Catholic Institute of Education

Roots & Wings

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The Periodical of the Professional Society of Religious Educators

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the fourth and final 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.

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

Back to school: which saint to choose?

(Geneviève Pasquier)

The start of a new school year is a moment of promise, but sometimes it also causes anxiety for students, parents and even teachers. Patron saints, however, can offer encouragement.

Children and young people can ask Saint Carlo Acutis to help them develop their talents and learn to share them. (Photo by MAURIZIO MAULE/IPA/MAXPPP)

Many saints can accompany children, parents and teachers throughout the year. Discover a small selection of saints, all of whom have a connection with studies and education, and can support those who pray to them.

For children and young people

Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897)

Children will recognize themselves in this sensitive little girl who had trouble making friends. At the age of 14, strengthened by her trust in God, she chose to overcome her anxieties and perform small acts of love every day. Children can confide in her to intercede with God to help them overcome their own difficulties.

Carlo Acutis (1991-2006)

Carlo Acutis was an ordinary teenager of our time, but he lived his daily life fully with God and developed his talents, particularly on the computer. By entrusting themselves to his intercession, children and young people can ask him to help them develop their talents and learn to share them.

Joseph de Cupertino (1603-1663), patron saint of students

At the age of 17, Joseph de Cupertino wanted to enter the Franciscan order, but he had great difficulty reading and writing. During the entrance examination, he happened to be given the only Biblical passage that he knew by heart. He was thus admitted to the order and became a priest a year later. Praying through the intercession of Joseph of Cupertino can be a great help when someone is feeling helpless in the face of a new year or an exam.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), patron saint of schools and universities

Thomas Aquinas studied theology at the University of Paris. In his work, he sought to reconcile the heritage of ancient thought with Christian theology. Students can pray for his intercession as they start classes in order to begin the new year with confidence.

For teachers and educators

Catherine of Alexandria (292-312), patron saint of science, students and teachers

Catherine lived in Alexandria (Egypt) during the reign of Maximin II. Thanks to her eloquent skills, she won a debate against fifty opponents who tried to convince her of the stupidity of Christianity. At the time, Christians were being persecuted and Catherine was

martyred, even though she had won the debates. Through her intercession, teachers and students can ask for strength and courage to stand firm in difficult times.

John Bosco (1815-1888), patron saint of educators and apprentices

The son of poor peasants in Northern Italy, John Bosco became a priest. He set up a recreation facility, an oratory, a reception centre and workshops for the young workers of Turin, who had been left to fend for themselves. John Bosco invented an educational format based on gentleness, trust and love. Through his intercession, teachers and educators can ask for patience and trust in their mission with their pupils.

Jean-Baptiste de La Salle (1651-1719), founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools

Born in Reims (France), Jean-Baptiste de La Salle set up free schools for girls and then for boys. To educate them, he founded a congregation: the Brothers of the Christian Schools. He invented a new pedagogy: from then on, learning to read was based not on Latin but on French. Teachers can call on him to be ever more pedagogical and creative in their teaching.

For parents

Anne (1st century), mother of Mary

In iconography, Saint Anne is often depicted teaching her daughter to read from the Bible. She is the one who teaches Mary to pray and to place her faith in God.

Joseph (1st century), patron saint for the fathers of families

Husband of Mary, he is the foster father and educator of Jesus. Celebrating the Vespers of Saint Joseph on March 18, 2009, Pope Benedict XVI reminded us that "to be a father is above all to be a servant of life and growth".

Zélie and Louis Martin (19th century), parents of Thérèse de Lisieux (the "Little Flower")

For Thérèse de Lisieux's mother and father, God was always the first to be served. The "Little Flower" and her sisters were deeply influenced by their parents' profound faith. At the start of this new year, parents can entrust the growth of their spiritual life and that of their children to Zélie and Louis Martin.

https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/back-to-school-which-saint-to-choose/18292

REFLECTION

Eco-anxiety, violence and uprisings

(Martin Steffens)

As Jesus has shown us, we don't have to engage in violence in order to overthrow the empire of force

Simone Weil, the French philosopher and mystic who died in England in 1943 at age 34, was fascinated by levers. This mechanism enables a force, however small, to lift a load far exceeding it. Boat oars, wheelbarrows, crowbars, and bottle-openers... such levers are everywhere. Their power made Archimedes exclaim: "Give me a lever and a place to stand, and I will move the world."

Weil was looking for that lever in politics. How can a few citizens, in times of totalitarian crisis, move the inert mass of their contemporaries and topple the big state machine? Weil believed that this presupposed the art of "non-action". When the boulder stands in the middle of the road, one must stop and observe in order to find the lever that will roll it into the ditch.

It was precisely during her exile in London in 1943 that she found a lever for France. It was her "Declaration of Duties towards Mankind". It was intended to correct our Declaration of Human Rights, which saw as the reason why political commitment had gradually become devoid of concern for the common good, with each individual claiming recognition of his or her own rights from the State.

Uprisings of the Earth

Simone Weil was inspired by the fact that, according to Christian faith, a being had lifted the earth, without using any power. Didn't Jesus, stripped of his divine condition and committed to the miserable condition of our humanity, lift the weight of the world through his Cross? He showed us that we don't need to engage in violence in order to overthrow the empire of force.

Do members of the French climate activist group Les Soulèvements de la Terre (Uprisings of the Earth, SLT) seek such a lever in their way of protesting? Or are they, as interior minister Gérald Darmanin says, nothing more than "eco-terrorists"? Does the climate emergency lead them to believe that there is no longer time to do what Simone Weil counselled, i.e. to stop and observe? In fact, one of the group's slogans is "We will move to force", which is the exact opposite of using a lever.

At the same time, the SLT members can't help but question the name that brings them together. Isn't an "uprising" always a counterweight to a downfall? However, it's not Archimedes' mechanics that inspires the SLT activists, but the plant metaphor of flowering. "You can't dissolve what grows back", was their response to the French interior minister's decision to ban them.

Bulldozer

Not far from where I live, there's a hazard sign for cyclists that says: "Warning! Tree roots." These roots that are pushing through the earth and silently breaking up

the pavement of the bike path will one day need the intervention of a bulldozer. Before it was used to describe an earth-moving machine, the word "bulldozer" came from an earlier noun bulldose, like a dose potent enough to tame a bull. It came to signify a gun of imposing calibre or the use of violence by racist groups to intimidate (to bulldoze) black slaves. This word alone indicates that there is violence against nature. The slow upheaval of the concrete also indicates that the earth is not willing to give in.

Is the subterranean, sovereign patience of the plant still the order of the day? Is the careful observation of a Simone Weil right for our times? One thing's for sure: we cannot arouse the eco-anxiety of today's young people by an ambient discourse, sometimes officially supported by the public school system itself, while demanding from them something other than a full and complete reaction.

https://international.la-croix.com/news/culture/eco-anxiety-violence-and-uprisings/18116

REFLECTION

Artificial Intelligence vs. Human Intelligence: The case of poetry

(Christina Linardaki)

Poetry is one of the fields with which science is experimenting on one of the most cutting-edge technologies, Artificial Intelligence (AI). The projects and the sites that produce poetry with technical means are numerous: Poevolve, Poetry Creator, Poem Generator, Tra-La-Lyrics, PoeTryMe, iPoet (in Chinese), PoemBot, PoemPotraits and Verse by Verse (Google's), Talk-ToTransformer, Bot or Not are just some of them.

Most of the above sites and projects are based on one of the branches of AI called machine learning. According to machine learning, the right algorithms can help a computer self-improve as it acquires more experience. Thus, a computer can be "trained" to produce what is required of it, in this instance poems, based on a body of data (e.g. the poems of an existing poet) and an algorithm that explains to it how it can use them (which would include elements such as the number of stanzas or lines in a stanza; this is the template-based approach) or just by putting together random words based on typical requirements, e.g. the desired number of syllables for rhythm (generate and test approach). Results have been found to range from simply bad to fairly good, in which latter case they have been produced by chance.

But why poetry? Why have scientists who already work on AI speech synthesis chosen poetry out of all literary genres? Why not choose another short form, e.g. bonsai short stories (with a typical ceiling of around 600 words)? The answer lies in the characteristics of each genre. A short story, however small, must have a structure: characters, dialogues, plot. Poetry, on the other hand, while considered the most difficult literary genre to grasp, as it involves a multitude of language levels (vocabulary, grammar, syntax, semantics, phonemics, metrics, figures of speech, etc.), incorporates a degree of arbitrariness, since there are no strict or universal rules for what is acceptable or not. It also incorporates a degree of absurdity, as many a time it not only resists commonly acceptable meaning, but also reverses it. Moreover, although it includes many levels of language, it does not require the use of all of them at the same time in order to exist: in other words, it is not mandatory for all these elements to be present in a single poem.

The above characteristics of poetry make it fertile ground for experimentation and this is also the reason why many new and ambitious writers start off with poetry, usually ending

up writing bad poems. The whole situation is made worse by the fact that nowadays readers are equally unaware: they do not have the evaluation criteria or, even worse, the ability to understand the poetry they are reading.

There is also another reason to choose poetry as an experimentation field: in order to understand a literary work, the author's contribution is no longer relevant. No matter if a poem has come as a result of the poet's experiences, if it mirrors his thoughts or his need to produce something new, literary theory with formalism, new criticism, structuralism and its reader-centred approaches has turned the light to the text first and the reader next, bringing about the "death of the author". The text, therefore, has been considered an autonomous entity for the understanding of which nothing else is needed than its own words.

Bot or Not

How can someone today understand if a poem has been written by a human being or by a computer? The answer is that more often than not he can't! And this is because some of AI attempts are really good and also because human beings have written poems that mimic computer attempts, reflecting the incoherence of the modern era. Examples are numerous: LangPo, erasure poetry, OuliPo, magnetic poetry, Flarf. Here follows a characteristic example of such a poem:

> *Red Faces*
>
> Red flags the reason for pretty flags.
> And ribbons.
> Ribbons of flags
> And wearing material
> Reason for wearing material.
> Give pleasure.
> Can you give me the regions.
> The regions and the land.
> The regions and wheels.
> All wheels are perfect.
> Enthusiasm.

On the site "Bot or Not" (botpoet.com), in which the visitor is called to choose whether the poem that appears on his screen is written by a human poet or by AI, the above poem by Gertrude Stein has been considered by at least 70% of the answerers written by a computer.

And, for argument's sake, a rather good attempt (although with shortcomings in coherence and meaning) at a poem generated by Deep-Speare6:

> that is the world art we a lord of god give in him, evermore to teach my prayers
> and only to forget her for its sake it is not love, for all thy flesh and peace.

So, if there are computers that write as computers, computers that write as human beings, human beings that write as human beings, and human beings that write as computers, what on earth is going on? This question was posed by one of the devisors of the site "Bot or Not", Oscar Schwartz, in a 6-minute Tedx speech. Schwartz then goes on talking about something that has also preoccupied another scientist, Byron Reese, in his book *The Fourth Age: Smart Robots, Conscious Computers, and the Future of Humanity* (Atria Books, 2018): it is about the capacity of being human and what defines it. Is it something with which we are born or something that we are trained to become? And how do we define which one is part of it or pertains to it?

In 2017, six scientists wrote and signed a manifesto, in which they are also wondering: Is the capacity of being human something that can be lost or won? Are those who torture, kill, humiliate human existence still considered human? Is a person born e.g. in a western country more human than an indigenous in, say, New Zealand? In the end, is human nature a social, thus changing, construct? And they end up saying: "It's time for us to come out and start building a community of AI scientists, neuroscientists, philologists, game developers, historians of literature, movie producers, writers, entrepreneurs — all those who are united by the passion to discover the first principle of humanity and — furthermore — by the genuine desire to provide humans and machines with compelling and efficient tools of learning and relearning to be human".

Even if, however, certain people need to re-learn how to be human, this does not mean that they were not born totally humane. The capacity of being human lies at the core of our existence, is interwoven with the language we speak, our mental tools, our imagination, our emotions. Even if we create computers with human form or capacities, they will remain mirrors of the human beings, who – among other things – feature self-awareness and a sense of identity, something that a machine, which is programmed just to execute orders, does not dispose of. Transhumanist thinkers have long thought about such questions. Is it, then, ever imaginable for a mirror to reach or overcome that which it mirrors? It remains to be seen.

Academia Letters, June 2021

TALKING ABOUT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (CPTD) [1]

The Power of Imagination – Storytelling in the Classroom

(Kate Ristow)

Don't we all love a good story? Stories make us laugh and they make us cry. They illuminate life and help us to reflect on our life experiences. They entertain us. They encourage us to explore new worlds and to walk in the footsteps of others. Stories validate our beliefs. They teach us about compassion, love, and respect for others. They can be springboards for prayer and make the content of a lesson come to life.

I'd like to introduce you to two extraordinary storytellers: Jeannine Goggin, MPS, and Sr. Marie Ellen Kuhel, OSU. Jeannine has a Masters in Pastoral Studies from Loyola University of New Orleans. While raising seven children with her husband Dan, Jeannine ministered as a catechist, a parish religion coordinator, and Consultant for Children's Catechesis as a member of the Green Bay Diocesan Office Staff.

Currently, she is on the authorship team for Silver Burdett Ginn's religion series, *Blest Are We*, and is a national speaker on faith formation, spirituality, discipleship, and Church and women's issues. Jeannine lives in Neenah, Wisconsin.

Sr. Marie Ellen Kuhel is an Ursuline Sister of Cleveland and has a master's degree from Catholic University of America. Sr. Marie Ellen has extensive experience in ministry, having served as a high school teacher, a youth minister, and a Director of Religious Education. Currently, she is Pastoral Associate at St. Eugene Parish in Cuyahoga Falls,

[1] Read this article for CPTD points. See Page 22.

Ohio. Sr. Marie Ellen is a popular conference speaker and gives workshops, parish missions, and days of reflection on catechetics, RCIA, and adult faith formation.

I recently had the opportunity to chat with Jeannine and Sr. Marie Ellen via e-mail. They were eager to share with CATECHIST readers their wisdom about storytelling. Here's what we talked about.

CATECHIST: Does storytelling have a place in religious education?

Goggin: Storytelling is the key ingredient in faith formation because it helps form a class into a small Christian community, enabling participants to feel comfortable and safe with the catechist and one another. When that environment is experienced, learning flows naturally; life connections and insights are easily shared. It has been said, "When you know someone's story, it is impossible not to love them." I believe that a catechist's responsibility is to help students experience a loving God and a compassionate community. Both embrace them with care, forgiveness, and mercy.

Kuhel: Storytelling is religious education! It is essential to ministry. Ministry is all about inviting people to faith. Jesus was the Master Storyteller. He told stories that have the power to transform our lives. The Gospel of Mark says that Jesus did not speak to his followers without a story: "Without parables, he did not speak to them, but to his own disciples he explained everything in private" (Mark 4:34).

CATECHIST: How do stories impact or affect people?

Kuhel: Stories stir the heart, not just the intellect. They affect the listener profoundly. Stories put us in touch with our truest selves. They make the connection between the biblical word and our own lives. God is continually sending us stories.

Goggin: I concentrate on four perspectives: discovery, engagement, celebration, and commitment. Through stories, we discover our Tradition, history, and heroes. We discover new insights about our beliefs and how we live our lives.

Stories engage us. Think about Zacchaeus' encounter with Jesus, his conversion, and his generous response to those he had cheated [Luke 19:1-10]. We need to encounter Jesus, to experience conversion, and to awaken to a deeper spirituality and solidarity with the world's poor.

All celebrations are invested with storytelling and the Church is a storytelling community. We retell Scripture stories as we celebrate who we are as Church and then connect the stories to our lives.

Lastly, we use stories to define commitment and to challenge us to live as true disciples of Jesus. I think of Jean Donovan, a young missionary who returned to El Salvador in dangerous times to give needy children her love and protection. Jean was murdered by the military for her decision. A commitment to goodness is the challenge for every disciple.

CATECHIST: What kinds of stories do you like to use and what age groups best respond to stories?

Goggin: I have three criteria for choosing a story. First, I must love the story. second, I must be able to BECOME the story. By becoming, I mean that I can identify with its wisdom and humour, its characters and events. Lastly, I must be able to share the story. For me, that means that a story's length, its images, vocabulary, and focus are possible for me to capture and retell.

Stories have universal appeal because we were created by a storytelling God. Since living in caves and sitting around the campfire, we have been tribal by nature. From ancient times to now, it is stories and the community of memories created by storytelling that binds us together. We laugh, listen, participate, learn, and remember through our stories.

As a catechist, I use contemporary stories, newspaper articles, and storybooks. For instance, to open the doors at First Communion family meetings, I like to tell Mem Fox's *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge* [Note: Sr. Marie Ellen also mentioned this book as a wonderful resource for those preparing for First Eucharist]; for first reconciliation meetings, I tell stories that invite people into the process of change, as the Zacchaeus story does. For confirmation, I tell urban stories-real-life tales of contemporary, courageous Christians and committed missioners.

My favourite stories to share are written and illustrated by Patricia Polacco. They can be told to any age level because they often involve family members of varying ages. Two of my Polacco favourites are: *The Keeping Quilt* and *Chicken Sunday*. Both of these involve issues worthy of discussion and reflection.

Kuhel: Mostly I use picture books. Picture books are written for adults to read to children. The stories are simple enough that even the adults can understand them!

Stories – good , well-written stories – are for every one of every age. In a sense, stories are ritual. They help the word take flesh in us and open our imagination to new ways of living, loving, healing, and forgiving.

CATECHIST: What advice can you give to catechists about using stories in religious education?

Goggin: Never memorize a story. Instead, learn it as if you are viewing the scenes of a play. Retell it by imagining the "scenes" and describing them. Do memorize an opening and closing line and incorporate any colourful, descriptive language unique to the story.

Create a file for each unit in your text. As you find stories, pictures, or newspaper articles, clip them out or duplicate them for your file. When you are teaching, your resource file will help to enrich your classes.

Based on the premise that the best response to any story is another story, I use a story stick, a tree branch, or a rain stick decorated with beads, feathers, or ribbons. Only the person holding the stick can tell a story; the rest of the audience or class are listeners. Other options to the story stick are a "story hat" or a shawl that is worn by the storyteller and passed on to the person telling the next story.

Practice telling your story in different ways. Speak to an imaginary audience. Tell the story in front of a mirror. Record the story, listen to it, and ask yourself: How can I tell it better? The key to success is repeated performance!

Kuhel: Don't be afraid of stories. It seems to me that most good stories are scripturally based: *The Runaway Bunny* by Margaret Wise Brown is Psalm 139; *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak is the Prodigal Son. Look for the Scripture in the story.

Twelve Strategies for Storytelling

A good story becomes a great and memorable story if told well. You'll be a more successful storyteller if you incorporate the tips below.

1. Know your story well. Practice, practice, practice!
2. Tell the story; don't just read it.
3. Establish a quiet environment for listening. If possible, gather the children together in a story circle or have them sit on a story rug.
4. Make the story more interesting by changing pace and modulating your voice to reflect different emotions, such as humour, love, excitement, drama, joy, sorrow, and danger.
5. Use gestures, sound effects, and facial expressions to make the story come alive.
6. Make eye contact with the listeners as you tell the story.
7. Don't hurry the story. Let the images and words steep in your students' imaginations.

8. Invite the children to echo a phrase that is key to the story. For example, in the Creation story, they might join you in saying, "God saw how good it was!" as you tell them about each day of creation. Young children especially love the repetition.
9. Use props-a flannel board and felt figures; paper bag puppets; enlarged photocopied colour pictures from the story; or objects that are mentioned in the story.
10. After the initial telling, have the children reprise the story in various ways: acting it out; creating storyboards; or drawing a favourite character or a pivotal part of the story.
11. Ask the children what they learned from the story.
12. Make sure the stories you tell connect to the theme of your lessons. Don't tell a story just because you like it or think the students will enjoy it. Relate the stories you tell to what you are teaching and help the children "get" the connection.

Finding Stories to Share

Establish a relationship with the children's librarian at your community library. Tell her that you are looking for stories you can use to enrich your religious education classes. Tell her the age of your students and the grade level you teach. Mention specific themes you are looking for. For example, if you are teaching baptism, you might want a story that focuses on belonging. If you have a lesson coming up on reconciliation, you will want to find a story that deals with forgiveness, making peace, or the love of a parent for a child.

Don't wait until the last minute to ask a librarian for story resources. Plan three or four weeks ahead and give the librarian time to put together a list of suggestions or a stack of books you can choose from.

Sr. Marie Ellen says she finds stories by "living at Borders Books!" In other words, she visits the store frequently and explores the shelves for new titles she can share with others. I have the good fortune of living near a wonderful children's bookstore. I visit the store, talk with the staff, and browse. I am also on the store's mailing list, so I am notified when new books come out. Any storyteller will agree: it takes time and effort to find good stories, but it's worth it when you stumble on a story you can't wait to share!

You also can do your own research. The children's reference section of almost every library has a terrific book called A to Zoo: Subject Access to Children 's Picture Books by Carolyn W. Lima. Look up the subject or topic you are interested in and you'll find a list of books that might meet your needs. The key to this is actually reading the book before using it with your class. It's part of the preparation process.

Jeannine Goggin suggests using the Internet to locate storytelling resources. She says, "Usually, I begin with the topic – healing, for example – then explore it until I find something I can love, become, and share!"

Recommended Stories

I asked Jeannine and Sr. Marie Ellen to share the titles of some of their favourite books – stories they've used successfully again and again in their ministry. I've also added a few of my own "best loved" stories. Happy reading and sharing!

Jeannine Goggin focused on diversity and offers these suggestions[2]:

- Asian American Stories
- Grandfather's Journey by Allen Say
- Dia's Story Cloth: The Hmong People's Journey of Freedom by Dia Cha

[2] These suggestions are from an American context. Nonetheless, they do give an idea of the kind of story that might be suitable, and many will have a universal appeal.(Editor's Note)

- Native American Stories
- The Birchbark House by Louise Erdrich
- Bears Make Rock Soup and Other Stories by Lise Erdrich
- Hispanic American Stories
- Tomas arid the Library Lady by Pat Mora
- My Name Is Maria Isabel by Alma Flor Ada
- African American Stories
- Pink and Say by Patricia Polacco
- Only Passing Through: The Story of Sojourner Truth by Anne Rockwell
- Sister Marie Ellen Kuhel offers these wonderful tales:
- Tacky the Penguin by Helen Lester
- Night and the Candlemaker by Wolfgang Somary
- The Firekeeper's Son by Linda Sue Park
- You Are Special by Max Lucado

My Favourites

- The Tale of Three Trees by Angela Elwell Hunt
- In God's Name by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso
- Love Your Neighbour: Stories of Values and Virtues by Arthur Dobrin
- Bagels from Benny by Aubrey Davis
- A Child Is a Child by Brigitte Weninger
- The Empty Pot by Demi (single-name author)

Story in Prayer Services

Sister Marie Ellen frequently incorporates stories into prayer services for adults and children. She suggests you use the following outline as a guide:

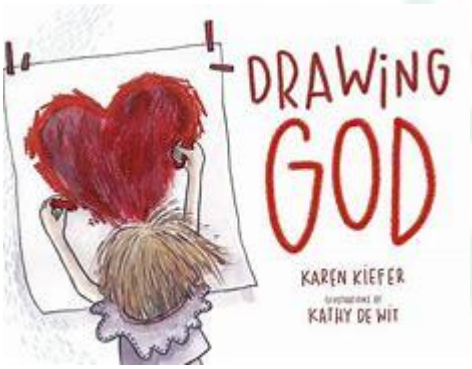
- Opening Song
- Tell the story you've chosen.
- Share Scripture with the group.
- Allow time for silent reflection.
- Generate shared discussion by asking these questions: What did you hear? What word or phrase will you remember? What difference will these stories make in your life?
- Pray the Our Father together.
- Close with a prayer that ties the stories and the discussion together.

Catechist. Dayton: Nov/Dec 2005. Vol. 39, Issue. 3, p. 20-23 (4 pp.)

CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Drawing God Day

www.drawing-god.com



In the children's book, "Drawing God," young Emma is inspired to draw like Picasso after a field trip to the art museum. The urge to draw something beyond spectacular would not leave her side. Emma decides to draw GOD. Emma is so excited to share her images of GOD with her classmates, until she realizes that no one can see GOD in her drawings. However, her contagious faith casts a spell over her classmates and eventually they are all inspired to draw GOD and every picture is different.

Emma's joyful desire to draw GOD and share it with her world is the spirit behind WORLD DRAWING GOD DAY. Everyone sees GOD differently and yet in a beautiful way. There's also so much opportunity to grow in conversation, love and friendship by sharing our own interpretations of God with each other. Although the story, Drawing God is written for children 3 to 8 years old, the messages are really for any age.

Where do you see GOD?

What does GOD look like to you?

Have fun inspiring and creating. There's an extensive guide filled with classroom ideas at the end of the Drawing God book. However, here are some ideas that focus on World Drawing God Day, specifically. Go to

Microsoft Word - World Drawing God Day Idea Kit .docx (wordpress.com)

You can find some activities for Advent here.

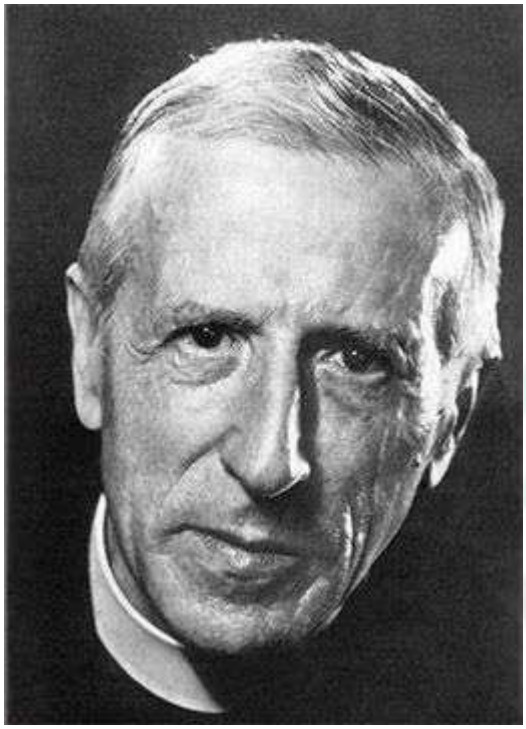
Drawing+God+Advent+Idea+Kit+2022.pdf (squarespace.com)

PORTRAIT

Fire on earth: Teilhard's essay "The Mass on the World"

Francis paid tribute to Teilhard de Chardin during his visit to Mongolia, saying the "often misunderstood" Jesuit theologian intuited that "the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world."

(Michael McGirr)



Teilhard De Chardin (1955)

It is rare to celebrate the centenary of the writing of an essay, especially one as brief as "The Mass on the World" by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. To be fair, The electrodynamics of moving bodies, the paper Einstein published in 1905 while he was working at a droll job in a patent office in Bern is even shorter. Nobody who has seen *Oppenheimer* will doubt the impact of those few pages.

Teilhard was in the same league as Einstein as a creative thinker, especially with regards to the possibilities of matter and the energy hidden within it. Teilhard's work, however, was always towards a coalescence, a bringing together of the energies of the world rather than a splitting them apart. He believed in an ultimate convergence, an omega, a final point towards which all things were evolving. It's a mystery to me that he was the one who was considered threatening.

"The Mass on the World" was not published until 1961, six years after Teilhard died. Like many of his works, including another exquisite essay, *The Divine Milieu*, copies had circulated from hand to hand among his friends and supporters. But Teilhard, a devout Jesuit priest, was seldom in the good books of his ecclesiastical superiors and was forbidden from publishing or lecturing for many of his most productive years. This was deeply painful to him as, despite the sophistication of his mind and the esteem of his scientific peers, there was a simplicity in Teilhard. He was consigned to an isolation that grated against his convivial nature.

"Letters from a Traveller"

Born in 1881, Teilhard grew up in the warm folds of a Catholic family in southern France; his first love beyond his family was the landscape of Auvergne, especially its rocks. In his spiritual biography, *The Heart of Matter*, written in 1950, he begins: "I was certainly not more than six or seven years old when I began to feel myself drawn by Matter – or, more correctly, by something which 'shone' at the heart of Matter." This was the beginning of his lifelong quest for a "unique all-sufficing and necessary reality".

In the middle of 1923, Teilhard was a member of a scientific caravan finding its way through Mongolia and China, carrying an improbable cargo of fossils which would shed light on the development of the human species. Conditions were basic, but Teilhard, despite his refined and gentle manners, never minded this. He had coped better than most as a stretcher bearer on

the western front during World War I. In China, Teilhard described himself as "a pilgrim of the future on my way back from a journey made entirely in the past". His travels in Chinese pre-history, as exciting as they were, turned his attention towards what the world was becoming. A letter to a friend on August 26, 1923, is collected in *Letters from a Traveller* (1962):

“The more I look into myself the more I find myself possessed by the conviction that it is only the true science of Christ, running through all things, that is to say true mystical science, that really matters … I keep developing and slightly improving, with the help of prayer, my "Mass upon things". It seems to me that in a sense the true substance to be consecrated each day is the world's development during that day- the bread symbolizing appropriately what creation succeeds in producing, the wine (blood) what creation causes to be lost in exhaustion and suffering in the course of its effort.”

The "Mass Upon Things" to which he refers is "The Mass on the World".

"I will make the whole earth my altar"

The essay begins with a moment of stillness. Teilhard finds himself at the start of a new day perched out of doors on a high place. He has no bread, wine, or altar. Instead, "I will make the whole earth my altar and on it will offer you all the labours and sufferings of the world". His utensils for saying such a Mass are simply "the depths of a soul laid widely open to all the forces which in a moment will rise up from every corner of the earth and converge upon the Spirit". He brings to mind "all those you have given me to sustain and charm my life" and, beyond them, "the vast anonymous army of living humanity".

I have read this essay on countless occasions and never fail to find another phrase of beauty and depth which had not caught my attention in quite the same way before. It challenges my understanding of the Eucharist or Mass, the central act of communal worship for many Christians. It is easy to mistake the Eucharist for what happens in church. The Eucharist is not confined to any particular liturgy, least of all one with so many airless rules and regulations that it is difficult to feel a pulse of life in its veins. When we gather for Mass, we bring to focus the entire Eucharist of creation: the bread is our toil, the wine is our pain:

“All of us, Lord, from the moment we are born feel within us this disturbing mixture of remoteness and nearness; and in our heritage of sorrow and hope, passed down to us through the ages, there is no yearning more desolate than that which makes us weep with vexation and desire as we stand in the midst of the Prescence which hovers about us nameless and impalpable and is indwelling in all things.”

An old man in Central Park named "Mr Tayer"

Jean Houston, a founder of the human potential movement and close advisor of Hillary Clinton, tells a wonderful story about her childhood. In the early 1950s, she was saddened by the divorce of her parents. The break-up hit her at a bad time: she was an adolescent, exceedingly tall, awkward, and self-conscious. By chance, she met an old man in New York's Central Park who asked her simply to call him "Mr Tayer".

The pair started taking weekly walks and this became a safe space for Jean, meaning, for her, a place of adventure that lifted her beyond her anxious world. She was fascinated by the joy that this man in his seventies took in the smallest living thing, such as a caterpillar. In the middle of a great metropolis, he would exclaim about the caterpillar's 'wonderful, funny little feet' and told Jean that she, too, would experience her own metamorphosis, becoming not just a butterfly, but perhaps more like a cloud that floated above the cacophony of urban life. She later wrote in *Godspeed: the journey of Christ* (1988):

“Old Mr Tayer was truly diaphanous to every moment and being with him was like being in attendance at God's own party, a continuous celebration of life and its

mysteries … Always he saw the interconnections of things … he was truly penetrated by the reality that was yearning for him as much as he was yearning for it."

She told her mother that when she was looking at nature with Mr Tayer "I leave my littleness behind".

Only years later, when she came across one of his books, did she realize that the old man was Teilhard. Sadly, the austere Church of the early twentieth century had little place for such an expansive spirit. At the time Jean met him, he was exiled from Europe and forbidden to teach or publish.

One day, he failed to meet his weekly appointment with Jean, and she was sad. He had died alone. Ten people came to his funeral; only one, Pierre Leroy, attended his graveside.

https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/fire-on-earth-telihards-essay-the-mass-on-the-world/18304

WEBSITE

Church History

Church History in Christianity: Key People, Events and More

A website well worth exploring, including:

Timelines

6000-1 BC AD 1-300 301-600 601-900 901-1200 1201-1500 1501-1600 1601-1700 1701-1800 1801-1900 1901-2000 2001-Now

Church History For Kids (Feature Articles)

- George Whitefield: From School Dropout to Open-Air Evangelist
- Hudson Taylor: Fit to Serve, Missionary to China
- C. S. Lewis: An Adventure in Faith
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer: The Cost of Discipleship
- Jim Elliot: Story and Legacy
- William and Catherine Booth: Building God's Army
- Richard Wurmbrand: The Voice of the Martyrs

- Halloween: In the Land of the Shadow
- Origen: The Stone That Sharpens Us All
- Lottie Moon: The Southern Belle Who Went to China
- William Wilberforce: The Little Man Who Stopped a Big Evil
- Menno Simons: Pioneering a Way of Peace
- Mary Jones: "God Will Give Me a Bible."
- Charles Finney: Bold Revivalist with New Ideas
- Easter, a Play for All Time
- Mary McLeod Bethune; a Missionary to Her Own People
- Special Issue--Christmas Part 1
- William Carey, the Father of Modern Missions Part 1
- Rosa Parks and the Bus Ride That Changed America
- Polycarp: Courage on Display Part 1
- Francis Asbury: Preacher on Horseback Part 1
- John Wesley: Father of Methodism
- John Bunyan: The Jailor's Story
- John Calvin: Reluctant Reformer
- The Life and Faith of Johann Sebastian Bach: 'Soli Deo Gloria' (To the Glory of God Alone)
- Phillis Wheatley: A Slave No More
- Mitsuo Fuchida: The Enemy Whose Attack Provoked America
- Ida Sophia Scudder: Reluctant Missionary
- Richard Allen: Freedom Without Equality Is Not Freedom at All
- Sojourner: Witness to Truth
- Perpetua: Her Prison Became Her Palace
- How Did John Newton Discover God's Amazing Grace?
- Adoniram Judson, First Missionary from the United States
- Robert Raikes and How We Got Sunday School
- St. Patrick of Ireland: From Slave to Missionary
- George Washington Carver: Perseverance and Resourcefulness
- Mary Slessor Issue 2: White Ma of Calabar
- Mary Slessor Issue 1: The Worst Place on Earth
- Squanto and the First Thanksgiving
- Martin Luther: Father of the Reformation
- David Livingstone: Explorer, Missionary and Abolitionist
- Augustine: Troubled Youth, Famous Thinker
- Harriet Tubman: Freedom or Death
- Nate Saint Fit to Fly ... for God
- Corrie Ten Boom's Life According to Her Own Words
- George Mueller, Orphanages Built by Prayer
- Fanny Crosby Blind Hymnwriter
- William Tyndale, God's Outlaw
- Samuel Morris, Missionary to America
- Gladys Aylward's Long Road to China

BOOK REVIEW

A Church against science?

Science's threat to faith is actually no threat at all. A review of Nicholas Spencer's "Magisteria: the Entangled Histories of Science and Religion"

(Tom Verde)

A section of "The Last Judgment" by Michelangelo Buonarroti

Perhaps the most famous image in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, painted around 1511, is The Creation of Adam, the moment when God is a divine breath away from imparting life to Adam with the near touch of their outstretched fingers. Yet before God created human beings, Scripture tells us, he created the sun, the stars and "the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth," an act depicted in a previous panel, The Creation of the Sun, Moon, and Plants. In this dramatic scene, the radiant ball of the sun is the focal point. The depiction of the Last Judgment on the chapel's altar wall also places Christ and the solar disc at the centre of the universe. The sun's pre-eminence in the chapel's famous artwork has led to speculation that Michelangelo, with the approval and acknowledgement of his papal patrons, incorporated into his painting the contemporary theory of Copernican heliocentrism which placed the sun, and not the earth, at the centre of the cosmos.

But hold on. Wasn't Galileo dragged before Vatican authorities a century or so later and placed under permanent house arrest for defending the very same theory? Had the Church's opinion on the science of astronomy changed so radically in the years between Michelangelo's inspired brush strokes and the 1630 publication of Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems, Galileo's defense of Copernicus's refutation of geocentrism? Or was there less distance than we think between the teachings of the Church and lessons of the laboratory?

A relationship more cooperative than contentious

This is the question that author Nicholas Spencer, a fellow at London-based Christian think tank Theos and the International Society for Science and Religion, explores in *Magisteria*, his intelligent, often surprising history of the relationship between science and religion throughout the centuries. This relationship was indeed sometimes contentious, but he argues that it was more often cooperative. Spencer begins his story in Alexandria, Egypt in 415 CE when a "mob of enraged Christians" dragged the philosopher and mathematician Hypatia into the streets and flayed her alive with razor-sharp oyster shells before burning her to death. Her crime? The study of ancient Greek mathematics, geometry, and astronomy—rather than orthodox Christianity—as a "way of grasping what was immutable and holy."

While the gruesome account of her death was probably an exaggeration, the truth was that Christian bishops sat in on her lectures, not to gather damning evidence, but to gain access to the sort of classical knowledge that the Church ultimately treasured. During the Middle Ages, in scriptoriums from sunny southern Italy to the frigid reaches of Northumbria, monks busily copied and preserved "the decaying manuscripts of antiquity, Christian and pagan alike." Thanks to their diligence, the works of Aristotle, Euclid, Plato, Ptolemy, and other natural philosophers (as they were called before the word "scientist" was coined in 1834) not only survived but filled libraries and formed the bedrock curricula of Europe's cathedral schools and earliest universities. "In actual fact," Spencer writes, "for much of history, religion wasn't just 'not at war' with science, but it actively supported it, serving to legitimise, preserve, encourage and develop scientific ideas and activities."

This support was not without scriptural foundation. "The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth his handywork," Psalm 19 proclaims. In his letter to the Romans, Paul advised that God's "invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature" may be perceived "from what has been made." By this reasoning, the dedicated, scientific study of creation was nothing less than "an exaltation of the creator" leading to "the perfection of our souls," as the thirteenth-century French bishop William of Auvergne wrote.

Science and faith in Judaism and Islam

This philosophy was hardly unique to Christianity, and Spencer devotes a respectful amount of space to Judaism and Islam in his discussion. He gives credit where credit is due to the likes of revered Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides, one of the greatest thinkers of the Middle Ages, for his efforts to "bring theology into harmonious dialogue with Greek philosophy and science." During the Abbasid caliphate (roughly 750–1250 CE), astronomical observatories and libraries/translation centres, such as Baghdad's famed Bayt Al-Hikma (House of Wisdom) popped up across the Muslim world, side by side with mosques and madrasas (Islamic theological schools). In Islam, science and religion also met on a practical plane: calculating the correct direction of Mecca at prayer time, in an era when the caliphate stretched across thousands of miles, required an understanding of astronomy, geometry, and trigonometry. The sheer number of surviving medieval Arabic manuscripts on astronomy alone outnumber their Greek and Latin counterparts.

Beneficiaries and inheritors of many of these diligently translated and interpreted documents were churchmen such as twelfth-century German Dominican friar Albertus Magnus (Albert the Great) who composed empirical studies of plants, minerals, and the animal kingdom. Albert's education was grounded in the teachings of Aristotle, as well as the writings of eleventh-century Persian physician Ibn Sina (father of early-modern medicine) and twelfth-century Andalusian philosopher and polymath Ibn Rushd. Albert's most famous pupil, fellow Dominican Thomas

Aquinas, leaned heavily on Ibn Rushd's commentaries on Aristotle when writing his own magnum opus, the Summa Theologica, which utilized Aristotelian logic to scientifically prove the existence of God. Around the same time, at Oxford University, scholastic philosopher and bishop Robert Grosseteste wrote extensive treatises on astronomy, rainbows, tidal movements, mathematics, and the nature of light (De Luce). The university's interdisciplinary Ordered Universe project, established in 2010, continues to translate and analyse Grosseteste's writings to this day.

The Christian faith of some of history's greatest scientists

Bishops and monks weren't the only members of the Church who carried the torch of scientific knowledge. Readers may be surprised to learn just how many famous figures in the history of science have been people of faith. Copernicus received his doctorate not in astronomy but in canon law and served as a canon at Frombork Cathedral in northern Poland. His intellectual descendent, German astronomer Johannes Kepler, once wrote that he "wanted to become a theologian" and set out to show in his first book, The Sacred Mystery of the Cosmos (1596) that it was God, the cosmic mathematician, who "determined the order of the celestial bodies."

Catholic friar Marin Mersenne, a contemporary and correspondent of Galileo, introduced the Italian astronomer's work to France and honoured Galileo's work by building working models based on his theories. Ultimate sceptic René Descartes was happy to leave matters of faith to the Church, yet he dedicated his Meditations on First Philosophy (1641) to the Sorbonne's faculty of theology. His famous dictum, cogito ergo sum ("I think, therefore I am") may have affirmed his earthly existence, yet he freely admitted that "man cannot achieve correct knowledge of natural things so long as he does now know God."

The charter of the Enlightenment Era's preeminent scientific think tank, London's Royal Society, stated that it was devoted "to the glory of God the Creator." Meanwhile, one of its most famous presidents, Sir Isaac Newton, whose "science did not banish God from the universe" (as Spencer observed), believed the study of theology was more critical than that of mathematics or science.

Even some of the most prominent early-modern scientists whose discoveries upended our understanding of the physical world maintained deep theological convictions. Chemist Michael Faraday (another Royal Society president), a pioneer of the study of electromagnetism, was a deeply devoted member of a Church of Scotland sect. For him, the "beauty of electricity" as he put it, was that it is governed by laws which "God has been pleased to work in his material creation." Even Charles Darwin himself—whose theory of evolution was perhaps the most consequential leap forward in the history of science since Copernicus—entered Cambridge in 1828 with the intention of becoming an Anglican priest.

The Reformation and Christian fundamentalism deal a blow

This is not to say that the long relationship between religion and science has always been chummy, and Spencer readily acknowledges this. When the two have come into conflict, the issue, more often than not, has been over authority, or, as Spencer puts it, who maintains "the right to pronounce on nature, the cosmos, and reality." This is where Galileo ran afoul, asserting his right (and the right of independent scholars) to judge for himself how the heavens operated. It's not that the Church has historically been opposed to new ideas. Never prone to alacrity, however, it preferred to let go of old ones in its own good time.

The Protestant Reformation was another blow to the Catholic Church's authority, though there was resistance from both Protestants and Catholics to the eventual abandonment of the Aristotelian understanding of the universe. Ultimately

it was Protestants, in particular fundamentalist Christians, who dug in their heels on the most threatening scientific re-evaluation of creation: the theory of evolution. To these believers, accepting Darwin's theory meant rejecting the literal truth of Genesis, which even most Jews regard as allegorical.

The pushback gained momentum in the early twentieth century as Evangelical parents demanded that evolution not be taught in schools. They brought their case to court in Dayton, Tennessee in the summer of 1925 when fundamentalist firebrand William Jennings Bryan argued against evolution in the famous Scopes "Monkey Trial." Bryan's opponent, Clarence Darrow, lost the case but won in the court of public opinion. In his opening remarks at the trial, Darrow's co-counsel Dudley Malone stated that "there are millions of people who believe in evolution and in the stories of creation as set forth in the Bible and who find no conflict between the two."

Science's threat to faith, in other words, and as Spencer recounts in this eclectic and informative history, is actually no threat at all.

https://international.la-croix.com/news/science-tech/a-church-against-science/18424

FESTIVALS

Hanukkah (7-15 December 2023)

Hanukkah starts at nightfall on December 7, 2023 and ends with nightfall on December 15, 2023, beginning on the Hebrew calendar date of 25 Kislev, and lasting for eight days. It marks the miraculous victory of the Maccabees, Jewish freedom fighters, over the Seleucidian Greek occupiers in the year 139 BCE. After recapturing Jerusalem's Holy Temple, which had been converted into a place of idol worship, they searched for pure oil with which to light the Temple menorah. They found just enough to burn for one day, but miraculously it burned for eight days until more oil could be brought.

On each of the eight nights of Chanukah, Jewish people light special menorahs (candelabras), adding another flame each night, until on the eighth night eight flames are burning brightly. The lighting takes place at home, in a doorway or near a window, and is performed after brief blessings are recited.

On Chanukah, it is customary to play with dreidels, tops upon which four Hebrew letters, nun, gimmel, hay, and shin, are written.

In modern times, communal menorah lightings are often held in public squares, sharing Chanukah's message of the triumph of light over darkness and freedom to worship G-d. (www.chabad.org)

LOCAL NEWS

South African Catholic bishops call for protection of whistleblowers

Bishops call on Justice Department to protect whistleblowers as more than 300 witnesses testify to widespread corruption during the Jacob Zuma presidency.

(La Croix International staff)

Catholic bishops in South Africa have taken a stand to denounce corruption among the political class and encourage and protect whistleblowers who are risking their lives for the common good.

"We applaud you for the gift of courage and self-sacrifice in denouncing the corruption in the country", said the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC), that also brings together bishops from Botswana and Eswatini. "We assure you of our continued solidarity and prayers... We applaud you for the gift of courage and self-sacrifice as whistleblowers. Your example of sacrificing self-interests and comfort for the sake of the common good is something our country currently needs in abundance", the SACBC said in open letter to the people of God in South Africa, signed by the conference president Bishop Sithembele Sipuka of Mthatha.

The SACBC bishops said they felt compelled to send a message of gratitude and support to you, honest South Africans and called on the Justice Department "to find a way to protect whistleblowers in the interim while the laws are being reviewed." "Our hope and prayer are that the proposed legal reforms on whistleblowers recently released by the Department of Justice will soon translate into effective action for improved safety and protection of whistleblowers", the bishops said.

"State capture" and widespread corruption

The whistleblowers were crucial to the investigations conducted by the so-called "Zondo" commission, named after its chairperson Chief Justice Raymond Zondo, and which detailed the way state resources were plundered during the presidency of Jacob Zuma. It shows how the wealthy businessmen, the Gupta brothers, tried to influence political and economic decisions in a process known as "state capture" and allegedly orchestrated widespread corruption with Zuma's help.

Corruption charges include crippling the country's revenue service, the national carrier South African Airways, looting the agency that runs the country's passenger railways, interfering with the public broadcaster, appointment of officials to prevent investigations from taking place at the behest of Zuma and others close to him, and "selling" of senior ministerial posts in exchange for bargain deals and contracts. Zuma was ousted in February 2018.

The Zondo commission was to work for 180 days but the hearings stretched to more than 400 days over four during which more than 300 witnesses testified, collected in collected 159,109 pages of evidence. Father Stanislaus Muyebe, Vicar General of the Dominican Order in Southern Africa, and Director of SACBC's "Justice and Peace" Commission was instrumental in calling for the recently completed report. The first part of the report was published on January 4, 2022 and the fifth and final part was released on June 22, 2022.

Corruption cases in South Africa are known to drag on for years with many delays. The fact that Zuma is still in court facing corruption charges relating to a weapons sale from more than two decades ago, long before he was elected president, demonstrates how drawn-out the legal process can be.

https://international.la-croix.com/news/world/south-african-catholic-bishops-call-for-protection-of-whistleblowers/18288

Developing School Leaders

(Denis Hurley Centre)

It is often said that there is a crisis of leadership in South Africa: not only in politics but in business, in education, in the media and in our churches.

As a small contribution to addressing this issue, Sr Cathy and Raymond have been working with Mark Campbell of the KZN Catholic Schools Office to deliver a course through the year to help grow leaders for Catholic schools. Catholic schools in South Africa enjoy a rich mix of learners and educators – Catholics, other Christians and other faiths – and so the participants in this programme also came from a mix of backgrounds, yet all committed to the values of a Catholic school. A few of them have recently started as principals; most are deputies and heads of department who hope one day that they will also hold 'the top spot'.

The programme is one that was developed by Raymond when at the Jesuit Institute, together with the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) and the Catholic Schools Office for Gauteng. Whilst it has been delivered in other parts of the country, 2023 was its first outing in KZN.

Some of the participants visiting a classroom at Mariannhill Junior Primary. The school is still waiting for completion by the Department of Education of new classrooms and, until then, there are 60 children, and two classes, operating side by side in each classroom!

The course began in February with a two-night retreat at Coolock House on the South Coast giving the initially 17 participants a chance to look inward at their own values and what their leadership journey had been up to now. They were taught techniques of journaling and self-reflection that they could then use during the course of the year. Since then they have met every six/eight weeks focusing each time on a different theme: strategic planning, engaging with stakeholders, managing staff, finance and fundraising, and maximising resources. These sessions have benefited from input by school principals with decades of experience and also from the Director of CIE and Bishop Neil Frank of Mariannhill.

The network of Catholic schools – 323 institutions across the country – ranges from wealthy urban independent schools to small farm schools to under-resourced Government schools which are part of the public-schools-on-private-property scheme. Some are owned by bishops (there are six Catholic dioceses covering KZN) and some by religious orders

(such as the Holy Family, Marists and Dominicans). This means it is one of the only occasions in which leaders from private and public schools come together with a shared mission and a willingness to learn from each other. The shared learning was also promoted by hosting sessions at different schools over the course of the year. (The picture at the top shows the group at the famous St Francis College under the appropriate motto Ora et Labora – Prayer and Work).

The principals are in the final phase of the programme, writing their last assignment this time reflecting on how they have grown personally and professionally over the last 10 months. It has been a privilege to accompany these rising leaders, almost all of them showing great commitment, resourcefulness, patience and spiritual depth in how they respond to the complex issues facing our schools and our country. We wish them well as they complete the programme and continue their journey of leadership in their schools.

Women Of Different Faiths Come Together For Peace

(Denis Hurley Centre)

So many of us have been troubled by what has happened, and continues to happen, in the Middle East and wonder how to respond. As Pope Francis has said: "War is always a defeat." We were thus delighted when we were asked by a Jewish woman and a Muslim woman to help facilitate a prayer meeting. The request came jointly from DUT's Prof. Monique Marks (a long-time partner of the DHC) and from Nadia Meer (whose aunt, Fatima Meer, was a close friend of Archbishop Hurley). Our own Sr Cathy Murrugan was a key participant with her fellow Holy Family sisters. The following report is from Monique:

On the evening of 19 October, an usual event took place in Durban in the midst of the massive destruction and loss of life in the Holy Land. Over 30 women from different cultures and beliefs (Bahá'i, Christian, Jewish, Hindu and Muslim) came together peacefully to dialogue about the very distressing situation in Palestine and Israel. The aim was to create a welcoming platform for the sharing of grief and fears as well as hopes, and to join hands in friendship and prayer

These diverse women met at Saint Joseph's church hall in Morningside. Symbolically wearing white and bearing candles, women spoke of the importance of commonality rather than difference. Their common identities brought them together as mothers, sisters and conscious human beings who are distressed by suffering and injustice. Some have been directly impacted by the existing conflict, with families in Gaza or in Israel.

Theirs was a resounding shared call: "We as South African women say stop the violence. We call for peace!" It is a simple message but one that is not being practiced by global leaders as they continue to make decisions with violent outcomes. Instead they could be looking for just and peaceful solutions utilising their power and influence to promote truth and reconciliation.

The event was facilitated by Hailey Fudu from the Bahá'i community. She held each woman present with care, allowing every person to speak up and out within the bounds of mutual respect and consideration. She provided prayer books from all global religions for the

women to explore and many were moved to share short readings from these texts that have meaning in the current context. Interestingly, most women shared something they connected with from a faith other than their own.

Some of the women had braved condemnation from their own communities and their families for participating in this event, thus showcasing the commitment of these women to sisterhood and to mutual care. The spirit of South African Ubuntu emerged in this safe space of sharing: we are who we are because of others; we know that peace is possible even when it appears unattainable.

This group is committed to meeting on an ongoing basis, bringing along menfolk in the future, but holding sisterhood as an example for a better world.

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Professional Development Points Schedule

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

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