Formation for Mission

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Fleming, D 1996, Draw me into your friendship: the spiritual exercises & literal translation and a contemporary reading, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, St. Louis.


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John Paul II 1988, Post-Synodal apostolic exhortation christifideles laici: the vocation and the mission of the lay faithful in the church and in the world, St Paul Publications, Homebush.


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Scroope, M 2008, Key readings for busy people. 4th edn, Loyola Institute, North Sydney.


Touhy, D 2005, Leading life to the full, Veritas, Dublin.
6. PRAYER OF THE SENSES
This prayer brings the person into a real intimacy with Jesus. As we grow or fall in love with others, our commitment deepens as we begin to share a history. Memories, objects, smells, sounds and sensations help us to understand and recall the person with new eyes.

In this prayer method, we pray with the senses. To enter into this fully, this method is always prayed after two contemplations and two repetitions on the same gospel scene. The prayer of the senses assumes a sustained prayer experience and a shared history of love.

7. CONTEMPLATION
A prayer method that is possible for anyone. It is sometimes referred to as the prayer of silent love because it brings the prayer into a journey home. Two methods are generally used in this form of praying:
(i) reading the text then contemplating it (This involves the processes of moving from head to heart; recollection to quiet, desire to gift)
(ii) identifying a single word which can help us to find meaning (also called centering prayer).

8. PRAYER OF REPETITION
This is a simple method of deepening our prayer life. It is undertaken after any kind of prayer experience. It reflects the natural movement in prayer toward the simple, personal and contemplative.

9. PRAYING TOGETHER
The art of praying the Gospels reaches its full dimension whenever two or more gather in the name of Jesus to pray. This naturally includes the dimension of reflection. This form of praying as a group brings us in our personal lives, into the relationship which God intended, and into the world where we become fully conscious to the gifts that God has given. Five models are prompted in this prayer method:
(i) listening in community model
(ii) a desire to open the text through meditation model
(iii) a discernment model
(iv) a charismatic model
(v) contemplative model.

10. PRAYER OF DESIRE
Once referred to as prayers of aspiration. They usually take the form of short, pithy prayers that raise one to God. This prayer comes from two ways:
(i) naturally in our praying the gospels
(ii) spontaneously expressed from our desires.
This prayer is prayed as it comes, in any place or time, in a free and trusting relationship with Jesus.

(Reference: Hansen, M 2004 The gospels for prayer, Ave Maria, Indiana, pp. 15-25)

Australian Catholic education has undergone significant change over the past forty years. While the various transitions have been relatively smooth, substantial and daring challenges remain. One such challenge pertains to the meaning, support and resourcing of the faith formation offered to lay Catholic educators. Generally speaking, in the transition of Catholic schools from a predominantly religious to lay staff, formation has not enjoyed the urgency or priority it requires. Yet, without a strong sense of vocation directed to the building of the Kingdom of God, it would be difficult for teachers to effectively contribute to the development of the ‘culture or habitus’ and ‘integral formation’ of students, central to the mission of Catholic schools. Since 2005 substantial formation programs have been developed and resourced, giving great hope for the faith nurture of all who are co-responsible for Catholic education.

Yet, despite these significant initiatives the formation of lay educators continues to be complicated by the tensions and struggles taken up in the inherited social and cultural patterns of the current era. Spirituality is undoubtedly coming back in vogue, but it is often expressed in terms of finding personal meaning and affirmation of self, with a disconnection from religion and Church. Christian beliefs and practices related to selflessness, community and the presence of God do not readily appear compatible with the secular world view. The forces of secular culture are now perceived to be so strong that unless certain actions are quickly progressed, such as the formation of lay educators, the mission of Catholic education may well ‘be doomed to failure’. There is a danger that it may not be possible for lay Catholic educators to recognize the pervasive hold these concepts have over them.

In this presentation we would like to share with you the experience of one Catholic Education Office as it addressed the imperatives around faith formation in its systemic schools. The presentation will address three issues:
1. Conceptual perspectives on formation;
2. A case study of an organic approach to religious and spiritual formation;
3. An overview of strategic directions in implementing the Spiritual Exercises.
It is essential that leaders and staff understand, and are solidly committed to, the Catholic identity of the school.

*Catholic Schools At A Crossroads, 2007, #10*

If Catholic schools are to succeed in the mission articulated above it will be essential that all those appointed as Principals, Assistant Principals and Religious Education Co-ordinators (RECs) are faithful Catholics who are ready to embrace the mission of the Catholic school today and to lead and inspire their staff and parents accordingly.

*Ibid #16*

To be effective bearers of the Church’s educational tradition, however, laypersons who teach in Catholic schools need a ‘religious formation that is equal to their general, cultural, and most especially, professional formation’.

*The Holy See’s Teaching on Catholic Schools, 2006, p.5*

In discovering and living their proper vocation and mission, the lay faithful must be formed according to the union which exists from their being members of the Church and members of human society. There cannot be two parallel lives in their existence: on the one hand, the so-called ‘spiritual life’, with its values and demands; and on the other, the so-called secular life; that is, life in a family, at work, in social relationships, in the responsibilities of public life and in culture.

*Christifideles Laici, 1989, #59*

Catholic educators need a ‘formation of the heart’: they need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens this love and opens their spirits to others, so that their educational commitment becomes a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love, (cf. Gal 5:6)

*Educating Together in the Catholic School, 2007, #25*

The transmission of the Christian message through teaching implies a mastery of the knowledge of the truths of the faith and of the principles of spiritual life that require constant improvement…Apart from their theological formation, educators need also to cultivate their spiritual formation in order to develop their relationship with Jesus Christ and become a master like him.

*Ibid, #26*

## Ten Prayer Methods

1. **The Lord’s Prayer**

   The model of all Christian prayer is found within this prayer. Jesus teaches the art of praying. He encourages us to ask, seek, request with confidence and persistence; to be sincere and true to self and to God. We are encouraged to seek solitude, interiority and intimacy in our prayers and not to be caught up in complicated words or phrases but rather to remain in the present and attend to the Kingdom of God.

   The method can be used with the Hail Mary, Magnificat and any other formal Christian prayer.

2. **Sacred Reading**

   This is sometimes referred to as lectio divina. It is a prayerful reading of scripture leading to a greater communication with God. This method describes the art of praying the Gospels. There are four movements (which are not necessarily linear) found within this prayer method: use ordinary numbers below

   (i) read
   (ii) meditate
   (iii) pray
   (iv) contemplate.

3. **Meditation**

   The three powers of the soul are traditionally nominated as memory, understanding and will. It is through using them in scriptural prayer that we are reminded that the intellect understands and the will impels us into further action reflecting the mystery of God. As we remember, we see the details of the event. Secondly, we see the truth in the story, what is revealed about God through Jesus. Thirdly, we desire God, through the movement between the events and the truth, Jesus to self and God to respond.

4. **Imaginative Contemplation**

   This prayer has a rich history because in this method of praying it emphasises the humanity of Jesus, the use of imagination and feelings to enter into an intimate relationship with him. This relationship prompts a self-giving love. The Ignatian method of imaginative contemplation is directed to finding God in daily life with the aim to be in union with Christ working in the world, in our daily life.

   In this method, it is not important to complete the whole text but to enter fully into the text thereby entering fully into a relationship with Jesus.

5. **Prayer of the Body**

   If we visualise our body as clay and God as the potter, thumb marks can be found in each of our lives. Our response to this presence can also be expressed in the prayer of the body. Four sets of suggestions listed below are some of the commonly used ways to develop and express a deeper union between God and ourselves:

   (i) we spontaneously use a position, gesture or movement (during prayer)
   (ii) we consciously use a position, gesture or movement (during prayer)
   (iii) we unconsciously allow a position, gesture or movement to speak to us or to speak to Jesus (during prayer)
   (iv) we suggest ways to pray using the whole body, i.e., sing, make music, dance.
4. Ignatian Methods of Praying the Gospels

A common basic structure

1. Preparatory Prayer
   • I enter God's presence
   • I ask for help.

2. Body of Prayer
   a. Introductory steps
   • I read the text
   • I ask for what I desire.
   b. Prayer points
   • I pray the text

3. Concluding Prayer
   • I converse with God.

What makes for our different methods of prayer?

• Firstly, our desire or intention results in different choices of scripture text and ways of proceeding from that choice.
• Secondly, it is found in the different ways of reading the scripture.
• Thirdly, in the body of prayer, different methods will suggest petition, meditation, contemplation or conversation.

Entering and reflecting upon prayer

It is constantly said we live in very busy times. We need to find and hold onto that sacred time and space for what nurtures our relationship with God and thereby nurtures us. We make a commitment to a certain time(s).

To enter into prayer, St Ignatius took the three elements common to all past prayer methods:
• we place ourselves in the presence of God
• offer God reverence
• ask for God's grace.

Find and establish a relaxed prayer position whether it be kneeling, sitting, standing or lying down. Remember although relaxed, persons will still need to be alert!

Reflection after prayer provides the vital link between prayer and the daily life we are living. A rhythm is created between living, praying and reflecting, each nurturing each other, helping us to be both enlivened and capable of greater discernment about the grace of the Spirit in our life and actions.

The Meaning of Formation

The word formation is drawn from the Latin word *forma*, meaning 'to shape'. Formation refers to opportunities provided for individuals or groups to prepare them for a special or particular mission. It is also the natural process whereby human beings are shaped through the realities of daily life which challenge them to grow into higher states of living. There is a desire in every human heart for transcendence. Human Beings are created by God and only discover the full wonder of their humanity in being true to their creator.

This process in a Catholic spiritual sense involves assistance with a person's personal growth so that this transformation is embedded in the life of Jesus Christ, and his Body, the Church. Pope Benedict XVI calls for a 'formation of the heart' that provides opportunities for spiritual encounters 'with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirit to others'.

Christian religious and spiritual formation leads a person to a deeper life centred in the Holy Trinity. It is a gift in which all can share, allowing greater growth into the Trinity, the demands of discipleship and the vocations of administration, teaching and parenting. 'What is needed', wrote Pope John Paul II 1985, ‘are ministers of the Gospel who are experts in humanity, familiar with their own emotions and able to share them with others, and who are at the same time, contemplatives who have fallen in love with God.'

Some Core Elements of Formation

1. Christ centred
   The centre of all formation is fidelity to Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth and the life. It is about coming to know, love and imitate him and so entering into the life of the Trinity (John Paul II 2001, #39).

2. Communio
   Christian formation is decidedly relational and significantly influenced by the community context in which people find themselves. Access to mentors, spiritual companions, animators and formators are vital for the support of teachers in their faith growth. It is an experience of communion.

3. Vocational
   The formative process is also about cultivating one's personal vocation to do God's will wherever one is placed in life.

4. Invitational
   Membership of a Catholic school community brings with it a responsibility for staff to seek understanding of its identity and mission. The school has a responsibility to invite each staff member to participate in appropriate educational and formative programs that provide this understanding.
5. Integral
Formation engages with people as total human beings. It ensures that there is no gap between the reality of daily life and a person's faith life.

6. Personal
God's self-revelation to each person is to be found in the reality of their daily lives. The human heart is the centre of all spiritual formation, for it is from this inner recess that a person is moved to live in God's love.

7. Life long and developmental
Formation is a task that a person engages in throughout the whole life journey. Christian living is a pilgrimage which is only fulfilled through grace after death.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Inner Circle —
Baptised in Jesus Christ
Through their personal narratives, individuals are connected to the wider community. Through Baptism, persons are committed to the life of the Church, which in this particular case finds expression in the life of parish school and its mission to serve Christ.

Middle Circle —
Living in Jesus Christ
Religious and spiritual formation is informed and guided by the Christian life of ‘Walking Jesus’ Way’, ‘Telling Jesus’ Truth’ and ‘Living Jesus’ Life’. (John14:6) All baptised Christians are called to this experience.

Outer Circle —
Missionaries of God’s Love
This formation is expressed within the parish school and contemporary culture through the New Evangelisation, in which we participate for the greater good of others, creation and God.

3. THE ART OF PRAYING

The art of praying the Gospels begins with our desire for a relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. From this desire many forms of scriptural prayer have flourished:

contemplative meditative personal liturgical communal

A key outcome for all in Catholic education is that each person grows increasingly confident in finding prayer methods that are unique to them and their particular circumstances. God knows depths in each of us that we are yet to experience. There are depths in God, as well, that are yet to be offered to us. In prayer, we invite divine intimacy and surprise into our lives. Over the centuries, there have developed various ways of praying the Gospels which each of us will experience during our years in Catholic education.

In the time of the desert fathers of the Church, the mystics taught the steps or stages of entering into contemplative prayer. From this foundation, different contemplative prayer traditions emerged in the East and West. These traditions included the prayer of recollection, prayer of quiet, prayer of the heart, prayer of simple presence, centering prayer and the Jesus prayer.

- In the twelfth century, the great masters of spirituality began to organize these ways into methods. Their concern was to find prayer methods that:
  - were easy to remember
  - helped deal with distractions
  - enhanced ‘the natural and graced movement of the person into a deeper relationship with God’.

In this era, the following four methods of prayer were outlined as the key elements of all prayer and were collectively named as lectio divina:

- lectio or reading,
- meditatio or meditation,
- oratio or prayer, and
- contemplatio or contemplation.

During the sixteenth century, St Ignatius of Loyola developed popular prayer methods that were more precise and simpler than had previously been created. The art of prayer developed by St Ignatius wove together faith, relationship and service and incorporated the following dimensions:
CENTRED ON JESUS CHRIST AND HIS BODY THE CHURCH

Baptism is a special call to intimacy with Our Redeemer, Jesus Christ and service of his Body the Church. Formation therefore is central to the life of the Church, enabling people to find in their living and working, deeper meaning expressed completely in the life of Jesus as narrated in the Gospel. It embraces the universal mission of the Church to preach Christ Jesus, Our Redeemer, live out our faith in service, praise God in worship, form community and evangelise.

THE MYSTICISM OF SERVICE

Ignatian spirituality based on seeking and finding God in all things, is the essential guide for mission formation. Formation for active service of others, God and creation is at the heart of ministry, as it continuously stirs and enables mission in practical terms. It is about engaging in critical reflection where people live and work in the light of the Christian way of life.

FRIENDS IN THE LORD AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

While formation begins with the individual, it is equally connected to the life of the parish school community. The baptised are all called to be friends in the Lord. Formation is a means for the whole parish school community to share collectively in the mission of the Church in Catholic education. This best happens when peers collaborate or reflect together on their common mission. It is a serious challenge to form a faith community that itself becomes the core of the formative community that is the parish school.

RECOGNISING GOD’S LOVE FOR US — A NEW WORLD

Commitment to the poor and marginalised is at the essence of the Gospel and Catholic way of life. In the Christian faith, spiritual formation challenges us to create a more just world. In the first, second and third weeks of the Spiritual Exercises, Our Lord Jesus Christ, is ever active in generating a new order of love, for, with, and on behalf of the poor. In the fourth week of the Spiritual Exercises people pray to the all loving God, who labours for them in their personal lives, the lives of others and in creation itself.

ACCOMPANIMENT AS A MEANS OF SUPPORT

As a pilgrim, St Ignatius found himself seeking support from Our Lady to be placed with Christ in the world. The Spiritual Exercises are a process of support through accompaniment. Formation is a supported process, as people journey in faith in ways that add meaning and value to life through prayer, the sacraments, the Mass, reflection, community engagement, faith sharing and social justice in action. It is about nurturing genuine human growth and transformation towards lives integrated in Our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. This process is premised on accompaniment, conversation and openness in a climate of respect and freedom.

REFLECTION, AN EVALUATION PROCESS THAT IS PRACTICAL —
THE AWARENESS EXAMEN

In its most practical expression, formation typically involves reflection upon experiences. The Awareness Examen provides a means for a reflective and Christ-centred approach to life. When adapted to every day experiences of work and home life, this provides an Ignatian way of proceeding that carefully evaluates how parish school communities and individuals might move forward in the service of others. It is seen also in a commitment by the individual and community to formation planning and action research based on lived experience.
The Need for Directions Regarding Formation

They provide:
1. greater clarity and unity of purpose regarding religious and spiritual formation in parish school communities
2. major support for clergy and principals in this highly specialised area of their responsibilities
3. enhanced possibility of systemic renewal in the Catholic faith
4. collaborative growth in this exciting area of Catholic parish school life.

Goals

The overall goals for religious and spiritual formation in parish schools are to:
1. support ongoing growth in awareness of the reality of God within one's life and all creation
2. provide experiences for people to deepen their interior spiritual lives and engage more deeply in Jesus Christ's continual call to discipleship and its implications for daily life and work
3. articulate ever more fully and promote in every way this call to discipleship through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, his Gospel and the teaching of the Church as the revelation of the Father's love for us and the way to true freedom.
4. enable each person in Catholic education to participate and accept shared responsibility for mission formation under the authority of the Bishop
5. ensure strategic and annual planning includes sound religious and spiritual formation

Processes

The means by which the goals are experienced

1. development through accompaniment and ongoing support
2. adult learning principles and practices are employed
3. the dynamic input, reflect, share and pray model for programs is used.

2. St Ignatius’ Journey in Faith & the Spiritual Exercises

Foundational Insights

The Spiritual Exercises are the record of St Ignatius Loyola's progressive journey into the mystery of salvation, as revealed by Our Redeemer, Jesus Christ; so they record the various stages of a journey in faith. The Spiritual Exercises are not a program to be imposed, but rather an instrument for touching the faith life of a person, that is already there, and for fostering its growth. Ignatian spirituality belongs to the Church and is available for anyone who has come to the realisation that belief in Jesus Christ is a life giving experience — however they express it — and want to grow closer to him. St Ignatius looked for a spirit of openness and generosity in the person about to make the Spiritual Exercises.

The Jesuit historian, Fr John O'Malley SJ and the scholar of the Spiritual Exercises, Fr Howard Gray SJ, both believe that Ignatius Loyola was given the following three basic and simple insights:

CONVERSATION
The apostleship of listening to oneself, others and God

DEEPEST DESIRES
Life generating dreams for oneself, others and the workplace

HELPING SOULS
Love ought to manifest itself more by deeds than words

SEEKING AND FINDING GOD
IN ALL THINGS

Further Key Ignatian Concepts

FOUNDED ON PERSONAL DIGNITY
For St Ignatius, the core of formation is recognition of one's dignity as a person made in the image and likeness of God. People, possessing a sacred story and commissioned through Baptism are called to participate to the fullness of their gifts in the Christian and human story. The valuing of self and others begins with an interior renewal, a call to recognise that in Christ people are created to live a life centred in the desire to come to know, love and serve God, others and all created things. (Principle and Foundation Spiritual Exercises 2) This is what it means to live a healthy and joyful life. Formation is most effective when it attends to the lived experience of the person being formed. Personal circumstances, relationships, spiritual journey, successes and failures, constitute the essence of a person's formation program.
Applied to communities the use of discernment presumes a sense of communion, a common vocation in the Holy Spirit and a common commitment to carry out decisions of the group. Members do not subvert the common good, nor act for personal ego or gain.

First Principle and Foundation
The fundamental worldview of St Ignatius is summed up in the First Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises (§23). Ignatius advises people when making the full Spiritual Exercises that if they are unable to proceed in prayer they should go back to the First Principle and Foundation as it will reorientate them back into their prayer experiences. St Ignatius looked for a spirit of openness and generosity in the person about to make the Spiritual Exercises. The First Principle and Foundation is an invitation to open up our own vision of self and all created reality in relation to God in an affective climate of large-heartedness.

Friends in the Lord
A description for persons sharing their faith journey together and discerning their common mission.

Indifference
Ignatian indifference is putting aside personal preferences, attachments, and pre-formed opinions to be completely balanced and open to God’s will when it comes to making a choice or decision.

New Evangelisation
Pope John Paul II first described the New Evangelisation as new ‘in ardour, methods and expression’ (Address to the Latin American Bishops, 1983). Yet, ‘the vital core of the new evangelisation must be a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the person of Jesus Christ’ (The Church in America, 66). John Paul II did not announce a re-evangelisation, but a new evangelisation. Because faith and culture have come apart, the faith must be planted anew: A new era in the mission of the Church has begun: proclaiming the Gospel in new ways as was the case in the Apostolic era, when there was no other blueprint than that of the person of Jesus Christ. Such an enterprise requires of us a new ardour, a new desire for God in following his Son.

Retreat
A number of days spent in prayer/reflection with a director, in this case following the Spiritual Exercises, as adapted for Catholic education within the Diocese of Lismore.

Spiritual Exercises
By this name of the Spiritual Exercises is meant every way of examining one’s conscience, of meditation, of contemplation, of praying vocally and mentally, and performing other spiritual actions, ‘for as strolling, walking and running are bodily exercises, so every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of the disordered tendencies, and, after it is rid, to seek the Divine Will as to the management of one’s life for the salvation of the soul is called a spiritual exercise’ (Fleming, 2002, Annotation 1). It is for persons who wish to make a choice in life towards greater love and service of God.

OUTCOMES
Manifestation of the process effects
The following outcomes for religious and spiritual formation are intended for each member of the Catholic Education Office and parish school communities:
1. deeper faith relationships with oneself, others, creation and God
2. greater engagement between individuals’ lives, Jesus Christ and his Church, expressed in discipleship
3. stronger commitment to the vocations of teaching and parenting

PROGRAM PLANNING OVERVIEW
Research and experience suggest the following ideas as supportive of successful religious and spiritual formation implementation:
1. shared understandings of Catholic education and formation are actively promoted by all participants
2. clearly identified structures, roles and responsibilities provided by this document
3. systematic, ongoing religious and spiritual formation experiences provided at all levels of Catholic education with regular evaluation and appraisal.

CONCLUSION
In the life of Our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, we find that ‘the child grew and became strong. He advanced in wisdom and age and favour before God and man’ (Luke 2:52). Each baptised person is called to grow in his or her interior spiritual life, centred on the Holy Trinity.

As we grow in strength, courage and wisdom we too strive to lead our communities, whether in the family or parish school, in the way of the goodness of this world and God’s love. By performing deeds of love, service and justice in the name of Jesus Christ and through the beliefs and sacramental life of the Church, we embody and reveal the Good News.

The experience of religious and spiritual formation is central to the life and mission of the Church and the ministries within it. It is the means by which the Christian life and various ministries within the Church are reinforced and developed. Formation therefore is not an add-on to other activity, but a fundamental pre-requisite for all that happens.
The previous discussion has highlighted Church teaching, and some contextual perspectives currently shaping the development of lay Catholic educator formation in Australia. This section provides a case study of how one rural Australian Catholic Education Office has responded to existing perspectives and challenges in shaping a model for religious and spiritual formation. This office services 45 schools with approximately 16,000 students and 1,300 teaching staff. This model, organic in nature, has been developed collaboratively in a series of phases from the 1980s to 2010, and is still emerging. The Catholic Education Office, Lismore, New South Wales, has had a long history of resourcing the religious and spiritual formation of educators employed in parish schools. The impetus behind this initiative was the magisterial voice on lay formation, the mounting urgency around formation, rising challenges to the purposes of Catholic schools and the lack of detailed directional frameworks and maps. The consultative process included continual analysis of program evaluations, engaging with ecclesial instructions, managing conflicting perspectives, refining understandings and setting new directions.

**PHASE ONE**

In the first phase, from the 1980s to the mid 1990s parish schools conducted annual Spirituality Days mainly facilitated by local clergy, Catholic Education Office staff and visiting Religious. However, by the mid 1990s schools were struggling to find suitable personnel, normally Religious, to lead the mandated annual Spirituality Day. During this period, three members of a Spirituality Team in a metropolitan Catholic Education Office provided three years of retreats for significant numbers of teachers. Each year there were two live in retreat programmes, ‘Journey’ (three days) and ‘Wellsprings’ (five days). Anecdotal evidence over ten years later from teachers who participated in these retreats has reported a life transforming impact that still remains. However, this initiative could not be sustained and despite the best of intentions and initiatives, many schools increasingly struggled with their capacity to provide quality Spirituality Days.

**PHASE TWO**

Consequently, action was required to support schools with more substantive religious and spiritual formation initiatives, which marked the second phase around 1997. Given that resource staff were not available centrally to meet the needs of the 45 parish schools, Renewal Teams consisting of clergy and teachers, supported by Catholic Education Office staff were formed in each of the four deaneries of the diocese to offer a retreat day at least once a year. Training and formation was offered to each Team in preparation for the retreat days. Over 120 teachers participated each year in the retreats.

**1. GLOSSARY**

**Accompaniment**
Accompaniment is the process of coming to a deeper awareness of the presence and movement of God in a person’s everyday life through relating to a spiritual companion in an atmosphere of trust. As the person being accompanied shares dreams, struggles, triumphs and fears, they open to their deepest and wisest source of freedom and joy, the love of God. It is ultimately about the movement of each baptised person towards holiness.

**Apostolate**
A work of the Church or a missionary activity on behalf of the Church.

**Arrupe program**
A formation program for a person who wishes to be a giver of the Spiritual Exercises.

**Awareness Examen**
The structured review of each day, developed by St Ignatius, to enable discovery of God’s movements and action within one’s daily life.

**Consolation**
Spiritual consolation is what St Ignatius in the Spiritual Exercises calls ‘any increase in faith, hope and charity’. It is when one experiences a feeling, or cluster of feelings, of peace and/or other positive emotions which draw one towards God. It is the opposite of desolation.

**Contemplation**
A particular way of praying encouraged by St Ignatius whereby the one praying puts him or herself imaginatively into (usually) a gospel scene, using all their senses and interacting with the other characters in the scene.

**Contemplation in action**
Contemplation in action is neither a simple, practical counsel nor a pious wish. Neither is it a matter of alternating between moments of action and times of prayer. Rather, it is a circular movement, which finds its origin in the movement of the Holy Spirit, which passes through our hearts, and is fulfilled in a concrete apostolic commitment to return to its source in God. We are encouraged to grow ‘as in a circle’ from contemplation to action and from action to contemplation.

**Discernment**
Discernment is ‘where prayer and action meet’. It is a sifting of spiritual movements within oneself in order to be able to choose the good from the better choice. The three levels are:
1. Discerning the day using the processes called ‘The Awareness Examen’
2. Discerning for individual decision-making
3. Communal apostolic discernment.
Overview of Strategic Directions in implementing the Spiritual Exercises (continued)

Catholic Education Office Staff
1. contemplation to realise God’s love
2. God in nature

Parents In Parish Schools
1. contemplation to realise God’s love
2. God in nature

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

PROSPECTIVE AUDIENCES
School Principals — 2 days per year
Assistant Principals — 2 days per year
Coordinators RE Primary/Secondary — 2 days per year
Coordinators Ministry Primary/Secondary — 2 days per year
Primary and Secondary school staff — 1 day per year
CEO staff — 1 day per year
Parents — 1 night and day per year

PROPOSED DAILY SCHEDULE FOR PARISH SCHOOL DAYS
9:00 am – 10:30 am Session One
11:00 am – 12:30 pm Session Two
1:15 pm – 2:45 pm Session Three
2:45 pm – 3:00 pm Prayer

PROCESSES
Imagination Exercise/Prayer
Input
Personal reflection time
Sharing in small group
Big group feedback

As well, some Teams were offering retreat days for schools and evenings for parents. The retreats were centred on the person of Jesus Christ, participation was voluntary, suitable venues were chosen and it was fully funded systemically. The evaluations for each retreat over nine years reflected significant faith enrichment for all participants. While this systemic support for schools met part of the need, significant numbers of schools still struggled to provide Spirituality Days that left teachers enriched and/or transformed spiritually.

PHASE THREE
The third phase addressed the ongoing struggle that many schools were experiencing in providing faith transforming Spirituality Days. The consultative process revealed that the Spirituality Days had virtually no engagement with the major spiritual traditions which are part of the rich heritage of the Church. In order that each parish school could access sound spiritual formation on its Spirituality Day a comprehensive four year religious and spiritual formation was begun, called ‘Schools of Spirituality’. Each year, for four years, one of the Carmelite, Franciscan, Jesuit and Benedictine Religious Orders would conduct a Spirituality Day for parish school executive members in each of the four regions of the diocese. This was an enormous task given the geography of the diocese, a region extending over 500 kilometres in length. Parish school executives were appreciative of these days, reported being spiritually enriched, and were able to improve the provision of spiritual formation to their staff. As this phase came to an end, they were asked to identify a preferred approach for more extensive engagement. Ignatian Spirituality was named as the first priority.

PHASE FOUR
Engaging with Ignatian Spirituality was taken up in the fourth phase. After the ‘Schools of Spirituality’ phase finished there was a period in which the Executive Director of the Loyola Institute, Sydney, conducted retreats for Parish Renewal Teams, Co-ordinators RE and Co-ordinators Ministry in parish schools and several staff of the Catholic Education Office. The retreat evaluations confirmed the transformational impact of Ignatian spirituality upon staff. Following extensive consultation it was decided to develop a six year formation program for all parish school Spirituality Days, which would be coordinated and resourced systemically. The heart of this six year program would be the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola, written out of his experience as a layman. It was intended that through the Spiritual Exercises the faith of teachers would be strengthened, Catholic identity and purpose of parish schools enhanced, religious leadership capacity matured and richer experience gained to continue building a solid, organic and comprehensive religious and spiritual formation framework.
The Spiritual Exercises were chosen because they facilitate a formation of the heart whereby the movement of grace within people allows the love of God to inform all life decisions and resolutions. They create contemplatives within daily life and so address a great spiritual estrangement experienced in our times. Centred on Jesus Christ and his body the Church they are a set of foundational exercises that enable a person to deepen the experience of God in daily life and discern how best to serve God, others and creation.

They do this through promoting conversation by listening to oneself, others and God, discerning one’s deepest desires for self, others and the workplace, and learning how to help souls more by deeds than words (Scrutinies 2008, 123). Aware that the Spiritual Exercises could prove to be quite daunting for many school Executive members and staff it was decided to provide two years of preparation prior to their introduction.

Given, the varied levels of preparation for the six year program among school Executive members, four Catholic Education Office consultants provided accompaniment to strengthen faith leadership capacity. Through school based meetings Executive members were supported and resourced to prayerfully reflect upon their leadership from a faith perspective. This was undertaken using Leading Life to the Full (Touhy 2005). This accompaniment was extended to include the use of two prayer books, Sacred Space (Irish Province of the Society of Jesus 2009) and Mission (Link 2000) to strengthen personal and communal prayer. During the first term of each school year all parish school Executive members engaged in a two day retreat, intended to deepen their sense of vocation and understanding of the content and processes for the school Spirituality Days. In doing so it was anticipated they might be better able to prepare, support and follow up all aspects of the Spirituality Days. Over the two years each Executive members’ retreat and parish school Spirituality Day was facilitated by the Executive Director, Loyola Institute, Sydney. The topics included understanding one’s baptismal gifts, spirituality and leadership, seeing God in all things, accompaniment, leadership and the life, death and resurrection cycles of organizations, St. Ignatius the pilgrim, schools as places of pilgrimage, imaginative contemplation, awareness examen, discernment, images of God and faith leadership.

The evaluations from the 2008-2009 retreat and Spirituality Days provided a rich source of data for supporting the organic development of religious and spiritual formation. At the end of each retreat and Spirituality Day proforma evaluations were completed by participants. The evaluation sheets were framed around three open ended statements ‘I leave here thinking/ feeling/hoping’. Over the two year period evaluation sheets were completed by teachers (n=3200) and school Executive members (n=276).

2013

FOURTH WEEK — SPIRITUAL EXERCISES (#218-237)
— REALISING GOD’S LOVE

THE FOURTH WEEK asks the retreatant to reflect upon the events associated with the resurrection and the Risen Lord’s appearances to the apostles after the resurrection. Ignatius adds an appearance by Our Divine Redeemer to Mary his mother, which is not contained in the gospels, as one of the meditations for this week. The purpose of this week is to strengthen the retreatant’s commitment to follow Christ by contemplating the Risen Christ and, his interactions with the apostles, the bearers of his message to the world.

Contemplatio ad Amorem (Contemplation to Attain Love) is the concluding contemplation of the Spiritual Exercises. It is designed to help the retreatant cement all that has been learned and understood throughout the making of the Spiritual Exercises so that the retreatant deeply experiences the love of God and in return responds as completely as possible to that love in daily life. It contains the often repeated Ignatian phrase, ‘Love ought to manifest itself more by deeds than by words’, which for Ignatius is the sign of true love of God and others. ‘Finding God in all things’ is a unique Ignatian spiritual insight. Ignatius believed that God can be found in all things not just in prayer, but in the mundane and ordinary events of life. This is one of the graces gained from making the Spiritual Exercises.

Parish School Executives Retreat Days
1. contemplation to realise God’s love
2. God in nature
3. God in people
4. God in history
5. Finding God in all things
6. implementing a spiritual life.

Whole Staff Retreat Days
1. contemplation to realise God’s love
2. God in nature
Overview of Strategic Directions in implementing the Spiritual Exercises (continued)

2012

THIRD WEEK — SPIRITUAL EXERCISES (#190-217) — SUFFERING WITH JESUS CHRIST

THE THIRD WEEK is devoted to contemplating the events of Our Redeemer’s passion and death. The purpose of this week is to help the retreatant strengthen his or her desire to follow Jesus Christ, while recognising that imitating him involves in part experiencing the complete giving of oneself as he did in his passion and death.

Parish School Executives Retreat Days
1. one Passion, four Gospels
2. the Eucharist
3. Gethsemane and arrest
4. the divinity is hidden
5. God knows failure
6. the way of the Cross.

Whole Staff Retreat Days
1. one Passion, four Gospels
2. the Eucharist

Catholic Education Office Staff
1. one Passion, four Gospels
2. the Eucharist

Parents In Parish Schools
1. one Passion, four Gospels
2. the Eucharist

Interpreting this qualitative data required a rigorous analysis to accurately identify the impact of the formation activities on the participants’ lives. An independent consultancy group analysed the data using the QSR NVivo software to identify the major themes and code participant’s responses to them. Consequently, they established the extent to which the needs, experiences and future aspirations were common to all three participant groups of Executives, secondary and primary teachers.

The analysis provided overwhelming evidence that each participant group experienced a deeper engagement with the purposes of Catholic Education as a result of the retreats and spirituality days. The most frequent group of positive responses related to participants’ enriched interior faith lives and spiritual journeys (n=3635 comments). Within the pattern of responses strong themes emerged. More than two thousand responses (n=2417) reported the experiences enhanced participants’ self knowledge, self acceptance, commitment to reflection, a more prayerful life (particularly the Awareness Examen) and deeper engagement in their faith. Affirmed in their faith and spiritually enriched, these responses indicated a pattern of strong energy to continue building the Catholic faith life and community in their parish schools, especially by providing students with access to Ignatian ways of praying, and in particular the Awareness Examen. However, there was a noticeable disengagement between participants and their sense of vocation. Further, the Church received little prominence in the responses. This analysis contributed significantly to an understanding of the implications of an organic approach in developing a solid and comprehensive framework for religious and spiritual formation.

PHASE FIVE

The organic development of the formation framework expanded during phase five when it was identified that school Executive members required further support to enhance their capacity for leadership in religious and spiritual formation. During 2008 and 2009 the Bishop of Lismore led groups of principals on pilgrimage overseas. These pilgrimages have impacted deeply on the faith lives of the participating principals. Consequently, over a two year period thirty senior staff have participated in a thirty week Retreat in Daily Life. This retreat is an annotated version of the Spiritual Exercises and includes one hour of prayer daily and weekly meetings using Skype with a spiritual director. While the evaluations of this program have not yet been subjected to rigorous analysis, the anecdotally reported impact on the lives of the participants and their school communities has been very positive. Further, the Loyola Institute took on a train the trainer role for the four years of the Spiritual Exercises.
Beginning in 2010, the two day retreats for parish school Executive members included an additional training component and package enabling them to facilitate their schools’ Retreat Days. Given the level of responsibility this placed on the Executive members, accompaniment was provided by Catholic Education Office consultants for each school’s Retreat Day. This accompaniment, while resource intensive, included preparatory and debriefing meetings, as well as attendance at each school’s Retreat Day. Phase five will not conclude until December 2013.

Concurrently with phase five, phase six began the process of documenting the direction for religious and spiritual formation as just described. Taking up the directions outlined in this paper, a document was developed, entitled Launch into the Deep – Directions for Religious and Spiritual Formation in the Apostolate of Catholic Education, to provide a common language, greater clarity and unity of purpose around formation in Catholic education. The document is located within the diocesan foundations of Catholic education and provides a conceptual base for religious and spiritual formation. Implementation of the directions in this document will guide the building up of parish schools’ capacity for religious and spiritual maturity, vocational awareness, theological knowledge and missionary commitment. While the second part of the document details the six year program around the Spiritual Exercises, the first part provides directions regarding the rationale and meaning for religious and spiritual formation.

2011

SECOND WEEK — SPIRITUAL EXERCISES (#101-189)
— ON THE ROAD WITH JESUS CHRIST

THE SECOND WEEK focuses on events from the life of Jesus Christ until his passion and death so that the retreatant can learn from these considerations how to imitate him in his or her own life. Ignatius introduces the retreatant to a form of prayer he calls ‘contemplation’. This desire is further strengthened through meditation on the contrast between the standard of Satan and the standard of Christ. In order to support this meditation the Spiritual Exercises allow retreatants to become more receptive to the will of God rather than their own. Thus, they may come to notice the signs of the ‘good’ and ‘evil’ spirits at work in their lives.

Parish School Executives Retreat Days
1. a response to Jesus Christ’s personal call to me
2. the Incarnation
3. good and evil – the two standards
4. three classes of person
5. three degrees of humility
6. indifference

Whole Staff Retreat Days
1. a response to Jesus Christ’s personal call to me
2. the Incarnation
3. good and evil – the two standards.

Catholic Education Office Staff
1. a response to Jesus Christ’s personal call to me
2. the Incarnation
3. good and evil – the two standards.

Parents In Parish Schools
1. a response to Jesus Christ’s personal call to me
2. the Incarnation
3. good and evil – the two standards.
Overview of Strategic Directions in implementing the Spiritual Exercises (continued)

Catholic Education Office Staff
1. life principle and foundation – to know (praise), love (reverence) and serve God
2. sin and the Fall
3. forgiveness.

Parents In Parish Schools
1. life principle and foundation – to know (praise), love (reverence) and serve God
2. sin and the Fall
3. forgiveness.

2008

Introduction To The Spiritual Exercises And Catholic Education

Parish School Executives Spirituality Days
1. spirituality of leadership
2. one's baptismal gifts in co-leadership for Catholic education
3. Foundational Beliefs and Practices: The Essential Framework and my leadership
4. finding God in all things — dealing with others
5. the Emmaus story; a metaphor for accompaniment
6. The life, death and resurrection cycle for leadership.

Whole Staff Spirituality Days
1. spirituality and leadership
2. one's baptismal gifts in co-leadership for Catholic education

Catholic Education Office Staff
1. foundational insights of St Ignatius
2. imaginative contemplation
3. Holy Thursday prayer.

Parents In Parish Schools
1. spirituality of leadership
2. one's baptismal gifts in co-leadership for Catholic education
Overview of Strategic Directions in implementing the Spiritual Exercises (continued)

2009

**INTRODUCTION TO THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES - A PILGRIM PEOPLE**

Parish School Executives Spirituality Days
1. St Ignatius Loyola — a pilgrim
2. schools as places of pilgrimage
3. images of God
4. imaginative contemplation — being in the story
5. discerning my day, life, community
6. a School of Prayer — Awareness Examen.

Whole Staff Spirituality Days
1. St Ignatius Loyola — a pilgrim
2. parish schools as places of pilgrimage
3. Images of God.

Catholic Education Office Staff
1. St Ignatius Loyola — a pilgrim
2. parish schools as places of pilgrimage
3. Images of God.

Parents In Parish Schools
1. St Ignatius Loyola — a pilgrim
2. parish schools as places of pilgrimage
3. parish and family as places of pilgrimage
4. Images of God.

2010

**FIRST WEEK — SPIRITUAL EXERCISES (#24-100) — GOD AND US**

THE FIRST PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION is the presupposition which underlies the entire work of the Spiritual Exercises summed up in the statement that ‘human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls’. It is an invitation to open up our own vision of self and created reality in relation to God. The First Principle and Foundation contains the key Ignatian concept of ‘indifference’. Ignatian indifference is a predisposition not to seek or use one thing or another as an end in itself, but only in as far as it leads the person to greater service of God.

THE FIRST WEEK of the Spiritual Exercises (#24-90) begins with the sacred story of the person and involves the progressive deepening and potential integration of one’s personal story with the life of God, others and creation. This journey rarely comes easily, nor is it undertaken without some form of support, instruction, reconciliation and prayer. Moreover, it is not something that is necessarily linear, ordered or predictable. It focuses on the sin of the angels, the sin of Adam and Eve, and the effects of sin in general, but especially on the retreatant's relationship with God.

Parish School Executives Retreat Days
1. life principle and foundation – to know (praise), love (reverence) and serve God
2. sin and the Fall
3. forgiveness
4. where am I?
5. how am I?
6. who am I?

Whole Staff Retreat Days
1. life principle and foundation – to know (praise), love (reverence) and serve God
2. sin and the Fall
3. forgiveness.