

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the second 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



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REFLECTION

Fever ...

(Ron Rolheiser)



John Updike, after recovering from a serious illness, wrote a poem he called, *Fever*. It ends this way: *But it is a truth long known that some secrets are hidden from health.*

Deep down we already know this, but as a personal truth this is not something we appropriate in a classroom, from parents or mentors, or even from religious teaching. These just tell us that this is true, but knowing it does not itself impart wisdom. Wisdom is acquired, as Updike says, through a personal experience of serious illness, serious loss, or serious humiliation.

The late James Hillman, writing as an agnostic, came to the same conclusion. I remember hearing him at a large conference where, at point in his talk, he challenged his audience with words to this effect: Think back, honestly and with courage, and ask yourself: What are the experiences in your life that have made you deep, that have given you character? In almost every case, you will have to admit that it was some humiliation or abuse you had to endure, some experience of powerlessness, helplessness, frustration, illness, or exclusion. It is not the things that brought glory or adulation into your life that gave you depth and character, the time you were the valedictorian for your class or the time you were the star athlete. These did not bring you depth. Rather the experience of powerlessness, inferiority, is what made you wise.

I recall too as a graduate student sitting in on a series of lectures by the renowned Polish psychiatrist, Kasmir Dabrowski who had written a number of books around a concept he termed, "positive disintegration". His essential thesis was that it is only by falling apart that we ever grow to higher levels of maturity and wisdom. Once, during a lecture, he was asked: "Why do we grow through the disintegrating experiences such as falling ill, falling apart, or being humiliated? Would it not be more logical to grow through the positive experiences of being loved, being affirmed, being successful, being healthy, and being admired? Shouldn't that fire gratitude inside us and, acting out of that gratitude, we should become more generous and wise?"

He gave this response: Ideally, maturity and wisdom should grow out of experiences of strength and success; and maybe in some instances they do. However, as a psychiatrist, all I can say is that in forty years of clinical practice I have never seen it. I have only seen people transformed to higher levels of maturity through the experience of breaking down.

Jesus, it would seem, agrees. Take, for example, the incident in the Gospels where James and John come and ask whether they might be given the seats at his right hand and left hand when he comes into his glory. It is significant that he takes their question seriously. He does not (in this instance) chide them for seeking their own glory; what he does instead is redefine glory and the route to it. He asks them: "Can you drink the cup?" They, naïve as to what is being asked of them, responded: "Yes, we can!" Jesus then tells them something to which they are even more naïve. He assures them that they will drink the cup, since eventually everyone will, but tells them that they still might not receive the glory because being seated in glory is still contingent upon something else.

What? What is "the cup"? How is drinking it the route to glory? And why might we not receive the glory even if we do drink the cup?

The cup, as is revealed later, is the cup of suffering and humiliation, the one Jesus has to drink during his passion and dying, the cup he asks his Father to spare him from when in Gethsemane he prays in agony: "Let this cup pass from me!"

In essence, what Jesus is telling James and John is this: *There is no route to Easter Sunday except through Good Friday*. There is no route to depth and wisdom except through suffering and humiliation. The connection is intrinsic, like the pain and groans of a woman are necessary to her when giving birth to a child. Further still, Jesus is also saying that deep suffering will not automatically bring wisdom. Why not? Because, while there is an intrinsic connection between deep suffering and greater depth in our lives, the catch is that bitter suffering can make us deep in bitterness, anger, envy, and hatred just as easily as it can make us deep in compassion, forgiveness, empathy, and wisdom. We can have the pain, and not get the wisdom.

Fever! The primary symptom of being infected with the coronavirus, *Covid-19*, is a high fever. Fever has now beset our world. The hope is that, after it so dangerously raises both our bodily and psychic temperatures, it will also reveal to us some of the secrets that are hidden from health. What are they? We don't know yet. They will only be revealed inside the fever.



REFLECTION

Jesus, ever young

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



22. Jesus is "young among the young in order to be an example for the young and to consecrate them to the Lord". For this reason the

Synod said that "youth is an original and stimulating stage of life, which Jesus himself experienced, thereby sanctifying it".

Jesus' youth

23. The Lord "gave up his spirit" (cf. Mt 27:50) on a cross when he was little more than thirty years of age (cf. Lk 3:23). It is important to realize that Jesus was a young person. He gave his life when he was, in today's terms, a young adult. He began his public mission in the prime of life, and thus "a light dawned" (Mt 4:16) that would shine most brightly when he gave his life to the

very end. That ending was not something that simply happened; rather, his entire youth, at every moment, was a precious preparation for it. "Everything in Jesus's life was a sign of his mystery"; indeed, "Christ's whole life is a mystery of redemption".

24. The Gospel tells us nothing of Jesus' childhood, but it does recount several events of his adolescence and youth. Matthew situates the time of the Lord's youth between two events: his family's return to Nazareth after their exile, and Jesus' baptism in the Jordan, the be-

ginning of his public ministry. The last images we have of Jesus as a child are those of a tiny refugee in Egypt (cf. Mt 2:14-15) and repatriated in Nazareth (cf. Mt 2:19-23). Our first image of Jesus as a young adult shows him standing among the crowds on the banks of the Jordan river to be baptized by his kinsman John the Baptist, just like any other member of his people (cf. Mt 3:13-17).

25. Jesus' baptism was not like our own, which introduces us to the life of grace, but a consecration prior to his embarking on the great mission of his life. The Gospel says that at his baptism the Father rejoiced and was well pleased: "You are my beloved Son" (Lk 3:22). Jesus immediately appeared filled with the Holy Spirit, and was led by the Spirit into the desert. There he prepared to go forth to preach and to work miracles, to bring freedom and healing (cf. Lk 4:1-14). Every young person who feels called to a mission in this world is invited to hear the Father speaking those same words within his or her heart: "You are my beloved child".

26. Between these two accounts, we find another, which shows Jesus as an adolescent, when he had returned with his parents to Nazareth, after being lost and found in the Temple (cf. Lk 2:41-51). There we read that "he was obedient to them" (cf. Lk 2:51); he did not disown his family. Luke then adds

that Jesus "grew in wisdom, age and grace before God and men" (cf. Lk 2:52). In a word, this was a time of preparation, when Jesus grew in his relationship with the Father and with others. Saint John Paul II explained that he did not only grow physically, but that "there was also a spiritual growth in Jesus", because "the fullness of grace in Jesus was in proportion to his age: there was always a fullness, but a fullness which increased as he grew in age".

27. From what the Gospel tells us, we can say that Jesus, in the years of his youth, was "training", being prepared to carry out the Father's plan. His adolescence and his youth set him on the path to that sublime mission.

28. In his adolescence and youth, Jesus' relationship with the Father was that of the beloved Son. Drawn to the Father, he grew up concerned for his affairs: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Lk 2:49). Still, it must not be thought that Jesus was a withdrawn adolescent or a self-absorbed youth. His relationships were those of a young person who shared fully in the life of his family and his people. He learned his father's trade and then replaced him as a carpenter. At one point in the Gospel he is called "the carpenter's son" (Mt 13:55) and another time simply "the carpenter" (Mk 6:3). This detail shows that he was just another young person

of his town, who related normally to others. No one regarded him as unusual or set apart from others. For this very reason, once Jesus began to preach, people could not imagine where he got this wisdom: "Is this not Joseph's son?" (Lk 4:22).

29. In fact, "Jesus did not grow up in a narrow and stifling relationship with Mary and Joseph, but readily interacted with the wider family, the relatives of his parents and their friends". Hence we can understand why, when he returned from his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, his parents readily thought that, as a twelve-year-old boy (cf. Lk 2:42), he was wandering freely among the crowd, even though they did not see him for an entire day: "supposing him to be in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey" (Lk 2:44). Surely, they assumed, Jesus was there, mingling with the others, joking with other young people, listening to the adults tell stories and sharing the joys and sorrows of the group. Indeed, the Greek word that Luke uses to describe the group - *synodía* - clearly evokes a larger "community on a journey" of which the Holy Family is a part. Thanks to the trust of his parents, Jesus can move freely and learn to journey with others.

His youth teaches us

30. These aspects of Jesus' life can prove inspiring for all those young people who are developing and pre-

paring to take up their mission in life. This involves growing in a relationship with the Father, in awareness of being part of a family and a people, and in openness to being filled with the Holy Spirit and led to carry out the mission God gives them, their personal vocation. None of this should be overlooked in pastoral work with young people, lest we create projects that isolate young people from their family and the larger community, or turn them into a select few, protected from all contamination. Rather, we need projects that can strengthen them, accompany them and impel them to encounter others, to engage in generous service, in mission.

31. Jesus does not teach you, young people, from afar or from without, but from within your very youth, a youth he shares with you. It is very important for you to contemplate the young Jesus as presented in the Gospels, for he was truly one of you, and shares many of the features of your young hearts. We see this for example in the following: "Jesus had unconditional trust in the Father; he maintained friendship with his disciples, and even in moments of crisis he remained faithful to them. He showed profound compassion for the weakest, especially the poor, the sick, sinners and the excluded. He had the courage to confront the religious and political authorities of his time; he knew

what it was to feel misunderstood and rejected; he experienced the fear of suffering and he knew the frailty of the Passion. He turned his gaze to the future, entrusting himself into the Father's safe hands in the strength of the Spirit. In Jesus, all the young can see themselves".

32. On the other hand, Jesus is risen, and he wants to make us sharers in the new life of the resurrection. He is the true youthfulness of a world grown old, the youthfulness of a universe waiting "in travail" (Rom 8:22) to be clothed with his light and to live his life. With him at our side, we can drink from the true wellspring that keeps alive all our dreams, our projects, our great ideals, while impelling us to proclaim what makes life truly worthwhile. Two curious details in the Gospel of Mark show how those risen with Christ are called to authentic youth. In the Lord's passion we see a young man who wanted to follow Jesus, but in fear ran away naked (cf. 14:51-52); he lacked the strength to stake everything on following the Lord. Yet at the empty tomb, we see another young person, "dressed in a white tunic" (16:5), who tells the women not to be afraid and proclaims the joy of the resurrection (cf. 16:6-7).

33. The Lord is calling us to enkindle stars in the night of other young people. He asks you to look to

the true stars, all those varied signs he gives us to guide our way, and to imitate the farmer who watches the stars before going out to plough his field. God lights up stars to help us keep walking: "The stars shine in their watches, and are glad; he calls them and they say: 'Here we are!'" (Bar 3:34-35). Christ himself is our great light of hope and our guide in the night, for he is the "bright morning star" (Rev 22:16).

The youth of the Church

34. Youth is more than simply a period of time; it is a state of mind. That is why an institution as ancient as the Church can experience renewal and a return to youth at different points in her age-old history. Indeed, at the most dramatic moments of her history, she feels called to return with all her heart to her first love. Recalling this truth, the Second Vatican Council noted that, "enriched by a long and living history, and advancing towards human perfection in time and the ultimate destinies of history and of life, the Church is the real youth of the world". In her, it is always possible to encounter Christ "the companion and friend of youth".[10]

A Church open to renewal

35. Let us ask the Lord to free the Church from those who would make her grow old, encase her in the past, hold her back or keep her

at a standstill. But let us also ask him to free her from another temptation: that of thinking she is young because she accepts everything the world offers her, thinking that she is renewed because she sets her message aside and acts like everybody else. No! The Church is young when she is herself, when she receives ever anew the strength born of God's word, the Eucharist, and the daily presence of Christ and the power of his Spirit in our lives. The Church is young when she shows herself capable of constantly returning to her source.

36. Certainly, as members of the Church, we should not stand apart from others. All should regard us as friends and neighbours, like the apostles, who "enjoyed the good will of all the people" (Acts 2:47; cf. 4:21.33; 5:13). Yet at the same time we must dare to be different, to point to ideals other than those of this world, testifying to the beauty of generosity, service, purity, perseverance, forgiveness, fidelity to our personal vocation, prayer, the pursuit of justice and the common good, love for the poor, and social friendship.

37. Christ's Church can always yield to the temptation to lose enthusiasm because she no longer hears the Lord calling her to take the risk of faith, to give her all without counting the dangers; she can be tempted to revert to seeking a false, worldly form of security. Young people can

help keep her young. They can stop her from becoming corrupt; they can keep her moving forward, prevent her from being proud and sectarian, help her to be poorer and to bear better witness, to take the side of the poor and the outcast, to fight for justice and humbly to let herself be challenged. Young people can offer the Church the beauty of youth by renewing her ability to "rejoice with new beginnings, to give unreservedly of herself, to be renewed and to set out for ever greater accomplishments".

38. Those of us who are no longer young need to find ways of keeping close to the voices and concerns of young people. "Drawing together creates the conditions for the Church to become a place of dialogue and a witness to life-giving fraternity". We need to make more room for the voices of young people to be heard: "listening makes possible an exchange of gifts in a context of empathy... At the same time, it sets the conditions for a preaching of the Gospel that can touch the heart truly, decisively and fruitfully".

A Church attentive to the signs of the times

39. "Even though to many young people, God, religion and the Church seem empty words, they are sensitive to the figure of Jesus when he is presented in an attractive and effective way". Consequently, the Church should not be ex-

cessively caught up in herself but instead, and above all, reflect Jesus Christ. This means humbly acknowledging that some things concretely need to change, and if that is to happen, she needs to appreciate the vision but also the criticisms of young people.

40. The Synod recognized that "a substantial number of young people, for all sorts of reasons, do not ask the Church for anything because they do not see her as significant for their lives. Some even ask expressly to be left alone, as they find the presence of the Church a nuisance, even an irritant. This request does not always stem from uncritical or impulsive contempt. It can also have serious and understandable reasons: sexual and financial scandals; a clergy ill-prepared to engage effectively with the sensitivities of the young; lack of care in homily preparation and the presentation of the word of God; the passive role assigned to the young within the Christian community; the Church's difficulty in explaining her doctrine and ethical positions to contemporary society".

41. Although many young people are happy to see a Church that is humble yet confident in her gifts and capable of offering fair and fraternal criticism, others want a Church that listens more, that does more than simply condemn the world. They do not want to see a Church that is silent and

afraid to speak, but neither one that is always battling obsessively over two or three issues. To be credible to young people, there are times when she needs to regain her humility and simply listen, recognizing that what others have to say can provide some light to help her better understand the Gospel. A Church always on the defensive, which loses her humility and stops listening to others, which leaves no room for questions, loses her youth and turns into a museum. How, then, will she be able to respond to the dreams of young people? Even if she possesses the truth of the Gospel, this does not mean

that she has completely understood it; rather, she is called to keep growing in her grasp of that inexhaustible treasure.

42. For example, a Church that is overly fearful and tied to its structures can be invariably critical of efforts to defend the rights of women, and constantly point out the risks and the potential errors of those demands. Instead, a living Church can react by being attentive to the legitimate claims of those women who seek greater justice and equality. A living Church can look back on history and acknowledge a fair share of male authoritarianism, domination,

various forms of enslavement, abuse and sexist violence. With this outlook, she can support the call to respect women's rights, and offer convinced support for greater reciprocity between males and females, while not agreeing with everything some feminist groups propose. Along these lines, the Synod sought to renew the Church's commitment "against all discrimination and violence on sexual grounds". That is the response of a Church that stays young and lets herself be challenged and spurred on by the sensitivities of young people.



REFLECTION

Ways of Knowing: Senses Unfamiliar

(Richard Rohr)



One of the gifts of Native traditions is their openness to wisdom from many avenues beyond rational thought—community, ancestors, dance, drumming, nature, and symbols that speak deeply to the unconscious. I am humbled to learn from our Pueblo, Apache, and Navajo brothers and sisters here in New Mexico, and I invite you to learn about the indigenous peoples who live near you or have been forcefully removed from the land you now call home.

*Read the following passage from Kent Nerburn's book *Voices in the Stones: Life Lessons from the Native Way* with your heart wide open to unfamiliar and unexplainable ways of knowing. Imagine you are there with him:*

I am standing in a lonely field, far from the nearest road, in the open prairie country of Northwestern Minnesota. Just beyond me, the Ojibwe man who brought me here is overseeing the reburial of the bone fragments of two young girls, maybe fourteen or fifteen years of age, that were unearthed by a farmer during an excavation on his land.

We know they are girls and their approximate ages because modern science, with its tools and technologies, has analyzed their anatomical structure and drawn this conclusion. Yet beyond those facts we know nothing about them. They are thought to have lived over a thousand years ago. .

How wrong it felt to watch the bones of children being placed in a pit and covered by a front-end loader. These bones had once been young girls

who had run and laughed and played on this very land. . . .

Who were they? How did they live? And are their spirits still present, as my friend who oversaw the burial believes?

I do not know. I cannot know. I can only bear witness and hope that my witness somehow does honor to their memory.

We are quick to draw lines where our awareness stops. Our streets, our alleyways, our history on the land—these form boundaries enough for us.

But there are truths that lie beneath our consciousness, just as there are truths that lie beneath our feet. That we do not know them does not mean that they do not exist, only that we do not have the patience and humility to hear.

Many years ago I stood in a dry creek bed in Alaska north of the Arctic Circle, staring out over

a river of stones that wound, sinuous, into the purple arctic twilight.

Perhaps it was the strangeness of the setting, perhaps it was the power of the moment, but, as I stood there, those stones began to speak. It was a clacking sound, a clattering sound, like the fluttering of wings, the descent of birds, the pounding of a hundred thousand hooves across the frozen tundra.

I could not name it, but neither could I deny it. It came to me through senses unfamiliar, claiming me with a knowledge I did not know. That it was not within my rational understanding did not make it any less real.

The bones of these girls and the forgotten thousands of people who walked on these lands before us and gave their bodies and spirits to this soil speak with that same voice. We hear it, if we hear it at all, with a sense that lies far below our conscious awareness.



TALKING ABOUT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (CPTD) ¹

2nd International Conference on
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The human experience of conflict and its transformation through restorative practices: a vector for formation of RE teachers

(Dr Christopher Cotter, Catholic Education Western Australia)

Abstract

Restorative practices are a suite of interventions designed to improve social discipline and grow social capital through participatory learning and decision making. Participants involved in restorative conferences often report a powerful sense of transformation leading them to responses of surprise and wonder. This research is a sustained theological reflection on the human experience of conflict and its transformation through restorative practices viewed through the eyes of Catholic school students and teachers and interpreted using the insights of René Girard and Bernard Lonergan. Catholic school communities that adopt and practice a restorative philosophy can invite their members to participate in the resurrection: Christ's work of forgiveness as risen victim in the unbinding of human beings from the necessity of victimhood and division, and inviting active participation in the unfolding of a new creation. This approach offers opportunities for the explicit formation of Catholic religious educators in a thoroughly pastoral and practical theology and in a spirituality of hope, with deep connection to the mission and purpose of the Catholic school.

¹ Read this article for CPTD points. See Page 28.

Introduction

This paper proposes an approach to the intentional spiritual formation of Religious Education teachers in Catholic schools that takes seriously a theological anthropology of the human person and assumes that the practices of school life can be the data for theological engagement. Experiences which lead participants into an experience of wonder – feelings of surprise mingled with admiration, caused by something beautiful, unexpected, unfamiliar, or inexplicable – are most helpful this approach. Gripping, powerful and memorable human experiences often lead participants into just such moments of wonder. The transformation of conflict and distorted desire through ritualised interventions such as restorative practices can become data for theological reflection and the ground of a spiritual formation deeply aligned with the mission and purpose of the Catholic school.

Formation of Religious Educators through Reflection on a Restorative Meeting

Adult education or formation, as with all education or formation, must attend to the person; the human subject. Starting from the interiority of the human subject, Crowe describes education as a two-way movement: an upwards movement, *achievement (or experience)*, and a downwards movement, *tradition (or gift)*.² These ‘movements’ and the process of integration, are described briefly below.

The ‘upward’ movement: experience

According to Lonergan, human consciousness is structured such that there is an intentional striving or dynamism in human consciousness toward attentiveness to data, understanding, truth, and value.³ The unrestricted desire for complete intelligibility, for what is real, and the complete good of value drives this intentionality. Questioning, wanting to know, moves the subject to *achieve* apprehensions of intelligibility, truth and value. The on-going process of achievement has the potential for liberation, since our desires for intelligibility, truth and value are unrestricted. That is, human persons in their conscious intending can strive for what is beyond themselves at any given point in time: they strive for understanding, knowledge and value that exceeds their current achievement. Self-transcendence is only ever a conditional and precarious achievement: it is not once and for all, but rather a life-long project.

Man [*sic*] achieves authenticity in self transcendence...the transcendental notions, that is, our questions for intelligence, for reflection, for deliberation, constitute our capacity for self-transcendence. That capacity becomes actuality when one falls in love.⁴

Love is the goal of the ‘upward’ movement of experience.

The ‘downward’ movement: tradition

The downward movement describes the process of educators handing on their cultural, intellectual and social values and judgements to those being educated. This can be named tradition. Tradition is a *gift*. Tradition, in particular the Catholic faith tradition being handed over to adults, teachers and leaders, who share the mission of Catholic schools, is sourced in the gift of love. The values and judgements of the Catholic faith tradition have their origin in love; knowledge born from religious love, God’s love flooding human hearts.⁵

² F. E. Crowe, *Old Things and New: A Strategy for Education* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985).

Crowe’s thesis applies to school education and to adult education. The key difference between school students and adults is that in adult consciousness, experience is more likely to be mature and receptive.

³ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 5th edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1971), 104-105.

⁵ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 115, 118-119.

It is notable that love is the beginning and the end: the prior gift of tradition finds its source and origin in love and achievement finds its fulfillment in love.

In the case of the restorative conference the 'downward movement', the traditions being communicated, are the processes used in restorative practices, the philosophy that informs restorative practices and a pastoral theological approach to restorative practices.⁶ Restorative practices are an intervention deployed to support and enhance the pastoral care of students in Catholic schools. Restorative practices contribute to the maintenance and growth of student social discipline and the maintenance and growth of social capital, contributing to the development of a cohesive community focused on learning and the presence of Christ through the experience of forgiveness, grace, the symbol of the cross and the meaning of the resurrection.

The role and significance of 'wonder'

Staff, students and parents who participate in the restorative conferences often express surprise at the strong impact it has on them.⁷ In case study research I conducted, two very competent and highly experienced teachers who had participated in a restorative conference reported that they: "walked around for a couple of days going [saying to each other] 'Wow! Wow!' ".⁸ The two teachers were quite speechless. Initially, they could not adequately articulate their experience. Their experience transcended their cognitive-linguistic capabilities. In other words, the restorative conference was an experience of *wonder* for the two teachers. Two highly intelligent educators with much professional experience found themselves in a place of wonder. Wonder presents a critical moment for the possibility of integrating faith and life experience. The human sense of wonder is indicative of the human drive to *understand*. Significantly, *understanding* is the meeting point between gift (tradition) and the reality of being human (experience).

Understanding: the meeting place between achievement and gift, between experience and tradition.

Understanding is a personal experience, a built-in dynamism of human consciousness, an achievement. Understanding is personal and unique. The drive to understand experience is integral to human conscious intentionality. Lonergan, following Aristotle and Aquinas, maintains that understanding is a distinct activity of generalising from experience.⁹ Generalisations are reached by forming an image to study the problem: "[t]he image moves the understanding to understand."¹⁰ Moreover, Crowe points out that "intelligibility is immanent in the image".¹¹ The image is not just an aid to understanding, but is central to the act of understanding. The act of understanding is unique to each human subject and her or his concrete situation; each person finds their own images and 'plays' with them until intelligibility emerges and a generalisation of the experience can be articulated. In other words, imagination needs to be let free to play with the data of experience. In this case, the 'data of experience' refers to the transformation of desire through the experience of

⁶ See for example, Bruce Costello, Joshua Wachtel and Ted Wachtel, *The Restorative Practices Handbook: For Teachers, Disciplinarians and Administrators* (Bethlehem, PA: International Institute for Restorative Practices 2009) 1-38; and, Christopher Cotter, "A Pastoral Theological Approach to Restorative Practices in the Australian Catholic School Context" (DTheol diss., University of Divinity, Melbourne, 2019).

⁷ Nathan Simmons, "Unbelievable [*sic*]," in *Australian Educational Leader* 35, no. 2 (2013): 26.

⁸ The teachers use of the verb "going" in place of the more grammatically correct "saying" could simply be a colloquial expression. However, the use of "going" could also be indicative of the strength of the experience. The experience impacted the "going-on" of the teachers' lives, not just their speech, Cotter, "A Pastoral Theological Approach to Restorative Practices," 260 fn.

⁹ Lonergan, *Insight*, [ix].

¹⁰ Lonergan, *Insight*, quotation on the title page; Aristotle, *De Anima*, III, 7.

¹¹ Crowe, *Old Things and New*, 44.

the restorative conference: the dialectic of desire that is restored in subjects through the structured dialogue of the restorative conference.¹²

Theological understanding

Theological understanding is understanding in the area of mystery.¹³ Mystery, by definition, can never be fully understood. As Lonergan maintains:

[f]or the divine mysteries by their very nature so exceed created intellect that, even given in revelation and accepted by faith, they remain as it were wrapped in the veil of faith.¹⁴

Understanding in the realm of mystery can only be imperfect and analogous. Therefore, those doctrines from 'above', the doctrines of tradition must be explained and understood by means of analogy. Analogy offers the only (and even so, imperfect) understanding of divine mystery. Theological reflection on restorative conferences provides a rich vein for the imagination to mine analogical understandings of the doctrines of forgiveness and grace, the symbol of the cross and the meaning of the resurrection.

Theological reflection to facilitate understanding

Whilst understanding is personal and unique, it is often developed within a community of discourse and validated in a community of discourse.¹⁵ Teachers who experience a restorative meeting and begin to wonder about its meaning(s) present a critical moment for the possibility of the integration of tradition and experience through small group learning or spiritual formation experiences. Theologically educated teachers and leaders will facilitate these group formation experiences on-site and develop resources to support the learning. Whilst academic rigour and attention to the grammar of theological reflection will characterise these formation experiences, the primary experience of the participants will be the encounter with teachers and leaders who facilitate the formation experiences through a positive, non-rivalrous mimesis¹⁶, mediated as the gift of love. These formation experiences will be designed to be transformative for teachers and, as a consequence, teachers may discover for themselves the word about the gift; that is, to accept and know the gift that they are loved by God, to respond with love in return and the possibility of coming to know the "word of religion, of accepting the judgments of fact and the judgments of value that [the Christian] religion proposes".¹⁷ This is a form of the 'new evangelisation': it takes seriously the challenge of the contemporary split between the gospel and culture,¹⁸ and may lead "the individual into a new and deeper relationship with Christ that transforms both personal and private life".¹⁹ A *method of inquiry* beginning from the *lived experience* of

¹² This experience is also referred to as "psychic conversion", the restoration of the link between the two types of consciousness (psychic-affective and intentional) through the transformation of their attendant desires ('mimetic' desire and 'natural' desire). See, Cotter, "A Pastoral Theological Approach to Restorative Practices," 204-215.

¹³ Crowe, *Old Things and New*, 139.

¹⁴ Lonergan, *Method*, 321.

¹⁵ "Man's [*sic*] coming to know is a group enterprise", B. J. F. Lonergan, "Belief: Today's Issue," in *A Second Collection*, ed. William F. J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1974), 87.

¹⁶ Imitation

¹⁷ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 118.

¹⁸ Pope Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelisation in the Modern World: Evangelii Nuntiandi*, (1975), 20, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html (accessed 20 June, 2019).

¹⁹ Richard Rymarz, "John Paul II and the 'New Evangelisation': Origins and Meaning," in *Australian eJournal of Theology*, 15, no. 1 (2010): 21, https://staff.acu.edu.au/_data/as-sets/pdf_file/0009/225396/Rymarcz_evangelisation_GH.pdf (accessed 29 May, 2019).

teachers and leaders will have resonance for them as educators,²⁰ and is promoted, endorsed and recommended by the Church teaching magisterium, Catholic educational authorities, theologians and teacher educators.²¹ In short, the transformation of conflict, understood by teachers and leaders as an experience of the resurrection through a process of spiritual formation that takes seriously the interiority of the human subject, may lead to spiritual transformation.²²

Formation of educators: a school priority

Christ is the foundation and dynamic authority of the whole educational enterprise of the Catholic school.²³ The Christ centered, incarnational goal of the Catholic school is the 'holistic' or 'integral' human formation of students. As the Congregation for Catholic Education proposes:

The integral formation of the human person, which is the purpose of education, includes the development of all the human faculties of the students, together with preparation for professional life, formation of ethical and social awareness, becoming aware of the transcendental, and religious education.²⁴

The goal of integral or holistic formation of students places demands on teachers and other staff in Catholic schools. Teachers, support staff and administrators in Catholic schools require a holistic or integral 'professional formation' for themselves which includes a vast range of cultural, psychological and learning and teaching opportunities, growth in humanity and an encounter with Christ.²⁵ This demands an integrated, sequential, developmental and personalised and Christ-centered approach to professional learning within a culture of continuous improvement and growth. Staff formation of this kind is essential for responding to the socio-cultural reality "in which it is increasingly difficult to educate".²⁶ Therefore, Catholic school leaders and administrators claim the time and space to assist teachers to

²⁰ See for example, Helen Timperley, Linda Kaser and July Halbert, "A Framework for Transforming Learning in Schools: Innovation and the Spiral of Inquiry," *Centre for Strategic Education: Seminar Series 234*, (East Melbourne, VIC: Centre for Strategic Education, 2014).

²¹ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 46; Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World: Evangelii Gaudium*, (2013), 133, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html; National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC), *A Framework for Formation for Mission*, National Catholic Education Commission: Sydney (2017); Terry Veling, *Practical Theology: On Earth as It Is in Heaven* (New York: Orbis, 2005), 3; John Swinton and Harriet Mowatt, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 5; Miroslav Wolf, "Theology for a Way of Life," in *Practicing Theology*, ed. Miroslav Wolf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2002), 245-263; Gowdie identifies a number of theologians who practice a theological approach she describes as "praxis of theological reflection" in *Stirring the Soul of Catholic Education: Formation for Mission*, (Mulgrave, VIC: Vaughan, 2017) 80-81.

²² "The dynamic process of spiritual formation is often sparked by moments of conflict", Gowdie, *Stirring the Soul of Catholic Education*, 71.

²³ Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School*, (Vatican City, 1977), 34, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19770319_catholic-school_en.html (accessed 9 February, 2020); Archbishop J. Michael Miller, *The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools* (Strathfield, NSW: St Paul's Publications, 2007), 26.

²⁴ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, (Vatican City, 1982), 17, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19821015_lay-catholics_en.html (accessed 9 February, 2020).

²⁵ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated persons and the Lay Faithful*, (Vatican City, 2007), 21-25, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html (accessed 9 February, 2020).

²⁶ *Educating Together in Catholic Schools*, 20.

come to know Jesus by attending to spiritual formation and practising theological reflection together.²⁷ Allocating time and resources in the professional development program for intentional spiritual formation, including theological reflection, must be a priority.

'Integral' staff formation through restorative practices

Human experiences of conflict based in rivalry and *ressentiment*²⁸ are transformed through the restorative meetings carried out in the educating community and have the potential to open participants to be attentive to the seemingly hidden and yet always active presence of the Trinitarian God. As expressed in *Evangelii Gaudium*:

God's presence accompanies the sincere efforts of individuals and groups to find encouragement and meaning in their lives. He dwells among them, fostering solidarity, fraternity, and the desire for goodness, truth and justice. This presence must not be contrived but found, uncovered.²⁹

The pastoral theological approach to restorative practices makes manifest, in the everyday work of the community, the God who "brings good out of evil by his power and his infinite creativity".³⁰ Consequently, Catholic schools and school systems must prioritise spiritual formation activities that connect explicitly with the daily life of the school. Spiritual formation activities that invite teachers and leaders to see and interpret reality, conflict and suffering through the eyes of faith and open staff to have their lives and experiences interpreted through the gospel. Spiritual formation activities of this kind also encourage staff to put on Jesus' 'lenses' and Jesus' mind and help staff to inhabit what it means to be co-creators in the ongoing and unfolding story of creation and grasp the truth of Jesus' saying "you will do even greater things" (Jn 14:12).³¹

Staff spiritual formation of this kind will support the development of "theologians at the grass roots";³² teachers who are capable of reflecting theologically on their experience and with students in their classes.³³ Formation should also be individualised and tailored to each staff member's particular needs and stage of development. Senior staff should be

²⁷ Rina Madden, "Spirituality and Religious Education: Reflecting on Teacher Practice," *Pacifica: Australasian Theological Studies* 30, no. 3 (2017), 283; Gowdie, *Stirring the Soul of Catholic Education*, 164; Gerald Arbuckle, *Intentional Faith Communities in Catholic Education: Challenge and Response* (Strathfield NSW: St Pauls, 2016), 200, 204, 207-208; Helga Neidhart and Janeen Lamb, "Forming Faith Leaders in Schools," *Leading and Managing* 2, no. 19 (2013): 74.

²⁸ *Ressentiment* is a sense of hostility directed toward an object that one identifies as the cause of one's frustration, that is, an assignment of blame for one's frustration

²⁹ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 71. "[A] central breakthrough in the biblical revelation is that God is manifest in the ordinary, in the actual, in the daily, in the now, and can even be revealed through the sinful and the evil. This is quite different than you might assume, that God is only offering us the pure, the spiritual, the right idea, or the ideal anything. This is why Jesus stands religion on its head! We Catholics used to speak of 'actual grace' in this light. That is why I say it is our experiences that transform us - if we are willing to experience our experiences all the way through, even and most especially the hard and wounding ones." Richard Rohr, *Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality* (Cincinnati: St Anthony Messenger, 2007), 16.

³⁰ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 278.

³¹ "[Discipleship] involves willingness to learn from one's own contemporary experience, and to grow into progressively deeper understanding of the meaning and demands of the Gospel", Monica Hellwig, *What are Theologians Saying Now?* (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1993), 38.

³² Attributed to Dr Leonie Crotty RSM by a young leader in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga.

³³ Madden, "Spirituality and Religious Education," 269.

designated to accompany each educator.³⁴ Formation of Catholic educators must also include expectation and support, and find the appropriate balance between these elements in policies and procedures.³⁵ It must also be a 'formation of the heart':

'[teachers] need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others', so that their educational commitment becomes 'a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love' (cf. Gal 5:6). In fact, even 'care for instruction means loving' (Wis 6:17). It is only in this way that they can make their teaching a school of faith, that is to say, a transmission of the Gospel, as required by the educational project of the Catholic school.³⁶

The spiritual formation process outlined above is a formation of the heart which is attentive to the interiority of the human person and is open to explore affective understanding and knowledge, as highlighted in the pastoral theological approach to restorative practices.

Formation for mission

Finally, formation is for mission.³⁷ Catholic schools share in promoting and living an authentic humanity that is the joy of the Gospel to the world: "bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing",³⁸ particularly *with* those on the margins of our communities. To proclaim *and to actively seek kinship* with those on the margins of the Church, of those at risk of being excluded from Catholic schools, is not often a popular policy within an aspirational, success-oriented culture. It is an act of missionary discipleship and of Christian leadership that is profoundly counter-cultural. As Nouwen advises:

...the leaders of the future will be those who dare to claim their irrelevance in the contemporary world as a divine vocation that allows them to enter into a deep solidarity with the anguish underlying all the glitter of success, and to bring the light of Jesus there.³⁹

Pope Francis through the draft constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* ('Preach the Gospel') is planning to restructure the entire Vatican curia so that the evangelising mission is the central dicastery and organising principle of the Catholic church's bureaucracy, as noted in *Crux* on 22 April 2019. Taking the lead from Pope Francis, Catholic school leadership and school system leadership could make their central organising principle the possibility of human transformation in communities of learning: 'bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing' *to all*.



³⁴ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion*, (Vatican City, 2014), 7, accessed 2 June, 2019, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20140407_educare-oggi-e-domani_en.html; Richard Rymarz, "An Empirical Investigation of Young Teachers in Catholic Schools in Wagga Wagga Diocese" (paper presented to the Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Wagga Wagga, NSW, 8 April 2018); Neidhart and Lamb, "Forming Faith Leaders in Schools," 75.

³⁵ Such as 'Professional Development and Staff Formation' Policy and 'Accreditation to Work, Teach and Lead in Catholic Education' Frameworks and Policies.

³⁶ *Educating Together in Catholic Schools*, 25

³⁷ NCEC, *A Framework for Formation for Mission in Catholic Education*.

³⁸ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 273.

³⁹ Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (Crossroad: New York, 1989), 35.

CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Can a school be 'Catholic' online?

(Mark Potterton, *The Southern Cross*, April 22 to April 28, 2020)



The coronavirus has caused major disruption to education around the globe. UNESCO reported that nine out of ten of the world's children were out of school at the start of April.

The challenge around the world is how to ensure that the impact on children's learning is minimised.

As soon as it became clear that the Covid-19 pandemic would impact on schooling at Sacred Heart College in Johannesburg, where I serve as principal of the primary school, we began talking about how we would continue school using the online platforms available to us.

Can we still be a "Catholic" school online? A lot has been written about the nature and purpose of the

Catholic school. The best definition, in my view, was written by the late Prof Peter Hunter and Paul Faller, who proposed:

"The purpose of the Catholic school is to provide a good all-round education in the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus, aspiring in particular to live out its central message and challenge: to worship the God who loves us, to love and help our fellow human beings, and to learn to exercise responsibility for the world around us."

Most of the descriptions of the Catholic school are really about the culture of a school. These descriptions speak about the lived values and attitudes which influence all aspects of the school's life.

They include activities in and beyond the classroom,

relationships among staff members, parents and students, and disciplinary procedures. The emphasis is around people and relationships and how they deal with each other.

These dimensions are all very difficult to replicate online.

In some of the Church's documents on Catholic schools, a major focus has been the upholding of the dignity of the human person, of all beings, and of all creation, with a special concern for the poor and the marginalised.

Hunter and Faller argued that the essence of this is "outreach to others, pastoral care for all, and celebration of the school's religious character".

When Sacred Heart College (and, I'm sure, other Catholic schools) saw that Covid-19 would affect learning, staff discussed how we would continue schooling using the online platforms available to us.

In the high school and in Grade 6, teachers were familiar with Google Classroom, and that's the technology they went with.

The preschool uses WhatsApp, and does so very creatively, sending videos and photos of what children are doing.

In the primary school, study packs and workbooks were sent home and teachers make use of email, the school App, phone calls and WhatsApp.

But the danger of running online education is that it is remote and that a primary concern becomes the “transmission of knowledge”. This, in my view, is the antithesis of what Catholic education should be. It has to be about relationship and meaningful knowledge.

The Church documents speak of preparing students “to take their place in society as responsible, honest and compassionate citizens”. Teaching and learning must be shaped by a Catholic vision of life.

At our school we decided that we would make it personal and include weekly phone calls to the parents, as well as make the services of the school counselor available. The feedback

from parents suggests that it is the personalised dimension of online learning that is appreciated by both them and the students.

In a recently published UNESCO document on online learning, the authors argue that distance learning doesn’t have to mirror learning as it normally happens in school. In fact, they argue that trying to replicate the pace and type of work that would be done at school is unrealistic.

Schools must decide on a daily structure, a timetable, or a to-do list of what the staff want for students. The authors strongly suggest that less is more when it comes to the scope of work which teachers set in distance-learning, especially in times of uncertainty and instability.

The time we have had teaching from a distance has allowed us to see what works and what doesn’t,

for both our students and parents. It has also allowed us to better understand the pace at which work gets done. We have learnt that teachers need to be flexible and need to adapt wherever possible.

The UNESCO document provides instructive guidance for Catholic schools, reminding us to focus on the “whole child”. The UN agency argues that children at home don’t just need education, but that they first and foremost need to be fed and protected.

Health, safety and wellbeing must always come first.

These are indeed unprecedented times and Catholic schools are urgently called to respond as best we can. It is vital that in addition to worrying about the impact on teaching and learning, we think about the spiritual, psychological and social needs of children too.



ARTISTS’ CORNER

Art in the Time of COVID-19

(New Mobility: The magazine for active wheelchair users)

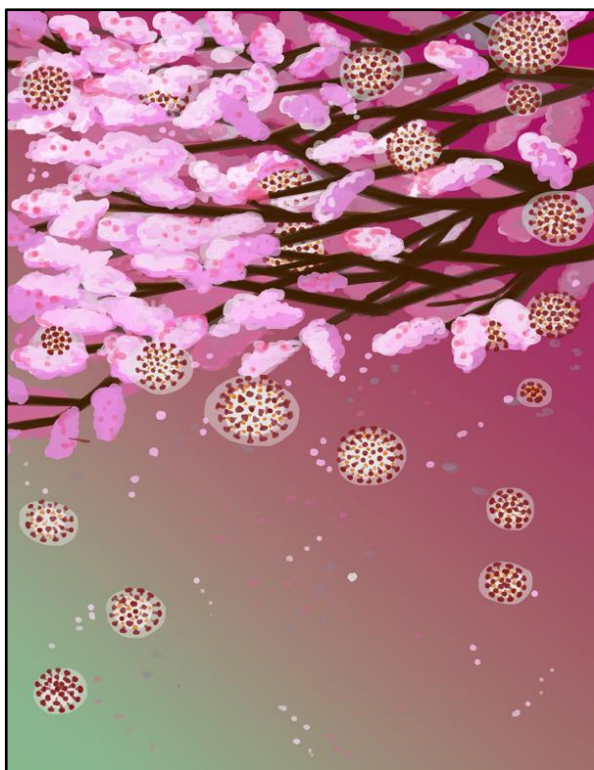
www.newmobility.com/2020/05/art-in-time-covid-19/

“In early April, we asked six artists who use wheelchairs to submit pieces that speak to these unique times. They delivered with themes of strangeness, isolation, anxiety and, ultimately, the power of art to ease us into the unknown.”

On the next page we present three of the artists and their work.

- *Strange Days*, Amanda Russel
- *The Love of Music in Isolation*, Tommy Grieco
- *It’s a Matter of Perspective*, Wes Holloway





Strange Days

8.5 x 11" digital painting
Amanda Russel

This is a part of a digital series dealing with the beauty of the season infused and infected by coronavirus. Everything around us feels different — we are surrounded by invisible particles waiting to infect us — but the seasons and the weather are predictably doing what they always do.



It's a Matter of Perspective 8.5 x 11" pen and ink on paper Wes Holloway

"The piece was inspired by our time as a nation spent in isolation and quarantine. This is not a new experience for most of us with disabilities. We have all spent time, often alone, looking out at the world where things are still happening. The struggle to reconcile your own needs with the needs of many is something we try to figure out often."

The Love of Music in Isolation

3 x 4' acrylic on canvas

Tommy Grieco

This piece is my interpretation of COVID-19 and social distancing. In the beginning, I wasn't sure about this virus or what it would do to me personally. A lot of fear and anxiety. Now, being self-isolated from family and friends, I hope for a positive outcome. The three individuals on the top are practicing social distancing, which will probably last for weeks and maybe months. The guitar player is every artist, playing for all the essential workers to give them hope and joy during the tough times and sacrifice.



WEBSITE

A Contemplative Path through the Crisis

www.acontemplativepath-wccm.org



In the midst of global suffering, this website offers rich resources for hope and healing. The 'Contemplative Path' programme offers insights born from the present challenges we face - shaping wisdom for a better world after the crisis.

There will be different kinds of offerings:

- Short reflections and video-lectios,
- Introduction to meditation for people newly looking for a spiritual path,
- Courses and online discussions,
- A 15-minute video series from many teachers and presenters.
- Online meditation, Contemplative Eucharist, other live events



BOOK REVIEW

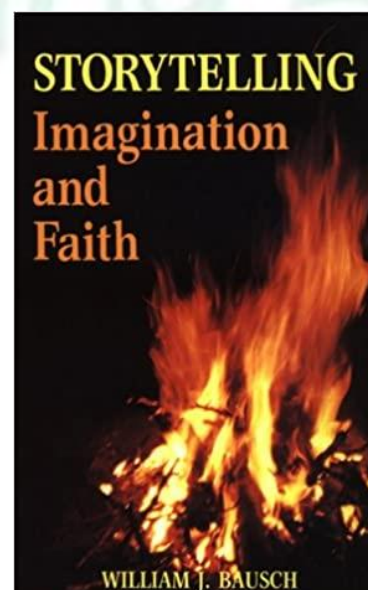
Storytelling: Imagination and Faith

The ancient art of teaching through story is explored here in a refreshingly contemporary way. Father Bausch uses a well-spring of stories from the masters of antiquity to well-known authors today, both religious and secular. He celebrates the power of stories to capture and pass on from one generation to the next the wisdom, imagination, and faith of a people. This is both a book of stories and about storytelling (goodreads.com).

Publisher: Twenty-Third Publications

Paperback, 232 pages

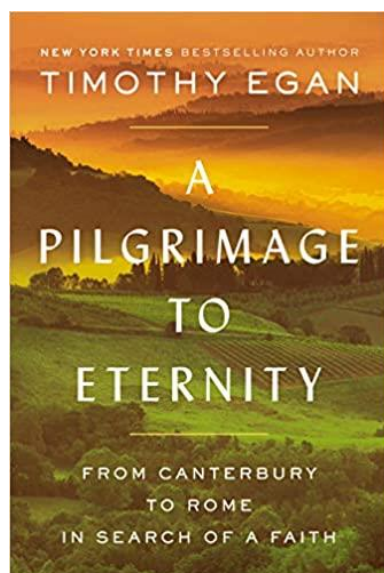
ISBN 9780896221994



BOOK REVIEW

A Pilgrimage to Eternity: From Canterbury to Rome in Search of A Faith

(Santiago Ramos, United States, January 11, 2020)



Hiking somewhere near the Italian mountain town of Aosta, about five hundred miles from Rome, Timothy Egan's feet began to hurt. "The toes on my right foot are a throbbing mess of bubbled blisters." He can barely move.

"The best I can do is wrap them in tape and treat the skin later with antiseptic and cushions." That won't be much help. Fifty miles later, near Piverone, he reports: "a bloody mess of skin, gauze, blood and pus."

Further down, in Pavia, Egan's feet are "hamburger." While numbering the lessons he learned from completing, mostly by foot, the Via Francigena—a thousand-mile

religious pilgrimage spanning four European countries—Egan writes: "I will never hike without blister medication."

A Pilgrimage to Eternity: From Canterbury to Rome in Search of a Faith is a lofty title, and this book, a travelogue with essayistic interludes, addresses lofty themes in theology, philosophy, history, and politics. But the wince-inducing foot-related asides make the book what it is: a personal story of pilgrimage. Foot-talk is a central part of pilgrimage, and any modern pilgrim will relate to Egan's agony.

What can I do to avoid blisters? Should I buy waterproof boots? When do I switch to sandals? Waxy plaster or gauze? To pop or not to pop? Disgusting, no doubt.

But the stinging pain, along with the apparent lack of medical consensus on foot care, helps the pilgrim abandon any illusions of having things all figured out and under control. A months-long pilgrimage isn't a pleasant stroll accompanied by intellectual contemplation. It is a physical as well as a spiritual project.

The Via Francigena ("the road that comes from France") dates at least as

far back as the ninth century. It is a series of interconnecting paths, starting in Canterbury that leads pilgrims all the way to the seat of the bishop of Rome, crossing through France and Switzerland.

In his mid-sixties Timothy Egan, the author of several commercially successful books and a New York Times columnist, found himself lost in a dark wood, ruminating over various experiences of suffering, needing "a stiff shot of no-bullshit spirituality."

At the beginning of his book he considers himself "an Irish Catholic by baptism, culture, and upbringing," one who is "lapsed but listening," though still a "skeptic."

In search of answers, he chooses not only to read and think but also to walk a pilgrim path that has been trodden by centuries' worth of fellow seekers.

He is also inspired by the rise of Pope Francis, which Egan considers a sign of rebirth in Christianity. He hopes to get an audience with the pope once he reaches Rome.

Most chapters in this book focus on different sites along the Via and the historical figures associated with them. Rich in detail

and anecdote, many of these pieces could stand alone as magazine articles.

At Canterbury Cathedral, Egan ruminates on the life of the martyr Thomas Becket and Justin Welby, the current leader of the Anglican Communion. He connects a small monastery near the French village of Wisques with thoughts about Benedict of Nursia.

In Corbény, he reflects on Joan of Arc and the role of women in the church. Langres makes him think of Denis Diderot; Lausanne, of Martin Luther; Geneva, of Michael Servetus (the Unitarian beheaded by John Calvin).

Augustine's theory doesn't answer all questions about evil

These historical portraits serve as a point of departure for big moral questions.

Egan grapples with the Wars of Religion, the Inquisition, the Crusades, and other occasions when Christian leaders declared it to be "no longer a sin to take the life of a fellow human, so long as that human was a declared enemy of the church."

Egan is interested in church history because one of the main questions motivating his pilgrimage is whether it is reasonable to believe in the claims of the Christian faith when so many crimes have been committed by Christians.

After all, "a higher percentage of Europeans died

in intra-Christian wars than in the industrial carnage of the Great War."

The sins of the Catholic Church are, in this regard, also the sins of its Protestant critics, and even of the modern trailblazers who want to completely replace the church with secular institutions.

Luther translated the Bible and stood up to clerical tyranny, but also wrote malicious anti-Semitic tracts that incited violence.

Calvin set up a Christian utopia that beheaded dissenters. Secular French revolutionaries sacked monasteries and killed peasants. Egan writes about all these things.

Ultimately, it seems that evil itself—rather than just the evils done by Christians—poses a problem for Egan's search for faith. It is an old problem: Why would a good God allow so much suffering in the world?

Unfortunately, Egan rejects the best resource that his own tradition has for tackling this problem.

Twice he takes up the topic of Augustine of Hippo, one of the most penetrating thinkers on the problem of evil, only to dismiss him as "a very confused man" who "hated" sex. He "embraced the philosophy of dualism" and came close to calling the human body an evil thing.

Augustine squares the existence of evil in history with the existence of an all-good, all-knowing, all-

powerful God by placing all the blame on human agency, thus giving God "a pass."

But Augustine's "philosophy of shit happens" does not absolve God, Egan argues, because if God is truly all-knowing, then he must see all evil deeds "unspooling in advance."

Reading Egan on Augustine, you wouldn't guess the extent of this "very confused" man's influence—not only for Christian theology, but also for philosophy and literature.

To cite some random, post-1900 examples: Edmund Husserl began his lectures on time and consciousness by declaring: "our modern age, so proud of its knowledge, has failed to surpass or even to match the splendid achievement of [Augustine] who grappled so earnestly with the problem of time."

Ludwig Wittgenstein opens his *Philosophical Investigations* with a passage from Augustine concerning language. Memoirist and biographer Francine du Plessix Gray called Augustine "the first great autobiographer." Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben found in Augustine useful ideas with which to critique the current political order.

Augustine has his shortcomings, especially with regard to sexuality. But a thinker who has inspired such a diverse array of people should not be so lightly dismissed.

On the problem of evil, Augustine's response begins with the notion that God is absolute Being, lacking nothing, outside of time, unchanging, and perfectly good. The universe and humans along with it are separated from God and are in time, which is another way of saying that we are subject to constant change.

The human self is fragmented by time and desire, never whole and at peace, and looking for satisfaction in the wrong places: power, lust, money. "Our heart is restless until it rests in you," Augustine writes.

In our restlessness, we act rashly and harshly, vying to dominate our fellow human beings. The universe itself fragments into disorder, manifesting itself as disease and natural disasters. That's why "shit happens."

In his Confessions, Augustine records a consoling thought that came to him after his conversion: "I no longer wished individual things to be better, because I considered the totality."

"The totality" is history as it is seen by God from his timeless perch. It includes all the crimes that Egan contemplates in his book, but it fits them into a larger story in which the

universe itself is made new at the end of time. Augustine's theory doesn't answer all questions about evil, and not everyone finds it consoling. But it isn't stupid.

Egan's epiphany comes as a result not of theological argument

Egan's meditations on historical themes, along with engrossing descriptions of ancient vineyards, alpine trails, and local cuisine, eventually give way to more intimate reflections. Egan is suffering more than just foot pain. His sister-in-law is dying of cancer.

A friend who was a victim of an abusive Catholic priest committed suicide (the same priest abused untold numbers of people).

On top of these sorrows, there is the normal parental anxiety over a young adult son and daughter, both of whom join Egan at different stages of his pilgrimage, as does his wife.

In view of all these personal concerns, I can understand why Egan might have grown impatient with the heady abstractions of Augustine's theology.

Egan's epiphany—described in a section titled "Answers"—comes as a re-

sult not of theological argument, nor of meeting the pope, but of a gradual accumulation of experiences: a mystical encounter with the incorrupt corpse of St. Lucia Filipini; moving words from a priest in Switzerland; an Etruscan sarcophagus bearing husband and wife, which gives Egan "the small proof I need, another affirmation of the joyful defiance of linear time."

This last event suggests that Egan's desire is close to Augustine's: our hearts are restless until they can somehow transcend linear time, in which all things pass away.

"You cross the finish line when you link your tenuous existence with the perpetual past," Egan writes. What is this past? Many of us know it, or think we know it, "by baptism, culture, and upbringing." Some of us don't know it at all.

Regardless, as this beautiful book makes clear, if we wish to discover it, or re-discover it, we must go on pilgrimage.

Author: Timothy Egan

Publisher: Viking

Hardcover, 384 pages

ISBN 978-0-7352-2523-7

https://international.la-croix.com/news/no-bullshit-spirituality/11595?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=e-mail&utm_content=11-01-2020&utm_campaign=newsletter_crx_lci&PMID=c846096e5e379ce4c77e681a70eaff9d



LOCAL NEWS

CPLO backs economic and social corona measures

(Erin Carelse, The Southern Cross, April 29 to May 5, 2020)



As President Cyril Ramaphosa announced a limited easing of the national lockdown from Level 5 to Level 4, effective as from May 1, he referred repeatedly to this being “a time of caution”. According to the director of the Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Office (CPLO), this is the lens through which the speech and the activities proposed need to be understood.

Level 4 is the second-most stringent level and applies when there is still a “moderate to high spread of the virus and low to moderate response”.

CPLO director Fr Peter-John Pearson said two aspects seem to be shaping South Africa’s response.

“One, much is still unknown about the virus; how it spreads is only partially understood, and the toll it could eventually take, including the possibility of a future peak in the pandemic, remains largely unknown,” he said.

Second, he noted, despite gaps in our knowledge, we do know more than a month ago, and can determine the kinds of economic activities better geared to principles such as social distancing, spaces where hygienic standards can be more rigorously enforced, and industries whose contribution to the nation’s economic life is indispensable.

Fr Pearson pointed out that we also have a better picture of where the pandemic is most intense, and so variations in response can be permitted.

He noted that Mr Ramaphosa made clear that there would be room for dialogue around these issues. The attempts to find consensus have been positive markers of how government has worked during the pandemic, Fr Pearson said.

There will be no immediate easing of restrictions on gatherings. “To emphasise the potential gatherings have for contagion, the president noted that both a funeral and a religious gathering that ignored earlier restrictions had caused a rapid spread of the virus,” the priest observed.

Mr Ramaphosa also underlined the need for people who could work from home to continue to, which Fr Pearson said was couched as an obligation.

The president also sanctioned an increased deployment of 70 000 defence force members to help in ways other than support for “law and order” activities.

The defence force has come under severe criticism for transgressions in the lockdown, and Fr Pearson warned that its conduct needs to be watched vigilantly.

Also, facemasks will have to be worn in public, and companies, including small firms, are busy producing these.

Earlier in the week the president also made available an “extraordinary coronavirus budget” of R500 billion that will prop up businesses, subsidise wages, create new jobs and—above all—have a strong focus on the poor and vulnerable.

According to CPLO project coordinator Kenny Pasensie, the president has gone a long way to aiding South Africans and has injected life into an economy being suffocated by Covid-19.

“Finding the necessary funding for the economic stimulus and social relief package meant the government had to rob Peter to pay Paul: R130 billion of the R500 billion will be funded by reprioritizing the current budget,” he noted.

“President Ramaphosa probably had an easier task convincing his cabinet to find some money in the current budget than convincing them that approaching international institution like the IMF and the World Bank was necessary,” Mr Pasensie added.

He said it was encouraging that the president and cabinet took to heart proposals by civil society to top up social security grants and relief for the jobless. “Putting money directly into the hands of people is arguably the best way of getting food on the table for people wrestling with hunger. The top-up money will help more than just the 18-million grant recipients because many support entire households,” he added.

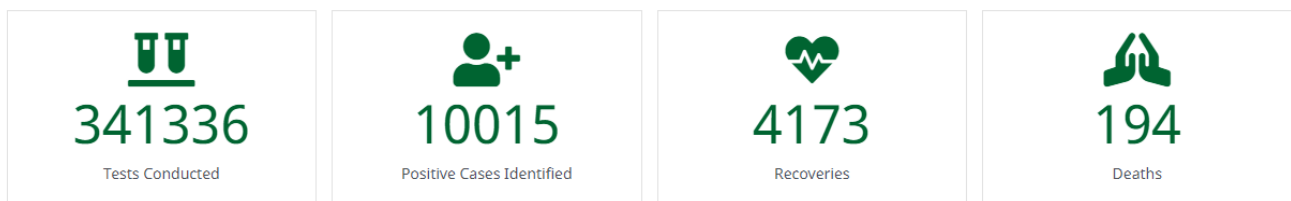
Mr Pasensie said it was good to see the government recognising the roles of those in the informal economy.

Over and above the R100-million assistance already given to SMMEs, spazashop owners and other informal businesses, an additional amount of R2 billion will be made available to them.

Waste pickers will also get assistance.

“Overall, government’s response to fighting Covid-19 has been excellent from a public health perspective; now the hope is that it will strive with the same zeal on economic and social welfare measures to save livelihoods and protect the economy,” Mr Pasensie said.

COVID-19 Statistics in South Africa



(10 May 2020)



INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Big Bang priest still makes noise

(Supplement to The Southern Cross, April 22 to April 28, 2020)

The work of researchers who reported detecting the signal left behind by the rapid expansion of space billions of years ago is rooted in the efforts of a Belgian priest whose mathematical computations in the 1920s laid the groundwork for the Big Bang theory.

Mgr George Lemaître, a mathematician who studied alongside leading scientists of the first half of the 20th century exploring the origins of the universe, suggested that the cosmos began as a super-dense “primeval atom” that underwent some type of reac-

tion that initiated the expansion of the universe which continues today.

The priest’s conclusions challenged the conventional hypothesis proposed by luminaries such as Albert Einstein and Fred Hoyle that the universe was in a steady state.

Researchers in cosmology over the decades refined Mgr Lemaître's idea, leading to what became widely known as the Big Bang theory and later ideas that signs of the Big Bang can be detected.

The most recent evidence supporting the Big Bang emerged in March when a team of scientists announced they had detected polarization in light caused by primordial gravitational waves originating from the Big Bang. The measurements were made with the Background Imaging of Cosmic Extragalactic Polarisation experiment, or Biceps2, located near the South Pole.

Scientists had theorised that such waves would have been produced in the universe's first trillionth of a trillionth of a second as it underwent an exponential expansion 13.8 billion years ago, sending ripples throughout the universe that can still be detected.

Other research teams are seeking to confirm the findings.

If the existence of gravitational waves is confirmed, it will provide the most direct evidence yet for the rapid expansion of space, also known as the theory of inflation, said Ronald Olowin, professor of astrophysics at St Mary's College in California.

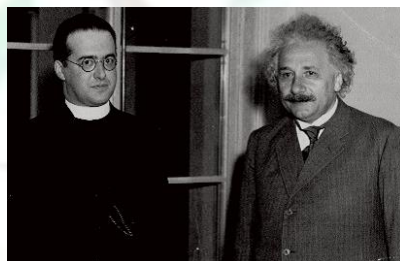
Inflation was proposed in 1980 by Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) physicist Alan Guth. In information provided by

MIT, Dr Guth described inflation as the "propulsion mechanism" that caused the universe to undergo tremendous expansion in a fraction of a second.

The discovery also provides more evidence to support Einstein's general theory of relativity and quantum mechanics governing motion in the universe, Prof Olowin said.

Mgr Lemaître's work focused on interpreting Einstein's theory and analysing measurements of galactic motion by astronomer Edwin Hubble. The priest's computations pointed to a constantly expanding universe and by extrapolation backward to the primeval atom.

Applause from Einstein



Lemaître & Einstein

The priest's work has long been held in high regard by generations of scientists. Even Einstein, who at first was sceptical of the calculations, literally stood up and applauded Mgr Lemaître's explanation of the origins of the universe during a series of seminars in California in 1933.

Mgr Lemaître, who taught for most of his career at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium, died on June 22, 1966 at 71 knowing that he was on

the right trail. He was told shortly before his death that scientists had measured cosmic microwave background radiation.

By the late 1990s, researchers also concluded that the universe was expanding at an increasing rate, which Mgr Lemaître's computations had shown to be happening.

"He's really come into his own after a few decades of obscurity," said John Farrell, the author of *The Day Without Yesterday: Lemaître, Einstein and the Birth of Modern Cosmology*.

Despite the scientific disagreements, Mgr Lemaître maintained warm friendships with his colleagues around the world, Mr Farrell said.

A more definitive challenge, however, arose as some in the scientific community believed Mgr Lemaître's pursuits were religiously motivated in an attempt to identify a creation moment in line with Catholic teaching. Mgr Lemaître insisted there was neither a connection nor a conflict between his science and his Catholic faith.

In response to a question about the connection of his work and his faith, Mgr Lemaître said that the Bible's authors were "illuminated... on the question of salvation" and that "the idea that because they were right in their doctrine of immortality and salvation they must also be right on all other subjects is simply the fallacy of people who have an incomplete understanding of

why the Bible was given at all”, according to a 1933 *Literary Digest* article quoted in Mr Farrell’s book.

Augustinian Father Allan Fitzgerald, director of the Augustinian Institute at Villanova University in Philadelphia, said there should be no conflict between faith and scientific discovery. He explained that St Augustine of Hippo expressed openness to truth wherever it could be found.

“The sciences of our day are no less than being sources of truth than anything else. The sense Augustine brought to all of this was, just don’t try to use this book called Genesis or the book called the Bible as a way of embarrassing yourselves in front of scientists,” said Fr Fitzgerald, who at one time pursued a career as a physicist.

“Once [scientific discovery] reaches a state of true being, we can’t use the Bible to beat it back,” he said.

Religion and science

Jesuit Father Gabriele Gionti, who studies quantum gravity at the Vatican Observatory, said that as a scientist he draws a distinction between the beginning of the universe and creation, and finds no contradiction between religion and science.

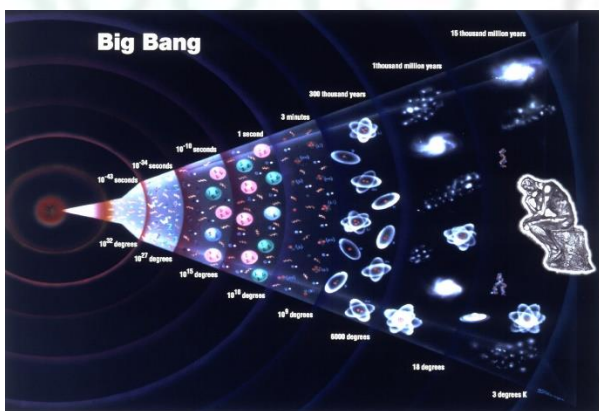
“Creation does not coincide with the beginning of our universe,” he explained. “I tend to separate theological terms from scientific terms. This discovery proves, quite clearly, that the human mind is able to find mathematical models, like cosmic inflation, which could describe quite accurately nature,” he said.

“This is totally in agreement with the doctrine of *imago Dei*, which says that God created human beings as God’s image and as such we are like God, capable of discovering the secrets of nature,” the Jesuit said.

John O’Keefe, professor of theology at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, said the apparent measurement of gravitational waves and their connection to the early moments of the life of the universe “doesn’t change a whole lot except to make it even more likely that the Big Bang theory is the best scientific explanation for the origin of the universe”.

He expressed concern that the mainstream media continues to press the idea of conflict between science and religion.

“A lot of people still don’t understand that the Big Bang theory is not threatening to Christian faith,” Prof O’Keefe said. “I think Catholics need to spend a little more time reading what our tradition teaches rather than just taking the word of the evening news,” he said. “The evening news is totally distorting between science and religion, that there is a war between science and religion when there really isn’t.”



INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Clean ocean win shows it's worth dreaming big

In a time when bad news abounds, it is welcome that someone's audacious plan to tackle a seemingly insurmountable environmental problem is having success

(Cristy Clark, Australia, October 26, 2019)

In 1997, oceanographer and boat captain Charles Moore made a shocking discovery. After deciding to cut through the North Pacific Gyre on his way back to California from Hawaii, Moore gazed into the ocean and, instead of pristine waters, found a vast vortex of floating plastic debris.

Moore later described the experience in an article for *National History* magazine. 'I was confronted, as far as the eye could see, with the sight of plastic.

It seemed unbelievable, but I never found a clear spot. In the week it took to cross the subtropical high, no matter what time of day I looked, plastic debris was floating everywhere: bottles, bottle caps, wrappers, fragments.'

Today this phenomenon has become known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, although it is apparently two huge 'patches' linked together by the North Pacific Subtropical Convergence Zone — an area where warm South Pacific and cooler Arctic waters meet.

Research since 1997 has also tracked the growth of these patches and the incredible damage they do to marine life.

While there is plenty of solid waste — plastic bottles, styrofoam cups, abandoned fishing nets, drums of toxic chemicals — much of this vortex of rubbish consists of a cloudy soup of micro plastics.

When Moore surveyed the micro plastics in the patch in 1999, he found that plastic outweighed zooplankton by a factor of 6:1. More shockingly, this ratio only improved to 5:2 in a 2002 study elsewhere in the ocean.

When you start to appreciate the scale of this marine pollution, it explains why so many marine animals are being found with stomachs full of plastic.

Indeed, we may only be seeing the tip of the iceberg.

The sheer size of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch and the wider problem that it represents is utterly overwhelming, which is why it was so exciting to hear the people at the Ocean Cleanup Foundation recently announce that their ocean clean-up machine is now working and has been able to collect micro plastic particles as small as 1mm in diameter, in addition to larger debris.



Boyan Slat is the founder and CEO of the Ocean Cleanup Foundation. He was just 18 when he pitched the idea of an ocean clean-up machine in a TED Talk that went viral.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROW9F-c0kIQ>

We need more of this kind of audaciousness

While some have criticised his concept for promising too much and diverting money from other important projects, this latest success appears to indicate that his vision is achievable.

In fact, the team are now estimating that they will be able to significantly over deliver on their earlier promises of removing 42 per cent of the debris over ten years.

Roots & Wings Vol 6 No 2



In a time when bad news stories seem to abound, it is welcome news that someone's audacious plan to tackle a seemingly insurmountable environmental problem is having such success. Of course, Slat's clean-up project is just a drop in the ocean (if you'll excuse the pun) in relation to fixing our global problem with plastic waste.

Collecting the worst of it from one patch in the Pacific is not going to resolve the fundamental issue that we are drowning in discarded plastic and it takes hundreds of years to break down. But what it does tell us is that it is worth dreaming big.

Moore, the man who first discovered the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, once claimed

Dr Cristy Clark is a lecturer at the Southern Cross University School of Law and Justice. Her research focuses on the intersection of human rights, neoliberalism, activism and the environment, and particularly on the human right to water.

https://international.la-croix.com/news/clean-ocean-win-shows-its-worth-dreaming-big/11110?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=e-mail&utm_content=26-10-2019&utm_campaign=newsletter_crx_lci&PMID=c846096e5e379ce4c77e681a70eaff9d



that cleaning it up would 'bankrupt any country' that tried it, but Slat decided to try anyway.

When confronting the scale of plastic pollution, we need more of this kind of audaciousness. And apparently there are some actions that will make a real difference.

We need businesses to move away from plastics wherever possible, and others to keep working to make plastics that are truly biodegradable or more recyclable. We also need better waste collection systems, everywhere in the world, to stop so much plastic from ending up in our water ways.

But at the end of the day, we individuals also need to avoid plastic where we can. We can at least do the basics: give up plastic bags, skip disposable water bottles, avoid plastic packaging, recycle where possible, and don't litter.

None of us want an ocean full of plastic. Or a glass of water full of micro plastics for that matter. The question is, what are we going to do about it?



CPTD

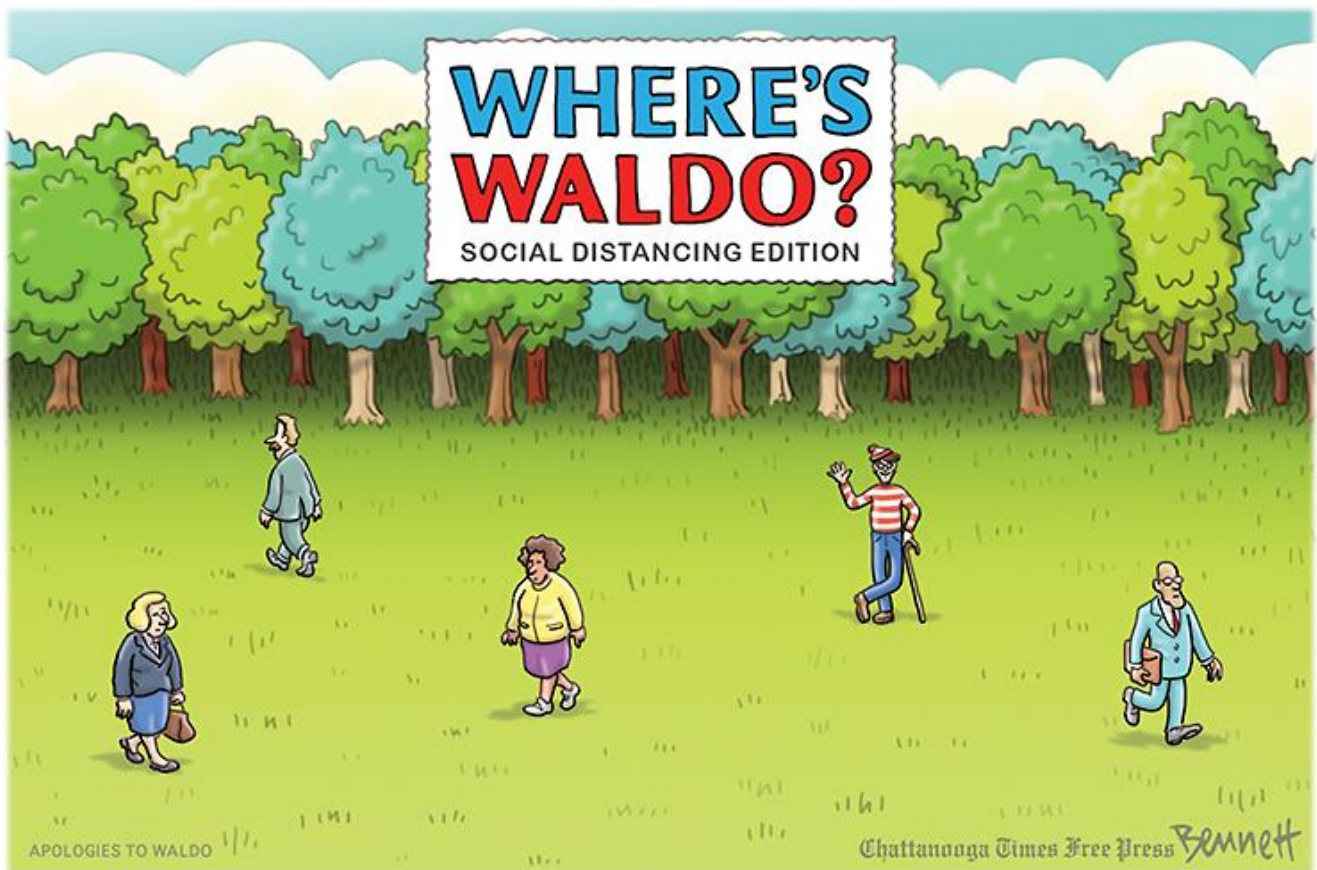
The human experience of conflict and its transformation through restorative practices: a vector for formation of RE teachers

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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