



# The periodical of the Professional Society of Religious Educators

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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the third issue of *Roots & Wings*. As in the case of the first two issues we offer a variety of articles, newsbites and resources as an invitation to reflect on classroom practice and to try out new approaches. The two main articles - on page 10 and page 13 - challenge us to think in new ways about our relationship as teachers to the young people we teach, and to the Religious Education curriculum we offer them.

With the international meditation seminars approaching, we offer some reflection on the practice from the perspective of medical research and from the experience of teaching it in another country - In this instance, Fiji. Links in the former article "20 Scientific Reasons to Start meditating Today," take the reader to an array of research reports substantiating the claims made.

There is a secondary focus on Islam in this issue by way of encouragement from a prominent Catholic archbishop to read the Qur'an, and a statement from Muslim organisations in South Africa warning about the lure of ISIS.

We hope you enjoy the issue.  
PAUL FALLER

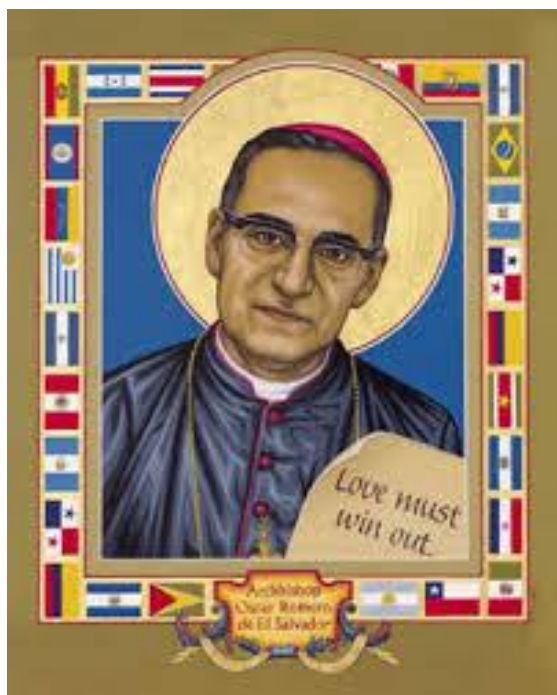
## CONTENTS

REFLECTION	Blessed Oscar Romero .....	2
REFLECTION	20 Scientific Reasons to Start Meditating Today .....	3
REFLECTION	Sense of the Faithful .....	6
WEBSITE	RE Today Services .....	7
BOOK REVIEW	Big, Big Questions .....	8
HUMOUR	Cartoons .....	9
ARTICLE	The Wisdom of Friedrich Froebel and St Benedict (Carmel Scanlon - Part 1) .....	10
ARTICLE	An Open, Inquiring Study of Religion (Marisa Crawford & Graham Rossiter) .....	13
STORY	A Hindu creation story .....	17
PRACTICE	'No More Wine' (Eularia Clarke) .....	19
NEWS		
INTERNATIONAL	.....	20
LOCAL	.....	23

# REFLECTION

## Blessed Oscar Romero

Archbishop of San Salvador - Voice of the voiceless - Martyr for justice and love of the poor



Oscar Romero, the Latin American Archbishop martyred in 1980, is revered as one of the most outstanding prophetic figures of the 20th century, standing up for the poor and marginalised, and challenging the Church to do the same. His "beatification" (the final step before being called a "Saint") took place this past weekend, on Saturday 23 May, outside San Salvador Cathedral.

Romero was shot to death while saying Mass on March 24, 1980. No one has ever been prosecuted for the assassination, though it's widely believed the killers were linked to a right-wing death squad. Gunmen also attacked a massive crowd at Romero's funeral six days later, leaving dozens dead.

Known formerly as a pious and relatively conservative bishop, nothing in his background suggested that he was a man to challenge the status quo. But at the outset of a bloody civil war in El Salvador in

the late 1970s, he became the country's most courageous and important voice for the poor and victims of human rights abuses.

Following a US-backed coup in October 1979, a violent military regime had taken power. A month before his death, Romero wrote to US President Jimmy Carter asking him to suspend military and economic aid to the government, insisting the new rulers "know only how to repress the people and defend the interests of the Salvadoran oligarchy." Just a day before he was shot, Romero begged - indeed, *ordered* - soldiers and members of the security forces not to fire on citizens.

From the day he died, Romero has been popularly revered as a martyr and saint. The formal pursuit of canonization, however, was held up for decades - in part, due to conservatives in the Church who felt that his canonization would be seen as an endorsement of left-wing Marxist politics and, more broadly, of "liberation theology". However, Pope Benedict XVI reopened Romero's case; while back in 2007, then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina told a Salvadoran priest that "to me [Romero] is a saint and a martyr ... If I were pope, I would have already canonized him."

### *Why is Oscar Romero's beatification so significant?*

There are four reasons why the Romero beatification is a significant turning point for the Catholic Church.

*First*, it marks a healing of tensions over "liberation theology," a movement in Latin American Catholicism promoting social justice. Its core idea is the "option for the poor," meaning the Church should have a special concern, as Christ did, for the downtrodden and people at the mar-

gins. Titanic battles raged over liberation theology in the 1980s and 1990s. Today, a moderate consensus has taken hold: *If “liberation theology” means armed Marxist rebellion and the reduction of politics to class struggle, the answer is no. If it means fighting poverty and struggling for justice, it’s yes!* Beatifying Romero, a hero to the liberation theology movement, amounts to an endorsement of this consensus.

**Second**, Romero becomes a patron saint for persecuted Christians everywhere, at a time when anti-Christian violence has become a leading human rights challenge.

**Third**, the beatification ratifies a new standard for what counts as “martyrdom.” It’s no longer necessary to die explicitly *in odium fidei*, at the hands of those who hate the faith, which was the traditional test. Now martyrdom includes dying *in odium caritatis*, as a victim of those motivated by a hatred of charity. Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez, one of the founders of liberation theology, recently said, “This is Latin American martyrdom: To give one’s life for justice, for the love of the people ....”

**Fourth**, Romero symbolizes the socially engaged Church Pope Francis wants to lead: “*a poor Church for the poor.*”

*Adapted from an article by John Allen Jnr in CRUX - <http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/05/16>*

## REFLECTION

### 20 Scientific Reasons to Start Meditating Today

(Emma Seppala, Ph.D.)

*Emma Seppala originates from Paris, France and is Associate Director at the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE) at Stanford University. Her research areas include: Complementary & Alternative Interventions (yoga, meditation); The Science of Happiness, Health, Well-Being; Stress; Trauma; Emotion and Emotion Regulation; Compassion, Social Connectedness; Cross-Cultural Psychology.*

I started meditating soon after 9/11. I was living in Manhattan, an already chaotic place, at an extremely chaotic time. I realized I had no control over my external environment. But the one place I did have a say over was my mind, through meditation. When I started meditating, I did not realize it would also make me healthier, happier, and more successful. Having witnessed the



benefits, I devoted my PhD research at Stanford to studying the impact of meditation. I saw people from diverse backgrounds from college students to combat veterans benefit. In the last 10 years, hundreds of studies have been released. Here are 20 scientifically-validated reasons you might want to get on the bandwagon today:

#### ***It Boosts Your HEALTH***

1 - Increases immune function (See [here](#) and [here](#))

- 2 - Decreases Pain (see [here](#))
- 3 - Decreases Inflammation at the Cellular Level (See [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#))

#### *It Boosts Your HAPPINESS*

- 4 - Increases Positive Emotion ([here](#) and [here](#))
- 5 - Decreases Depression (see [here](#))
- 6 - Decreases Anxiety (see [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#))
- 7 - Decreases Stress (see [here](#) and [here](#))

#### *It Boosts Your SOCIAL LIFE*

Think meditation is a solitary activity? It may be (unless you meditate in a group which many do!) but it actually increases your sense of connection to others:

- 8 - Increases social connection & emotional intelligence (see [here](#) and - by yours truly - [here](#))
- 9 - Makes you more compassionate (see [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#))
- 10 - Makes you feel less lonely (see [here](#))

#### *It Boosts Your Self-Control*

- 11 - Improves your ability to regulate your emotions (see [here](#)) (Ever flown off the handle or not been able to quiet your mind? Here's the key)
- 12 - Improves your ability to introspect (see [here](#) & for why this is crucial see [this post](#))

#### *It Changes Your BRAIN (for the better)*

- 13 - Increases grey matter (see [here](#))
- 14 - Increases volume in areas related to emotion regulation, positive emotions & self-control (see [here](#) and [here](#))
- 15 - Increases cortical thickness in areas related to paying attention (see [here](#))

#### *It Improves Your Productivity (yup, by doing nothing)*

- 16 - Increases your focus & attention (see [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#))
- 17 - Improves your ability to multitask (see [here](#))
- 18 - Improves your memory (see [here](#))
- 19 - Improves your ability to be creative & think outside the box (see research by [J. Schooler](#))

#### *20. It Makes You WISE(R)*

It gives you perspective: By observing your mind, you realize you don't have to be slave to it. You realize it throws tantrums, gets grumpy, jealous, happy and sad but that it doesn't have to run you. Meditation is quite simply mental hygiene: clear out the junk, tune your talents, and get in touch with yourself. Think about it, you shower every day and clean your body, but have you ever showered your mind? As a consequence, you'll feel more clear and see things with greater perspective. "The quality of our life depends on the quality of our mind," writes Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. We can't control what happens on the outside but we do have a say over the quality of our mind. No matter what's going on, if your mind is ok, everything is ok. Right now.

### *It Keeps You Real*

Once you get to know your mind, you start to own your stuff and become more authentic, maybe even humble. You realize the stories and soap operas your mind puts you through and you gain some perspective on them. You realize most of us are caught up in a mind-drama and become more compassionate towards others.

And...the more you meditate, the more you seem to benefit, research studies such as this one suggest.

### *Myths about Meditation*

Having an empty mind—*nope, in fact, when you start meditating, you'll find it's quite the opposite*

Sitting in lotus position—*nope, you can sit on the couch (just don't lie down, you'll fall asleep)*

Sitting for an hour a day—*nope, small doses work just fine, (see here and - by yours truly - here)*

Chanting in a language I don't understand—*nope, not unless that floats your boat*

Buddhist, Hindu or religious—*nope, not unless you make it so*

Weird—*what's so weird about sitting and breathing? Besides, US congressmen, NFL football leagues and the US Marine Corps are doing it, how weird can it be?*

Wearing robes—*what?*

### *"I can't meditate" because*

I can't clear my mind—*no worries, while you're sitting there you'll experience the noisy chaos of a wound up mind that's unwinding: tons of thoughts, feelings and emotions. Don't worry about how you feel during, notice how you feel after and throughout the rest of the day*

I can't sit still—*that's ok, just sit comfortably, fidget if you need to*

I get anxious—*that's also normal, all the junk's coming up, learn some breathing practices to calm yourself down, exercise or do yoga before meditating*  
I hate sitting still—*that's fine, then go for a walk without your earphones, phone etc.; or start with yoga; or do breathing exercises...give yourself time to just "be" without constantly "doing" something*

I tried and I hated it—*there's not just one kind of meditation, there's a whole menu out there, look for the shoe that fits: mindfulness, Transcendental, compassion, mantra, Vipassana, Art of Living breathing practices, yoga nidra, yoga, insight, loving-kindness, tai chi etc...*

I don't have time - *if you have time to read an article about meditation all the way through, you have time to meditate. Think of all those minutes you waste every day on the internet or otherwise, you can definitely fit in 20 minutes here or there to give your life a boost! Gandhi is quoted as saying "I'm so busy today, that... I'm going to meditate 2 hours instead of 1."*

<http://www.emmaseppala.com/20-scientific-reasons-to-start-meditating-today/#.VZKQsPmqgko>



# REFLECTION

## Sense of the Faithful

(The Southern Cross Editorial, 3 June 2015)

After 62% of Ireland's population voted against the position represented by the Catholic Church in last month's referendum on gay marriage, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin spoke about a "social revolution" which requires introspection by the Church.



"The Second Vatican Council stressed the notion of a *sensus fidei*, the competence of individual believers and the Church as a whole to discern the truths of faith."

The referendum result is significant. For all the reports of a drain of Catholics from the Church, Ireland still has one of the highest Mass attendance figures in the West, and most people in

the republic describe themselves as Catholics. Archbishop Martin noted that "most of these young people who voted 'yes' [in favour of same-sex marriage] are products of our Catholic schools for 12 years".

Many loyal Catholics, and even some priests, voted yes to civil same-sex marriage. These attitudes are replicated in polls throughout the West.

This cannot be ascribed simply to a failure of catechetics. The Catholic Church has pronounced its teachings clearly and forcefully. The problem is not that many of the faithful don't understand or appreciate these teachings, but that they have rejected them as inapplicable to their lives.

Bishop Kevin Doran of Elphin, who had been a leading voice in the campaign against same-sex marriage, put his finger on it: "It seems that many people voted 'yes' as a way of showing their acceptance and their love for friends and family members who are gay. Large numbers obviously believed that they could vote 'yes' without in any

way undermining marriage."

Importantly, he showed respect for their position: "While I do not share their belief, I understand their reason for celebrating, and I do respect their spirit of solidarity."

The *sensus fidelium* – the sense of the faithful – in some areas of the Church seems to reject the Church's opposition to civil same-sex marriage, and other issues. Conversely, in other areas, especially in Africa, the faithful seem to support the Church's teachings and positions on matters concerning homosexuality.

The Second Vatican Council stressed the notion of a *sensus fidei*, the competence of individual believers and the Church as a whole to discern the truths of faith. The sense of the faithful cannot change the unalterable teachings of the Church, but, with due discernment, it could inform the ways in which these teachings are understood and applied.

Speaking in Washington in late May, Cardinal Walter Kasper said that Pope Francis wants to

give the *sensus fidei* “complete meaning”.

“He wants a listening magisterium that makes its position, yes, but makes its position after it has heard what the Spirit says to its churches,” said Cardinal Kasper.

Last year Pope Francis told the Vatican’s International Theological Commission: “By the gift of the Holy Spirit, the members of the Church possess the ‘sense of the faith’. It is a question of a kind of ‘spiritual instinct’ which permits us to ‘think with the Church’ and discern what is consistent with the apostolic faith and the spirit of the Gospel.”

The magisterium, the pope said, has the “duty

to pay attention to what the Spirit tells the Church through authentic manifestations of the ‘sense of the faithful’”, but cautioned that by this he does not mean simple majority opinion.

The decision to circulate a questionnaire aimed at collecting the views of Catholics on the family in preparation for October’s Synod of Bishops on the subject is a concrete expression of the pope’s desire to know the sense of the faithful.

Of course, the Church is not a democracy and its teachings cannot be altered on the mere basis of opinion polls or questionnaires. As it has been for almost two millennia, however, some teachings, especially those addressing issues of morali-

ty, can be expressed, presented, emphasised and applied in different ways and by different means.

In this, it is essential that the magisterium – the teaching authority of the Church – remains intact.

We live in times when large proportions of Catholics disregard the magisterium, not only on questions of sexual morality, but also, and perhaps more grievously, on the scandal of poverty.

The Church needs to take stock and interrogate why this is so, and how the teachings of the Catholic Church can be communicated and applied in ways that reach people.

## WEBSITE

### RE Today Services

<http://www.retoday.org.uk/>

Scroll down the home page and click on the yellow box headed “Classroom Activities”. This will take you to the page “Useful Resources” which covers a number of relevant topics. Here is the complete list. Following these links will take you to a number of useful resources covering the topic in question.

[Abortion](#)

[Animal Rights](#)

[Art & Music](#)

[Beliefs in Action](#)

[Crime & Punishment](#)

[Death & the Afterlife](#)

[Environment](#)

[Euthanasia](#)

[Evil & Suffering](#)

[Faith Stories](#)

[Forgiveness](#)

[God](#)

[Justice](#)

[Peace & Conflict](#)

[People of Faith](#)

[Places of Worship](#)

[Prayer & Worship](#)

[Relationships](#)

[Religion & the Media](#)

[Religious Experience](#)

[Sacred Texts](#)

[Science & Religion](#)

[Wealth & Poverty](#)

# BOOK REVIEW

## Big, Big Questions

Fischy Music songs have been very effectively used in Primary Schools across the UK and beyond for many years in health and well-being, RE and collective worship settings. Songs can have a profound positive effect on helping children to:

- Articulate Deep Feelings and Thoughts
- Remember Important things
- Understand Not Just Cerebrally but also Emotionally
- Connect with themselves, other people, their world and beyond their world
- Find comfort and Hope



Big Big Questions uses 12 Fischy Music songs as a catalyst to help explore and reflect on some Key RE Themes. The songs each have a range of accompanying activities to enable you to get under the surface of the themes and help children to connect with them in a deeper way.

[www.shop.retoday.org.uk](http://www.shop.retoday.org.uk)

One of the book's authors, Lat Blaylock, has kindly sent a sample of the material contained in the book. To listen to some of the songs go to [www.fischy.com](http://www.fischy.com).

### BIG BIG QUESTIONS

BIG BIG QUESTIONS, TOUGH TOUGH QUESTIONS

How long God? How much God?

We are asking you, we are asking you

How far God? How come God?

We are asking you, we are asking you

We believe you're there

We believe you care

We believe you're not scared of

BIG BIG QUESTIONS, TOUGH TOUGH QUESTIONS

Why me God? Why him God?

We are asking you, we are asking you

Why her God? Why us God?

We are asking you, we are asking you

We believe you're there

We believe you care

We believe you're not scared of

BIG BIG QUESTIONS, TOUGH TOUGH QUESTIONS

Where are you, when will you?

We are asking you, we are asking you

Why won't you? Why don't you?

We are asking you, we are asking you

We believe you're there

We believe you care

We believe you're not scared of

BIG BIG QUESTIONS, TOUGH TOUGH QUESTIONS

© Fischy Music

### Singing the song together

- As you will hear, this is a big 'rock anthem' style song which requires commitment to make it work best!
- Start off with the chorus which is very strong and teach call and response style, a line at a time. You can make up your own actions to help reinforce the words

The verses are very simple, responding to the main vocal then all singing together, "we are asking you".

### About the song

The Psalms are part of Christian and Jewish Scripture, and feature humans questioning God very strongly. Muslims revere David (Dawud) as a Prophet of Islam too.

It is great to use the Psalms if you want to give children permission and ideas for enquiry RE - they ask God very good questions when given the opportunity, and can also suggest some answers god might give.

Here, a song picks up the Psalm's mood of questioning faith - the singers believe God is there, and God cares, but still the questions keep coming. These singers stand for many pupils! Adults can underestimate how deeply children need to question ideas about God, but this song gives permission and ways to do it.



## Pedagogy and learning methods

**Investigation:** children are encouraged to set the questions they find important and interesting.

**Reasoning:** children are asked to give reasons for their thoughts, not just to share opinions. Good RE always asks - and answers - the 'why?' questions.

**Creativity:** It's important not to treat the issue of suffering in life like a Maths problem; personal feeling is involved and really matters, so creative expression (e.g. in poetry or art) can be crucial to finding ways forward.

**Reflection:** the best work will often require children to think deeply and carefully for themselves.

## Activities and learning suggestions

### STARTING OFF

Start by sharing the Fischy music song with the children.

Introduce a 'Why Book' to the children. Explain that as part of the project you are going to collect together their 'Why?' questions and any answers that different people have to these questions.

Spend time with children supporting them to classify questions into big and little questions e.g.

- How much does this chocolate cost? / Is this chocolate nice?
- When was I born? / Why was I born?
- What is for dinner? / Can we help people who have no food?
- How many people are there in the world? / Why do some people have lots and some people have little?
- How can we help a sad person? / What makes me sad?

### DIGGING DEEPER

Introduce the big question mark activity, see example 2 below on p4. Children work in groups to write big questions that they have got for God or the one who knows everything.

After pupils have done the big question mark, it is good to invite them to swap sheets, and classify the questions. Which is the best? The hardest? The funniest? The most important? The page from a 'Why Book' here was made with 5-6 year olds.

Ask children to choose three questions that are interesting to them. Ask them to give three possible suggestions about what God might reply. Do they know any teaching from religious books and scriptures that would help them answer? Add all of these questions and possible answers to the class Why? Book.

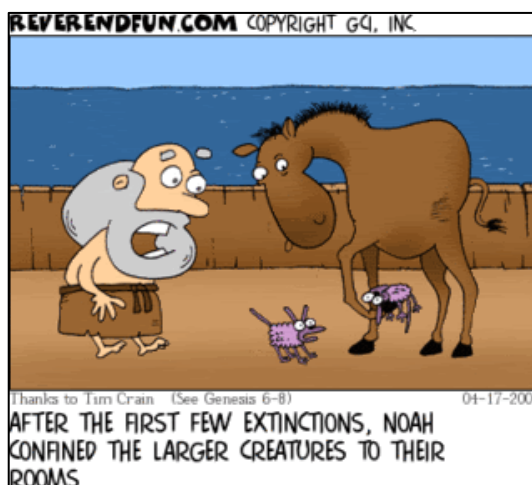
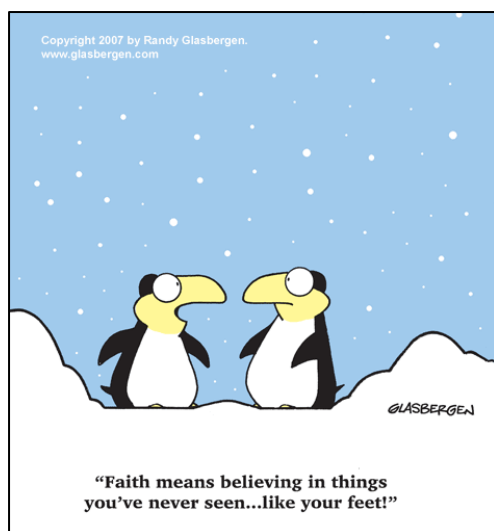
To go one step further, ask the pupils to review each other's answers and say what a Christian, a non-believer or a member of another faith would say about the questions and answers they have created.

Discuss with the class how singing the Fischy music song might help a person who was a Christian.

- Can these questions be answered?
- If so, how? If not, why not?

Add all of these questions and possible answers to the class 'Why Book'.

## HUMOUR



## ARTICLE

### The Wisdom of Friedrich Froebel and St Benedict (Part 1)

#### A Support for Teachers of Distressed Children Today

(Carmel Scanlon)

*Why, oh why did I choose this career? I'm only two years teaching and I'm so disillusioned. It is nothing like I imagined it would be. So many of the children are disturbed, antisocial and disinterested. Marriages seem to be breaking down all over the place. All the solid values are gone. There seems to be no accountability and we as teachers are expected to pick up all the pieces. If only this group of children were not in the class I'd be fine. They keep acting up, looking for negative attention and disrupting others. It is not teaching, it is policing. I feel like I am doing time.*

These are real comments from a real teacher suffering from strain, stress, exhaustion and disappointment. What she describes is not an isolated incident. In the cultural mayhem of disintegrating family, community and spiritual structures, common in Ireland today, children are suffering starkly, undeservedly heart-breakingly and teachers are suffering with them. Is it naïve to believe anything can help in this situation? Is there any realistic way that teachers can encourage, guide and help these children while at the same time finding satisfaction and fulfilment in teaching as a profession?

Drawing on the wisdom and insights of St Benedict the founder of monasticism, and Friedrich Froebel the great German educator, this article contends that teachers can enjoy rather than endure their work with distressed children in their care.

Benedict offers educators a grounded spirituality and way of life that facilitates stability, balance, community and meaning for teachers today, a spirituality that

has stood the test of time over one and a half thousand years, a spirituality that is suitable for the ordinary person in everyday circumstances. His Rule has been described as 'simply a piece of Wisdom literature designed to deal with the great questions of life in ways that make them understandable, clear and achievable'.

Froebel, on the other hand, offers awareness, understanding and profound insight into the suffering behind the behaviour of these children so that rather than being threatened by their antisocial acting out in the classroom, teachers are confident and at ease when handling their difficulties and distress.

Equipped with Froebel's insights and imbued with this Benedictine spirit, the teacher begins to mirror the loving kindness of Jesus Christ. This spirit permeates the classroom. These children can then experience love, affirmation, acceptance and safety - perhaps for the first time.

#### Acknowledging Where Children are Coming From

Children do not arrive in the classroom untouched by their social background and environment. Their home situation leaves deep and lasting influences which carry implications for their school lives. An awareness of this fact by the teacher is the first step in facilitating their education and growth.

It was the conviction of Froebel that 'life in all its aspects is connected to make one, harmonious whole' and that, 'There existed 'inter-connectedness' between all things, between our ancestors; the present generation and future generations; between the present life and the life to

come.' To Froebel, this meant that, 'there is a link between the education of children in the home, the school and the wider world. Indeed, he went further, insisting that:

life itself was the most important school for man, and that unless a school was related to life, it had no claim to its name. Living and schooling in that sense were synonymous.

With a policy of open interaction between home and school, educators quickly become aware of the lack of support in the lives of distressed children. Teachers can ponder the family-life of these children which can often be chaotic, unpredictable, stressful, unreliable and uncertain. Teachers, by meeting and involving parents where possible in the school context with a supportive and accepting attitude, rather than a critical one, can create a very important positive, trusting link between the two worlds of the child. This is particularly relevant when home life is difficult, challenging and dysfunctional. Visiting parents in their homes, where possible, especially when the child is in severe distress, can create a bond of trust and support for the parent. That someone cares during a period of crisis or upheaval can help make their difficulties more bearable. Teaching is, after all, a vocation not an occupation. Accordingly we begin then to appreciate what kind of world some children come from:

- A world where organised religion as a moral guide and a stabilizing influence is rarely a significant part of their lives. Very often these children live in a spiritual vacuum in which an explicit relationship with a living, personal God is neither nurtured nor recognised.
- A world where they occupy themselves after school in 'free range' fashion until their parents return from work - or in some cases, sadly, from the local pub - too tired to listen, too drained to hear, and sometimes too emotionally needy themselves to be

able or willing to attend to their children. They thus perpetuate, what John Bradshaw calls, 'the crisis of adult children raising children who will become adult children themselves.'

- A world where their bodies are malnourished and hyped-up by living on takeaways, pizzas, crisps, cakes or chocolate bars instead of on a balanced, healthy diet.
- A world where adults often discharge feelings in an unrestrained and erratic manner, which can be distressful and disturbing to the children in their care.
- A world where being treated by adults with respect, dignity and selfless devotion is often foreign to their experience.
- A world where the need for conversation, story play and adult involvement is replaced by hours of unsupervised TV viewing, indiscriminate video-watching and internet browsing, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and violence, while pounding them with images of infidelity, deceit and negativity.
- A world where parenting is haphazard at best, discipline is spasmodic, unpredictable and inconsistent, alternating between indulgence and neglect and where the children are bribed with money to do ordinary household chores, while at the same time their basic need for order, routine and predictability are utterly neglected.
- A world where one or both parents may have married out of a need for parenting and nurturing themselves, a situation in which the mother often becomes overwhelmed and distressed, the father finds someone else, and no one is there emotionally for the children.
- A world where the stability of the family as a coherent reliable group is often non-existent.

Hyped-up on junk food, exhausted from

inadequate sleep, physically unfit from endless TV watching instead of engaging in active and wholesome play, they become angry, wild, unmotivated, uncared-for and uncaring.

Having a clear awareness of this situation, the teacher may find it easier to be understanding of the children's failings and their challenging 'bold' behaviour. They are more likely therefore, to treat them with support and guidance rather than criticism and harshness, bearing in mind the fact that 'a child regards his own family life objectively and takes it as an ideal of life.' There is no point in giving negative feedback to these children because they will only react defensively.

The task of educators, therefore, is to create a safe environment in which guidance and support, along with loving kindness, will enable them to see and experience another way of relating so that they will learn to live, as Froebel says, 'in harmony with themselves, in harmony with their neighbours and the environment, and in harmony with their creator.'

### How These Children Present in Class

These children generally present in class in either of two ways but may show some characteristics of both.

They may withdraw into themselves and all their distress is imploded. This defence is generally adopted by girls though not exclusively so. In this scenario, children become dreamy, distracted, tired, listless and drained. They may complain of physical sickness and pain. In the long term this way of handling their distress can have severe repercussions on their health. 'Emotional energy that is acted in can cause physical problems including gastro-intestinal disorders, headaches, back-aches, neck-aches and severe muscle tension.' By 'acted in', John Bradshaw here means the internalizing of negative feelings that are too overwhelming to acknowledge.

Secondly, children may also work ex-

tremely hard to 'do well' 'be good' 'be perfect' and be in control'. Their thinking often goes as follows: 'If I could control everything no one can catch me off guard and hurt me.' They may, too, shrink from all conflict, argument, honest emotional discussion or engagement with other children because they feel that this would be too threatening to their security. Their relationship with other children therefore, becomes stylized and 'sage' rather than spontaneous and 'real'. Their self-esteem also plummets because they think they are to blame for the problems at home. At first sight this seems irrational, but Alice Miller, the world-renowned Jungian psychoanalyst, in her years of therapeutic work, has discovered that 'children tend to blame themselves for their parents' cruelty and to absolve the parents, whom they invariably love, of all responsibility.' Feeling helpless or abandoned is harder to face than carrying the enormous burden of guilt themselves. 'This toxic guilt is a way of having power in a powerless situation. It tells you that you are responsible for other people's feelings and behaviour.' This can set them up for a co-dependent way of relating as adults later in life. Children who react like this often try to placate authority. They do this because their inner world is so fragile and their sense of self so weakened that any criticism would send them into a distraught spiral of distress. Having rejected themselves, their fear of risking further rejection is unbearable.

Sometimes they are suffused with grief and loss if one parent leaves the home for good. They become 'clingly' in their need for the teacher's approval, trying to glean any care, love, kindness or understanding to help them to keep going. They may show the teacher a letter they have written to the missing parent believing that, if they write of their loss and love, the beloved parent will return. Their abject misery and stunned dismay when they discover the futility of their effort is followed by feelings of worthlessness, shame and despair.

One little boy in the class who had waited at the front window of his home for days, watching for his father's return, reported every day of his optimism about this happening very soon. When he realized eventually that this was never going to occur, he said: 'I mustn't have written the letter properly. Otherwise he'd have come back.'

In sum, these children suffer acutely, endlessly, relentlessly for sins that were not theirs in the first place.

### Responding to the Needs of Such Children

Not many years ago the solution to any classroom disturbance would have been to slap the children for their bad behaviour so as to have them 'licked into shape'

and forced to conform accordingly. This approach only succeeded in sending the problem underground while relieving the teacher of having to deal in an ongoing way with unruly behaviour.

Nowadays, because of a more holistic approach, the challenge to teachers is greatly increased. How can they make the classroom a safe, supportive place for these children? Arising out of the experience and reflection of this writer, a Froebel-trained teacher, the conviction emerged that fundamental to helping them is an understanding of their key emotional requirements at school, namely respect, acceptance, inclusion, awareness and strength. In considering how to address these needs the work of Friedrich Froebel has some wisdom to offer.

(To be continued in Vol 1 No 4, August 2015)

## ARTICLE

### An Open, Inquiring Study of Religion

(Marisa Crawford & Graham Rossiter)

*"An ignorant person cannot be pious"* (Hillel: Ethics of the Fathers)

The aims for classroom religious education proposed in the previous chapter treat the activity primarily as an educational exploration of religion and not as a religious experience. It is more concerned with knowledge, understanding and affective appreciation of religion than with the 'faith development' and 'faith responses' of pupils. However, since faith has always been a central concern of the Church documents on catechesis, the question may arise as to why it is not given a more prominent place in these aims for religious education. There is need to show how the proposed approach to religious education gives an important place to faith. It does not devalue or exclude 'faith-sharing' nor does it

exclude religious experience. There is also a need to explain how the emphasis on knowledge is not a retrograde move back to the old catechism style of teaching religion. It will not involve a loss of the 'personalism' that came into religious education in the 1970s and it will not compromise efforts to develop pastoral care and community spirit in the school.

The aims for religious education take into account the nature of religious faith and propose the best possibilities that the classroom can offer to promote the development of mature faith in young people. The classroom is a natural place for education (in particular, the form of education known as 'schooling' or 'school-teaching'). The classroom does its best



for young people's faith when it offers a sound education.

This chapter seeks to highlight what a sound classroom religious education means in practice. It will make use of a case study to show what can be achieved in an open, inquiring study of religion. It will suggest that the most appropriate way to foster the development of the religious faith of pupils in the classroom is to take the emphasis off faith and to develop the educational aspects of a study of religion.

### **A case study showing the possibilities in an open, inquiring study of religion**

What follows will examine in detail a particular religion studies course for Year 12 students. However, the principles that emerge from the discussion have significance for the teaching of religion throughout the secondary school. These principles are just as relevant to the teaching of a five period-per-week matriculation level course as they are to a non-accredited one period-per-week course with a much smaller requirement of written work. The points made here and in the following two chapters will provide a discussion of the methodology of religious education that can be applied to the program described in the second part of the book or to the programs that religion teachers already have in place in their own schools.

### **Details of the example: An accredited Year 12 course**

The example is a five period-per-week religion studies course taught as part of an alternative Year 12 program in a Catholic school in South Australia. The course was part of a school-based, Board-approved, curriculum which was an alternative to the more academically-oriented Higher School Certificate program. The course was for students who were not aiming at university entrance. The teacher had the same class for the regular Catholic religious education peri-

ods programmed for all the Year 12 students. The arrangement provided a unique opportunity for comparing the students' perceptions of the two courses.

The documentation for the course and student work were scrutinised and moderated by officers of the State Education Department. To satisfy the Education Department's requirements, the religion studies course had to be justified in educational terms, and not on the grounds of handing on the Catholic faith tradition. The aims for the course were as follows:- to acquire knowledge, understanding and a sympathetic appreciation of world religions including Christianity; to develop skills for studying religion objectively and impartially.

These educational aims were not incompatible with traditional aims for religious education in Catholic schools. They were not directed immediately at the religious faith of pupils but at their educational experience. Whether or not this ultimately enhanced their personal faith would depend upon the free response of the young people themselves, in their own time and in relation to many other influences on their lives.

Initially, the students were cynical about the religion studies course. They were not pleased to be receiving a 'double dose of religion', more than twice the 'injection of religion' given to the other Year 12 students. However, as the course progressed they changed their minds. They recognised that they were involved in an open-ended, inquiring study of religion which did not presume or require explicit faith commitment. It was a challenging study of world religions. They were required to think seriously about religion and to consider the connections that their study made with their own personal experience. Beginning with unfamiliar religions, they learned skills for studying religion impartially without the prejudice that is often associated with a study of one's own religious tradition.

### Young People's Perception of religious education: The importance of perceived freedom of inquiry

The students' perceptions of the two forms of religious education are particularly revealing. They liked the religion studies course because it gave them the opportunity for a free, critical encounter with religions as a significant part of human culture with which, it became clear, they had little familiarity. Furthermore, their thinking about a number of contemporary human/religious issues was extended. Their initial negative reactions came from expectations that religion studies would be similar to their previous experiences of religious education.

Their perceptions of the regular Catholic religion classes were different. This program, by comparison with similar programs in other schools, was a well-balanced one; nevertheless, the students perceived the purposes and processes of this program to be different from those in the religion studies course. While not able to articulate the differences clearly, they felt that the Catholic religion periods were designed for the 'getting' of religion while the religion studies course was more for the 'studying' of religion. They regarded the Catholic religion periods as attempts to communicate the Catholic faith, to make them more loyal to the Church, and to make them more religious. At one time during the week, when the religion studies class immediately preceded the religion period, something like 'schizophrenia' was evident in the students. At the bell for change of lesson, their attitudes would subtly change.

While the students were not antagonistic to the Catholic religion periods, the very existence of the religion studies course highlighted for them a significant difference in purposes. They invented their own language to describe the difference. At times, they would ask their teacher - "Are you speaking to us as our religion studies teacher or as our 'Religion-

Religion' teacher?" The latter term was used with a heavy emphasis to indicate that there seemed to be an additional obligation associated with the Catholic religion periods.

It appears that the difference had much to do with the perceived freedom of inquiry in the two types of classes. In most Catholic schools where there is only one program of religious education, it is likely that students' freedom of inquiry still remains a critical factor. There are religion teachers who provide this freedom naturally in the conduct of their classes. There are others who do not recognise that their expectations and their teaching exert a subtle psychological pressure on students to agree with certain points of view. Young people are very sensitive to such an imposition. They can be quite interested in studying religious issues but they do not want their own personal position pre-empted. While this is particularly relevant to the older students, it also applies to those in junior secondary classes. Young people's sensitivity to having religion 'imposed' on them does not mean they are uninterested in finding out more about their own religion. The reason that they may not appear interested in learning about religion is often because they perceive the exercise as an attempt to give them 'more' than information about religion. As one Year 11 student observed: "It is totally unfair of a teacher to constantly put you in a position where you have to be an 'enthusiastic believer' or 'unbeliever'. You shouldn't be pressured into that. It doesn't happen in other subjects." Yet this same student was interested in acquiring more information about religion.

What was said above about freedom of inquiry also makes sense of the experience of teachers who deal with religious issues in other parts of the curriculum. It is not uncommon to hear a teacher say: "I teach more about religious and moral issues in my English literature class than I do in religion class." The English class has an authentic freedom of inquiry for ex-

amining religious issues when they arise. The English lesson is not regarded by the teacher or the students as an activity for communicating religious faith and values. There is freedom on the part of both teacher and students to explore religious issues and to discuss their ideas without their comments being taken as a sign of a particular commitment or lack of commitment. Apparently this freedom is lacking in most religion classes; at least this is the perception of the students. The challenge for religion teachers is to transpose the freedom of inquiry experienced in the English literature class to religion classes. If this freedom is lacking in religion classes, then religious education will be perceived negatively by students as an imposition.

There is a danger that a preoccupation with the aims of 'communicating faith' and promoting 'faith development' can make teachers anxious about whether or not students believe what is being taught. The students can detect this anxiety in the teacher; it subtly influences the atmosphere in the class; the teacher's expectations regarding faith can place limits on freedom of inquiry. The sensitivity of young people in this matter should not be underestimated. The quality and the effectiveness of religious education are dependent on how much individual freedom is respected.

### The place for personal discussion in religious education

The students' experience of the religion studies course raises questions about the place of 'personalism' in the classroom - that is, about the place for the sharing of personal insights by students and teachers. The cognitive and affective aims noted earlier were emphasised by the teacher. The class was educational and not devotional in orientation. Students were not required to state their own personal convictions. The teacher was not looking for responses which might indicate a deepening of religious faith. The irony in the situation was that these con-

ditions which made it clear to students that 'faith responses' were not being sought, created the very freedom they needed to be able to discuss their ideas comfortably at a personal level. They were unanimous in noting that there was more value in discussions in the religion studies class than there was in the regular religion periods, even though the latter were often given over to longer periods of group discussion. This suggests that a serious study of religion is not incompatible with healthy personal discussion - much in the same way as English and Humanities teachers would welcome pointed discussion during their lessons. Personal discussion can readily be generated in religion periods as the by-product of a study which concentrates on exploring content. A discussion is not always free when the focus is directly on the personal views of the students. The problem is not with personalism in the religion class, but in the way the teacher tries to generate it.

A free discussion is one which does not commit contributors to any particular value position on which they may comment. This allows students to 'rehearse imaginatively' what different value positions might mean for them without their comments being regarded as the 'taking' of that position. If religion classes are primarily for inquiring into religious issues, then the question of possible commitment decisions can be left to the students' own freedom, in their own time and on a stage of life which is much larger than the one represented in the classroom.

The educational aims for the religion studies course put personal faith and commitment at some distance from the classroom. The distance created freedom of inquiry. Students could explore different views (even unorthodox ones), comment, agree or disagree, without their contributions being taken as a sign of commitment or lack of it. The most important thing that the teacher should do for young people's faith in the class-

room is to create a respectful free 'space' around it. It is not a matter of putting faith 'into' or taking faith 'out of' classroom religious education. Rather, it is giving the proper respect, space and freedom that any authentic faith de-

serves. There is no principle more important than this in religious education. It is not surprising that many of the most difficult problems in religious education can be traced back to some violation of this principle.

(From *Teaching Religion in the Secondary School*. 1985. Chapter 4)

## STORY

### A Hindu creation story



#### Activity 1: What's the meaning?

Ask pupils to begin by looking carefully at the image and trying to work out what the story told by the picture might be. Feed them some information after they have had a chance to think and raise some questions.

In Hindu understanding, this universe is just one of many. In between 'universes', the cosmic and primeval ocean continues in total tranquillity, and the unending snake Ananta lies coiled on the Ocean. Lord Vishnu lies on the coils of the mighty serpent as if on a floating couch. Vishnu embodies the energy of preservation. As he lies, he sleeps and dreams. Vishnu's consort, the goddess Lakshmi, sits with him, gently holding his foot.

In his dream, a lovely lotus flower comes growing from his belly button, petals luminous with the light of the heavens, and as the lotus unfolds, you will see in it the god Brahma, the creative. His four heads face in all directions at once, to the north, south, east and



west. His four hands hold the four Vedas, the scriptures. From his four hands he gently creates earth, air, fire, water. A new universe is beginning.

This Hindu creation myth sees the universe as the dream of the Divine. In dreams, anything can happen. We find ourselves presently inside one of these cycles of creation, and this means Hindus believe that Brahma has done his task for the moment. So there are very few temples in the whole of India dedicated to Brahma, even though he is such an important god, the creator of all.

In the Vedas (Rig Veda 10:129.1-7) after the telling of one creation story, the writer concludes with these fine words:

In the beginning darkness was swathed in darkness.  
All was liquid and formless. God was clothed in emptiness.  
Then fire arose within God; and in the fire arose love.  
This was the seed of the soul.  
And this is how the Universe was made.  
Or perhaps it was not  
Indeed God alone knows  
Or perhaps not.

(Rig Veda, here simplified for pupils)

Here are four suggestions about the meaning of this story. Ask pupils to discuss them, in pairs, and then to rank them in order: which ones do they think make best sense of the myth?

1. This ancient story is meant to show us that life moves round and round in circles and the forces of preservation and destruction are balanced at any one time.
2. This myth of creation shows that Hindu religion encourages us to be thankful to higher forces for the life, the energy, the order and the beauty of the planet we find we live on.
3. This story is very knowing: no one can be sure of how it all began, but the story says it began with a dream, not by accident.
4. Ancient creation myths often use a flower, a belly button, a dream, an ocean, a snake and similar symbols to explore our sense of where we came from. This one uses all these symbols. We come from the gods and goddesses, says Hinduism.

### Activity 2: Artistic comparison

Look online for some more images of this scene from a Hindu story - there are many. Searching 'Vishnu Lakshmi Brahma Lotus' will find them. Compare three images and choose a favourite, saying why. What do they all have in common? What is different about each?





## PRACTICE

### A miracle painting by Eularia Clarke: 'No More Wine'



Use the image with the text of John 2:1-11. Begin by asking pupils to look carefully at the picture. Then compare the text with the picture, and choose some suitable activities from the examples given below.

- **How many...** Ask children to count the buckets, people, glasses, emotions, grapes, colours, symbols. Counting activities look very simple, but they make you engage with a work of art very well by looking hard.
- **Get into the picture.** Ask pupils to draw themselves on a tiny sticky note, and place themselves where they would choose to stand if they were in the picture. From there, what could they see, hear, touch, smell?
- **Bible or not?** What has the artist got from the Bible? What has she added? (Read the story from John, chapter 2.)
- **Tree?** Why is Jesus a tree in this picture? What is the artist thinking?
- **Another miracle story.** After studying this picture, take another miracle story – Calming the Storm, Ten Lepers, the Paralysed man – and create an image of the story in the style of Eularia Clarke.

# INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## Archbishop recommends the Qur'an

*An archbishop who previously headed the Vatican's interreligious council believes that Catholics can learn a lot from the Quran, Islam's holy book, reports DENNIS SADOWSKI.*

THERE is a book which Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald believes can inspire Christians to appreciate the God of all creation. And it's not just the Bible. Archbishop Fitzgerald, who retired at the end of 2012 as the papal nuncio to Egypt, said the Quran, with all of its names for God, can help Christians deepen their faith and inspire them to see God in new ways.

Since retiring, the English-born archbishop has been leading retreats on the names of God in Islam and contrasting the same or similar names for God found in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Archbishop Fitzgerald, who is fluent in Arabic, spent the past eight months finalising a book on the subject while serving as a guest instructor at Jesuit-run John Carroll University in Cleveland. He said his aim is to broaden understanding among people of different faiths, much as it was when he taught at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies in Rome, his time as a missionary priest in Sudan, his 19 years as secretary and then president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and as nuncio during Egypt's Arab Spring.

The archbishop's work is rooted in *Nostra Aetate* ("In Our Time"), the Second Vatican Council's declaration on relations with non-Christian religions promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1965. Understanding and accepting people of other faith traditions and their religions "is what we are supposed to be as Church," Archbishop Fitzgerald said. "*Nostra Aetate*, in a sense, gives you an impression that dialogue is always bilateral. So it's Christians and Muslims, Christians and Buddhists, Christians and Hindus," he explained.

"This is what we are supposed to be as Church. I think you come back to *Lumen Gentium* [Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church], the Church is the nature of a sacrament. It is a sign of what God is doing. And God doesn't only work in the Catholic Church. God works through the Spirit in other religions as well, and we must be open to that," he said. "That means we must relate to people. We are not meant to be a club. We are meant to be engaging in relations."

Zeki Saritoprak, director of the John Carroll University's Islamic studies programme, has known Archbishop Fitzgerald for more than a decade. He said having the archbishop on campus for eight months has boosted an understanding across religious traditions. "He would make connections with the biblical sources so non-Muslim students would find their Quranic understanding can resonate with their own teaching," Prof Saritoprak said.

For Archbishop Fitzgerald, who is now 77, much of his 54 years as a priest has been spent engaging in interreligious relations. His most high-profile work occurred from 1987 to 2006 with the pontifical council, first as secretary for 15 years and then as president for nearly four years. He landed at the council because of his knowledge of Islam and his teaching background and experience living, studying and ministering in Tunisia, Uganda and Sudan.

However, he said, his life path has been different from what he first imagined when he went off to school with the Missionaries of Africa—the White Fathers—at the age of 12 in 1949.

He originally thought he would eventually serve where members of the order had traditionally served: West Africa, East Africa or in sub-Saharan countries. Along the way, Arab North Africa piqued his interest and eventually he was sent to Tunisia to study theology for four years. In Tunisia, he took the opportunity to study Arabic. Several years after his 1961 ordination as a priest of the missionary order, he earned a degree in Arabic at the University of London.

Archbishop Fitzgerald subsequently was assigned to teach Arabic at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies and then was a lecturer in religious studies at the Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, where he taught courses on Islam to Muslim and Christian students.

He returned to the pontifical institute in Rome after two years and was named director in 1972. In 1978, he returned to Africa to minister in parish work in northern Sudan. In 1980, he was elected to his order's general council, serving for six years. His experience has made him one of the Catholic Church's foremost experts on Islam and the Quran.

As secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Archbishop Fitzgerald worked with Nigerian Cardinal Francis Arinze, then the council's president, and focused on building stronger ties and understanding with leaders and those who practised different religions.

"We had visits from people all around the world, and we conceived our work as also giving this message that the Church must be engaged with people of other religions. So it was encouraging others churches to open up. That meant going around to different places, accepting invitations, sometimes organising things ourselves," the archbishop recalled.

He was ordained a bishop in 1992 and became archbishop in 2002 when he became president of the pontifical council after Cardinal Arinze was named prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. At one point at the congregation, he spent a month living in a Buddhist monastery in Japan as part of an interreligious exchange. On a holiday in India, he and a friend explored key sites of Hinduism. "That was also getting the feel of the religion rather than just studying it through books," he said.

In February 2006, he became nuncio to Egypt and served as the Holy See's representative to the Arab League. He witnessed the uprising of the Egyptian people in 2011 and retired at age 75 at the end of 2012 as the country struggled with establishing a new form of government.

Archbishop Fitzgerald is now returning to Jerusalem, where he is assigned to the Missionaries of Africa community based at the Crusader-era St Anne's church in the Old City, which Catholic pilgrims usually visit before they begin the Via Dolorosa. The church is the traditional birthplace of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who commands a chapter in the Quran and is the only woman mentioned by name in Islam's holy book (she is mentioned more frequently in the Quran than she is in the entire New Testament). The 21 White Fathers there always welcome pilgrims.—CNS



## Christian Meditation in Fiji Schools

(Denise McMahon, WCCM National Coordinator, Fiji)



Although successive generations of children living near the Prayer Centre have learned how to meditate and we have noticed the visible positive effects which it has had on them, Christian Meditation in the schools in Fiji has taken quite a number of years to be accepted and appreciated. Meditation in the schools was started first by Sr. Maura Hennessy SM in a boarding school on the island of Ovalau over fifteen years ago and for some years it was part of the daily school program.

Sadly, the practice was dropped several years later when a new Principal took over. At the same time in Suva, a team led by Fr Denis Mahony SM, with the consent of the Catholic Director of Education, gave seminars on Christian Meditation to the teaching staff of the primary and secondary schools in Suva. This venture was disappointing and not much came of it. Perhaps the teachers were skeptical that children could be silent and still.

That was the end of the work in the schools for a few years except for Marist Brothers High School where Brother Sam Eathorne FMS introduced it as a

daily practice and Fr Denis started here at the Prayer Centre a children's meditation group which met for twenty minutes

after each Sunday Mass. Then, about six years ago Father and I were invited to several primary and secondary schools in Suva to teach meditation. This time we adopted a different strategy requesting to teach the children in their classrooms and insisting on the presence of the class teachers during the teaching. We also asked for the opportunity to speak to the teachers as a group about meditation and its importance for children.

The teachers began to see how easily the children took to meditation and the good effects that it had. The children seemed to like it. All those schools now have daily times of meditation and several schools have two times of meditation, one at the beginning of the school day and the other at the end of the day. Some schools have had sound systems installed so

that the meditation can be coordinated from the administration centre with the teachers taking it in turns to lead it. This year the school meditation team has expanded with several generous retired teachers joining us. We have revisited the 12 schools where meditation is already established as a daily practice and, as well, have gone to 6 new schools both primary and secondary which now feature daily meditation. Time did not permit us to accept some invitations to schools on other islands in Fiji but we are hoping to do this now in 2015.

## Media Release: SA Muslims warn against ISIS

Muslim Community Coalition [<mailto:muslimcommunitycoalition@gmail.com>]

Various Muslim organisations (See list below) and scholars from across South Africa met recently to discuss the problem posed by the attraction of the Islamic State group among some South African Muslims. The representatives expressed concern about information gleaned from within the Muslim community about growing sympathy for ISIS among some South African Muslims, and reports received that more South Africans have left for Syria since news of the 16-old Cape Town girl broke early April.

The meeting discussed a number of steps that Muslim community leadership are taking and will take in order to address this attraction and engage with the spurious discourse of ISIS which it claims is based on Islam.

This Friday, 29 May, imams in mosques across the country will deliver a 'national unified' khutbah (sermon) about ISIS, that will encourage Muslims to be wary of recruitment activities of the group in South Africa.

Recounting the history of Islam in South Africa, the sacrifices that Muslims made to ensure that Islam and Muslims become part of the South African social fabric, the role of Muslims in the anti-apartheid struggle, and 'the South African culture of peaceful coexistence', the khutbah says South African Muslims 'have much to be grateful for and for which to celebrate the praises of

God'. However, it warns, this gratitude is meaningless if 'some individuals within our community affiliate themselves with such groups or persons that would jeopardise the freedoms that South Africans enjoy'.

While the khutbah acknowledges that 'millions of Muslims across the globe are experiencing occupation and other kinds of oppression', and expresses support for the 'continuous struggle and jihad against unjust occupation' by the Palestinian and other people, it calls for a response that is consistent with the spirit and values of Islam. The sermon calls for 'aggression [against Muslims] to cease', and suggests that 'the chances for justice are better when there is peace, not war'.

The khutbah informs the Muslim community that there have recently been 'individuals from our community who have joined or attempted to join ISIS'. However, it asserts, 'The vast majority of Muslim scholars around the world have clearly condemned ISIS and have categorically stated that it does not represent Islam or the Shariah.'

From an Islamic perspective, the khutbah argues, 'it is unlawful for anyone to join [ISIS]', saying the group engages in 'criminal activities' and 'sheds people's blood' unlawfully, 'labels Muslims as disbelievers, violates people's honour and usurps their properties... and creates corruption on earth'.

Islam, it says, 'calls for mercy, love, and rejection of terrorism and extremism, which represent envy, rancour, and hatred.' On behalf of the organisations that issued the khutbah, it 'advise[s] people not to be deceived by false slogans and calls of such groups'.

A spokesperson for the group of organisations and scholars said that there was serious concern within the community, and that there are families 'whose lives have been made miserable, whose elders have become haggard and distressed' because of the intention of family members to join ISIS. Some South African Muslims that have gone to Iraq and Syria went to fight with ISIS, while others emigrated to live in territory controlled by the group, he said. He added that there was much legitimate anger in the Muslim community about the actions of the United States and other western powers in the region, in their support of Israel, supporting the Egyptian coup government, the occupation of Iraq, and generally supporting dictators in the region.

'As South Africans, we will work with other institutions within South African society - such as government, the media and community organisations - to stem any attraction of South Africans for this group, or any similar group such as Boko Haram or Al-Shabab. We must be uncompromising in our rejection of their ideologies and their actions,' he concluded.



## Meditation Seminars

### TEACHING MEDITATION TO CHILDREN

**Booking for these events is now open. Please consult your local CIE or Catholic Schools Office.**



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.

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	Christian Brothers' Centre, Paradyskloof Road, Stellenbosch.	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

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE VENUE FOR THE FIRST SEMINAR IN THE CAPE TOWN AREA ON 30 SEPTEMBER (13:00 - 15:00) HAS CHANGED. IT WILL NOW TAKE PLACE AT THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS' CENTRE IN STELLENBOSCH.**



**Professional Society of Religious Educators**