

***A Catholic pedagogy...educating tourists  
or nurturing pilgrims? What are you  
doing?***





***Pivot Principle - A Catholic Curriculum places Jesus, his message, his mission, his community, and his ethos at the centre of all learning.***

Break open this statement. What was Jesus'	<b><i>We place Jesus at the centre of all learning by embedding this pivot principle in:</i></b>
Message:	Our message:
Mission:	Our Mission:
Community:	Our Community:
Ethos:	Our Ethos:

A sample profiling tool for a Catholic curriculum...

Principle	Guiding thoughts	Strong	Modest	Weak
<p><i>Principle No. 1 – The Pivot Principle:</i>  <i>A Catholic Curriculum places Jesus, his message, his mission, his community, and his ethos at the centre of all learning.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our school provides opportunities for the students to learn how to pray (in a variety of ways.)</li> <li>• Developing a personal prayer life is structured into the life of the school.</li> <li>• Gospel values/virtues are witnessed in our school.</li> <li>• Gospel values/virtues are a central part of the school's strategic planning.</li> <li>• Gospel values/virtues are evident in the overview planning documents in all curricula.</li> <li>• Gospel values/virtues are explicit in all policy documents.</li> <li>• Our school uses a symbol system and narrative which articulates and celebrates the Gospel values</li> </ul>			

Principle	Guiding thoughts	Strong	Modest	Weak
<p><i>Principle No. 19 – The Sacramental Principle: A Catholic community is distinctive in being an intensely sacramental people. A Catholic curriculum, therefore, introduces students to the central role language, the symbolic, and ritual play, in the cultural and religious dimension of life for people living in Aotearoa, New Zealand.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have a well-developed symbol system in the school environment.</li> <li>• All members of the community can draw meaning from these symbols.</li> <li>• Our school liturgies/prayer experiences are effective in building a sense of community (among student? With the parents...with the parish?...between schools?)</li> <li>• Our students can articulate and draw meaning from their liturgical experiences.</li> </ul>			

## Suspending Disbelief: Engaging with Mystery

*In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God, and the Word was God (Jn 1:1)*

A Catholic pedagogy must:

- Prepare students to **engage with mystery** and be open to encounters with the Divine as they explore their secular world.
- Provide structured, sustained and focused opportunities for students to **generate their own religious and secular meaning informed by Catholic Tradition**.
- Assist students to accept and live with a diversity of unexplained meanings.

**To achieve this teachers must:**

- Create a climate in which students can **suspend 'disbelief'**...putting aside personal theories whilst critically examining new ideas and concepts.
- THIS IS A KEY POINT FOR CATHOLIC PEDAGOGY. St Anselm's notion that theology represents 'faith seeking understanding' is key in a Catholic pedagogy.
- Provide opportunities that allow students to recognise that **the gift of faith allows one to rest comfortably with the mystery of God**.

## Searching for Truth or Celebrating the Truth?

*Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." (Jn 20: 29)*

In order to prepare students to encounter the '**mystery of the Divine**' a Catholic pedagogy must:

- Reflect a fine balance between '**searching for truth**' and '**celebrating truth**'
- Involve the interplay between content, the challenging processes of teaching, researching and learning, and the subtle place for personal freedom.
- Allow for students to scaffold their own thinking, manipulate theories in response to new experiences and construct meaning...not simply regurgitating the teacher's understanding.
- Provide a proactive approach to identify and challenge misunderstandings surrounding Catholic faith.

**To achieve this teachers need to:**

- **How can we allow our students to explore and shape their own 'truths' whilst we as teachers often face the alternative dilemma of articulating the 'absolute' truths and values systems of the Catholic Tradition?**
- Differentiate the curriculum for different learning styles, levels of conceptual readiness, context and faith stage.. **Create a classroom/school curriculum in RE** 😊

## Asking God Questions "Nurturing Pilgrims

**Or Educating Tourists?" "Who do people say that I am?"(Mk 8:27)**

A Catholic pedagogy needs to:

- Emphasise the acquisition of skills in the identification and evaluation of what counts as meaning and spirituality in the light of the *Gospel values* as expressed in the Catholic tradition.
- Provide experiences that show how religious beliefs can enhance people lives.
- Highlight how misinterpretation of religious beliefs can lead to prejudice, persecution and violence.
- Pause and ask God's questions

God's questions...

- Instead of asking "What does this mean to me"? A typical God question involves asking "What does God think of..."? "I wonder" questions?
- The spiritual and moral implications of the meaning-making process continually come to the fore.

Tourists pause in their journey to ask 'man's questions', pilgrims on the other hand are challenged to stop and reflect on "God's questions". This differentiation is the most significant.

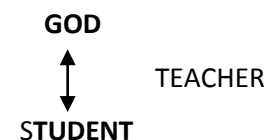
## Catholic Pedagogy – a bridge between the Secular and the Divine

## Making Jesus Real: Fostering Relationships

*"Love one another as I have loved you." (Jn 15:12)*

Start with the learner's context

- Use teachable moments
- Facilitate opportunities for learners to discover the truth for themselves.
- BE GROUNDED IN AN INTIMATE AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH God.
- It involves much more than the simple act of 'teaching', it is a process that grapples with mystery, faith and love.
- Respect the learner as a fellow pilgrim in search of truth and witness the loving presence of God.



# Christ the Teacher

From papyrus to parchment,  
 scroll to volume,  
 mainframe to laptop,  
 spoken word to instant message,  
 analogue to digital –  
 your word, O Christ,  
 is alive and vibrant among us.

Speak, Teacher,  
 your servant is listening.  
 Instruct me in your lessons  
 and lead me in your truth.

From childhood to middle age,  
 yesterday to tomorrow,  
 darkness to light,  
 past to present,  
 east to west,  
 age to age –  
 your Spirit, O Christ,  
 is alive and vibrant among us.

Speak, Teacher,  
 your servant is learning.  
 Instruct me in your statutes  
 and lead me in your ways.

From desert to mountain,  
 river to forest,  
 city to village,  
 ocean to continent,  
 earth to sky,  
 star to galaxy –  
 your resurrection, O Christ,  
 is alive and vibrant among us.

Speak, Teacher,  
 your servant is awakening.  
 Instruct me in your mysteries  
 and lead me in presence.

From time to space,  
 death to life,  
 then to now,  
 there to here,  
 ego to soul,  
 blindness to sight,  
 sin to grace  
 your wonder, O Christ,  
 is alive and vibrant among us.

Speak, Teacher,  
 your servant is transforming.  
 Instruct me in your silence  
 and lead me in your dying.

Amen.

*From. At the name of Jesus: The Way, the Truth and the Life. (2006) by  
 Michael O'Neill McGrath with prayers by Richard N. Fragomeni.*

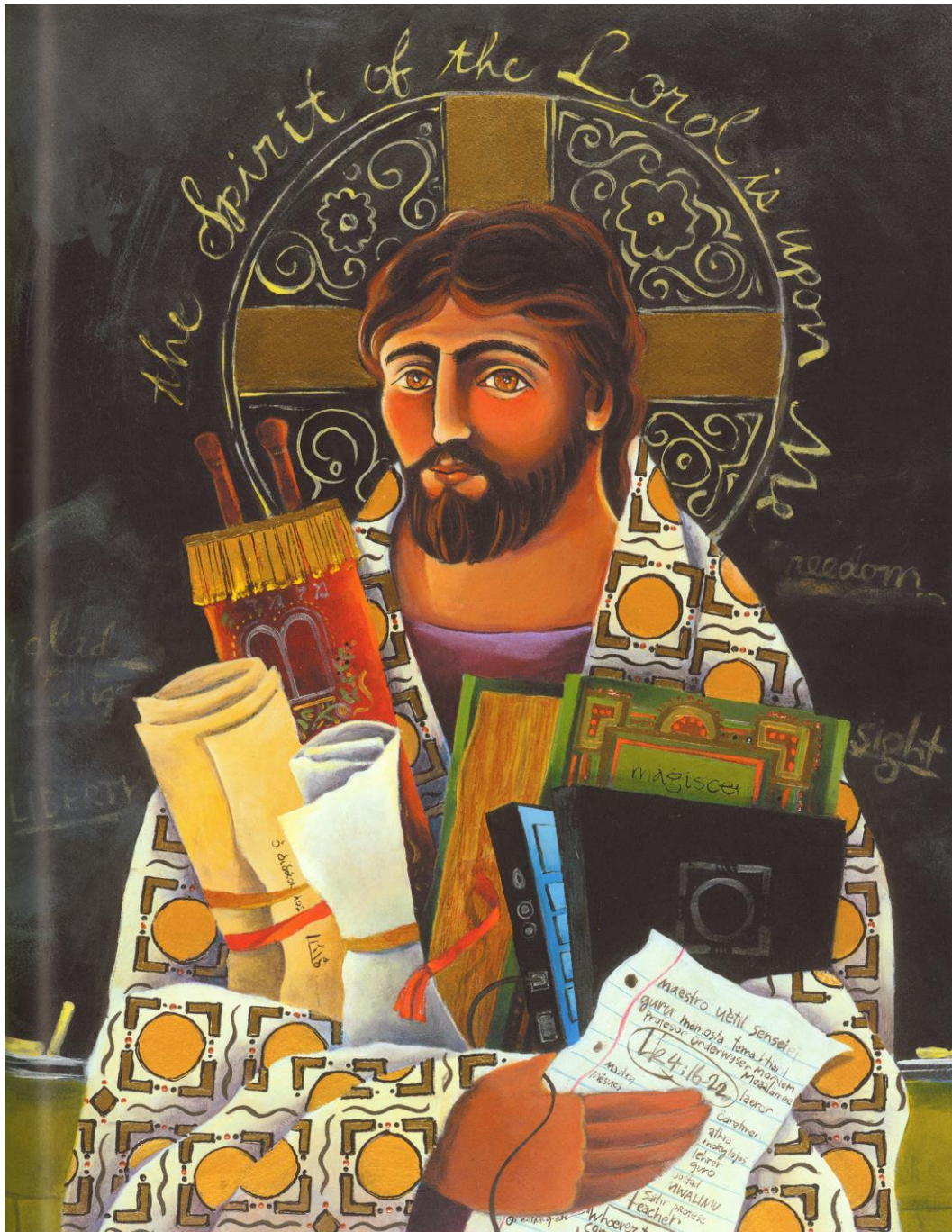


Image from. *At the name of Jesus: The Way, the Truth and the Life.* (2006)  
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Workshop BOT Symposium Catholic Diocese of Christchurch, March 2014. Catholic Pedagogy – Educating Tourists or Nurturing Pilgrims. Presenter Cushla O' Connor, Religious Education Adviser, Primary Schools.