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Editorial

Welcome to the 1st issue of Roots & Wings for 2025. As in the previous issue, we put before you the lives of three notable figures – this time ones who made an impact internationally, and who died in 2024.

Further to that, we present a selection of writings which include Part 5 of our series, *Consider Curriculum*, and various article which address current issues, perhaps most notably Pope Francis' message for the World Day of Peace.

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MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE WORLD DAY OF PEACE, 1st JANUARY 2025

Forgive us our trespasses: grant us your peace

I. Listening to the plea of an endangered humanity

1. At the dawn of this New Year given to us by our heavenly Father, a year of Jubilee in the spirit of hope, I offer heartfelt good wishes of peace to every man and woman. I think especially of those who feel downtrodden, burdened by their past mistakes, oppressed by the judgment of others and incapable of perceiving even a glimmer of hope for their own lives. Upon everyone I invoke hope and peace, for this is a Year of Grace born of the Heart of the Redeemer!

2. Throughout this year, the Catholic Church celebrates the Jubilee, an event that fills hearts with hope. The “jubilee” recalls an ancient Jewish practice, when, every forty-ninth year, the sound of a ram’s horn (in Hebrew, *jobel*) would proclaim a year of forgiveness and freedom for the entire people (cf. Lev 25:10). This solemn proclamation was meant to echo throughout the land (cf. Lev 25:9) and to restore God’s justice in every aspect of life: in the use of the land, in the possession of goods and in relationships with others, above all the poor and the dispossessed. The blowing of the horn reminded the entire people, rich and poor alike, that no one comes into this world doomed to oppression: all of us are brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of the same Father, born to live in freedom, in accordance with the Lord’s will (cf. Lev 25:17, 25, 43, 46, 55).

3. In our day too, the Jubilee is an event that inspires us to seek to establish the liberating justice of God in our world. In place of the ram’s horn, at the start of this Year of Grace we wish to hear the “desperate plea for help” that, like the cry of the blood of Abel (cf. Gen 4:10), rises up from so many parts of our world – a plea that God never fails to hear. We for our part feel bound to cry out and denounce the many situations in which the earth is exploited and our neighbours oppressed. These injustices can appear at times in the form of what Saint John Paul II called “structures of sin”, that arise not only from injustice on the part of some but are also consolidated and maintained by a network of complicity.

4. Each of us must feel in some way responsible for the devastation to which the earth, our common home, has been subjected, beginning with those actions that, albeit only indirectly, fuel the conflicts that presently plague our human family. Systemic challenges, distinct yet interconnected, are thus created and together cause havoc in our world. I think, in particular, of all manner of disparities, the inhuman treatment meted out to migrants, environmental decay, the confusion wilfully created by disinformation, the refusal to engage in any form of dialogue and the immense resources spent on the industry of war. All these, taken together, represent a threat to the existence of humanity as a whole. At the beginning of this year, then, we desire to heed the plea of suffering humankind in order to feel called, together and as individuals, to break the bonds of injustice and to proclaim God’s justice.

Sporadic acts of philanthropy are not enough. Cultural and structural changes are necessary, so that enduring change may come about.

II. A cultural change: all of us are debtors

5. The celebration of the Jubilee spurs us to make a number of changes in order to confront the present state of injustice and inequality by reminding ourselves that the goods of the earth are meant not for a privileged few, but for everyone. We do well to recall the words of Saint Basil of Caesarea: “Tell me, what things belong to you? Where did you find them to make them part of your life? ... Did you not come forth naked from the womb of your mother? Will you not return naked to the ground? Where did your property come from? If you say that it comes to you naturally by luck, you would deny God by not recognizing the Creator and being grateful to the Giver”. Without gratitude, we are unable to recognize God’s gifts. Yet in his infinite mercy the Lord does not abandon sinful humanity, but instead reaffirms his gift of life by the saving forgiveness offered to all through Jesus Christ. That is why, in teaching us the “Our Father”, Jesus told us to pray: “Forgive us our trespasses” (Mt 6:12).

6. Once we lose sight of our relationship to the Father, we begin to cherish the illusion that our relationships with others can be governed by a logic of exploitation and oppression, where might makes right. Like the elites at the time of Jesus, who profited from the suffering of the poor, so today, in our interconnected global village, the international system, unless it is inspired by a spirit of solidarity and interdependence, gives rise to injustices, aggravated by corruption, which leave the poorer countries trapped. A mentality that exploits the indebted can serve as a shorthand description of the present “debt crisis” that weighs upon a number of countries, above all in the global South.

7. I have repeatedly stated that foreign debt has become a means of control whereby certain governments and private financial institutions of the richer countries unscrupulously and indiscriminately exploit the human and natural resources of poorer countries, simply to satisfy the demands of their own markets. In addition, different peoples, already burdened by international debt, find themselves also forced to bear the burden of the “ecological debt” incurred by the more developed countries. Foreign debt and ecological debt are two sides of the same coin, namely the mindset of exploitation that has culminated in the debt crisis. In the spirit of this Jubilee Year, I urge the international community to work towards forgiving foreign debt in recognition of the ecological debt existing between the North and the South of this world. This is an appeal for solidarity, but above all for justice.

8. The cultural and structural change needed to surmount this crisis will come about when we finally recognize that we are all sons and daughters of the one Father, that we are all in his debt but also that we need one another, in a spirit of shared and diversified responsibility. We will be able to “rediscover once for all that we need one another” and are indebted one to another.

III. A journey of hope: three proposals

9. If we take to heart these much-needed changes, the Jubilee Year of Grace can serve to set each of us on a renewed journey of hope, born of the experience of God's unlimited mercy.

God owes nothing to anyone, yet he constantly bestows his grace and mercy upon all. As Isaac of Nineveh, a seventh-century Father of the Eastern Church, put it in one of his prayers: "Your love, Lord, is greater than my trespasses. The waves of the sea are nothing with respect to the multitude of my sins, but placed on a scale and weighed against your love, they vanish like a speck of dust". God does not weigh up the evils we commit; rather, he is immensely "rich in mercy, for the great love with which he loved us" (Eph 2:4). Yet he also hears the plea of the poor and the cry of the earth. We would do well simply to stop for a moment, at the beginning of this year, to think of the mercy with which he constantly forgives our sins and forgives our every debt, so that our hearts may overflow with hope and peace.

10. In teaching us to pray the "Our Father", Jesus begins by asking the Father to forgive our trespasses, but passes immediately to the challenging words: "as we forgive those who trespass against us" (cf. Mt 6:12). In order to forgive others their trespasses and to offer them hope, we need for our own lives to be filled with that same hope, the fruit of our experience of God's mercy. Hope overflows in generosity; it is free of calculation, makes no hidden demands, is unconcerned with gain, but aims at one thing alone: to raise up those who have fallen, to heal hearts that are broken and to set us free from every kind of bondage.

11. Consequently, at the beginning of this Year of Grace, I would like to offer three proposals capable of restoring dignity to the lives of entire peoples and enabling them to set them out anew on the journey of hope. In this way, the debt crisis can be overcome and all of us can once more realize that we are debtors whose debts have been forgiven.

First, I renew the appeal launched by Saint John Paul II on the occasion of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 to consider "reducing substantially, if not cancelling outright, the international debt which seriously threatens the future of many nations". In recognition of their ecological debt, the more prosperous countries ought to feel called to do everything possible to forgive the debts of those countries that are in no condition to repay the amount they owe. Naturally, lest this prove merely an isolated act of charity that simply reboots the vicious cycle of financing and indebtedness, a new financial framework must be devised, leading to the creation of a global financial Charter based on solidarity and harmony between peoples.

I also ask for a firm commitment to respect for the dignity of human life from conception to natural death, so that each person can cherish his or her own life and all may look with hope to a future of prosperity and happiness for themselves and for their children. Without hope for the future, it becomes hard for the young to look forward to bringing new lives into the world. Here I would like once more to propose a concrete gesture that can help foster the culture

of life, namely the elimination of the death penalty in all nations. This penalty not only compromises the inviolability of life but eliminates every human hope of forgiveness and rehabilitation.

In addition, following in the footsteps of Saint Paul VI and Benedict XVI, I do not hesitate to make yet another appeal, for the sake of future generations. In this time marked by wars, let us use at least a fixed percentage of the money earmarked for armaments to establish a global Fund to eradicate hunger and facilitate in the poorer countries educational activities aimed at promoting sustainable development and combating climate change. We need to work at eliminating every pretext that encourages young people to regard their future as hopeless or dominated by the thirst to avenge the blood of their dear ones. The future is a gift meant to enable us to go beyond past failures and to pave new paths of peace.

IV. The goal of peace

12. Those who take up these proposals and set out on the journey of hope will surely glimpse the dawn of the greatly desired goal of peace. The Psalmist promises us that “steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss” (Ps 85:10). When I divest myself of the weapon of credit and restore the path of hope to one of my brothers or sisters, I contribute to the restoration of God’s justice on this earth and, with that person, I advance towards the goal of peace. As Saint John XXIII observed, true peace can be born only from a heart “disarmed” of anxiety and the fear of war.

13. May 2025 be a year in which peace flourishes! A true and lasting peace that goes beyond quibbling over the details of agreements and human compromises. May we seek the true peace that is granted by God to hearts disarmed: hearts not set on calculating what is mine and what is yours; hearts that turn selfishness into readiness to reach out to others; hearts that see themselves as indebted to God and thus prepared to forgive the debts that oppress others; hearts that replace anxiety about the future with the hope that every individual can be a resource for the building of a better world.

14. Disarming hearts is a job for everyone, great and small, rich and poor alike. At times, something quite simple will do, such as “a smile, a small gesture of friendship, a kind look, a ready ear, a good deed”. With such gestures, we progress towards the goal of peace. We will arrive all the more quickly if, in the course of journeying alongside our brothers and sisters, we discover that we have changed from the time we first set out. Peace does not only come with the end of wars but with the dawn of a new world, a world in which we realize that we are different, closer and more fraternal than we ever thought possible.

15. Lord, grant us your peace! This is my prayer to God as I now offer my cordial good wishes for the New Year to the Heads of State and Government, to the leaders of International Organizations, to the leaders of the various religions and to every person of good will.

Forgive us our trespasses, Lord,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

In this cycle of forgiveness, grant us your peace,
the peace that you alone can give
to those who let themselves be disarmed in heart,
to those who choose in hope to forgive the debts of their brothers and sisters,
to those who are unafraid to confess their debt to you,
and to those who do not close their ears to the cry of the poor.

From the Vatican, 8 December 2024

NOTE: In-text references have been removed.



Three Notable Figures

Jimmy Carter, the most famous Sunday School teacher in the world

Jimmy Carter, the 39th President of the United States, passed away at the age of 100 on December 29. Openly evangelical and deeply devout, he was the first president to identify as a “born-again” Christian.

(Youna Rivallain)



Jimmy Carter delivers a sermon in Plains, Georgia in January 2017 - Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Jimmy Carter died on Sunday, December 29, an appropriate day for the former U.S. president who spent his life teaching Sunday School, a form of catechesis

preceding worship, in his Baptist parish in Plains, Georgia. He had lived in Plains since 1961 and continued teaching Sunday School there, drawing curious visitors from across the country.

Faith was central to the journey of this third-generation Southern Baptist from a young age. The son of farmers who cultivated timber, cotton, and the famously popular peanuts for which his hometown is known, he grew up in a deeply evangelical family.

At just 18 years old, he began serving as a deacon and Sunday School teacher at Maranatha Baptist Church in the small Georgian town of 500 residents. In both Plains and Washington, D.C., Carter taught Sunday School over 1,000 times, even during his tenure as governor of Georgia (1971–1975) and later as the 39th president of the United States.

The "Carter Challenge"

After each lesson, "Mister Jimmy" would always challenge his audience to do one good deed for another person. "It doesn't matter if it's calling a sad or lonely friend, mowing an elderly person's lawn, or simply baking a cake for a neighbour; through a simple act of love, President Carter repeated that, when combined, these small gestures could change the world," recalled Maranatha Baptist Church on its website, which nicknamed this preaching habit the "Carter Challenge."

He applied this challenge to himself until his final days, often volunteering as a handyman for his church or neighbours. He also sought to incorporate this principle throughout his career, notably aiming to re-centre morality in political life—particularly on the international stage. Despite a challenging single presidential term marked by economic crises and the Iranian hostage situation, he stood out for his dedication to causes like the civil rights movement and the promotion of peace.

Nobel Peace Prize

After his presidency, he founded the Carter Centre, an NGO based in Atlanta with the goal of "advancing human rights and alleviating suffering." In 2002, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his "decades of work to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, advance democracy and human rights, and promote economic and social development."

Although he maintained that his religious beliefs were separate from his political practices, Carter often spoke of Jesus as a driving force in his life. In a 1998 book of interviews with Canadian Christian author and speaker Don Richardson, he recounted being deeply moved by a sermon in his youth that said, "If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?"

The one who popularized the term "born-again"

Carter is also known for introducing the term "born-again" into the political and media spheres. This term describes the transformation experienced by those who convert to Christianity. Now widely associated with evangelical

Christians, it was first used by Carter during his 1976 presidential campaign, when he was largely unknown to the public.

A proponent of progressive evangelicalism, he announced in 2000 that he was leaving the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in the United States, a few months after the institution decided to prohibit women from serving as pastors. He justified his departure, arguing that the “increasingly rigid” stance was contrary to “the fundamentals of my Christian faith.”

Controversial among Christians

Carter was a divisive figure among evangelical Christians. While personally opposed to abortion, he supported the legalization of abortion following the Supreme Court’s 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*, which established a woman’s right to choose. As governor of Georgia, he also supported family planning programs that included abortion services. However, as president, he opposed increasing federal funding for abortion-related facilities, a stance that drew criticism.

During his presidential campaign, a 1976 interview with *Playboy* magazine also created divisions among his Christian supporters. Discussing topics such as the separation of church and state and his Baptist religious heritage, the future president admitted to having “committed adultery in my heart many times,” referencing Jesus’ teaching in the Gospel of Matthew: “Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

In evangelical circles, many criticized him not for his impure thoughts, but for verbalizing them in a public context. “Before the interview, most people I knew were pro-Carter,” conservative pastor and televangelist Jerry Falwell told *The Washington Post* at the time. “Now, that has completely changed.”

A fervent advocate of peace and dialogue, Carter was also the first U.S. president to welcome a pope, John Paul II, to the White House in 1979. “An event that would have been inconceivable in American politics just two decades earlier,” *Time* magazine noted at the time. A fellow advocate for dialogue, Pope Francis expressed being “saddened” by the death of the former U.S. president, highlighting his “firm commitment to peace.”

[Jimmy Carter, the most famous Sunday School teacher in the world - Catholic news – La Croix International](#)



Jürgen Moltmann, the "theologian of hope"

How can one ground Christian hope in the aftermath of the World War II atrocities? This guided the work of Jürgen Moltmann, one of the greatest Protestant theologians of his time, who passed away June 3, at the age of 98.

(Gilles Donada)



The German Reformed theologian Jürgen Moltmann died on June 3, in Tübingen, at the age of 98. "He was one of the greatest European theologians of the 20th century," said Father Jean-Louis Souletie, dean of the faculty of theology and religious sciences at the Catholic Institute of Paris and co-author of a biography of the renowned Tübingen University professor.

Born in 1926 into a culturally humanist but not very religious family (his grandfather was a grand master in Freemasonry), Moltmann was forcibly conscripted at 14 into the Hitler Youth and taken prisoner in 1945.

It was during his detention in Great Britain that he discovered the Christian faith through pastors.

Upon returning to his hometown of Hamburg, he immersed himself in theological studies and became a pastor in 1953, then a professor. He was appointed to the University of Tübingen in 1967. Haunted by the atrocities of the war and the Holocaust, he confronted his theology with the meaning of Christian hope. "After the war, everything is destroyed, everything has to be rebuilt," says Father Souletie. "He asks: where are we going? How are we going? He finds in Scripture, particularly in Saint Paul, the idea that Creation is groaning and needs help to bring forth the Kingdom. God promises us a land and freedom in Christ, so let's get to work!"

Christian faith as "a lever, a spur to transform the world"

His thought, which unfolds in a trilogy—Theology of Hope (1964), The Crucified God (1972), The Church in the Power of the Spirit (1975)—resonated immediately with Asian and Latin American theologians grappling with dictatorial regimes. Moltmann offered them the tools to think of Christian faith "as a lever, a spur to transform a world," which "continues to crucify God by oppressing people," explains Father Souletie. Right action is rooted in the "ways of living and speaking" of the Jesus of the Gospels. The German theologian placed "great importance on the Eucharistic table," the "memory of Christ's promises" and "a source for waging the battles" of the present time. The Church is "the servant of the Kingdom" when it works for the "liberation" of all that oppresses humanity.

A man of encounter, Jürgen Moltmann travelled across five continents to debate and give lectures. He maintained a close and constant dialogue with Judaism, meditating on the "messianic nature" of Jesus. A precursor of a theology of Creation, "he saw in plants, mountains, and rivers personalities to

be respected,” recalls Father Souletie. “He was a warm, humorous man who welcomed you warmly into his family home in Tübingen,” remembers the French theologian. “His theology is a great source of inspiration for young theologians who continue to engage in dialogue with his thought.”

<https://international.la-croix.com/religion/jurgen-moltmann-the-theologian-of-hope>



Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez, champion of the poor, dies aged 96

Fr Gustavo Gutiérrez, who has died aged 96, challenged the Church to reconsider its role in a world marked by social inequality and commit more fully to the defence of the weak.

(Joseph Tulloch)

Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez was a pioneer of liberation theology, a movement advocating for social justice and the liberation of the poor.



He died during the night of Tuesday, October 22, at the age of 96.

Emerging in the 1960s as a response to massive social inequalities in Latin America, liberation theology emphasised that the Christian faith must tackle social issues of poverty and exclusion in order to remain credible.

Fr. Gutiérrez's 1971 book *A Theology of Liberation* was foundational to this movement and has deeply shaped theological thought in Latin America and beyond.

'Poverty is death'

Fr. Gutiérrez was born in Peru in 1928, and initially studied medicine before turning to philosophy, psychology, and theology. He was ordained a priest in 1959 and entered the Dominican Order in 1999. For decades, he taught at the Catholic University of Lima, focusing on the social challenges facing people in his homeland and across Latin America.

In an interview with Vatican Radio in 2015, Fr. Gutiérrez stressed that care for the poor is central to the Christian message. "Poverty is death", he said, "it destroys people and families. The Church understands this better than in the past."

'One of the greatest theologians of our time'

One of the most charming stories about Fr. Gutiérrez was his friendship with the German theologian Cardinal Gerhard Müller, one-time head of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith—the same office that had once voiced its concern about aspects of liberation theology. Cardinal Müller spoke to Vatican News about the death of his friend, whom he called “one of the great theologians of our time.”

A challenge to the Church

Liberation theology had a far-reaching impact on the Catholic Church and on society. It challenged the Church to reconsider its role in a world marked by social inequality and commit more fully to defending the weak. In this and in many other ways, Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez's legacy lives on.

[Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez, champion of the poor, dies aged 96 - Vatican News](#)



Catholic nun in China honoured as a "moral role model" by Communist authorities

Sister Zheng Yueqin from the Diocese of Nanjing was given the "Good Person of Nanjing" award by the local Communist Party Committee in recognition for her work with disabled children

(La Croix International staff)



(Photo courtesy of Fides)

A Catholic nun from a diocese in China's eastern Jiangsu province has been awarded for being a "moral role model" by the local Communist party propaganda department in recognition for her work with disabled people.

Sister Zheng Yueqin from the Diocese of Nanjing was honoured with the "Good Person of Nanjing" award by the Propaganda Department of the Communist

Party Committee of Nanjing City and the Municipal Bureau of Civilization, according to Fides. This recognition is bestowed upon citizens who stand out for their significant contributions to the community. Sister Yueqin serves as the vice president of the Nanjing Catholic Charitable Foundation and is the founder of a special education centre affiliated with the foundation.

The award acknowledges Sister Yueqin as a "moral role model" who, through her religious vocation, has actively promoted the basic values of socialism. She is praised for her steadfast support and protection of individuals with mental disabilities, striving to create a joyful environment for them. Her dedication to fostering hope among the disabled is seen as a valuable contribution to realizing "the realization of the Chinese dream of the great rebirth of the nation" through her ordinary yet impactful work, according to official reasons for the nun getting the award.

Supporting students with various disabilities

Previously recognized as the "Red Flag Woman of the Eighth March" in March 2022, Sister Zheng expressed her joy at that award ceremony, stating, "What makes me happy is that the students who come to us no longer want to leave." The Centre for the Disabled, operated by the Catholic Charities Foundation in Nanjing has three branches caring for and supporting 137 students with various disabilities.

The Nanjing Special Education Centre, founded by Sister Zheng Yueqin in 2005, caters to nearly 400 mentally disabled and autistic children, earning several awards for its commendable work. "The boys and girls feel that they belong here. There is a long line of people who want to be welcomed into our centre," Sister Yueqin said. The centre not only facilitates rehabilitation but also provides internship opportunities in a supported employment factory for individuals with disabilities, enabling them to achieve self-sufficiency.

Nanjing Diocese covers all of Jiangsu province except Xuzhou, Nantong and Suzhou. It has two deaneries, 11 parishes and more than 30 Church mission points. The diocese has a long history, with the Vicariate Apostolic of Nanking (Nanjing) erected from the Diocese of Macau in 1660, and three decades later elevated to Diocese of Nanking.

Nanjing, capital of China's eastern Jiangsu province and where the diocese with the same name is based, is the second largest commercial centre in eastern China, after Shanghai. Nanjing is an important industrial base of China specializing in petrochemical, information technology, car manufacturing and steel production, industries of mechanical products, textiles, food and beverage industries, new construction materials and biopharmaceuticals.

<https://international.la-croix.com/news/world/catholic-nun-in-china-honored-as-a-moral-role-model-by-communist-authorities/18679>



Consider Curriculum: Part 5

Written and compiled by Paul Faller for the Catholic Institute of Education

This series of reflections is intended to refresh our understanding of the subject and the contexts within which it takes place and to promote discussion among religious educators about the theory and practice of what we might regard as the living spring at the heart of curriculum.

Here is an overview of the series.

Part 1 Religious Education – What is its nature? (Vol 10 No 1)

Part 2 The Rationale – Why do we have it? (Vol 10 No 2)

Part 3 the Student and the Teacher – Who is involved? (Vol 10 No 3)

Part 4 Contexts and Perspectives – Where does it happen? (Vol 10 No 4)

Part 5 Scope and Sequence – What does it contain? (Vol 11 No 1)

Part 6 Methodology – How do we do it? (Vol 11 No 2)

Part 7 Assessment – How do we rate it? (Vol 11 No 3)

We began this series considering the nature of Religious Education. We then turned in Part 2 to the question of rationale: why do we insist on it when the State effectively has pushed it to the sidelines? In the third part we considered who is involved, namely the student and the teacher. In the fourth part we looked at where it happens as we explore key contexts and perspectives. In this fifth part we explore the question of content: What does RE contain?

Scope & Sequence

What does it contain?

Develop the curriculum from a definite theological, anthropological, and cosmological standpoint.

Content

The classroom processes identified in the CORD Curriculum and other emerging areas of interest will guide the selection of content. However, there is much more involved potentially in these processes than could be covered in any programme of study in school. Content has therefore to be selected on the basis of certain criteria. The curriculum will emphasise content which

- Will enable the students to grasp the essential structure of this field of enquiry, e.g. its language, key concepts, literary genres, key symbols, beliefs, rituals, values, central figures, underlying methodology, role of evidence, interpretation, etc.;
- Will enable the students to achieve the learning intended in terms of four dimensions of learning, namely (1) knowledge, understanding and insight; (2) skills; (3) experiences, exposure, exploration and expression; and (4) desired attitudes and values;
- Is relevant to the life experience of the learner and able to be so related;
- Acknowledges indigenous African spirituality and religious symbols, artefacts and rituals;
- Relates to the contemporary situation in modern religious groupings;

- Reflects the setting of the school and its purposes;
- Features contemporary national and global issues and events;
- Extends the range and depth of students' learning;
- Promotes cognitive, affective and attitudinal development;
- Invites the active participation of the learner.

Skills

Religious Education involves pupils not only in the attainment of knowledge and understanding, but also in the acquisition and deployment of skills. The acquisition of skills is essential as a means to increasing knowledge and understanding.

A skill is an ability or aptitude developed through training and practice. The development of a skill depends on attitudes of self-respect and respect for others.

The skills required in any Religious Education course should be developed across the grades with discernment regarding the phase they should receive special focus.

1 Investigation skills

These skills are basic to the acquisition of knowledge in all subjects. They can only be developed by the use of primary resources and discovery methods of learning. They are of limited value unless employed with other categories of skills. Students should be taught to:

- identify and ask relevant questions;
- observe accurately;
- listen carefully;
- follow procedures;
- know where to look for evidence;
- gather relevant data from a variety of sources: texts, artifacts, art, symbols, customs;
- read a variety of prose and poetry;
- find references in texts: Scripture, etc;
- recognise sequence.

2 Interpretation skills

These skills are employed to understand the meaning or significance of information and data. They are difficult for some students to acquire, yet they are essential in Religious Education for religions and other world views are in fact interpretations of life and experience. Students should be taught to:

- categorize and classify;
- interpret the language of religion, signs and symbols;
- develop hypotheses;
- reflect on and interpret one's own experience;
- see life from another person's point of view.

3 Communication skills

These skills are dependent on the above. They enable students to clarify and order their own thinking. They enable them to express clearly and, therefore, make evident what they feel, know and understand. Students should be taught to:

- make a sensible and ordered presentation of information;
- use a variety of media to express ideas;
- express themselves through factual and creative writing;
- express themselves through drawing and painting;
- design diagrams, charts or models;
- express themselves orally;
- know religious language and use it appropriately;
- exercise imagination through role play.

4 Critical skills

Students should be taught to:

- question their own point of view;
- form reasoned opinions based on evidence;
- express these opinions in debate;
- weigh evidence;
- assess arguments;
- make connections between life and faith;
- differentiate between objective and subjective judgments.

5 Affective and social skills

Students should be taught to:

- relate well with others;
- work in a group;
- exercise empathy;
- participate in community prayer and celebration;
- be aware of national and global issues;
- accommodate social, cultural and faith differences.

In terms of the last of these social skills, John Dunne's method of "passing over" to other persons, cultures and religions and "coming back" is an invaluable educational technique. "What one does in passing over," claims Dunne, "is try to enter sympathetically into the feelings of another person, become receptive to the images which give expression to his feelings, attain insight into those images and then come back enriched by this insight to an understanding of one's own life which can guide one into the future."

6 Evaluation skills

Students should be taught to:

- distinguish between rules and principles, opinions and beliefs;
- make reasoned value judgments;
- make responsible choices.

Curriculum Processes

Following the 1991 CORD Curriculum the 13 classroom processes identified there would be included in the syllabus with the following additions and revisions.

- Religion: An additional process – a study of the nature, origin and development of religion itself in the secondary school syllabus.
- Ecology: An expanded focus on environmental issues and concerns is included in the process Structural Morality which is renamed Social Justice.
- Science and Religion: Included in the Theology, Morality and Social Justice processes.
- Ethics: Ethical principles in the processes Morality and Social Justice, to include current developments in contemporary culture such as social media and the technologies of AI and genetic engineering.
- World Religions: An expanded attention to the religions found in South African society integrated into all processes in appropriate ways and with a focus on ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. This will include knowledge and critical awareness of new religious movements, sects and cults.
- The Global Dimension: The global dimension of education is not an additional subject: it is best developed across the curriculum. It is a mix of knowledge and understanding that helps learners appreciate how their lives are affected by global issues, skills that enable them to play an active role as global citizens and, most importantly, dispositions that assume positive and inclusive stances on world issues.

Organising Principles

- Develop a close relationship between Life Orientation and Religious Education to ensure a common vision and a practical integration of the two areas.
- Choose an approach to organising content. Some possibilities:
 - by curriculum process;
 - by development of themes;
 - with sensitivity to the liturgical year, religious festivals, national and international days; or
 - a blend of these and other approaches.
- Take into consideration both four-term and three-term systems.

Here are two possible ways of organising the curriculum. Links with the different processes are suggested. Also, within brackets, are areas to cover within the processes.

Existential Questions

Organising the curriculum processes according to basic existential questions.

- Where are we? THEOLOGY (creation, cosmology)
- Where do we come from? THEOLOGY (origins & evolutionary history)
- Who are we? PERSONAL GROWTH (anthropology & sociology)

- Why are we here? RELIGION, THEOLOGY (teleology)
- Where are we going? THEOLOGY (eschatology & futurology)
- How do we find the way? SCRIPTURE, MODELS
- How should we live on the way? SPIRITUALITY, PHILOSOPHY, ETHICS & MORALITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE
- What help is there to live this way? ARTS, STORY, PRAYER, LITURGY, RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

An historical approach

Incorporating the different classroom processes, all treated from an historical perspective.

- Beginning with the founder/founding experience – MODELS (Jesus, disciples, early Church)
- The development of community – RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY (Church history)
- The emergence of sacred writings, teachings – SCRIPTURE, THEOLOGY
- Living the Way – SPIRITUALITY, ETHICS & MORALITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, PERSONAL GROWTH, MODELS, PHILOSOPHY
- Expressing the Way – PRAYER, LITURGY, ARTS, STORY



Where shall I lay my head?

Homelessness has numerous causes, many of them arising from the careless and selfish attitudes of our society. How dare we demonize those who have no home.

(Chris McDonnell)



In recent days the home secretary of the UK, Suella Braverman, has described rough sleeping as a "lifestyle choice" while defending her decision to restrict the use of tents by homeless people on the streets of Britain. More than that, it is rumoured that charitable organizations that supply tents to the homeless might themselves be prosecuted for their generosity. What have we come to? Is this the latest phase in the "don't drop litter campaign"?

Some ten years ago the Canadian sculptor, Timothy Schalz, gave us "Homeless Jesus" which depicted a huddled Christ lying on a park bench wrapped in a cloak identified only by his exposed feet bearing the marks of crucifixion -- stark and chilling image of those whom society chooses to ignore until they become inconvenient. By 2016, over 100 casts had been placed in various public places worldwide. And the list continues. Each day people walk by, some sit near the exposed feet, bowing their heads in prayer.

The destitution of Jesus is no more apparent than in Matthew's Gospel where he writes: "And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head'."

Poverty, unemployment, natural disasters, and wars

Homelessness has numerous causes, many of them arising from the careless and selfish attitudes of our society. One cause is poverty and the lack of a regular income to cover one's rent or mortgage. Some who are employed earn a wage or salary that is insufficient to meet their needs. Too often, we are critical of outcome and ignore the root of the evident problem. As long as all is tidy and presentable, we ask no further questions. So, we end up with a divided society, with those who have enough overtly critical of those with insufficient means to meet their basic needs.

Natural disaster, earthquake and flood can take away homes leaving whole communities without shelter and the means to feed themselves. For a few days they are headline news, that is until something else happens and the story fades. But the problem of their survival remains.

Another cause of poverty is war between nations. You have only to look at the graphic images of the destruction wrought on Gaza City to realize the huge material cost of repairing or replacing homes and businesses when all this over. Meanwhile, families must live amongst the rubble, the debris that once they called home.

Home is more than a collection of rooms

One of the most memorable tracks on Paul Simon's 1986 album *Graceland* is the song "Homeless", which Black Mambazo sing in English and Zulu. The haunting melody echoes the tragedy of the loss of home and the loneliness of night after a storm

Homeless, homeless
Moonlight sleeping on a midnight lake
Homeless, homeless
Moonlight sleeping on a midnight lake

We are homeless, we are homeless
The moonlight sleeping on a midnight lake
And we are homeless, homeless, homeless
The moonlight sleeping on a midnight lake.....

.....Strong wind destroy our home
Many dead, tonight it could be you
Strong wind, strong wind
Many dead, tonight it could be you.

But home is more than a collection of rooms. It is a place of family identity where meals are shared and stories told. It is a place of security for children, where the care of parents can be relied on. That is what makes the loss of a home so poignant and the consequences so hard to bear. If the Home Secretary thinks that is a lifestyle choice, so be it. I beg to differ from her point of view.

<https://international.la-croix.com/news/culture/where-shall-i-lay-my-head/18673>



The spiritual symbolism of the eye

The eye carries profound spiritual symbolism across various religious and cultural traditions. In the Bible, as in many faiths, it represents the gateway to divine light and spiritual elevation, provided the intentions behind the gaze are pure and upright.

(Stéphane Bataillon)

The eye in the Bible

“The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is healthy (or good, simple), your whole body will be full of light” (Matthew 6:22; Luke 11:34). In Christian tradition, the eye is both the physical organ that perceives external light and a spiritual conduit connected to the “eye of the heart,” which perceives divine truths.

When focused on God and His law with simplicity and purity, the eye enables the soul to ascend toward divine light.



In Christianity, the eye often symbolizes God's omnipresence, absolute knowledge, and universal vision. For example, an eye placed within an equilateral triangle evokes the Trinity and God's unblinking, eternal oversight.

The eye in other spiritual traditions

Across cultures, the eye shares this symbolism of access to spiritual illumination. Among the Inuit, a shaman is called “the one who has eyes,” emphasizing visionary insight. In Indian Upanishads and Taoism, the right eye is linked to the sun (activity and the future), while the left eye connects to the moon (passivity and the past). Their fusion represents the third eye—a fiery symbol of wisdom (Prajñā-cakṣus) in Buddhism and the pathway to dharma (Dharmacakṣus), transcending the material to reach the divine.

The duality of vision

However, the eye's symbolism is not solely positive. The gaze must be clear and generous. A “bad” or “sick” eye can lead to spiritual blindness, as Matthew 6:23 warns: “If your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness.” This darkness stems from greed or a lack of generosity, which stifles the sharing of divine light, much like hiding a lamp under a basket (Mark 4:21-25, Luke 8:16-17).

In the Old Testament, a troubled or malevolent gaze invokes divine justice, as captured in Victor Hugo's poem Conscience: “The eye was in the grave and watched Cain.”

The eye as a mirror of the soul

The eye's form and expression also reflect a person's spiritual and emotional qualities. This symbolism extends even to Japanese manga, where eyes often mirror the soul's depth and emotions. In Japanese manga, characters often have disproportionately large eyes, symbolizing their role as “mirrors of the soul.” These expressive eyes convey emotions vividly, fostering empathy in readers. In romantic manga (shōjo), the eyes often enhance the joy and tenderness of love stories.

A radiant outlook on life

In times of tension, cultivating an enthusiastic and light-filled perspective on life can surpass the retributive “eye for an eye” principle from Exodus (21:24). By embracing moments of shared joy and focusing on the good, the eye becomes not only a symbol of divine connection but also a tool for fostering a brighter, more harmonious existence.

[The spiritual symbolism of the eye - Catholic news – La Croix International](#)



The future of learning: How AI is revolutionizing education 4.0



- Artificial intelligence (AI) can support education by automating administrative tasks, freeing teachers to focus more on teaching and personalized interactions with students, enhancing rather than replacing human-led teaching.
- AI applications in education must be designed collaboratively and with equity in focus, addressing disparities across various demographics and ensuring accessibility for all students.
- Beyond using AI tools for educational purposes, it is crucial to educate students about AI itself, including how to develop AI technologies and understand their potential risks.

In today's rapidly evolving technological landscape, the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) and education is not just a future possibility; it is imminent.

Imagine a future where all students receive personalized support and inclusive learning opportunities, build stronger connections with teachers for enhanced guidance and receive apt recognition and evaluation of their achievements.

While the promise of AI in education is compelling, only through responsible and informed adoption can AI truly fulfil its potential and ensure equitable access to quality education for all.

In 2020, the World Economic Forum identified eight pivotal transformations needed to enhance education quality in the age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution – Education 4.0 Framework. As AI emerges as the defining technology of this era, we can accelerate the adoption of Education 4.0 by using this technology and ensuring learners are equipped to thrive with it.

Achieving success with AI in education

With increasing interest in AI and education, the Education 4.0 Alliance sought to understand the current state and future promises of the technology for education. The latest report – Shaping the Future of Learning: The Role of AI in Education 4.0 – shows four key promises that have emerged for AI to enable Education 4.0:

1. Supporting teachers' roles through augmentation and automation

The global teacher shortage poses a formidable challenge to improving educational outcomes, with the demand for educators projected to surge in the coming years. Integrating AI into education can streamline administrative tasks, giving teachers more time for meaningful student engagement.

By automating routine duties and emphasizing human-centric teaching, we can create an environment where educators can thrive, creating a richer learning experience. However, teaching involves more than imparting information – AI should augment, not replace teachers' role.

2. Refining assessment and analytics in education

The integration of AI in education holds promise in revolutionizing the assessment and analytics landscape. AI-enabled assessments offer educators invaluable insights, from pinpointing learning trends to supporting the evaluation of non-standardized tests.

By leveraging AI capabilities, educators can expedite the assessment process, offering timely feedback to learners and facilitating more focused engagement. Through real-time analysis, educators can identify strengths and weaknesses in student performance, allowing for targeted instructional strategies.

3. Supporting AI and digital literacy

Many education systems struggle to address the growing digital skills gap, crucial for students' employability and ethical tech use. Bridging this gap is imperative to cultivate an AI-ready workforce.

AI presents an avenue through which students can improve digital literacy, critical thinking, problem-solving and creativity, preparing learners for future job demands. Integrating AI into education, through traditional or innovative methods, is key to shaping tomorrow's workforce.

4. Personalizing learning content and experience

Extensive research confirms that individual tutoring significantly boosts learning outcomes, with tutored students consistently outperforming 98% of their peers in traditional classroom settings. However, providing personalized tutoring for every student poses a major economic challenge.

AI offers a solution to this hurdle. By harnessing AI, we can now tailor the learning experience to the individual, enhancing academic performance while seamlessly catering to diverse learning needs. Customizable interfaces emerge as invaluable assets, particularly benefiting neurodiverse students and those with diverse physical abilities.

Delivering on AI in education

As we build on the lessons learned, it's clear that new developments in AI may provide much-needed innovation in education. To make sure that new technologies fulfil their potential to enhance Education 4.0 and lifelong learning, we need to deploy them strategically and safely, taking into account the following factors:

1. Design for equity

Recognizing AI's potential to exacerbate current education gaps, AI-enabled educational innovations must prioritize equity in their design. That means addressing disparities between genders, public and private schools, as well as catering to children with diverse abilities and learning styles, while removing language and access barriers.

2. Enhance human-led pedagogy

AI will never replace high-quality, human-led pedagogy. To that end, most examples focus on enhancing human-led teaching by providing the right AI tools that automate clerical tasks and alleviate teachers' time to focus on their craft or by providing relevant training about AI skills that help them better deliver lessons on AI.

3. Co-design and implement with supporting stakeholders

AI-enabled innovations in education should acknowledge the critical roles played by teachers, parents and educational institutions in adopting this emerging technology. Successful instances of AI integration in education underscore the importance of collaboratively designed educational solutions with input from students, teachers and experts.

This collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach ensures that solutions meet the practical demands of the classroom, align with national curricula, remain abreast of industry trends and implement safeguards to protect student data.

4. Teaching about AI is equally crucial to teaching with AI

AI tools e.g. those that provide data analytics and gamified¹ learning – have long been part of the educational landscape. While developments in generative AI offer new opportunities to leverage AI tools, it becomes increasingly evident that teaching about AI in schools is vital.

This education should prioritize imparting skills related to AI development and understanding its potential risks. These skills are critical for shaping future talent capable of ethically designing and developing AI tools that benefit economies and societies.

5. Economic viability and access

Ensuring economic viability and access to AI-learning opportunities for all learners, is essential to prevent deepening the existing digital divide and avoid creating new disparities in education. The realization of AI promise in education requires substantial investment, not only in the products themselves but also in supporting infrastructure, training and data protection.

By addressing these critical aspects, we can unlock the full transformative potential of AI to improve educational outcomes for learners worldwide.



¹ Where elements of game playing (e.g. point scoring, competition with others, rules of play) are applied

Water Is Life – Lenten Calendar

17-23 March is National Water Week

22 March is World Water Day

World Water Day, held on 22 March every year since 1993, is an annual United Nations Observance focusing on the importance of freshwater.

World Water Day celebrates water and raises awareness of the 2.2 billion people living without access to safe water. It is about taking action to tackle the global water crisis. A core focus of World Water Day is to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030.

Every year, UN-Water — the UN's coordination mechanism on water and sanitation — sets the theme for World Water Day. In 2023, the focus was on Accelerating Change. In 2024, on Leveraging Water for Peace. In 2025, the theme will be Glacier Preservation.



As there is an international and national focus on water in March, coinciding with much of Lent, the Environmental Justice group of Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Braamfontein, has developed a Lenten calendar, *Water Is Life*, to raise awareness of the issues involved, to encourage you to take stock of your personal usage, and to adopt some waterwise practices.

A copy of this calendar can be found as an appendix on the next page.



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WATER IS LIFE

LENTEN CALENDAR 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
2 MARCH	3	4	5 ASH WEDNESDAY SAVOUR A GLASS OF WATER	6 PLANT AN INDIGENOUS WATER-WISE TREE	7 REPORT A BURST PIPE	8 COLLECT RAIN WATER
9 FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT	10 CHECK FOR DRIPPING TAPS	11 TURN OFF BETWEEN WETTING AND RINSING	12 FLUSH TOILET ONLY WHEN NECESSARY	13 OBSERVE WATER RESTRICTIONS	14 WATER GARDEN AT SUNSET	15 USE A WATER-SAVING PACK IN THE DISHWASHER
16 SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT	17 NATIONAL WATER WEEK	18 LOAD THE DISHWASHER CORRECTLY	19 WASH DISHES ON FULL LOAD	20 WASH CLOTHES ON FULL LOAD	21 USE LESS WATER IN SHOWER OR BATH	22 WORLD WATER DAY
23 THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT	24 SHOWER RATHER THAN BATH	25 KEEP SHOWER TO 5 MINUTES MAXIMUM	26 WATER GARDEN WITH A CAN	27 TURN OFF TAP WHEN BRUSHING TEETH	28 CLOSE THE TAP WHEN SOAPING IN THE SHOWER	29 CLEAN THE CAR WITH A BUCKET
30 FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT	31 FILL GLASS OR KETTLE ONLY TO NEED	1 APRIL USE SOAP INSTEAD OF SHOWER GEL	2 INSTALL A DUAL-FLUSH TOILET	3 READ AND RECORD YOUR WATER METER MONTHLY	4 CLEAN WALKWAYS WITH BROOM, NOT HOSE	5 MULCH YOUR GARDEN BEDS
6 FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT	7 FIT A WATER-SAVING SHOWERHEAD	8 INSTALL LOW-FLOW TAP AERATORS	9 PLANT DROUGHT-RESISTANT VARIETIES	10 CHECK YOUR GARDEN HOSE FOR LEAKS	11 LET THE RAIN WATER YOUR GARDEN	12 DO NOT POLLUTE WATER COURSES
13 PALM SUNDAY	14 REUSE GREY WATER	15 FIND OUT WHERE YOUR WATER COMES FROM	16 POUR UNUSED TABLE WATER INTO THE KETTLE	17 HOLY THURSDAY DO NOT PRE-RINSE IN THE DISHWASHER	18 GOOD FRIDAY INVEST IN A JOUC TANK	19 EASTER VIGIL THANK GOD FOR WATER
20 EASTER SUNDAY	21	22	23	24	25	26
	REDUCE	REUSE	REFUSE	REPURPOSE	RECYCLE	