

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first edition of *Roots & Wings* for 2020. This publication, sent electronically free of charge to members of the Professional Society, appears quarterly. It contains regular features as indicated in the Contents table alongside.

In this and subsequent issues we will feature some of the theory and practice presented at the Second International Conference on Catholic Religious Education held recently in Melbourne, Australia from 11-14 February 2020. The conference was cohosted by the Australian Catholic University and Catholic Education Melbourne.



Members are encouraged to send material for future editions. What might you send? Here are some examples:

- Lesson ideas or plans
- Reviews of useful materials such as books or websites
- News from your school's RE Department
- Short articles of interest to religious educators
- Adverts for RE posts in your school

## CONTENTS

REFLECTION .....	2
REFLECTION .....	4
TALKING ABOUT RE (CPTD) .....	6
CLASSROOM PRACTICE .....	9
ARTISTS' CORNER .....	12
WEBSITE .....	12
BOOK REVIEW .....	13
LOCAL NEWS .....	14
INTERNATIONAL NEWS .....	15
QUESTION (CPTD) .....	18

LENT & EASTER	
<b>ASH WEDNESDAY</b> <b>LENT BEGINS</b> Emphasizes our mortality and our need for ongoing repentance.	<b>DAYS OF FASTING</b> ASH WEDNESDAY GOOD FRIDAY  <b>WHAT IS FASTING?</b> One full meal and two smaller meals.
<b>PALM SUNDAY</b> Commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem.	<b>DAYS OF ABSTINENCE</b> ASH WEDNESDAY GOOD FRIDAY EVERY FRIDAY DURING LENT  <b>WHAT IS ABSTINENCE?</b> No meat.
<b>HOLY THURSDAY</b> Celebrates the Last Supper with the disciples and Passover.	
<b>GOOD FRIDAY</b> We remember the Passion and Jesus' sacrifice for us on the cross.	<b>40</b> The 40 days of Lent are based on two accounts: the 40 years of wandering by the Israelites and our Lord's 40 days in the wilderness at which point He was tempted by Satan.
<b>EASTER SUNDAY</b> <b>HE HAS RISEN!</b> Alleluia! The principal feast of the ecclesiastical year. Jesus has risen! Easter is an 8 day celebration leading to Easter Season, which ends on Pentecost.	<b>PILLARS OF LENT</b> PRAYER FASTING ALMSGIVING  The key to understanding the meaning of Lent is simple: Baptism.

Religious education visions a broad sweeping future and then makes that future happen earlier than it would have happened if religious education were not there.  
(James Michael Lee)

## REFLECTION

### *What does the word of God have to say about young people?*

Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* of the Holy Father Francis to Young People and to the Entire People of God (Chapter One)

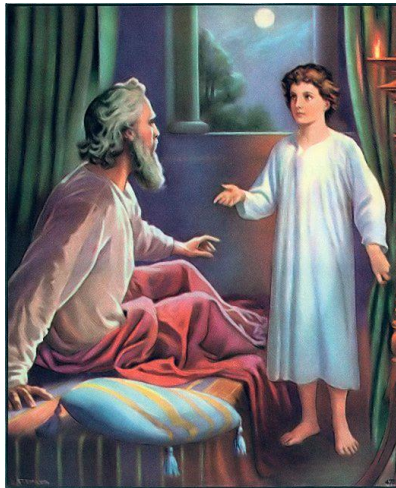
5. Let us draw upon some of the richness of the sacred Scriptures, since they often speak of young people and of how the Lord draws near to encounter them.

#### *In the Old Testament*

6. In an age when young people were not highly regarded, some texts show that God sees them differently. Joseph, for example, was one of the youngest of his family (cf. Gen 37:2-3), yet God showed him great things in dreams and when about twenty years old he outshone all his brothers in important affairs (cf. Gen 37-47).

7. In Gideon, we see the frankness of young people, who are not used to sugar-coating reality. When told that the Lord was with him, he responded: "But if the Lord is with us, why then have all these things happened to us?" (Jg 6:13). God was not offended by that reproach, but went on to order him: "Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel!" (Jg 6:14).

8. Samuel was still a young boy, yet the Lord spoke to him. Thanks to the advice of an adult, he opened his heart to hear God's call: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Sam 3:9-10). As a result, he became a great prophet who intervened at critical moments in the history of



**Samuel**

his country. King Saul was also young when the Lord called him to undertake his mission (cf. 1 Sam 9:2).

9. King David was chosen while still a boy. When the prophet Samuel was seeking the future king of Israel, a man offered as candidates his sons who were older and more experienced. Yet the prophet said that the chosen one was the young David, who was out tending the flock (cf. 1 Sam 16:6-13), for "man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (v. 7). The glory of youth is in the heart, more than in physical strength or the impression given to others.

10. Solomon, when he had to succeed his father, felt lost and told God: "I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act" (1 Kg 3:7). Yet the audacity of youth moved him to ask

God for wisdom and he devoted himself to his mission. Something similar happened to the prophet Jeremiah, called despite his youth to rouse his people. In his fear, he said: "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth" (Jer 1:6). But the Lord told him not to say that (cf. Jer 1:7), and added: "Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you" (Jer 1:8). The devotion of the prophet Jeremiah to his mission shows what can happen when the brashness of youth is joined to the power of God.



**Ruth**

11. A Jewish servant girl of the foreign commander Naaman intervened with faith and helped him to be cured of his illness (cf. 2 Kg 5:2-6). The young Ruth was a model of generosity in remaining beside her mother-in-law who had fallen on hard times (cf. Ru



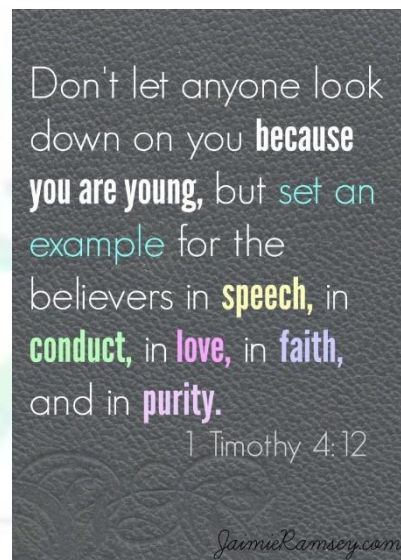
1:1-18), yet she also showed boldness in getting ahead in life (cf. Ru 4:1-17).

### *In the New Testament*

12. One of Jesus' parables (cf. Lk 15:11-32) relates that a "younger" son wanted to leave his father's home for a distant land (cf. vv. 12-13). Yet his thoughts of independence turned into dissolution and excess (cf. v. 13), and he came to experience the bitterness of loneliness and poverty (cf. vv. 14-16). Nonetheless, he found the strength to make a new start (cf. vv. 17-19) and determined to get up and return home (cf. v. 20). Young hearts are naturally ready to change, to turn back, get up and learn from life. How could anyone fail to support that son in this new resolution? Yet his older brother already had a heart grown old; he let himself be possessed by greed, selfishness and envy (Lk 15:28-30). Jesus praises the young sinner who returned to the right path over the brother who considered himself faithful, yet lacked the spirit of love and mercy.

13. Jesus, himself eternally young, wants to give us hearts that are ever young. God's word asks us to "cast out the old leaven that you may be fresh dough" (1 Cor 5:7). Saint Paul invites us to strip ourselves of the "old self" and to put on a "young" self (Col 3:9-10). In explaining what it means to put on that youthfulness "which is being renewed" (v. 10), he mentions "compassion,

kindness, humility, meekness and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving each other if anyone has a complaint against another" (Col 3:12-13). In a word, true youth means having a heart capable of loving, whereas everything that separates us from others makes the soul grow old. And so he concludes: "above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col 3:14).



14. Let us also keep in mind that Jesus had no use for adults who looked down on the young or lorded it over them. On the contrary, he insisted that "the greatest among you must become like the youngest" (Lk 22:26). For him age did not establish privileges, and being young did not imply lesser worth or dignity.

15. The word of God says that young people should be treated "as brothers" (1 Tim 5:1), and warns parents not to "provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (Col 3:21).

Young people are not meant to become discouraged; they are meant to dream great things, to seek vast horizons, to aim higher, to take on the world, to accept challenges and to offer the best of themselves to the building of something better. That is why I constantly urge young people not to let themselves be robbed of hope; to each of them I repeat: "Let no one despise your youth" (1 Tim 4:12).

16. Nonetheless, young people are also urged "to accept the authority of those who are older" (1 Pet 5:5). The Bible never ceases to insist that profound respect be shown to the elderly, since they have a wealth of experience; they have known success and failure, life's joys and afflictions, its dreams and disappointments. In the silence of their heart, they have a store of experiences that can teach us not to make mistakes or be taken in by false promises. An ancient sage asks us to respect certain limits and to master our impulses: "Urge the younger men to be self-controlled" (Tit 2:6). It is unhelpful to buy into the cult of youth or foolishly to dismiss others simply because they are older or from another generation. Jesus tells us that the wise are able to bring forth from their store things both new and old (cf. Mt 13:52). A wise young person is open to the future, yet still capable of learning something from the experience of others.

17. In the Gospel of Mark, we find a man who, listening to Jesus speak of the commandments, says, "All these I have observed from my youth" (10:20). The Psalmist had already said the same thing: "You, O Lord, are my hope; my trust, O Lord, from my youth... from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds" (Ps 71:5.17). We should never repent of spending our youth being good, opening our heart to the Lord, and living differently. None of this takes away from our youth but instead strengthens and renews it: "Your youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Ps 103:5). For this reason, Saint Augustine could lament: "Late have I loved you, beauty ever ancient, ever new! Late have I loved you!" Yet that rich man, who had been faithful to God in his youth, allowed the passing years to rob his dreams; he preferred to remain attached

to his riches (cf. Mk 10:22).

18. On the other hand, in the Gospel of Matthew we find a young man (cf. 19:20.22) who approaches Jesus and asks if there is more that he can do (v. 20); in this, he demonstrates that youthful openness of spirit which seeks new horizons and great challenges. Yet his spirit was not really that young, for he had already become attached to riches and comforts. He said he wanted something more, but when Jesus asked him to be generous and distribute his goods, he realized that he could not let go of everything he had. In the end, "hearing these words, the young man went away sad" (v. 22). He had given up his youth.

19. The Gospel also speaks about a group of wise young women, who were ready and waiting, while others were distracted and slumbering (cf. Mt 25:1-

13). We can, in fact, spend our youth being distracted, skimming the surface of life, half-asleep, incapable of cultivating meaningful relationships or experiencing the deeper things in life. In this way, we can store up a paltry and unsubstantial future. Or we can spend our youth aspiring to beautiful and great things, and thus store up a future full of life and interior richness.

20. If you have lost your inner vitality, your dreams, your enthusiasm, your optimism and your generosity, Jesus stands before you as once he stood before the dead son of the widow, and with all the power of his resurrection he urges you: "Young man, I say to you, arise!" (Lk 7:14).

21. To be sure, many other passages of the word of God can shed light on this stage of your life. We will take up some of them in the following chapters.



## REFLECTION

### *Obstacles to syncretizing Christianity with African culture*

(La Croix - October 7, 2019)



*Father Edoh Bedjra CJM, a theologian, researcher and president of the Catholic University of West Africa in Cotonou, Benin. In this interview with La Croix Africa, the Eudist priest talks about the obstacles to an inculturated African Christianity.*

**After a centenary of evangelization, we are still talking about the African Church today in terms of cultural specificities? Why? Why?**

We cannot speak of an African Church that has integrated its culture into the

Christian faith in a systematic or formal way but there is what is called an adaptation of African culture to the Christian faith.

This is a step that must evolve in order to achieve inculturation or the integration of this African reality into the Christian faith that we have received.

The Church has always functioned as if it were the only one in a position to give a message, forgetting that in some African cultures, the stranger who arrives is not the only one to have a message, and that he must also listen to the message of his host.

Our cultures have not been listened to.

To achieve this inculturation, there is still a long way to go.

The first African priests have been tackling this question ever since 1957. The Second Vatican Council subsequently paved the way for an opening in this direction.

At the 1994 African Synod, where the whole Church met, the pastors recognized that faith did not go deeply into the local culture depth and that they did not do everything to ensure that the Gospel penetrated all dimensions of the African way of life.

They only committed themselves to an in-depth evangelization.

**So, with such an awareness, what is preventing the successful completion of the inculturation project?**

First of all, there is an ecclesiological difficulty, that is, a problem in the conception of the Church, since it does not currently allow cultural disparities to be accepted in its functioning.

Despite the Second Vatican Council, this Church strongly preserves its tradition and gives a universal catechism to the whole Church. It is in a form of uniformity everywhere.

Secondly, African bishops sometimes lack motivation or see no particular interest or effectiveness in this endeavor that could nourish pastoral, liturgical and spiritual action.

There is the fact that most of the priests who are the backbone of pastoral action are no longer in contact with their cultural heritage because of their formation.

In the curriculum, the anthropological and cultural aspect has not yet been integrated as an important element for us, whereas we must take into account the recipient of the Gospel.

What is interesting is that we are fortunate to now have a pope who, in his apostolic exhortation "The Joy of the Gospel", gives the particular Churches a certain openness, a margin of expression by highlighting their cultural differences. We can use it today to relaunch the issue for Africa.

**Is there not a risk with this desire for inculturation to fall into religious syncretism?**

The Catholic faith, as we have it today, is itself a syncretism. Already at the level of the Jewish people, it is a faith in Jesus and the Judaic culture.

When it was transposed to Rome, it became a syncretism between the Jewish Christian faith and Roman culture. This is what gave us exactly what we have as an ecclesial tradition.

What is preventing us today from making a syncretism between African culture and what we have as faith, as a message that the Gospel brings us? Syncretism is not necessarily a bad thing.

It made no sense with the first missionaries, who avoided any contact with African culture. It is only through syncretism that a new society, a new culture is born.

Moreover, it is already there, because many of the songs we perform in the church, the procession of offerings, come from the culture, from the base. I come from Benin where many songs come from voodoo and the royal court.

This syncretism has already been initiated by evangelical movements around us — it is they who are precisely pushing the Catholic Church to pay attention to its culture.

Many Afro-Christian churches have developed this syncretism and sometimes it is wonderful. They have been able to combine African culture and the Gospel.



They make it an osmosis and it allows them to solve their daily problem and help others.

Of course, we need to know where this syncretism is leading us if we deviate, and at that moment,

the hierarchy and theologians are there to think with us.



## TALKING ABOUT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (CPTD) <sup>1</sup>



### *Re-contextualising Catholic school Religious Education: Educating young people spiritually, morally and religiously for the 21st century*

(Graham Rossiter - Professor of Moral and Religious Education, BBI The Australian Institute of Theological Education, Sydney - [g.rossiter@bigpond.com](mailto:g.rossiter@bigpond.com))

#### *Introduction: The role of a critical, evaluative religious education in resourcing young people's spirituality*

While the issue remains real, it has almost become something of a cliché to point out that we live in times of unprecedented change that make it difficult for young people to find meaning and purpose in life, and to propose that school education might be able to make some contribution to help them in this quest. People have been saying this for the past 50 years (Frankl, 1964; Birch, 1975); and during this whole period, what they said was always true. Part of the problem today is that new, challenging issues are continually emerging at a faster rate than ever. From climate change to terrorism, trade wars to mistrust of politicians, refugee migration to new levels of populist nationalism (Zakaria, 2019), trending memes to online trolls (Gorman, 2019), the list goes on, perhaps often overridden by individuals' anxiety about the performance of their precarious, projected identity on social media.

In 1967, this is what prominent Australian biologist and author Charles Birch thought about the question: "The problems are not out there for us to solve. But to solve us." In his view, the most realistic and helpful human response is in the activity of trying to comprehend problems and in trying to find solutions – even if apparent success and progress always remain elusive. About the same time, Philip Phenix's (1964) book *Realms of meaning: A philosophy of the curriculum for general education* signalled the start of an ever growing movement concerned with how school education might help young people in their search for meaning, purpose and values in times of rapid cultural change. Today, in globalised, digital, secularised culture, the importance and urgency of this role have never been greater, especially where the traditional religious sources of meaning are no longer prominent or plausible reference points. Rather, many secularised, individualistic, young people in Westernised countries appear preoccupied with a consumerist lifestyle – while at the same time there are unprecedented high levels of anxiety, depression and mental health issues. In the same vein, US educators/authors Postman and Weingartner (1969) considered that there were no institutions or processes – including education and schooling – that could reliably solve the problems; but education was at least a good starting point because it could skill young people in critical thinking and research, resourcing their capacity to think about the issues and to make better informed decisions.

<sup>1</sup> Read this article for CPTD points. See Page 18.

Australian philosopher of education Brian Hill (2006, p. 55; 2004) summed up the potential contribution of education this way.

Regarding the school: “the mission of education is to resource the choosing self”

Regarding religious education in any school type: “The teaching of religion in school has certain limited but crucial educational purposes:

- To help students appreciate the importance of the spiritual quest; of working out where they are going as human beings.
- To help them to interrogate their own cultural conditioning and reach a position of being able to develop an adequate personal framework of meaning and value.” (along with other purposes)

Hill took for granted that the sense of freedom and individuality permeating Westernised cultures would ensure that young people will eventually construct their own meaning, values and beliefs – even if for some (or perhaps many?) this will not be a conscious, reflective process but more a popular, cultural socialisation. Nothing could stop the ‘choosing’; but their choosing could be better educated. Hence, knowledge of contemporary issues and critical thinking would be important for informing life decisions, as well as knowledge of what one’s own and other religious traditions were saying about meaning in life. The religion classroom should be the very place where one might expect that students could learn how to appraise the shaping influence of culture. Religious Education, with core curriculum status in Catholic schools, has both the history, credentials and precedents for studying directly the contemporary human quest for meaning to help resource the spirituality of young people, whether they are religious or not. This meant broadening its scope beyond Catholicism to include study of other religions and of the ways in which culture influences spirituality.

In contemporary teaching in a number of curriculum areas, it is evident that this critical interpretation and evaluation of culture is occurring to some extent – for example in English, Science, History, Geography and Social Studies, to name some subjects. It would be incongruous and disappointing if this strategy was not a prominent part of religious education – the one subject you might expect to be especially interested in the spiritual/moral dimension to life.

As well as providing students with a study of their own religious tradition, religious education should help them become knowledgeable of the ways in which various other religious traditions are influential in pluralistic society – how they propose to their followers what it means to be human (Grimmitt, 1987; Jackson, 2004, 2018). Also, there needs to be a direct investigation of contemporary spiritual, moral and social issues as referred to above. Rositer (2018, pp. 95-104) and Crawford and Rossiter (2006) argued systematically that critical interpretation and evaluation, together with a research-oriented pedagogy, should become a core dimension of religious education. It suffices here to list most of the headings from their discussion.

- Traditions for a critical dimension to education (Phenix, Freire, Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy, Postman, etc.)
- Raymond Williams’ ideas about cultural agency and avoiding being ‘passive consumers’ of culture
- Catholic tradition for a critical dimension to evangelisation and education
- Critical evaluation as a type of contemporary gospel pedagogy
- Scope and limitations for a critical evaluative religious education in the classroom
- Proposed content and topics
- Acknowledging the negativity and lack of engagement in students’ attitude to religion and religious education (the ‘psychology of the learning environment’)
- Scheme for a spiritual/moral dimension to the school curriculum

- Personalism, meaningfulness and relevance in religious education

Just one argument will be outlined briefly here, proposing why the above dimension is now so important for the future trajectory of Catholic religious education in the 21st century.

The large majority of students in Australian Catholic schools have what has been described as by researchers as a as an individualistic, DIY, secular spirituality (Schweitzer, 2007; Crawford & Rossiter, 2006; Hughes, 2007, 2017). Some generations back, most people were socialised into the religious spirituality of their family. And this was the taken-for-granted and relatively unquestioned system for referencing their meaning, purpose and values. These days, many, including those who identify as being religious, have a functioning spirituality (and 'religion') that is constructed in a 'do-it-yourself' fashion in an eclectic way. They are more focused on lifestyle than on spirituality itself. Their spirituality may not be developed consciously. Rather, it is evident in the values they adopt, their commitments, lifestyle and motivations. In this sense it is an implied spirituality, and it may draw little from their religious tradition. It is often a spirituality that has absorbed uncritically the compelling world view that underpins contemporary consumerist lifestyle, which is orchestrated by the potent imagery and iconography of media advertising and marketing.

Statistically, 30% of the Australian Catholic school students are not Catholic (NCEC, 2012); and about 5% of the Catholic students (less than 4% of total students) are, or will be, regular participants at Sunday Mass.

Two conclusions:

- A religious education that concentrates almost exclusively on Catholicism will be perceived as largely irrelevant by the students.
- Contemporary secular spirituality – especially its consumerist dimension – needs to be evaluated in terms of its cultural origins, psychological influence and principal values; it is like the new global 'religion'. Such evaluation ought to be an important task for religious education.

Undertaking such an investigation of spirituality can make religious education more meaningful for young people, whether they are formally religious or not – precisely because it taps into the areas of their lives where spiritual and moral issues/values come into play. Religious education can resource their capacity to look critically at the ways that culture can have a shaping influence on people's imaginations of life, values and lifestyle. This approach tries to engage at the psychological points where young people's hopes and life expectations are generated – the same points that are the principal targets for commercial exploitation by the consumerist complex.

This might at first sight be regarded as just a psychological study and not 'proper' religious education because it seems to have little to do with Catholic theology. But one can argue that this is being true to the core purposes of religious education which tries to educate and thus enhance the basic human spirituality of young people no matter what their religious disposition.

This approach can help make students' experience of religious education more relevant. This is a different question from trying to make the church more relevant. These two questions should not be conflated. Only the church itself can address the latter question. It is a mistake to think that religious education should be primarily about trying to make the church look more attractive and inviting for young people.

I consider that this evaluative approach and its justifying argument are not just pertinent to current Catholic religious education. They are just as applicable to state-developed Religion Studies courses. Elsewhere, it was argued that these courses in Australia are still mainly replicas of the sorts of 'descriptive' world religions courses in





the United Kingdom in the early 1970s. In brief, their content is 'too tame' for contemporary relevance (Rossiter, 1999; Crawford & Rossiter, 2006).

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## CLASSROOM PRACTICE

### 52 Ways to Care for Creation

<http://www.creationjustice.org/blog/52-ways-to-care-for-creation?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=c54ec962-5aee-4840-9cof-3675dca13619>

From the above website we have chosen some activities that teachers could encourage at home and some that the school or the class could engage in.



### AT HOME

#### Eat Those Leftovers!

A great way to be a steward to the Earth is to consume your food. Did you know that Americans throw away 25% of the food they buy? Not only is this a waste of money but it is also harmful to the environment. Producing food takes land, water, and heavy machinery. By eating your leftovers you are not only saving money but also preventing energy

waste from food production. Not to mention you are keeping them from taking up space in a landfill.

#### Cut Your Shower Time by Five Minutes

Cut five minutes off your shower to save water. According to a study done by Harvard the average American shower uses 2.5 gallons per minute. You will save 12.5 gallons of water if you shorten by just

5 minutes. Or, consider turning the water off while you lather up and only turn it on to rinse.

#### Use Green Cleaning Products

Did you know some cleaning products have toxic chemicals that can harm your health as well as pollute God's creation? Check out our "Cleanliness and Godliness Toolkit" for ideas on greener cleaning.

### **Change Light Bulbs to Eco-Friendly Types**

CFL and LED bulbs can emit 25-80% less energy than traditional incandescents, plus they last longer! Consider this greener alternative when it comes time to replenishing those bulbs.

### **Track Your Waste for a Week**

Keep track of the waste that you create for a week. How much of it can be replaced with recyclables or reusables. What can you challenge yourself to live without?

### **Turn Off the Lights When Not in Use**

If you're not in the room, the light doesn't need to be on. Leave yourself post-its to help you remember to flip the switch off when you leave the room.

### **Fend Off "Energy Vampires."**

Make sure to turn off and unplug items when they're not in use. The socket draws electricity even

when items are "turned off." Some items that are often plugged-in when not in use are blow-dryers, phone chargers, electric kettles, and coffee pots. Other items that are often left in the "on" position when not in use are televisions, computers, and video game consuls. Using the battery-saving function on smart phones and computers helps them last longer, as well as saves energy. Perhaps you have a spare refrigerator you only need to run when you're preparing to entertain guests. Look around your house and find what can be unplugged. You might be surprised by your energy savings!

### **Use Gray Water**

Gray water is water that has been used but is not necessarily contaminated. You can use dish washing water, hand washing water, and cooking water to water plants. There are even systems you can install now that allow you to make use of gray water more effectively.

### **Track Your Use of Paper and Disposable Products**

This week, watch how much you use paper plates, disposable utensils and straws. See what of those items you can replace with reusable Tupperware and flatware that you can take with you. The Brand "TO GO WARE" sells reusable bamboo forks, spoons, and knives. You can keep this in your car, purse, or backpack to use at a moment's notice.

### **Opt to Wrap Gifts in a Reusable Bag Instead of Wrapping Paper**

Wrapping paper can only be used once while gift bags can be reused. You can give a festively concealed gift and care for creation at the same time. Or you can wrap your presents in newspaper or brown paper and personalize with your own hand drawn decorations. You can still be festive and make the gift special without buying wrapping paper.

## **AT SCHOOL**

### **Donate to a Faith-Based Organization that Supports Care and Justice for God's Creation**

Our ecological crisis is a spiritual crisis. We are facing systems of greed and racism that require a moral response. Give to faith-based organizations that devote time and resources to caring for God's creation. Consider becoming a monthly recurring

donor, to help the organization build a strong, predictable grassroots funding base for their work

### **Observe Earth Hour on Saturday, March 28, 2020**

At 8:30pm, turn off the lights for one hour to observe how much energy will be conserved if people around the world cooperate with energy-saving.

Click here to see the impact from years before and how you can get involved.

### **Observe Earth Day Sunday on a Sunday close to April 22, 2020, as well as Faith Climate Action Week**

This year is the 50th anniversary of Earth Day! Make use of the Earth Day Sunday resource developed annually by Creation Justice Ministries. This year's theme is "The

Fierce Urgency of Now" and is all about how to live faithfully in urgent times. Our 2020 resource will be available soon at [www.creationjustice.org/urgency](http://www.creationjustice.org/urgency) , and past years can be found through [www.earth-daysunday.org](http://www.earth-daysunday.org) . We also encourage communities to use materials from Faith Climate Action Week April 17-26, 2020.

### **Observe Endangered Species Day May 15, 2020**

Did you know one in five species is threatened or endangered? There are many things everyday people can do to save God's creation from extinction. Check out [www.creationjustice.org/angered](http://www.creationjustice.org/angered) to find materials to raise awareness in your faith community.

### **Advocate for Environmental Justice**

Learn about imminent threats to communities near you. Learn whose health and livelihood is most affected by local pollution issues, and who is on the front-lines of counteracting the harm. If you need a place to start, check out the Oil and Gas Threat Map. Join an existing grassroots organization, talk to your family and friends about environmental justice, or set up a meeting between your faith community and local environmental justice advocates to build solidarity.

### **Research How Your Community Regulates Waste**

Each city or town has their own trash, recycling, and compost system. What is

the system where you live? Regulations change frequently so take some time today to update yourself. Here are some questions for you to find the answers: Does my town/city have recycling curbside pick-up or do I take it to the recycling center? What can I throw in the recycling bin? Do I throw plastics, paper, glass, and aluminum together or do I separate them? Does my city/town have a curbside composting program? Can I compost in my own backyard?

### **Honor World Oceans Day Monday, June 8, 2020**

Plan to honor World Oceans Day with your faith community. Check out [www.worldoceansday.org](http://www.worldoceansday.org) for ideas, and find faith-based resources at [www.creationjustice.org/oceans](http://www.creationjustice.org/oceans) .

### **Watch a Documentary on Creation Care and/or Environmental Justice**

Some examples include faith-based films such as Behold the Earth and Renewal, as well as other educational films such as The Story of Stuff. Learn something new, and make a commitment to yourself to make a positive change in your life.

### **Reuse. You Don't Have to Use an Item Just Once Right?**

What disposable items in your life could you replace with a reusable option? Do you use cloth napkins or paper? Do you have a reusable water bottle or dis-

posable? Do you use cleaning wipes or clothes? Do you pack your lunch in plastic bags or in reusable containers?

### **Pick Up the Trash in Your Community**

Go outside and pick up trash. You can invite a friend or small group from church to join you. You can enjoy fellowship and increase the amount of garbage collected.

### **Calculate Your Water Footprint**

Find out what your water footprint is and how you can reduce your impact. This calculator will show you how your lifestyle impacts the rest of the world and how you can make a positive difference. Share with us ways you plan to reduce your footprint!

### **Honor the Season of Creation September 1-October 10**

Beginning with the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation on September 1 and ending with St. Francis Day on October 4, the Season of Creation is a time-set-apart to express gratitude for God's good creation, care for creation, and call for justice. Learn more at [www.seasonofcreation.org](http://www.seasonofcreation.org)

### **Measure Your Carbon Footprint**

Find out what your carbon footprint is and how you can reduce your impact. This calculator will show you how your lifestyle impacts the rest of the world and how you can make a positive difference.



## ARTISTS' CORNER

### Christine Valters Paintner



Christine Valters Paintner is an American poet and writer living in Galway, Ireland. She is the author of twelve books of nonfiction on creative process and contemplative practice and her poems have been published in several journals in both the U.S. and Ireland.

She describes herself in terms of three identities which she currently hold dear:

**Poet:** I look beneath the surface to find beauty in all things and then offer that back to others. I seek to cultivate this kind of presence in the midst of ordinary life, finding poems everywhere.

**Hermit:** Silence nourishes me deeply and I take regular times of solitude, often in the woods or by the sea to help me hear a deeper voice.

**Mystic:** I am called to follow in the tradition of the many who have felt a passionate desire for connection to the divine and I am blessed to share this path with others.

## WEBSITE



<https://abbeyofthearts.com/>

This is the website of Christine Valters Paintner and her husband, John. It is well worth exploring if you are interested in the connection between spirituality and the arts. You might even join The Holy Disorder of Dancing Monks!

WELCOME TO ABBEY OF THE ARTS!

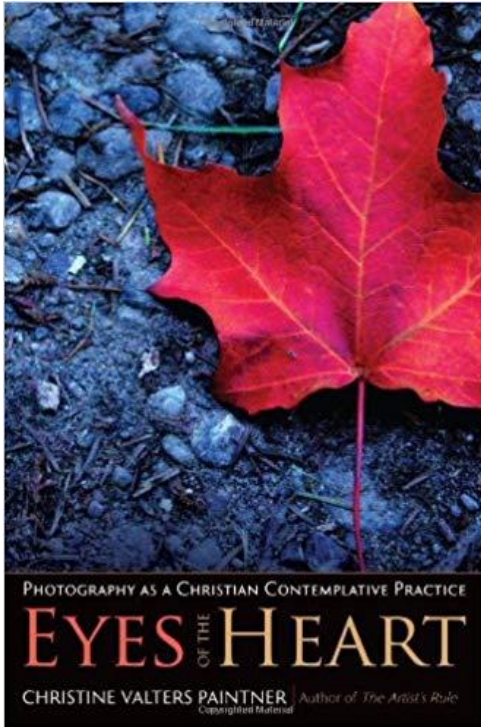
The Abbey is a virtual global online monastery offering pilgrimages, online classes & retreats, reflections, and resources which integrate contemplative spiritual practice and creative expression with monastic spirituality. We support you in becoming a monk in the world and an artist in everyday life. We believe in nourishing an earth-cherishing consciousness. We are an open and affirming community and strive to be radically inclusive.

Poetry is our nourishment. Art inspires our souls. We dance for the joy of it.



## BOOK REVIEW

### *Eyes of the Heart*



In this first book to explore photography as a spiritual practice from a Christian perspective, Christine Valters Paintner builds on the process of contemplative creativity she introduced online at Abbey of the Arts and in her book *The Artist's Rule*. She considers how a camera can help readers open "the eyes of the heart."

More than a book on photographic technique, *Eyes of the Heart* is about cultivating photography as a spiritual practice. Adapting the monastic practice of *lectio divina* (sacred reading) into a form of *visio divina* (sacred seeing), spiritual director and Benedictine oblate Christine Valters Paintner invites readers to a new way of viewing the world--through the lens of a camera. Paintner guides readers through six themes connecting the medium of photography with the Christian spiritual life. Each theme provides a photographic journey in which the reader does not simply take images, but receives images and learns to see with "the eyes of the heart" (Ephesians 1:18). Photos by the author are included.

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: Sorin Books; 4/30/13 edition (April 22, 2013)

ISBN-10: 1933495545; ISBN-13: 978-1933495545

## LOCAL NEWS

### *PE Catholic schools commit to strengthen religious formation*

*The Catholic Board of Education of the Eastern Cape South region, following a national Catholic schools congress, has decided to strengthen religious formation of learners. Members agreed to ensure that Religious Education is timetabled at every school and that religious formation responds to the context and lived experiences of learners.*





Catholic schools in Port Elizabeth have agreed to strengthen the religious formation of their learners, after the Catholic Board of Education of the Eastern Cape South met in the wake of the recent National Schools Congress.

Dominican Sister Aloysia Zellmann said the congress had left “no doubt in the minds of all present about the important role the Catholic schools played in the past and need to play in the future, for the sake of life for all, especially where the needs are greatest”.

Inspired by that, the regional Catholic Board of Education agreed to

strengthen the Catholic identity and ethos in its schools.

Members also agreed to ensure that Religious Education is timetabled at every school and that religious formation responds to the context and lived experiences of learners.

“Education in and for the 21st century requires training of educators for the skills needed in our fast-moving, changing and challenging society,” Sr Zellmann said.

“Environmental education is an essential part of it. All of us can and must contribute to caring for our common home, Earth,” she

said, echoing the resolutions at the meeting.

“Good practice of leadership and governance in the schools was stressed as essential, and this too may require appropriate training and formation,” Sr Zellmann said.

“Lastly, the sustainability, ownership and growth of our Catholic schools was discussed,” she said.

“This aspect calls especially on all in leadership in the network to think creatively about sharing resources and new possibilities of collaboration and ownership models.”

(The Southern Cross, November 27 to December 3, 2019)



## *G'town's 'Spiritfest' calls for new ideas*

(Samantha Carolus) *The Southern Cross*, February 19 to February 25, 2020



After a successful “Spiritfest” at last year’s National Arts Festival 2019 in Grahamstown/ Maikanda, organisers are inviting the public to share their suggestions for this year’s festival from June 25 to July 5 that aims to bring Christian people together in celebration of their faith.

Last year, the Ecumenical Street Parade and celebration brought visibility as a group of Christian members showed public appreciation for their faith.

“We hope this will attract an even bigger crowd this year, with many more joining their shared faith and voices of prayer in the event,” said Gunda Spingies, a Spiritfest coordinator.

Spiritfest’s Winter School in 2019 featured several well-received talks, among them one by Fr Anthony Egan SJ of the Jesuit Institute in Johannesburg on Christian kinship.

A daily meditation group, led by Paul Faller of the World Community for Christian Meditation, was very successful, Ms Spingies said, and Spiritfest has been encouraged to repeat it.



Other well-received events included the organ recitals by Christopher Cockburn and Stephen Holder.

Also, the Makhanda Kwantu Choir presented a combined concert with the Quava Vocal Group from Johannesburg, with the Quava choir winning a Standard Bank Ovation Award for its concert.

“Spiritfest hopes to grow more successful year by year—not in increasing door takings, or even in numbers of attendees, but in trying to make a difference in the lives of those we touch,” Ms Spingies said.

For suggestions and ideas, or recommendations of a suitable artist, e-mail [gunda.spingies@gmail.com](mailto:gunda.spingies@gmail.com) or [s.k.carolus@gmail.com](mailto:s.k.carolus@gmail.com). For more about Spiritfest see [www.grahamstowncathedral.org/Spiritfest](http://www.grahamstowncathedral.org/Spiritfest).



## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### *The movement to take climate action has begun – but we have a long way to go*

(António Guterres - secretary general of the United Nations)



*Young people, the UN and a growing number of leaders are mobilizing, but we need many others to take action, the UN secretary general writes*

A climate march at The Hague, the Netherlands, on 27 September 2019.



On the eve of the September UN climate action summit, young women and men around the world mobilized by the millions and told global leaders: “You are failing us”.

They are right.

Global emissions are increasing. Temperatures are rising. The consequences for oceans, forests, weather patterns, biodiversity, food production, water, jobs and, ultimately, lives, are already dire – and set to get much worse.

The science is undeniable. But in many places, people don’t need a chart or graph to understand the climate crisis. They can simply look out the window.

Climate chaos is playing out in real time from California to the Caribbean, and from Africa to the Arctic and beyond. Those who contributed least to the problem are suffering the most.

I have seen it with my own eyes from cyclone-battered Mozambique to the hurricane-devastated Bahamas to the rising seas of the South Pacific.

I called on the climate action summit to serve as a springboard to set us on the right path ahead of crucial 2020 deadlines established by the Paris agreement on climate change. And many leaders – from many countries and sectors – stepped up.

A broad coalition – not just governments and youth, but businesses, cities, investors and civil society – came together to move in the direction our world so desperately needs to avert climate catastrophe.

More than 70 countries committed to net zero carbon emissions by 2050, even if major emitters have not yet done so. More than 100 cities did the same, including several of the world’s largest.

At least 70 countries announced their intention to boost their national plans under the Paris agreement by 2020.

Small Island States together committed to achieve carbon neutrality and to move to 100% renewable energy by 2030.

Countries from Pakistan to Guatemala, Colombia to Nigeria, New Zealand to Barbados vowed to plant more than 11bn trees.

More than 100 leaders in the private sector committed to accelerating their move into the green economy.

A group of the world's largest asset-owners – responsible for directing more than \$2tn – pledged to move to carbon-neutral investment portfolios by 2050.

This is in addition to a recent call by asset managers representing nearly half the world's invested capital – some \$34tn – for global leaders to put a meaningful price on carbon and phase out fossil fuel subsidies and thermal coal power worldwide.

The International Development Finance Club pledged to mobilize \$1tn in clean energy funding by 2025 in 20 least developed countries.

One-third of the global banking sector signed up to align their businesses with the Paris agreement objectives and sustainable development goals.

The summit also showcased ways in which cities and global industries like shipping can achieve major reductions in emissions. Initiatives to protect forests and safeguard water supplies were also highlighted.

These steps are all important – but they are not sufficient.

From the beginning, the summit was designed to jolt the world and accelerate action on a wider scale. It also served as a global stage for hard truths and to shine a light on those who are leading and those who are not. Deniers or major emitters have nowhere to hide.

I will continue to encourage them to do much more at home and drive green economic solutions around the world.

Our planet needs action on a truly planetary scale. That cannot be achieved overnight, and it cannot happen without the full

engagement of those contributing most to the crisis.

If our world is to avoid the climate cliff, far more is needed to heed the call of science and cut greenhouse emissions by 45% by 2030; reach carbon neutrality by 2050; and limit temperature rise to 1.5C by the end of the century. That's how we can secure the future of our world.

Too many countries still seem to be addicted to coal – even though cheaper, greener options are available already. We need much more progress on carbon pricing, ensuring no new coal plants by 2020, and ending trillions of dollars in giveaways of hard-earned taxpayers' money to a dying fossil fuel industry to boost hurricanes, spread tropical diseases and heighten conflict.

At the same time, developed countries must fulfil their commitment to provide \$100bn a year from public and private sources by 2020 for mitigation and adaptation in developing countries.

And I will make sure that the commitments that countries, the private sector and local authorities have made are accounted for – starting in December at the UN climate conference in Santiago, Chile. The UN is united in support of realizing these initiatives.

Climate change is the defining issue of our time.

Science tells us that on our current path, we face at least 3C of global heating by the end of the century. I will not be there, but my granddaughters will.

I refuse to be an accomplice in the destruction of their one and only home.

Young people, the UN – and a growing number of leaders from business, finance, government, and civil society – in short, many of us – are mobilizing and acting.

But we need many others to take climate action if we are to succeed.

We have a long way to go. But the movement has begun.

(The Guardian Thursday 3 Oct 2019)

## *Religion a mere toy for China's comrades*

*Under new rules, the CCP will have a say in rites and rituals, selection of leaders, hiring staff and handling funds*

(Elizabeth Lam, Hong Kong, China) La Croix, February 7, 2020



Religion in China has received its last nail in the coffin with a new set of rules, effective from Feb. 1.

The new regulations on religious affairs make religion submissive to the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as they cover every aspect of religious life, from the formation of communities to daily activities.

The comrades at the Religious Affairs Office will have a say in rites and rituals, selection of leaders, annual meetings, hiring staff and handling funds. All of these activities must be reported in advance for their approval.

The CCP has been placed above all religious heads, reducing the role of the clergy to that of a meek facilitator. It is going to be hard for Muslims, Buddhists, Christians and Taoists — followers of China's ancient folk religion — who will only be allowed to practice their faith in the country with strings attached.

In the lexicon of the CPP, there is hardly any difference between politics and religion. This strange fusion of religion and politics puts the onus on religious personnel to implement the total submission of all their members to the CPP. Thus, the CPP expects the clergy to play the role of political proselytizing to advance the so-called "socialist cause."

With these controls, religion has been reduced to a mere tool for the CPP to prevent any unwanted people's intervention. Religion has been co-opted as part of President Xi Jinping's New Cultural Revolution, making a big noise. To survive in Xi's China, believers are expected to know a few things about "socialism with Chinese characteristics."

But, like Mao's Cultural Revolution, Xi's copycat version is more ambitious as it wants to wipe out faith in God altogether. To make this happen, the CPP will hand-pick Catholic priests or Protestant pastors, leaving little room for the ecumenical hierarchy.

It is a tough task for believers to follow the diktat of a political party that boasts of its atheistic moorings. None expects a sermon on the mount from such a party. The new measures met with criticism from the beginning. However, it fell on the deaf ears of the Communist Party.

Any religious group that refuses to submit to the party will be declared heretical and their churches and temples will be torn down. The fate of one million ethnic Chinese Uyghur Muslims who have been sent to "re-education camps" is a terrifying example.

The sinicization of religion is a kind of brainwashing that creates an illusion among believers. Sinicization reached its peak in 2019. This nationwide localization was introduced to make room for religion to promote the official ideology and strengthen the CPP's own hold on power.

For the Catholic Church, the CCP has a different goal. Under Article 5 of the new rules, the party wants to transform the Catholic Church into a "socialist church," not a church belonging to God. It loves to look at the church community as a local party unit.



As a political party and a social organization, the CCP has never been legally registered in compliance with the constitution of the country. There is no government agency to scrutinize the financial dealings of the party. But it has not deterred the CCP from tightening its grip on religious groups, which are strictly abiding by the constitution.

The CCP has found a novel way of enhancing its status. Suddenly, it is politically correct to say, "Listen to the party, follow the party." But following an atheist party means betraying the Catholic faith. If the Church is run by people who have betrayed their faith, it would not be a church at all. It will be a fatal blow to the faithful.

The CCP has always backed all its anti-religious actions by piecing together relevant laws.

The introduction of the new measures will serve as a cover to hide the heinous acts of the party. Religion in China could end up in the hands of the CCP, which could dismantle it on flimsy grounds following the

decisions of handpicked church leaders. Officially, church leaders will act against church communities, saving the CCP from criticism by local people and the international community.

The internal decision of a religious group is the final word. However, if a breach of law is involved, it will be directly passed on to the state-run religious office. It helps to engineer a split at any time in a church community, letting the party emerge as the winner in the game.

Whoever crosses swords with the party will be dismissed on grounds that they have failed to pass an internal assessment. Those clergymen who obey the CCP will go up in hierarchical rank.

China wants religion to follow the ultimate diktat of the dictator: "Those who follow me prosper, those who oppose me perish."

Behind the iron curtain of the party, religion has been reduced to a toy for the comrades.



## CPTD

### *Re-contextualising Catholic school Religious Education: Educating young people spiritually, morally and religiously for the 21st century*

Read the article for CPTD points and record your response to the following questions:

- What is the writer's main argument?
- What significance does the argument have in my context?
- What practical action does the argument's conclusion suggest?

### *Professional Development Points Schedule*

<https://www.sace.gov.za/Documentation/PROFESSIONAL%20DEVELOPMENT%20POINTS%20SCHEDULE.pdf>

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