experience of nine- to ten-year-old children leads me to the conclusion that many developmental theorists and educators writing about this age group seriously underestimate children's breadth of life experience and the depth and sincerity of the existential questions that they reflect upon and struggle with. The likes of Coles, Erricker and Berryman seem to be exceptions to this. With open minds they have taken the time to give children a voice and the opportunity to express their individuality and authentic concerns.

### Footnotes

1. See C. Erricker, J. Erricker et al, *The Education of the Whole Child* (London: Cassel!, 1997).
2. See http://www.cwvp.com/site/pubs/elbklt.html
3. See C. Erricker, J. Erricker et al, *The Education of the Whole Child*, p. 63.
4. See L. Kohlberg, *Essays on Moral Development*, Vol. 1 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).
5. See J. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981).
6. C. Erricker, J. Erricker et al, *The Education of the Whole Child*, p. 64.
7. C. Erricker, J. Erricker et al, *The Education of the Whole Child*, p. 13.
8. See J.W: Berryman, 'Teaching as Presence and the Existential Curriculum' in *Religious Education* 85/4 (1990), pp. 509-534.
9. J.W: Berryman, 'Teaching as Presence', p. 509.
10. See C. Klein, *The Myth of The Always Happy Child* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).
11. See J.W: Berryman, 'Teaching as Presence', pp. 514-518.
12. See R. Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin,(1990).

*The above article is a chapter in the book reviewed above. It is reprinted here with permission of the publisher.*

> Humans learn best from a curriculum of rich personal experience rather than from a curriculum of someone else's conclusions. The one most potent curriculum strategy a teacher can employ for the benefit of learners is to let students experience everything possible related to a subject.
>
> (Jerry Larsen. *Religious Education and the Brain*)

# ARTICLE

## The Bible in Celluloid: Teaching Scripture Using the Visual Arts

(Peta Goldburg)

*What many people know or think they know about the Bible often comes more from familiar representations of biblical text and themes in the popular culture than from study of the ancient text itself. This paper will focus on representations of popular biblical stories and characters and examine the ways characters are portrayed as well as the social assumptions and unconscious motivations that create such portrayals. As a religious educator I see advantages and disadvantages in these cultural representations of biblical events and I am interested in how these images may be explored in the religious education classroom.*

We live in an age that is witnessing the increasing development of visual culture. Most students in classrooms today have seen more movies than they have read books. Their knowledge of the scriptures is often based around the visual and musical arts. Imbedded in their imaginations are images of biblical characters from art works, operas and cinema. Some students read the biblical text only after they have seen a visual presentation of the biblical story. Teachers in the religious education classroom need to deal with the difference between the biblical story itself and the literary, musical and visual interpretations of the bible. Today for all of us knowledge of the Bible is strongly influenced by motion pictures.

Motion pictures are one of the most popular forms of the visual arts. They bring messages in form of words and images to large groups of people and are fundamentally "story telling devices" where the story telling occurs by combining many art forms such as music, visual arts, drama and dance into one (Lanier, 1982 p.1). In a way they are similar to theatre and opera because they are bi-sensory but on the other hand, motion pictures are slightly different because they more successfully control time and are able to cut from past to present. By using a series of images and sound, motion pictures present us with events, people and ideas as they change and develop. Films transport us to representations of events and places of long ago and if they are well produced and appear 'real' we accept them, at least for a short time, as real (Lanier, 1982, pp. 111,112). The motion picture has an extraordinary ability to get us involved. We are drawn into events which appear to "wrap around" us so much so that when we read biblical texts we must be careful that we are not reading in the light of some movie we have seen (Lanier 1982, p.113). As Alice Bach (1996) tells us "The basic components of 'reading' even of biblical texts needs to acknowledge that our impression comes from films and paintings which have been coded ideologically and influence our interpretations of biblical literary figures" (p.1). Images from the visual, verbal and musical arts become embedded in our imagination and affect our interpretations of the biblical narrative.

Ilana Pardes (1996) maintains that "Hollywood is central to our understanding of the Bible and biblical exegesis" (p.15). Pardes also reminds us that in the twentieth century, the Bible is not only circulated in traditional sites of worship like churches, synagogues and

prayer groups but also in movie theatres and art galleries. She describes this wider circulation as an "intriguing challenge to the demarcation between canonical and popular, holy and profane" (p.15). In her view "Hollywood has brought about the most dramatic change in the circulation of the Bible since the invention of print in the 15th century" (p.16). The motion picture industry provides a world-wide medium for the distribution of the holy book. But what text are they presenting? Movie interpretations are strongly influenced by a patriarchal culture and by earlier art forms (e.g. Charlton Heston was chosen as Moses in *The Ten Commandments* because he most resembled Michelangelo's Moses). Most biblical films serve the agendas of their makers and reveal more about contemporary culture than the biblical world (Bach 1996, p.114).

If teachers use Cecil B DeMille's 1956 remake of *The Ten Commandments* in religion classrooms, they need to be aware that what they are presenting is not the original biblical story but a story DeMille created. As a film-maker DeMille wanted to pay attention to biblical history. In fact he referred to over 950 books, and as many periodicals, clippings and photos so that he could present accurately what commentators said had happened (Bach, 1996, p.3). In his attempt to achieve authenticity of sets, costumes and props so much attention was paid to detail that he built new pyramids so they would not look weathered and 2000 years old. Unfortunately he believed that it was the film-maker's task to fill in the 'gaps' of the biblical narrative. To fill in these gaps in the portrayal of Moses he used references from Josephus, Philo and Midrash which greatly elaborated and expanded the biblical text (Pardes, 1996, p.22). From Josephus, DeMille was able to turn out a Moses who had it all: the admiration of the Egyptian people, the love of Nefertiti as well as Seti's approval (Bach, 1996, p.23). Because of his gap-

filling, DeMille was often accused of 'gingering' up the Bible but when challenged he told his accusers to read the Bible closely and there they would find more sex and violence than he could possibly portray on the screen (Bach, 1996, p.24). The story of Moses certainly contains much violence but little of Moses' love life. DeMille gave Moses a substantial love affair to turn him into a Hollywood star.

Biblical films are often said to provide a 'window' to biblical events. What is forgotten, however, is that the biblical narrative is fluid in that the reader of the text takes for granted its location in Ancient Egypt or Israel but this fluidity does not restrict the reader to one setting or one visual interpretation. On the other hand motion pictures restrict the viewer to one visual interpretation. DeMille's production of *The Ten Commandments* "freezes myth into history" (Nash, 1996, p.184).

For religious educators and scripture scholars many biblical films are troubling because of the extra material added to the biblical text through dialogue and visuals. Unfortunate as this may be it is equally problematic when evangelical Christians make their own motion pictures and disguise their theological agenda by claiming to retell the bible history narrative as it 'really happened'. No matter who produces them most biblical films look like the 'real thing' whereas we should understand them as the 'reel' thing (Nash, 1996, p.185).

In looking at how the biblical text was portrayed in movies I became particularly interested in how the motion picture industry portrayed biblical women. One of the characters I examined was Bathsheba whose story is embedded in that of David and occurs in 2 Samuel 11:2-5.

Bathsheba has captured the imagination of visual artists since the Middle Ages. "In several medieval Books of Hours she is

pictured as a thin greyish figure shivering in her bath" (Bach, 1997, p.158). While most visual images of Bathsheba show her naked or partly naked the biblical text is silent about Bathsheba's state of dress. Her nakedness is presumed through word association and the image of bathing (Gunn, 1996, p.77).

The biblical text of 2 Samuel 11 provides only a partial picture of the character of Bathsheba. The reader first sees Bathsheba when the narrator and David see her: "....he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful" (2 Sam 11:2b). "The scene invites the reader to assume a voyeuristic perspective of a spectator squinting at a keyhole" (Bach, 1997, p.134). Because the narrator introduces us to her through the eyes of David we are also voyeurs (Exum, 1996, p.25). When we view the picture of Bathsheba we replace David. The viewer becomes the voyeur. This voyeuristic perspective is continued and expanded in visual representations of Bathsheba. "The painter gives Bathsheba what the biblical text did not: a measure of subjectivity" (Exum, 1996, p.33).

Film of course is a voyeuristic medium – we sit in the dark and watch other people. However, what we view in the cinematic Bathsheba is only what the camera chooses to show us. The 1951 film David and Bathsheba gives Bathsheba power by using the scene of Bathsheba bathing as a seduction scene the atmosphere of which is built up by the music. This particular film also reinforces the gender bias of the biblical text – women are a temptation and are seen to be dangerous because they are the cause of men's downfall. In this version the Hollywood story is also altered to "suit an ideal American fifties viewing audience and the Hollywood star system". Susan Hayward is given dialogue which suggests that her marriage was 'arranged' and unhappy so the seduction which follows does not seem as bad thereby releasing Gregory Peck from any slur (Bach 1997, p. 159).

In the 1985 film King David we see a more passive Bathsheba. The film attempts to make David look better – he sees her bathing but does not send for her.

Both the 1951 film and the 1985 film go beyond the biblical text in making the viewing of Bathsheba explicit. Exum (1996) believes that the films show David to be a voyeur but Bathsheba is shown to be an exhibitionist - which in turn lessens David's guilt. She sees Bathsheba portrayed as an object of sexual desire and aggression. Bathsheba's body is focalised both in the biblical text and in visual representations. Bach (1996) notes that "one's mental representations of characters, whether they be from films, novels, paintings or church responses....reflect backwards onto the biblical text and serve to fill the reader's gaps" (p.113). The mind of the reader is influenced by the many visual representations of Bathsheba. The majority of these visuals have been produced by males. The arts mirror men's values and attitudes "male perception is projected as the universal vision" just as the story of Bathsheba in the biblical text was also produced by males for male readers (Synderott, 1995, p.70).

For Bach (1997) "biblical characters have a 'life' in the mind of the reader independent of the stories in which they were created" (p. vii). This statement holds true when we attempt to deal with the character of Mary Magdalene. If you ask who Mary Magdalene was most students would respond that she was 'a prostitute' yet there is no biblical evidence to support such an assertion. The notion of her being a prostitute comes more from society than from the biblical text. (Dillenberger, 1990). How people get this idea needs to be addressed. The identity of Mary Magdalene is obscure in Scripture. What do we know of Mary Magdalene from the text? Only Luke has her amongst the ministering women as someone who had seven devils cast out. Prior to this he has

spoken of a 'woman of the city', commonly regarded as a prostitute, who anointed the feet of Jesus. Although other women are mentioned in between, the Mary cured of seven devils is conflated with the woman who anoints. Mary Magdalene becomes a prostitute and even the archetype of the sinner who repents. All of the evangelists have her at the foot of the cross, all have her bringing spices to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus and the first to see the risen Christ. What most people know or think they know about Mary Magdalene belongs to legend rather than Scripture. Contemporary scripture scholars too provide contrasting interpretations of Mary Magdalene. Some call her sinner while others call her saint. Throughout history Mary Magdalene has been seen as a woman suffering from a mental illness; a leader and spokesperson of the women around Jesus; the first apostle (because she encountered the risen Jesus) and the first preacher.

In the visual arts Mary Magdalene has been depicted differently throughout different historical periods. The most common depictions show her as one of two things: as a symbol of the resurrection and first to see the risen Jesus or as the symbol of the penitent, washing the feet of Jesus. Warner (in Dillenberger,1990) describes her as the other half of a "diptych of Christian patriarchy's idea of women" – the first half of the diptych is the Virgin Mary (p.29). For some Mary Magdalene has become the model of female asceticism and penitence (Schapiro in Dillenberger 1990, p. 31).

During the Mary Magdalene boom (the Middle Ages) she is represented in scenes as diverse as the raising of Lazarus, the crucifixion and Pieta scenes. By the end of the fifteenth century Mary Magdalene is depicted as one of the principal vehicles for the passion. One of the most famous examples is Botticelli's Mary Magdalene weeping and clinging to the foot of the cross.

The Reformation too brought a change in the image of Mary Magdalene. During this period she is presented as a reformed seductress but we need to remember that most painters and patrons were male and that may well be why the hint of seduction remains. If we consider art as a mirror or reflection of life these depictions reflect the moral and religious beliefs of the reformers.

The 17th century (which has been called Mary's century) brought yet another image of Mary Magdalene. Here she is often represented deep in thought and she in fact becomes a symbol of contemplation.

In the twentieth century, films featuring Mary Magdalene present a conflated figure of scripture and legend (e.g. *Jesus Christ Superstar, Jesus of Montreal and The Last Temptation of Christ)*. Dillenberger (1990) finds this odd particularly in view of the 1960s search for historical accuracy regarding Jesus which she thinks should have been reflected in the treatment of other biblical characters. Film makers see Mary Magdalene as a central character in the story of Jesus and to reinforce her role they find it necessary to embellish the biblical text. The biblical text and its visual representations align the reader with a male subject position (Exum, 1996, p.9). Some motion pictures even present Mary Magdalene's sexuality as threat to Jesus (e.g. *The Last Temptation of Christ)*.

In the visual arts Mary Magdalene's image and the meaning borne by the image have changed with each era. Mary Magdalene, unlike Mary the Mother of Jesus, is equally prominent in the art of both Catholics and Protestants. Even after 200 years the visual and popular arts have not reached agreement on who Mary Magdalene was.

## Conclusion

The use of movies in classrooms has become increasingly popular. One reason for this increase in popularity is the strength and development of our visual culture. As religious educators we need to think carefully about increasing our use of the visual arts in religion classrooms. "Hollywood and religion, as cultural forms, have the power to reinforce, alter or challenge our most deep seated beliefs, values and hopes" (Ostwalt, 1998, p.8). For this reason religious educators should use the visual arts in their classrooms because analysis of the arts encourages critical thinking.

Rossiter (1996) in his study on the effect of film and television on young people's spirituality states that religious education teachers need to be more involved in promoting and understanding the nature of popular arts particularly film and television. He is also convinced that film and television are an alternative form of religious education. The challenge to religious educators is to use diverse ways of dealing with the popular arts as central components of religious education.

Rather than excluding the visual arts and motion pictures from the classroom they should be used as a way into the biblical text. I would suggest that the most effective way to use them may well be to select extracts from a variety of movies and works of art from different historical period and points of view. Students are then able to analyse, compare and contrast these various perspectives with the biblical text and may even be able to see how both the biblical text and the arts are a mirror on life.

Before using the visual arts as a teaching tool there is a need to investigate whether the works are scriptural interpretations (which will also be affected by the ideological influences of the dominant class) or scriptural illustrations (which simplify and reduce the text to a single meaning). Biblical films may as Nash (1996) suggests fulfil the function of responding to the "hunger for accessibility to the biblical world and by extension to the sacred" (p.188).

Just as the arts were used as effective teaching tools in the Middle Ages the popular arts can be used as teaching tools today. All of the creative arts offer possibility for new experiences and understanding. The visual arts encourage students to become critical interpreters of culture. The arts may even be the inspiration to modify the world (Empereur, 1987). Our goal as religious educators is to encourage students to become critical thinkers and religiously literate people. Studying the popular arts as part of religious education is an excellent medium and tool for engaging students in analysis and discussion about religion and its function in society.

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# STORY

## The Treasure under the Bridge

(Adapted by Gedaliah Fleer from the stories of Rebbe Nachman)

There was once a poor, G-d fearing Jew who lived in the city of Prague. One night he dreamt that he should journey to Vienna. There, at the base of a bridge leading to the King's palace, he would find a buried treasure.

Night after night the dream recurred until, leaving his family behind, he traveled to Vienna to claim his fortune. The bridge, however, was heavily guarded. The watchful eyes of the King's soldiers afforded little opportunity to retrieve the treasure. Every day the poor Jew spent hours pacing back and forth across the bridge waiting for his chance.

After two weeks' time one of the guards grabbed him by the lapels of his coat and demanded gruffly, "Jew! What are you plotting? Why do you keep returning to this place day after, day?" Frustrated and anxious, he blurted out the story of his dream. When he finished, the soldier, who had been containing his mirth, broke into uncontrollable laughter.

The poor Jew looked on in astonishment, not knowing what to make of the man's attitude. Finally, the King's guard caught his breath. He stopped laughing long enough to say, "What a foolish Jew you are believing in dreams. Why, if I let my life be guided by visions, I would be well on my way to the city of Prague. For just last night I dreamt that a poor Jew in that city has, buried in his cellar, a treasure which awaits discovery."

The poor Jew returned home. He dug in his cellar and found the fortune. Upon reflection he thought, the treasure was always in my possession. Yet, I had to travel to Vienna to know of its existence.

So too, in our time, many spiritually impoverished Jews travel in search... finally returning to Judaism to claim what was always their own.

# PRACTICE

## Lesson Evaluation Guide

| |
|---|
| **A.  Before the Lesson** |
| **1.  Lesson Topic** |
| **2.   Lesson Aim** |
| **B.  In the Classroom** <br> *Use the headings and questions that follow to help your evaluation of the lesson.* |
| **3.   Lesson Delivery** <br><br> **3.1 Introduction** <br><br> • Was I prepared? <br> • Did I try to engage the learners' interest? |
| **3.2 Core Activities** <br><br> • Was the lesson well structured? <br> • Were instructions clear? <br> • Did each activity engage the learners? <br> • Did each activity further the lesson's aim? <br> • Were the resources used appropriate? <br> • Was time well managed? <br> • Did I manage the learners effectively? |
| **3.3 Conclusion** <br><br> • How was the lesson concluded? Were important concepts and key learnings reinforced? <br> • To what extent was the lesson's aim realised? |
| **4. Lesson Content** <br><br> • Was I familiar with the topic and materials used? <br> • Was the material in harmony with the Church's vision and teaching? |
| **C.  After the Lesson** |
| **5. Evaluation of lesson** <br><br> • What went well? <br> • What could have gone better? <br> • What opportunities did I provide for learner participation in the lesson? <br> • How did the learners respond to the materials? <br> • Did I make links or allow learners to make links with previous lessons, lessons to come, or other areas of the curriculum? <br> • Is there anything I would have done differently? |
| **6. Looking ahead** <br><br> • This is where I can focus in order to enhance the quality of my RE lessons. |

# NEWS

## Calendar of Religious Festivals 2015

This, together with an introduction and a supplement, can be found on the CIE website at
http://www.cie.org.za/news/entry/calendar_of_religious_festivals_2015/

## Core Curriculum

You may be aware of the work done last year in developing a Draft Core Curriculum Statement to ease the pressure that teachers feel in trying to do justice to both Life Orientation and Religious Education. You can find it on the CIE website at
http://www.cie.org.za/news/entry/draft_national_core_curriculum_for_religious_education/

This is an interim measure. We are embarking on a four-to-five year project which will engage in fairly extensive research and result in a commonly agreed core curriculum for Grades R-12. You will have an opportunity sometime this year to be personally engaged through curriculum workshops.

## Higher Certificate in Religious Education

The importance of creating new opportunities for the personal and professional development of religious educators cannot be overestimated. For this reason, the CIE, is happy to announce the Certificate of Religious Education, a modular course through distance education with face-to-face and online tutorial support.

### Why enrol?

The three-month long (quarterly) modules may be taken
- Individually for personal or professional development purposes, or
- As a certificate course of six modules over two years, providing a basic qualification (Completion of the certificate would require 6 modules - 3 core and 3 elective over 2 years)

In either case, the modules will qualify for CPTD points.

### Module Design

Each module will have a twofold emphasis:
- To meet the practical needs of teachers in the classroom, and
- To invite a deeper reflection on issues relating to the field of religious education.

### Modules available

- Human Existence, God & Human Destiny (April 2015)
- Jesus of Nazareth (July 2015)
- Spirituality (October 2015)
- Catholic Social Teaching (January 2016)

### Modules in planning

Course development will be ongoing. Some (or all) of the following topics will be covered.
- An Introduction to Religious Education

- Planning and Teaching Religious Education
- Leadership in Religious Education
- Revelation, Faith & Human Experience
- Jesus, the Christ of God
- Scripture – the Word of God in Human language
- Liturgy & Sacrament
- Prayer
- Personal Morality
- Theology of Church
- The Church in History
- Religion – the Quest for God (or Ultimate Meaning)
- Science & Religion
- World Religions

### Delivery

- Distance education through email and post (later web-based) with local tutorials (available anytime)

### Registration

- Open to religious educators in Catholic schools, other faith-based schools (e.g. Anglican, Methodist), and catechists in South Africa and countries of the ACEAM region.

### Student Materials

- Study guides for each module will be distributed through email, or bought in hard copy by students.
- Access to local libraries such as St Augustine College (Johannesburg); St Joseph's ( Cedara); St John Vianney (Pretoria); Seminary (Cape Town) will be negotiated.

### Finances

- A moderate course fee of R500 will be charged per module. This would exclude course material as indicated above.  A graded fee dependent on level of school fees could be considered. A non-refundable enrolment fee R100 would be charged.

### Accreditation

- The course and modules will be internally accredited by the Catholic Board of Education

## Meditation Seminars

### TEACHING MEDITATION TO CHILDREN



The Catholic Institute of Education brings to South Africa two leaders in the field of teaching meditation to children. Dr Cathy Day and Ernie Christie have earned international acclaim for their pioneering work of introducing meditation to children and teachers in countries as diverse as Australia, the USA & Canada, Poland and Singapore. They will base the seminar on their

experience of implementing Christian meditation in 31 schools in Townsville, Australia.

The itinerary for the seminars that are planned for the period 21 September -4 October 2015 is as follows:

| DATE | DAY | PLACE | VENUE | TIME |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21 September | Monday | Durban | Glenmore Pastoral Centre, 10 Donlene Crescent, Glenmore | 12:00 -15:00 |
| 23 September | Wednesday | Pretoria | Denis Adami Hall, Woodlands Drive, Queenswood | 13:00 -16:00 |
| 25 September | Friday | Johannesburg | St Charles Catholic Church, Road No 3, Victory Park | 18:00 -21:00 |
| 26 September | Saturday | Johannesburg | Paulines Cultural Centre, cnr Queen St & Cumberland Rd, Kensington | 09:00 -12:00 |
| 28 September | Monday | Bloemfontein | St Joseph's Christian Brothers College, Waverley Road, Bayswater | 18:00 -21:00 |
| 29 September | Tuesday | Johannesburg | St Augustine College, Ley Road, Victory Park | 14:30 -16:30 |
| 30 September | Wednesday | Cape Town | Holy Cross Provincial House, Robert Sobukwe Rd, Parow Valley | 13:00 -15:00 |
| 30 September | Wednesday | Cape Town | Church of the Resurrection, 43 Janssens Avenue, Tableview | 19:00 -21:00 |
| 1 October | Thursday | Cape Town | St Joseph's Marist College, Belmont Road, Rondebosch | 13:00 -15:00 |

Booking for these events will open shortly.

## Religious Education Tests 2014

The CIE once again offered the National Grade 6 and Grade 9 Religious Education Tests but with some differences from the 2012 format, introduced following consultation with schools and teachers. Given that trouble had been taken in 2013 to consult widely and to adapt the test to meet the raised concerns, the level of participation was disappointing. Some general reasons for this might be the absence in many schools of an assessment policy for Religious Education, and the lack of a commonly agreed curriculum.

### Results

GRADE 6
37 Primary schools (2390 learners) took part in the Grade 6 Test. The average score for Section A was 23.43 and for Section B, 29.90, giving an overall average percentage of 53.33 (54.16 in 2012).
GRADE 9
16 Secondary schools (1328 students) participated in the Grade 9 Test with average scores of 21.62 (Section A) and 27.13 (Section B) and an overall percentage of 48.75 (49.96 in 2012).

## Religious Education Tests 2015

Feedback received from participating schools suggests further adjustments to the format. It was felt that the multiple choice Section A was over-weighted and tended to be

repetitive from one year to the next. Consequently, in 2015, the breakdown will be as follows:

The test will consist of TWO SECTIONS: A. 25 multiple choice questions (25 marks); and B. 5 short questions (75 marks). SECTION A (Multiple Choice) will consist of 10 questions of general knowledge and 15 questions based on the lessons listed in the information packs.

Logistical problems were experienced due to the three-month long postal strike, and so a revision of the marking procedure was thought necessary.

In 2015, the test (both Section A and Section B) will be marked internally by the school with the aid of memorandums supplied by CIE, though the school may return student answer sheets for Section A directly to the CIE in Johannesburg for marking if they so choose.

## Resources

A list of Religious Education Resources, with prices, is available from CIE. Go to
http://www.cie.org.za/images/uploads/RE%20Resources%202015.pdf

Note that the price of the Sing for Life book and CD have been significantly reduced.

## CIE Website

It would be a good idea to visit the CIE website to see what material is available there. One tends to forget. For instance at
http://www.cie.org.za/areas_of_focus/religious_education/curriculum/  you will find close to 100 assessment instruments for the different grades and lesson units of Lifebound.

## 12th Annual Art in Heaven Competition 2015

You may interested in taking part in a UK-based Art Competition. We have run such competitions here locally in 2008 and 2012 and in 2012 had some entries sent to the UK competition. This year's five themes are:
- Front Page: The Religious Education Book
- Faith (or doubt?)
- Questions: Big, bigger, biggest
- Stories that change lives
- Where is God?

For more information go to the link below where you can download more about the themes and a booking form.

http://www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/spirited-arts/introduction/2015-competition/

Professional Society of Religious Educators