



# Roots & Wings

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*The Periodical of the Professional Society of Religious Educators*

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the third issue of *Roots & Wings* for 2023. 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.



**Let Justice  
and Peace Flow**  
**Season of Creation**  
**2023**

A Mighty River  
Amos 5: 24

Each year from September 1 to October 4, the Christian family unites for this worldwide celebration of prayer and action to protect our common home.

Members are encouraged to send material for future editions. What might you send?

- Lesson ideas or plans
- Reviews of useful materials such as books, magazines, videos 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

### *A Critical View*

(Chris McDonnell)

*How artists create visual images and craft words to help us see the light of day even in the midst of war's darkness*



Guernica by Pablo Picasso. (Photo: Wikipedia)

Some people see art as decoration, which it can be, something to fill a space on an otherwise empty wall. For others it is a statement of intent, a comment on some social event, a significant memory, a protest. All is explored through colour and form to tell its own peculiar story letting its voice be heard.

In the late 1930s the Spanish nation was divided by civil war, a bitter struggle between the political left and right, between communists and fascists, a struggle that was to be the proving ground for the Sec-

ond World War that was later to ravage Europe and beyond, creating massive destruction and a colossal loss of life.

One small town would be remembered for its experience in late April 1937. It was called Guernica, the capital of the Basque people. It fell to this town to experience the first indiscriminate air raid. The raid was undertaken by Franco's allies, the elite Condor Legion of the German air force. The attack did not involve a military target but hit a civilian population on Market Day. Hundreds were killed.

## A Spanish painter and a Russian writer

The Spanish painter, Pablo Picasso, responded with a huge painting in black, grey and white. Titled "Guernica", it is a painting full of symbolism. It was Picasso's way of expressing, through his art, the sheer horror of the aerial bombardment of a civilian community.

Another artist who responded to oppression with his skill, this time by his writing, was the Russian poet and novelist, Boris Pasternak. In the 1950s he wrote the novel *Doctor Zhivago* depicting life during the post-revolutionary Civil War that gripped Russia. For this he was vilified in his own country and had to resort to smuggling copies of his book out of Russia in order for his story to be told. A great work of fiction telling the story of a people's suffering.

These are examples of how two 20th century artists responded to their circumstances with skill and fortitude. "Guernica" now hangs in Madrid, the Spanish capital, and *Doctor Zhivago* is available in translation to a worldwide audience.

Read more at: <https://international.la-croix.com/news/culture/a-critical-view/18088>



## REFLECTION

### *Thou Shalt: Sex beyond the List of Don'ts*

(Lisa Fullam)

c21 resources | winter 2022/2023

Walk into a school of music and observe the man in his forties just learning the violin. He struggles a bit with tone and pitch, and his fingers still get sore from the strings, but he wants to be able to express himself musically in the mode that the violin allows. He devotes himself to practice so that he may be not just a man learning the violin, but a violinist.

The virtue ethics of Thomas Aquinas are about this kind of process. In this approach, virtues are defined as "perfections" of our natural capacities, not just for certain types of activity but for human

Now we are facing again the use of terror against the civilian population of the Ukraine. How long will it last? How long before we have a response from Ukrainian artists to the plight of the people? No doubt words have been written and images made that have yet to see the light of day. We can only hope and pray that people continue to have courage to pursue the critical view.

## Addendum

As I concluded these few words, press agencies were reporting the death of the 37-year-old Ukrainian writer, Victoria Amelina. She was injured during an attack several days ago on a restaurant in Kramatorsk and was reported dead on June 30. Amelina was a poet, novelist and photographer, highly acclaimed within her own country and widely recognized internationally. She was currently making a photographic record of attacks on the civilian population. Yet another casualty of an unjust 21st century conflict.

moral life as a whole. Aquinas follows Aristotle, who noted that we "become builders by building and lyre players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts."

What happens when we apply this very traditional mode of ethical reflection to the questions of sexual ethics? The morality of sex has long been the focus of Christian teachings—and prohibitions. I propose a threefold end or goal, a telos, that might be a starting point for a new conversation about sex.



Christian ethical reflection on sex has tended to focus on what makes individual sex acts morally right or wrong. This view of sex that looks at acts objectively and tends to regard anything sexual as probably sinful has resulted in a rule-focused sexual morality generally expressed as lists of don'ts: Don't masturbate. Don't have sex before marriage. Don't use contraception when you have sex in marriage. Don't have sex outside marriage. Don't have sex with someone of your own sex. Don't abuse others sexually. I'm not dismissing these don'ts out of hand: some don'ts are of great value, some are less valuable, and some are grounded in bad biology, bad psychology, or bad theology and should be discarded.

But to limit our ethical talk of sex and sexuality to the don'ts is a theological and also a spiritual error, not unlike limiting a discussion of Christian life to talking about sin.

A goal we might seek in our sex lives, I suggest, may be described in three dimensions: a feel for incarnation, an ability for intimacy, and an eye for insight. I'll describe each of them, but they work together like a trinity—three aspects of one reality. I invite you to examine this proposal in light of your own feelings, beliefs, understandings, and experiences.

## INCARNATION

Incarnation is a central motif of Christian anthropology. We speak of Jesus as God incarnate, but the very notion that God can be fully human, like us in all things but sin, is a bold proclamation of the ineradicable goodness of human embodiment generally—not just Jesus' incarnation but our own. We are not spirits trapped in matter; neither are we mere matter that has stumbled into self-awareness. Rather, Christian tradition holds that we are incarnate spirit, an indivisible body-soul-spirit composite. When we are lost in sexual passion, there's usually not a lot of thinking going on—we are taken up in our bodiliness. Certainly pleasure is one of the obvious ends we hope for in our sex lives: there is a huge array of sexual pleasures, and pleasure by

proxy, as it were, when we delight in the delight of our partner.

Developing a feel for incarnation includes mutual pleasure, and goes further. A sense of our incarnate selves leads us to pay attention to our overall well-being—physical, emotional, and spiritual.

## INTIMACY

Intimacy is a central goal of sex. Like the other dimensions of excellent sex, it's a goal because it cannot be taken for granted, and because it is something that can deepen with attentive practice. Intimacy is not a yes or no question, but a matter of depth and degree. In a minimalist list of don't ethics, so long as you meet the minimal criteria for permissible sex, all guidance ceases. But a married couple not breaking any "rules" might still struggle with a lack of intimacy and fulfillment in their sexual relationship.

Intimacy as one of the three aspects of excellent sex is related to incarnation—sex expresses a personal reality, not only a bodily one. At the same time, it calls us to an emotional and psychological openness and vulnerability that can be far more challenging than just physical sex. One of the virtues cultivated in what Christian ethicist Karen Lebacqz called "appropriate vulnerability" is trust. A person who shies away from vulnerability will never know the freedom that can come through trusting another person with our bodies, thoughts, feelings, and desires. To be accepted by another in this intimate way in turn contributes to the third dimension of excellent sex, which is an eye for insight.

## INSIGHT

Insight means more than just perception; it implies a deeper level of cognition. While an observation like "she moved out" is a matter of objective fact, the evaluation "she doesn't love me anymore" is a deeper awareness of a fuller—and more painful—human meaning behind the observed act.

It is insight that invites us to see the echoes of our relationships beyond the immediacy of partners to include family, society

as a whole, and our relationship to God. Insight allows us to come to a better understanding of how sexual relationships have played out in our lives in the past, and how we might use that experience in present and future relationships. Insight calls us to cultivate the virtue of compassion for our own mistakes and those of others, and to be committed to what sustains stronger intimate relationships. Insight reveals connections that may not have been apparent and sharpens our vision of what might be.

Insight is especially engaged when we begin to catch the echoes between our sexual lives and our spiritual lives. Christian tradition has tended to associate spirituality with sexual abstinence, but to think of sex as opposed to spiritual excellence or as inhibiting spiritual growth is inconsistent

with a true understanding of our incarnate nature.

The list of virtues for excellent sex, of course, doesn't end with those I've mentioned here. The triune end of incarnation, intimacy, and insight is sought via a panoply of virtues, ranging from patience, humility, and forgiveness to honesty, attentiveness, and playfulness. And the wonder of it all is that it is exactly in the pursuit of excellent sex that we discover the particular contours and textures of the form it will take in our own lives, just as in each generation Christians incarnate the faith anew, responding to the voice of God as we and those who've gone before us have discerned it. In excellent sex, we celebrate that we were created by Love, to be love, and make love in the world. ■

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## REFLECTION

### Is Artificial Intelligence Human?

(Andrew Hamilton)

*Pope Francis urges a technological thinking that is set within wonder and within open questioning, leading to the shaping of culture that's not dominated by economic considerations*



Two apparently unrelated events took place recently. The senior researcher into Artificial Intelligence at Google in the

United States resigned, and Pope Francis addressed an Academy of Science and Culture in Hungary. The link between them was that both men shared concern about the dangers of unrestricted technological development and the need for informed conversation in society about the benefits and risks for society of technology.

At the heart of this issue is what is involved in Human Intelligence, and so what uses of mind should be privileged in society. In his address, Pope Francis returned to the way in which the question was posed by earlier Catholic writers, particularly by the Italian priest Romano Guardini in his reflective *Letters from Como* and by the English Catholic convert Robert Hugh Benson in



his dystopian novel, *Lord of the World*. Benson, writing in 1907, depicted a world divided into mutually hostile blocs turning its back on conservative values and faith and embracing progressive ideas in a way that led to the destruction both of the world and of the Catholic Church.

Guardini wrote his letters that reflected on cultural change in the world during 1924 when staying in a place of great natural beauty, Lake Como. As a stretcher bearer during the First World War he had seen the

human effects of the technologies developed during war. He had also noticed the social change brought about by the Russian Revolution and its effect on people. He was grappling, too, with the ascent to power in Italy of Benito Mussolini two years earlier. He had seen the end of the culture lamented by Benson and the beginnings of a culture and public attitudes dominated by technology. He reflected on what to make of this. Unlike Benson he sought ways of responding positively to the change.

### *Technological thinking is central and beneficial to culture, but...*

In his speech Pope Francis quotes Guardini's contrast between two ways of using the mind. As he (Guardini) put it:

*I have come to realise so clearly these days that there are two ways of knowing. The one sinks into a thing and its context. The aim is to penetrate, to move within, to live with. The other, however, unpacks, tears apart, arranges in compartments, takes over and rules.*



Guardini distinguished between a gentle, relational knowledge and mastery, which he described as "rule by service, creation out of natural possibilities, which does not transgress set limits", and another way of knowing, which "does not inspect; it analyses. It does not construct a picture of the world, but a formula... a law that can be formulated rationally".

Although Guardini had eased into the first way of thinking in the rural beauty of Lake Como, he did not see technological thinking as hostile. It was a central and beneficial part of culture. The risk was that it

would dominate culture as the decisive and ultimately only significant use of mind and so impoverish human life and culture. Pope Francis quotes Guardini's concern:

*What will become of life if it is delivered up to the power of this dominion?... What will happen when we become subject to the imperatives of technology? A system of machines is engulfing life... Can life retain its living character in this system?*

In instantiating the ways in which human life has been subjected to technology, Pope Francis refers to human ecology: the relationships between body and mind, flesh and spirit, persons and society, persons and the environment of which they are part. When these relationships are fractured by regarding persons as individuals disconnected with society, sovereign over their environment, and valued for their material power and prosperity, the result is a diminished humanity, an unequal society and a miserable and unfree people enslaved by an apparently uncontrolled but unjustly rigged economy. The emblem and fruit of these fractured relationships is the climate crisis.

The pope looks for a balanced way of thinking in which the technological thinking is set within wonder and within open questioning and shaping of culture that is not dominated by economic considerations. He sees this embodied in the ideal of the university as a community of scholars characterised by curiosity, the pursuit of truth and by self-knowledge.

## *Hope in the power of human longing for what is true and genuine*

Such a university would be a natural home for conversation about the human benefits and costs of the development of artificial intelligence and whether it serves the common good. In practice, however, universities also echo current ideologies. The criterion of their funding by governments is the economic contribution of its research. The search for knowledge as a human good is not honoured. Nor is the ideal of a university and of learning proposed by Francis generally accepted within universities.

Technological development, in any case, is not centred in the universities but in commercial institutions like Google and Meta, which both propagate and defend the cultural assumption that all technical development is inevitable and will benefit human beings. Any negative effects of this homage to progress can be remedied by further similarly profitable technological developments.

This cultural context of the development of Artificial Intelligence lends urgency to Guardini's anguished question about the consequences of the dominion of technology. It is not allayed by the initial response to Artificial Intelligence of regulatory bodies in the United States and Great Britain. Both see it in purely economic terms, the latter in terms of its effect on competition

and the former in its effects on employment and other economic criteria. Its deeper and broader effects on human life and on society are not seen as determinative. In Guardini's framing, the conversation will take place entirely under the terms of the dominion of technology and its profit-seeking masters.

The possible consequences of this are daunting. The immediate concern is whether the uncontrolled use of Artificial Intelligence will make obsolete any assumptions about the connection between communication and truth. Its potential, however, is greater than that. In Guardini's terms, technological knowledge, with its ability to sort and grade information based on recorded experience, has the capacity to supplant human knowledge in judicial processes, in policy making, in medical treatment, in political systems and ultimately in human beings' understanding of themselves.

Although both men recognise the potential for harm in technology, neither Guardini nor the pope yield to despair. Both retain hope in the power of human longing for what is true and genuine, and in the consequent resistance to settlements that fail to honour human dignity, sociality and responsibility. It is already time to join that resistance movement.

Andrew Hamilton SJ is a writer at Jesuit Social Services in Melbourne (Australia) and consulting editor of Eureka Street, where this article first appeared.

Read more at: <https://international.la-croix.com/news/science-tech/is-artificial-intelligence-human/17796>



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

## Advice to Beginners - And to Myself

(Thomas Groome) Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, USA



I walked into my first formal setting as a religious educator—a boys' Catholic high school with a class of sophomores—at the age of 21, now some 40 years ago. It seems only like yesterday; make the most of every day, they pass so quickly. But there I go, already advising you, when in fact I am hesitant about this whole exercise. For I am keenly conscious that in many ways, I was never your age. You have grown up in and now work with people from a very different world than my original one—an old Irish village. Can you even imagine a time and place where there was no television or telephones, and only snail mail—some days?

Yet, there are enduring features to the human condition and to Christian faith, my focus here, and thus to the challenge of integrating the two. So, perhaps I have come by a little wisdom from the heat of the day that you might find helpful in your morning time. But instead of addressing it only to you, let me address it to myself as well. Truth is that I often forget to practice the wisdom I have learned, and, in a sense, I am starting over—in you—and should begin again tomorrow, myself. I will limit to seven points.

*First*, let us attend to our own growth toward holiness of life—in whatever our tradition may be. For me this means becoming ever more faithful in discipleship to Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, over the years, I have personally verified that old scholastic adage, *nemo dat quod non habet*—you cannot share with others what you do not have yourself. I note, too, that all three Synoptics, using the analogy of salt for discipleship, warn that salt that loses its savour is useless. Luke says that it's not even fit “for the manure pile” (Lk 14:34).

Personally, I have not been entirely negligent, and I have benefited spiritually from what I have tried to teach. However, I have learned the hard way that I do far better religious education when I am active in a vibrant Christian community, take time for good personal prayer and communal worship, see a wise spiritual companion regularly, engage in works of compassion and justice, have regular retreats, and take the kind of amusement time that prompts me to glimpse again God's presence and abiding love.

Saint Augustine, writing in his First Catechetical Instruction (circa 400 CE), urged religious educators to have *hilaritas* about their work. This is usually translated as joy or enthusiasm, although I like the hint of “hilarity.” I have had the most *hilaritas* when what I was teaching engaged and nurtured my own spirituality as well. It's imperative that we at least try to practice what we teach, and do so with enthusiasm. This requires our own “care of soul”; with the help of God's grace, we must keep our salt salty.

*Second*, I encourage you and remind myself to be clear about our purposes as religious educators. Now this may surprise a little; shouldn't our primary concern be with what to teach and how to teach it. I suggest that we first get clear about why—the purposes that prompt us. For if we are clear about what we hope to achieve in people's lives and the world by educating religiously, this will—and should—guide our what and how.

I do best when I remember my “blue sky” purposes, the grandiose vision that nevertheless sustains my work and especially in difficult times. My best sense is that my religious educating should ultimately help bring about the reign of God, that God's will of fullness of life

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<sup>1</sup> Read this article for CPTD points. See Page 22.



for all may be “done on earth as it is in heaven.” God’s reign was Jesus’ sense of purpose; it should be the meta-criterion that guides what and how I teach as well. You need to choose your ultimate best hopes and perhaps a summary symbol for them—like God’s reign—and then let this ever sustain and disturb you.

We also need to choose more immediate purposes. I say that I am educating for Christian faith, but then must remember its holistic nature if what and how I teach is to promote it. Like its great commandment, Christian faith demands all of one’s “mind, heart, and strength,” or, as the Baltimore Catechism stated, “to know, love, and serve” as people of God. In other words, we must educate in ways that inform, form, and transform people’s lives, enabling them, by God’s grace, to become disciples to Jesus as “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6) and “for the life of the world” (John 6:51).

I can state my most immediate purpose as that people might come to know their faith. But then what do I intend by know and is my approach likely to promote such knowledge? At least on good days, I try to honour the biblical sense of knowledge and knowing. Again, this is a deeply holistic and relational affair that engages the heart as much as the head, that reaches beyond understanding to encourage personal conviction and commitment.

*Third*, and by way of what to teach, let us be true to the constitutive faith of our community but avoiding even the hint of sectarianism. I am thinking in my context of religious educators in the United States where there is little religious education in public schools and most of us are commissioned to educate religiously in the name of a particular faith community—typically our own chosen one.

Now, I personally know of no religious educator who agrees entirely with every jot and tittle of their faith tradition; all of our faiths have a “hierarchy of truths” and the ones lower down are more negotiable; indeed, coming to maturity of faith requires as much. However, every religion makes truth claims that constitute its core; these, I believe, must be represented faithfully and persuasively by its religious educators. Otherwise, we fail in our commission and do little to secure the faith identity of those we educate.

On the other hand, as Jesus himself reminded, “in my Father’s house there are many dwelling places” (John 14:3). While everyone needs a home within God’s family, we must never present our particular faith in ways that disparage other traditions or as if God loves only “our” people. The challenge for religious educators is to ground people in the particular while opening them to the universal—to learn from the universality of God’s love and self-disclosure. For Christians, every version of our Story must turn us toward the neighbour in love, including the neighbour who is “other” rather than “the same”; otherwise, we are not sharing Christian Story.

*Fourth*, I advise that we get to know as well as possible the people with whom we educate. All the great religious educators back to Augustine have advised that effective communication is “according to the mode of the receiver.” To begin with, we need to be well informed in the daily news, local and national, to hold, as Barth advised, the Bible in one hand and the morning paper in the other. We need to know the culture of the people with whom we work and get to know them personally, including their names.

Beyond this, we should regularly revisit our theological understanding of this human condition. When I remember that the people I teach are made in the divine image and likeness, that there is a “God-shaped hollow in the human heart that nothing else can fill” (Pascal), then I educate more effectively. This requires me to treat them with respect, encourage them to speak their own word, be open to learn from them and encourage them to learn from each other. On the other hand, if I have a negative attitude toward them, they seem to live down to my expectations.

*Fifth*, we must encourage a religious education consciousness in our faith communities and families, proactively engaging their shared life as curriculum. I have been gradually

drawn beyond the schooling paradigm to a community-based one. Of course, if we only want people to “learn about” religious traditions, then schooling is enough. But if we want them to “learn from” a tradition, perhaps to ground their spiritual identity in it, then schools and formal programs, although vital, will not be sufficient. We must forge coalitions between congregations, families, and schools/programs, whereby all members constantly review every aspect of their shared life for what it teaches, and intentionally craft an ethos that nurtures and sustains people in their faith. It still “takes a village” to nurture a particular identity, including identity in faith.

*Sixth*, we need to constantly reflect upon and try to improve our approach to doing religious education. Over the years, I have found it imperative to reflect on my own praxis of educating. In fact, whatever competence I have, I attribute to taking time after teaching/learning events to reflect discerningly on what we did and how things went. John Dewey is often cited as saying that we learn from our experience, but Dewey said that we learn from experience if we reconstruct it, in other words reflect on the why and wherefore of it, what transpired and how we might improve on it next time.

By way of a generic approach—educators must find their own style of doing it—I have long proposed a pedagogy that enables people to bring their lives to a faith tradition, and to bring a faith tradition to their lives. I have written about this under the awkward title of a shared praxis approach but it is, quite simply, a pedagogy that enables people to integrate their lives with their chosen faith into “lived faith.” Although I have tried to practice such a “life to Faith to life” approach for almost 40 years, oftentimes I do not do it very well. So, I continue to reflect on my praxis to learn to do it better.

*Seventh*: Lest we burden ourselves as responsible for the outcomes, my last counsel is that we balance our own best efforts with the memory of God’s grace. Of course, we must prepare well, be intentional throughout, and reflect back on every teaching/learning event, yet it is always God who “gives the growth” (1 Cor 3:6). On our side of the covenant, we must do the best we can, and then leave the rest in God’s hands.

I love the story about John the Baptist (John 1: 19-28) when the “big people” in Jerusalem send messengers to inquire if he might be the awaited Messiah. I imagine John being tempted; he would have had good grounds—the extraordinary circumstances of his birth to his aged parents, and so on. In fact, the text hints at some hesitancy on his part. One of the words used, and repeated twice, to describe John’s response is *homologeo*; this is usually translated as “to confess” but it also had the meaning to “submit with resistance.” So, after a struggle, John finally said, “I am not the Messiah.” (Jn 1: 20).

Every religious educator should make John’s statement an oft repeated prayer. So, when you are not as good as you could be or should be, or when things do not go as planned (they never do), put your feet up and say, “Well, I’m not the messiah”; leave the rest in God’s hands.

I wish you God’s best blessings on your vocational path as a religious educator; there is none more strategic. Indeed the very future of our world may well depend on the great religions doing religious education in ways that bring peace and justice for all people and for God’s creation. Welcome to this noble work.

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## CLASSROOM PRACTICE

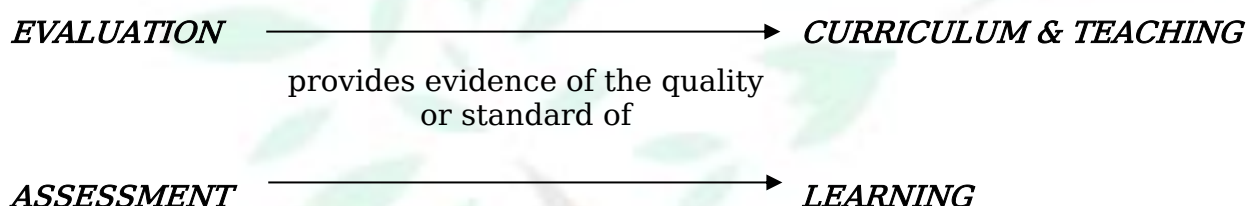
### *Evaluating Religious Education*

(TEEC – Theological Education by Extension College<sup>2</sup>)

In our offering of Religious Education we might be employing the most up-to-date methods and have access to state-of-the-art resources, but how do we know whether our teaching is having the desired effect? How shall we find out?

In this article we study the processes that enable us to answer these and other related questions. We deal with evaluation, where the spotlight is on the individual teacher or the school as a whole, to determine the effectiveness of the religious education we are offering. We do this from different perspectives – our own, that of an external evaluator, and that of the students themselves. In the next issue we shift the spotlight onto the students as we look at the question of assessment of their learning and the appropriateness of this process in Religious Education.

There is often confusion between the terms ‘evaluation’ and ‘assessment’. Some theorists use the two interchangeably, but here we use each in a particular way. So let’s be clear before we start our discussion. The diagram below will help.



### *Evaluation: How is the school doing?*

#### *What is Evaluation?*

Evaluation can be defined as the attempt to describe and judge the merit or worth of a curriculum or of one or more of its components. It encompasses the whole educational function of the classroom. Though frequently overlooked, evaluation of the Religious Education programme establishes what is happening in the classroom and, if necessary, what changes are needed to improve the programme. Frequently, changes are made to programmes without trying to evaluate the worth or merit of the existing programme. Much of value can be lost because of this. Careful use of evaluation can provide information upon which sound decisions about programme improvement can be made. Evaluation, therefore, has been described as a resource for doing important things better.

There are other important reasons to evaluate the Religious Education programme in a school or parish. Systematic evaluation of programmes allows for those who hold an interest in what is being taught – school owners, parish priests, parents, and national and local education offices – to discover the impact the programme is having on the students and the community. Specific information can be obtained and then provided which demonstrates

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<sup>2</sup> This article is an edited excerpt from the course 5RE 04 Religious Education in Theory and Practice.



the educational contribution the school or parish is making to the overall religious education of the students. The community has a right to know about aspects of the Religious Education programme; evaluation is the key way by which the school or parish fulfils its accountability to the community.

Another reason for evaluation is that it allows teachers to discover what is of value in the programme. When teachers and schools are able to make value judgments and to clarify what is actually happening, evaluation provides a means of examining the assumptions, ideas and philosophies which in turn, will guide future programme development.

Evaluation also makes public the work of the classroom for the benefit of further teaching in subsequent years. Students can then be provided with a programme that is truly developmental and not overly repetitive.

### *What should be evaluated?*

Evaluation of the Religious Education programme is essentially concerned with three areas – the curriculum itself, the quality of teaching that is being provided and the outcomes of the programme. A list of questions can be used to assist in making judgment about the merit or worth of the programme. Such questions allow the evaluator to sharpen perceptions of what is occurring in each of the areas to be evaluated.

#### THE CURRICULUM

- What is the quality of the religion content? Is the content which students learn appropriate, useful, relevant and significant given their experiences, knowledge, intellectual capacity, developmental readiness, interests and needs?
- Are the activities suitable and interesting for students? Do the content and activities encourage higher cognitive skills? Is there a range of activities to allow for the special education needs of students with disabilities and students with great potential?
- List the texts and curriculum materials which the students use. What are the key reactions to the quality of these texts and materials? How similar are they to those used in other curriculum areas?
- Are the texts and curriculum materials readable, challenging, relevant and appropriate to the culture of the students who are using them? Is the language of the texts understandable for the students who will use them?
- Does the curriculum provide alternative ways for the teacher to achieve the same objectives?

#### TEACHING

- Are teachers encouraged to visit each other's classrooms by mutual agreement to provide critical and constructive feedback about each other's teaching? Does the Religious Education coordinator or other members of the school leadership team participate in such a process?
- Are teachers' explanations clear? Are questioning strategies appropriate? Is there appropriate supervision of activities?
- What is the climate of the classroom? Is it open, enthusiastic, engaging?
- Are cooperation and independence stressed in the classroom?
- What assessment strategies has the teacher used? What aspects of the Religious Education programme do these measure?

#### OUTCOMES OF THE CURRICULUM

- What are the learning outcomes of the Religious Education programme, both those that were intended as well as those which were unintended?
- What advances in skills have been gained by the students?

- Is there evidence of new insights or understandings which have been enhanced by the Religious Education programme?
- How have the students engaged in the process of learning in Religious Education?
- How would the students' motivation and willingness to participate and become immersed in the material be described?

The information gathered by the use of these and other such questions should be recorded in some accessible form, rather than simply rely upon the teacher's memory. Information should be recorded every few weeks, before precise memory begins to elapse. The recording process should be brief enough to allow for teachers' busy schedules, yet sufficiently detailed to provide a source for future teaching ideas. It needs to be more than merely checking off a list or some similar device.

### *How to Evaluate*

Sometimes schools may find it helpful to include evaluators from outside the school or faith community. These external evaluators provide expertise and an alternative view of the school's religion programme. When this kind of evaluation takes place, the major purpose of the evaluation is validation and quality control to discover if an appropriate and educationally sound Religious Education programme is operating according to some agreed guidelines.

The kind of evaluation which seeks to improve the quality of the curriculum experienced by the students can be conducted by the religious education teacher in the school or catechist in the parish, by other colleagues and members of the community's leadership team, or by the school's religious education coordinator<sup>3</sup>. A number of people can be involved in responding to inquiries such as those listed above. Students can provide some of the most accurate responses to the reviewer's questions. Parents are another source of information, as are other teachers, the Religious Education coordinator, the school principal or the director of religious education in the parish.

Methods for conducting evaluations can be varied: small group discussions with staff and/or parents; pen and paper response sheets seeking students' reaction to their involvement in the programme; individual interviews with teachers; observation of teachers during class. The aim is to gather sufficient quality information to assist decision making to improve the Religious Education programme. Perhaps the most significant source of information is the questions and responses of the students in relation to their experiences of the Religious Education programme. They can provide important information upon which to base decisions for programme improvement.

It is important to plan the timing for evaluation. It should be regular enough to provide sufficient data, but not too frequent that it becomes counter-productive.

The educational evaluator, like an art critic, clarifies the decisions which teachers make about improving their teaching. With this understanding, teachers can locate the nature and purpose of evaluation in a way which contributes to the effective teaching of their programme. This can help alleviate the pressure some people fear when an evaluation is undertaken. To consider the work of evaluation as appraisal and valuing, in the same way that a connoisseur values the work of an artist, allows the teacher to stress improvement and the search for greater effectiveness, rather than an attempt to highlight weakness and inadequacy.

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<sup>3</sup> The role of religious education coordinator is roughly equivalent to that of a head of department in other school curriculum areas, and to that of a director of religious education in some faith community contexts.

In order to encourage excellence in Religious Education, the Religious Education Council of England and Wales has instituted the Religious Education Quality Mark (REQM) which acknowledges and celebrates excellence in the subject. It encourages schools that believe they are making a difference to learners through their Religious Education to apply for bronze, silver or gold awards. The criteria for these awards are divided into the following sections:

- A. Learners and Learning
- B. Teachers and Teaching
- C. Curriculum
- D. Subject Leadership
- E. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

If you would like to explore this as a model for your own evaluation, go to the following web link: <http://www.reqm.org/>.

### *Evaluation: How is the teacher doing?*

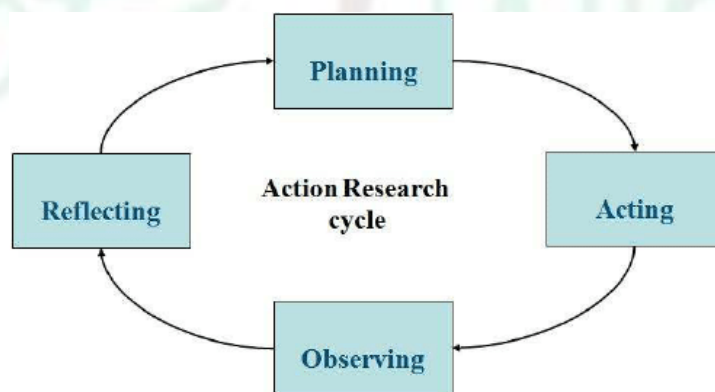
In the above section, we made some reference to the evaluation of the individual teacher. Here we explore two ways of doing this that stress improvement and the search for greater effectiveness.

#### *Lesson Observation*

As a teacher you might feel daunted by the prospect of having an observer in your classroom. This is understandable, but if the observation is done with a view to more effective teaching, and by a colleague you can trust, you will soon see the benefit of the exercise and be able to invite such an intervention in a more confident way. It will help too if teachers team up in pairs to observe each other.

#### *Action Research*

This is a form of research which teachers carry out into their own practice. It starts out with a commitment to an educational ideal, for example to improving a particular educational practice in the Religious Education classroom. It is a cyclical process where the four steps of planning, acting, observing and reflecting are repeated until the new practice is firmly established in a way that suits both teacher and student.



(Researchgate.net)

If you would like to study this process in more detail, consult Summers, H. & Waddington, R. (Eds.).1996. *Religious Education for Transformation*. Pretoria: Kagiso Tertiary.





## PORTRAIT

### *Pope suggests China take Matteo Ricci as its model*

(La Croix International staff) | June 1, 2023

*Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) -- or Li Madou as he is known in China -- served to connect the Chinese people with other civilizations.*



Pope Francis has praised the apostolic zeal of Matteo Ricci, an Italian Jesuit missionary who ministered 500 years ago in China, as a model of consistency for Christian witness and a source of inspiration and love for Chinese people.

"His love for the Chinese people is a model; but what is a very timely one, is his consistency of life, his Christian witness. He brought Christianity to China... consistent with his vocation, consistent with that desire to follow Jesus Christ," Pope Francis said of Venerable Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) during his weekly General Audience on Wednesday, May 31 in St. Peter's Square, as he continued his catechesis series on saints who personified apostolic zeal.

Francis, reflecting on the life of the Jesuit missionary, spoke about how "Ricci and one of his confrères prepared themselves very well, carefully studying the Chinese language and customs, and in the end, they managed to settle in the south of the country. It took 18 years, with four stages through four different cities, to arrive in Peking, which was the centre. With perseverance and patience, inspired by unshakeable faith, Matteo Ricci was able to

overcome difficulties and dangers, mistrust and opposition."

The pope said Ricci "always followed the way of dialogue and friendship with all the people he encountered, and this opened many doors to him for the proclamation of the Christian faith." "This missionary was able to "inculturate" the Christian faith, as the ancient fathers had done in dialogue with Greek culture," Francis said.

*"Witness of religious life, virtue and prayer"*

Matteo Ricci moved to China when he was 30 years old. He drafted a huge map of the world, which served to create a wider understanding of the world and to connect the Chinese people with other civilizations. In 1601, Ricci -- or Li Madou as he is known in China -- composed a treatise on friendship. That text offered an opportunity for the Mandarin Chinese and the literati of the Ming Dynasty to know the thinking of the great philosophers of the West. It also lay the foundation for dialogue between the Jesuits (and Western culture) and the great intellectuals of China.

"Ricci's fame as a man of science should not obscure the deepest motivation of all his efforts: namely, the proclamation of the Gospel. With scientific dialogue, with scientists, he went ahead but he bore witness to his faith, to the Gospel. The credibility obtained through scientific dialogue gave him the authority to propose the truth of Christian faith and morality, of which he spoke in depth in his principal Chinese works," the pope said.

"Besides doctrine, his witness of religious life, virtue and prayer: these missionaries prayed. They went to preach, they were active, they made political moves, all of that;

but they prayed. It is what nourished the missionary life, a life of charity; they helped others, humbly, with total disinterest in honours and riches, which led many of his disciples and friends to embrace the Catholic faith," Francis said.

Father Ricci was an expert in mathematics, cosmology and astronomy who helped spread the Gospel in China during the 16th century. The Italian Jesuit was the first

Westerner invited into the Forbidden City, the Chinese imperial palace where the emperor lived, and he produced the first map of China where Africa, Europe and America also appeared.

Matteo Ricci died in Peking in 1610, at the age of 57, and was the first foreigner permitted by the Emperor to be buried on Chinese soil.

<https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/pope-suggests-china-take-matteo-ricci-as-its-model/17903>



## WEBSITE

### Season of Creation

[Season of Creation](#)



Each year from September 1 to October 4, the Christian family unites for this worldwide celebration of prayer and action to protect our common home. As followers of Christ from around the globe, we share a common call to care for creation. We are co-creatures and part of all that God has made. Our wellbeing is interwoven with the wellbeing of the Earth.

We rejoice in this opportunity to safeguard our common home and all beings who share it. This year, the theme for the season is "Let justice and peace flow". The guide, available at [EN SoC 2023 GUIDE .pdf - Google Drive](#), will help you learn about the season and plan to celebrate it. More resources, including webinars and prayer services, sample flyers, bulletin inserts, and the official Season of Creation social media channels, are available online. Please visit [Season of Creation](#) to access all the materials.



## BOOK REVIEW

### *What men call history*

*Historians usually write of a past when the outcomes are known, but a new book on the Russo-Ukrainian war is different.*

(Gillian Bouras) | Greece June 17, 2023



Perhaps it was the viewing of King Charles' coronation that did it, but the fact remains: I have always been interested in history, and just lately that interest has surged. Again.

Another factor at play was the re-reading of Arnold Toynbee's essay "The Present Point in History", which had suddenly surfaced. Time and trends affect even historians, so I don't suppose Toynbee is much read or thought of these days, but he was once very famous. The essay dates back to 1947, and is taken from his book *Civilisation on Trial*, an

apt title, for in the post-war era civilisation was indeed being sorely tested.

The essay opens with Toynbee's childhood memories of seeing the so-called colonial troops who had come to London to help celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. In adulthood he wrote that the English middle classes probably believed that in a sense history was over then: they thought of Waterloo in 1815, the Great Reform Bill of 1832, and the suppression of the Indian Mutiny in 1859.

The middle classes of other western nations shared this view. For the Americans, the Confederacy would never rise again, and for the French Alsace-Lorraine would never be recovered. These events would remain in the past.

#### *"History sure does rhyme"*

A popular idea, however, is that history repeats itself. Mark Twain could not agree, but thought that "history sure does rhyme". Australian historian Christopher Clark maintains, though, that we have a non-linear relationship with the past. His new book *Revolutionary Spring: Fighting for a New World 1848-1849*, which is about the revolutions of 1848, and has received glowing reviews, tackles this idea. We might think that some events in the past are safely packed away, but sometimes they suddenly reappear and start to speak to us. This, he says, is the case with the 19th century.

The Eastern Question, such a focus during the 19th century, seemed to recede during the 20th, but now, Clark points out, it is back. Greece watched anxiously as the recent Turkish election was held, for tensions between the two countries, always present, have lately grown in intensity, while Erdogan seems to have a neo-Ottoman vision for his country. Then there is the squabbling over the future of Libya, the grim fate of Syria, and the conflict over the grain exports from the Black Sea ports.

It's been a good couple of months for the publication of history. Clark's book has been followed by *The Russo-Ukrainian War: The Return of History*, by Harvard professor Serii Plokhy. Toynbee believed that War and Class were the twin diseases of civilization, and were thus ever-present, and who, historians and others, can argue with this assertion? Toynbee was also inevitably concerned with the concept of Empire, and so are Clark and Plokhy.

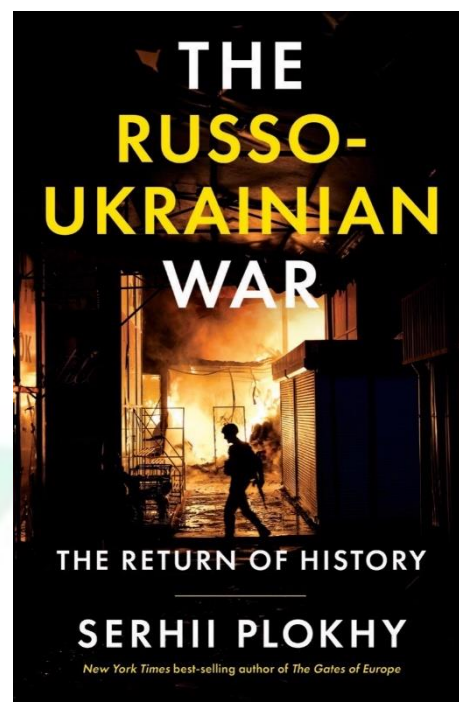


*Toynbee believed in progress being achievable only in spiritual terms.*

Clark has stated that the Russo-Ukrainian conflict stretches back far beyond the 20th century, in that it connects "with a deeper history of wars and annexations along the Russian imperial periphery", and Plokhy argues similarly, writing that the process of Ottoman decline began in the 17th century and the Russian one in 1914. He also sees the current conflict as being one of the wars related to the disintegration of Empire. He warns, however, that the process of disintegration can take a long time, and nearly always involves a great deal of suffering. He also points out that the so-called Great Powers have lost every war they have engaged in since 1945.

Plokhy has family in Ukraine and has lost a cousin in the conflict. He says that after the first shock of the invasion had passed, most people asked themselves what they could do to help. He decided that he could best help by using his skills as an historian, for, as he said in a recent interview, history is being used as a weapon in this conflict, with Putin apparently having had a hand in writing about and pushing the contentious view that Russians and Ukrainians are one people. Such manipulations are, of course, common. In Australia we've had the so-called "culture wars", which thankfully did not involve bloodshed, but did see history used as a weapon.

Historians usually write of a past when the outcomes are known, but Plotkhy's current volume is different. He says that being a good historian means that he has to control his emotions: a hard task. But historians can also posit their own point of view, and it is interesting to note that Toynbee believed in progress being achievable only in spiritual terms. He wrote that God alone knows the true picture.



<https://international.la-croix.com/news/culture/what-men-call-history/17984>



## FESTIVALS

### *Yom Kippur (25 September 2023)*



**Yom Kippur**

Yom Kippur or Day of Atonement is observed on the tenth day of Tishri (September-October) and represents a culmination of the Ten Days of Penitence which begin on Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. It is the most solemn day in the Jewish year and is characterised by fasting and prayer. Whereas other holidays are often ignored by many secular Jews, Yom Kippur is typically observed even by those who would not describe themselves as religious. The laws concerning the observance of Yom Kippur are clearly outlined in the Jewish scriptures. According to the Bible, Jews are not permitted to work and must afflict their souls between the eve of the ninth and the eve of the tenth of Tishri. Specifically, five things are forbidden on Yom Kippur: eating and drinking, washing oneself for personal grooming, the wearing of leather shoes, anointing the body, and conjugal relations.

## *Diwali (12 November 2023)*



Diwali is the festival of lights, taking its name from the Sanskrit word Deepavali, meaning 'a row or cluster of lights'. It marks the beginning of the religious New Year and takes place over five days in October/November. Clay lamps containing oil are lit in the home and may be floated in leaf cups along the river. Light symbolises the victory of virtue and goodness. Lakshmi, the Goddess of success and fortune, blesses the homes of those who celebrate the festival. Gifts are exchanged and prayers and requests are made to Lakshmi for the year ahead. At this time there is a conscious attempt to repair relationships that have been fractured over the year.



## *LOCAL & INTERNATIONAL NEWS*

### *South African Catholics seek to welcome, protect, migrants and refugees*

The Southern Africa Catholic Bishops Conference reiterates its call for more inter-state coordination as xenophobia against people from other parts of Africa is on the rise

(La Croix International staff) | June 9, 2023



*A man attempts to extinguish a shack after residents of Kagiso set ablaze the homes of migrants in Johannesburg, South Africa, 4 August 2022.*

The South African Catholic Bishop Conference has called on "people of God" to put an end to xenophobia and welcome, integrate and protect migrants and refugees who come to the country in search of safety and a better economic life.

Bishop Joseph Mary Kizito, Liaison Bishop for Migrants and Refugees Office of the South African Catholic Bishop Conference, said Saint Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, the patron saint of migrants, should be their model. "He defended their (migrants) human rights. That's why today we are so grateful that we have a patron saint for migrants who can intercede for us... an advocate for the poor," said Bishop Kizito. He called on Catholics "to walk in the footsteps of Saint Scalabrini, and to call for an end to xenophobia. Bishop Kizito, was speaking during a recent cross-boarders workshop held in Aliwal Diocese.

The SACBC, in its June 1 message also encouraged all "to show solidarity with the poor" and "to see the world as a global village where people belong" reiterating its call for more inter-state coordination as xenophobia against people from other parts of Africa is on the rise due largely to a shrinking economy and rising unemployment in South Africa.

South Africa, because of its economy, education facilities and its relative political stability continues to attract refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants. In 2020 South Africa was the top destination country for such people in southern Africa. The Migration Data Portal estimates 2.9 million migrants lived in South Africa by mid-2020 and that this accounts for slightly less than 5 percent of the overall population of 60 million people. Relief Web reports that this number is thought to be an underestimate because of the presence of large numbers of unauthorized migrants, particularly from neighbouring countries.

<https://international.la-croix.com/news/world/south-african-catholics-seek-to-welcome-protect-migrants-and-refugees/17949>

### *Xenophobic violence has a long history in South Africa*

According to the Vatican's Integral Human Development country report for South Africa, a host of international organizations are active in protecting and serving migrants through legislation and a variety of social programs. However, the report does point out that while refugees and asylum seekers generally have freedom of movement and the right to seek employment in South Africa, discrimination and xenophobic violence are prevalent. Also, that recent legislative amendments have also limited certain categories of asylum seekers' the right to work.

The xenophobia monitoring platform Xenowatch has documented much violence against refugees, asylum seekers and even against native-born South Africans originally from elsewhere in the region. In 2008, nearly 60 people perished and nearly 50,000 displaced during anti-immigrant riots. Other fatal flare-ups took place in 2015 and 2019. The violence against foreign nationals is selective, targeting Black Africans, in a development that some authors have referred to as Afro-phobia, according to Xenowatch. a growing number of South Africans accuse immigrants of taking away their jobs and social benefits.

Experts say this xenophobic violence is largely due to poor performance of the economy and the country's very high levels of unemployment, and often spurred on by the rhetoric of local politicians who solidify their political support by mobilizing communities on the basis of a nationalist agenda and portraying immigrants as the cause of unemployment and other problems. With unemployment rates as high as 65 percent among the youth, South Africa is still reeling from the negative impact of the coronavirus pandemic in which 2 million jobs were wiped out.





## *Vladimir Putin and the age of resentment*

*Sociologist Grigory Yudin says the powerful resentment that is motivating Putin is a symptom of an increasingly victimized Russian society*

(Jean-Pierre Denis in Paris) | France August 11, 2023



What motivates Vladimir Putin? And why do so many Russians support him? In an interview with the opposition media outlet Meduza, Moscow sociologist Grigory Yudin offers a psychological, cultural and political explanation. He says the driving force that motivates the dictator in the Kremlin and what connects him to a large part of the Russian people is not a strategy, a program, or even interests. Putin - a cold and cynical calculator and a former spy - is, in fact, rather sentimental. Emotion guides him. But not just any emotion: a negative one.

Yudin says there is "a powerful feeling of resentment" in Russian society. And it is "one of the rare channels through which Vladimir Putin connects with a significant part of society", the sociologist points out. "Even more importantly, he produces this emotion himself. And that emotion is resentment — monstrous, endless resentment. Nothing can mollify this resentment. It's impossible to imagine what could compensate for it," notes Yudin.

### *A metaphysics of human unhappiness*

He does not explicitly use the word, but one cannot fail to make the connection with the origins of fascism, which "Putinism" increasingly resembles. He says this "overflowing" resentment provokes and meets a deep echo in the Russian people.

"[They resent] a world order that seems unfair, and, accordingly, whoever takes responsibility for being 'superior' in this world order, meaning the United States of America," Yudin adds. In a here-and-now that is considered evil, a metaphysics of human unhappiness, external evil is the cause of Russian failure and suffering. The figure of the American superpower logically concentrates this hostility.

A relatively minor development in Yudin's interview caught my attention. "A significant part of the world has well-founded complaints about the current world order, and against the U.S., which took responsibility, became a hegemon, and has benefited from the world order in many ways," he says. "We see that parts of the world that are engulfed by this resentment are more understanding toward Vladimir Putin." It should be noted that even an opponent like him recognizes himself in part in this grid of analysis. Resentment arises "rightly" in the face of a world order that "benefits" some, but not others. This is how deeply-rooted this feeling is.

In fact, the countries or regimes that refuse to condemn Russia are crossed by this current of negative energy, an emotional rather than rational approach. Certainly, the list includes pariah regimes, such as North Korea or Syria, and a whole range of countries with a pro-Soviet or non-aligned culture, such as Cuba, Venezuela, Algeria, or India. But these are precisely states, like Russia, that have long nurtured a certain tradition of post-colonial resentment, in some cases anti-gringo, in others neo-Third Worldist. This culture is sometimes even the only ideological engine of the regime in place, as well as a convenient way to silence internal criticism.

### *The old cliché about the "Russian soul"*

Therefore, Yudin's analysis is only partially based on the old cliché about the "Russian soul", a nostalgic spirit that is sentimental

and convulsive. From his critical observation of the society that surrounds him and the regime that stifles him, this thinker has perhaps identified one of the most contemporary and universal social diseases. In much of its former African zone of influence, France now has to confront animosity and admit resentment, to the point of sometimes having to pack up. In the United States, Donald Trump forcefully exploited moral suffering of the declining classes, and still counts on it.

<https://international.la-croix.com/news/culture/vladimir-putin-and-the-age-of-resentment/17465>

What do our increasingly victimized societies express? How can we understand the success of conspiracy theories? Disillusionment, bitterness, and the justification of one's failures by pointing the finger of blame are everywhere. Many populist leaders are trying to divert this inexhaustible source of energy into political or geopolitical fuel. We have now entered the age of resentment. This is a climate change that is no less worrying than the environmental one.



## CPTD

### *Advice to Beginners - And to Myself*

Read the article for CPTD points and record your response to the tasks found at the end of each article.

### *Professional Development Points Schedule*

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

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