LEADING FOR MISSION

Integrating Life, Culture and Faith in Catholic Education

Jim and Therese D'Orsa

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DEDICATION

This book honours those leaders who, during major transition periods in Catholic education, have charted—and continue to chart—a course responsive to the challenges of a demanding context.

As Catholic educators move into the fourth era of Catholic education in this country, an era shaped by globalisation and post-modernity, there is much encouragement to be gained from those who negotiated similar transitions in the past. Their success in leading the Catholic community from one era to the next secured the mission and identity of Catholic schools in their time and place.

We celebrate in particular the leadership of Monsignor John Slowey, Br Kelvin Canavan, Fr Frank Martin and Monsignor Tom Doyle; in whose leadership journeys we have been privileged to share.

Jim and Therese D'Orsa
February 2013.

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Editorial

Ms Kate Ahearne for patiently assisting the authors in finalising the text.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This book is a MUST for the Catholic Church's leaders and educators. The authors correctly argue that "the Catholic school remains the only plausibility structure for faith that many young people and their parents encounter." Faith development programs of yesterday are ineffective because needs have dramatically changed. Our schools desperately call for imaginative mission-thinkers and practitioners, who understand the radically changed cultural school environment, and are able to create relevant transformative responses. If the insights of this book are not read and implemented our schools have no future as Catholic institutions.

(Gerald A. Arbuckle, sm. Co-founder of the Re-founding and Development Unit Sydney, Author of many studies including Culture, Inculturation, and Theologians, 2011).

At a time when government funding policies are causing Catholic education system and school leaders to focus on the future economic prospects for Catholic schooling across Australia, Jim and Therese D'Orsa have written a book that represents the canary in the coal mine. In what they refer to as this liminal era, Catholic schooling faces new and serious risks to the integrity of its mission. This is a challenge that must engage all leaders in Catholic education if our schools are to be places where Jesus' message of the kingdom is a lived reality not a history lesson. What is required is leaders who are skilled not only in strategic and operational leadership but also in mission leadership which is the focus of this outstanding book. Mission leadership utilizes theological reflection to enhance mission thinking which assists Catholic school leaders to respond to the multi-dimensional challenges of secularisation. The book is both sophisticated and practical which has great appeal for Catholic school and system leaders who are seeking imaginative and thought-provoking ways to develop a sure-footedness in their leadership in these uncertain times. This is certainly a book for the times and all those who treasure the mission that engages the hearts and minds of Catholic educators/leaders in our efforts to create the Kingdom spaces which transform death dealing post-modern culture into life-giving God-giftedness.

(Dr Cathy Day, Director of Catholic Education,
Diocese of Townsville).

We live in a liminal time when the old certainties have been eroded and the new is yet not convincing. Teachers, parents and students are subject to many postmodern cultural forces. This book argues that evangelisation in this context is not just a matter of greater zeal or effort. We have to understand our culture and the powerful influence it has on us, mostly unconsciously. Jim and Therese D'Orsa give leaders insights and tools to make sense [meaning] of these times and to effectively hand on the faith to postmodern students. This book is excellent in clarifying contemporary missiological themes and ground-breaking in its emphasis on "meaning-making". It is an important addition to current missiological literature, and a good read.

(Noel Connolly SSC, Columban Mission Institute Sydney, Formerly Vicar General of St. Columban's Mission Society).

In *Leading For Mission: Integrating Life, Culture and Faith* Jim and Therese D'Orsa, together with the other contributors, have given us a sterling account of a striking story, one of a never-ending journey of leadership for mission and vision. The reflection on the terrain which the Church, and particularly its educational mission, has traversed in this country leaves no room for complacency. The assessment of where we are now impels us to continually revise, renew and amend, our mission and our vision. This is because ours is a mission never finally achieved, but always remains the goal of pilgrimage, and of a vision both Spirit-filled and open to the realities of the world. Insightful, challenging, and constructive, this book is a "must-read" for those involved in today's Church, and especially for its leaders, and those responsible for the ever-adapting processes of Catholic education.

(Monsignor Tom Doyle, A.O. Former Director of Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Melbourne).

THE BROKEN BAY INSTITUTE MISSION AND EDUCATION SERIES

The purpose of the Mission and Education Series is to explore aspects of contemporary Catholic education in the light of the Church's official teaching on mission, and of the experience of those who attempt to embrace this mission in their personal and professional lives.

The richness of the resources now at the disposal of those who seek to explore education theologically can come as a surprise. Because the faith held by the Catholic community is a living faith, Catholic Church teaching on mission has developed, and continues to develop, in the light of contemporary societal and cultural changes. Similarly, Scripture continues to yield its treasures. Only now, for example, is the Bible being widely recognised as a witness to God's purpose or mission in the created universe, and as an account of human response to the unfolding of that mission.

We live in a period of rapid cultural change driven by global dynamics. This has its impact on how we understand what knowledge is, how it is acquired, and how schools are best led and organised so as to maximise student learning and the economic and social benefits that are presumed to flow from sound educational policies.Very often the emphasis in such developments shifts from 'the learning student' to the more abstract concept of 'student learning'. This sits uneasily with the concept of a Catholic education.

The consequence of rapid societal change is that, in our time, new areas of mission present themselves with real urgency. It is now clearly necessary to include within the mission agenda both the processes of knowledge construction and meaning-making, and the modes of Christian participation in the new public space created by both globalisation and the communications media. These new areas of mission take their place alongside those fields already familiar to the faith community.

The Mission and Education Series seeks to bring together, in the one conversation, the light that human experience, culture and faith throw on particular topics now central to the future development of Catholic education. It also seeks to honour the significant efforts that Catholic educators make, on behalf of young people, to address the contemporary mission agendas within the total process of education. It provides a forum designed to stimulate further conversation about the 'what' and the 'how' of Catholic Education as a work of the Gospel in our complex society and culture.

It is the hope of the Mission and Education Editorial Board that Catholic educators, both in Australia and beyond, will view the series as an invitation to contribute their own creativity to this vital conversation.

Therese D'Orsa
Commissioning Editor
Mission and Education Series
Broken Bay Institute

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Explorers, Guides and Meaning-makers: Mission Theology for Catholic Educators

Catholic Curriculum: A Mission to the Heart of Young People

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1
LEADING FOR MISSION

Catholic school and system leaders today face the daunting task of leading as Catholic education enters a new, and as yet undefined, era. The catalyst for the change of era is a fundamental shift in the way people see the world and the impact this is having on the relationships by which they define their life-world. Many taken-for-granted assumptions about what constitutes family, about our culture, about our faith community, and about our relationships to the natural world are under challenge, and people find this disconcerting.

The changes underway, driven by the media and developments in technology, impact on all levels of society, and bring about institutional responses that seek to address a pervasive sense of uncertainty and anxiety by seeking to control more and more of people's lives. The changes have a major impact on the culture in which we live, and so on how we make sense of the world. In a transition era many people perceive life as insecure—as having lost its moorings—because things that were once taken as givens now seem uncertain. As a consequence, they feel disoriented. Finally, the changes underway have their impact on how faith is understood and lived, even on how people now construe what it means 'to be Catholic'.

LEADING IN A LIMINAL ERA

As we discuss in Chapter two, anthropologists describe an historical period in which there is profound unease about the fundamental assumptions that hold a culture together as *a liminal period*, and the experience as that of 'liminality': of living in an 'in-between stage', or 'standing at a threshold'. In this liminal stage people are never clear about what the future will hold. Optimists live in the hope that things will improve, while others turn to various forms of escapism and even despair. Liminal periods contain catalysts for important new developments in a culture.

Leading in a liminal period is never easy, because meanings that were once taken for granted can no longer be assumed. In a liminal period the 'glue' that holds a community together can easily become unstuck because

people lose their sense of purpose as meanings begin to change. At the school level, a community's sense of mission and identity—matters which were once unproblematic—now become contested. In such a situation, teachers can easily become unsettled and lose confidence in the worth of what they are doing, particularly as the use of institutional power becomes more pervasive. In a liminal period, being a top class operational thinker, or even a sound strategic thinker, is insufficient, because in most cases these forms of thinking assume and require that meaning is stable. A liminal period calls for *mission thinking* which places a premium on both meaning and on helping staff, parents and students make sense of what is happening in their world.

Negotiating transition periods in Catholic education

The history of Catholic education in this country indicates that it is no stranger to the experience of liminality. Its leaders have already negotiated two major liminal periods, both of which marked important turning points in its development. As today's leaders face an uncertain future, there is much to be learned from these earlier experiences.

Era 1: Schools for Catholics.[1]

The first transition period occurred in the 1870s when the bishops, dissatisfied at having to make major compromises about matters they saw as integral to Catholic schooling, walked away from a system of 'Schools for Catholics' funded by government and established independent Catholic school systems under the charge of religious congregations. The era of schools for Catholics had run for over half a century prior to this, and in that time hundreds of lay teachers had worked under the supervision of parish priests to educate young Catholics, often in very trying conditions.

Era 2: Era of the religious congregations.

The action of the bishops opened the way for a second era—*the era of the religious*—to commence, and this ran until roughly the mid-1960s, when it became clear that the Catholic schools could no longer respond to the demand for places posed by population growth. This second era was based on an assumption which was subsequently disproved: that the identity of the

1 This phrase is used of the schools which, during the first era of Catholic education, were established to cater predominantly (but not exclusively) for Catholics, but which functioned within the normal provision of schooling of that time. These schools were not separate from the schooling available to other children and were funded from the same sources. This was not to be the case in the era of the religious congregations.

Catholic school is dependent on the presence of religious. However, such was the success of the second period, and so deeply did the template of a Catholic school as *a school run by religious* find its place in the worldview of Catholics during that time, that Catholic identity had to be seriously re-negotiated in the transition period that heralded the arrival of a third era: *that of the educated lay Catholic leader.*

Era 3: Era of the educated lay Catholic leader.

This era began in the late 1960s when young lay women (and subsequently men) entered the teaching staff of Catholic primary schools in significant numbers after having been trained in Catholic teacher training colleges. The era continued until the mid-2000s, by which time Catholic education had been professionalised and institutionalised, and become the major avenue for lay ministry within the Catholic Church.

A transition period is usually brought to closure when what caused the underlying anxiety and uncertainty has been identified and addressed. The transition periods that preceded the second and third eras in Catholic education were characterised by a pervasive sense that something bearing on the Catholic identity of the Catholic school was becoming problematic. In both cases noted above (as we shall see later) this involved important developments in how the mission of the school was construed and how Catholic education was organised. Negotiating these transitions proved painful, as there is a human cost involved in expanding the framework from which Catholic education draws its meaning. This seems an unavoidable consequence of change, and something that contemporary leaders will soon have to face.

As the new millennium has unfolded, there is again clear evidence of the sense of unease that characterises transition periods. While the sources are multiple, much seems centred on the assumptions that different groups within the Church now hold about what it means 'to be Catholic'. System and Church leaders have responded to this development in a number of ways. For instance, the Brisbane Archdiocese sought to explore the matter in a wide-ranging research project called 'Who's Coming to School Today?' that was concerned to chart changes in the demography of the schools and the attitudes of parents and students[2] The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria has joined forces with the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, to undertake a major project, the 'Enhancing Catholic School Identity Project' (ECSIP), which seeks to provide school leaders with solid data on

2 Report: *Who's Coming to School Today?*: Summary of Research Findings Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2009. The research was conducted in collaboration with the Australian Centre for Educational Research (ACER).

the attitudes students and parents bring to Catholic schooling. The goal of the project is that the mission of the schools can be made more responsive to the actual faith situation of the school communities. In the absence of such an initiative, the belief of the Leuven academics driving this project, based on their own experience, is that Catholic schools in this country will gradually become secularised to the point that they lose their Catholic identity.[3] The bishops of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) have sought to provide guidance to Catholic educators in the face of a pervasive anxiety about the Catholic identity of Catholic schools in their 2007 policy statement *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads*.[4]

What seems unique about the present transition period is *the range of factors that are converging* to produce and sustain a sense of anxiety and uncertainty. While some are peculiar to the Church at the present time, most result from the major cultural changes, and the impact of the megatrends now driving those changes. Among the factors that can be named are:

From the faith arena:

- the unstable nature of the Catholic community
- erosion of confidence in Church authority
- uncertainty among the parent body about what it means to be Catholic, and the impact this has on students' religious development
- the impact of pluralism within the community and the way this now plays out in educational policies and practices.

From the cultural arena:

- changing aspirations of parents and teachers with respect to the outcomes of schooling
- pervasive loss of confidence in society about what can be taken as true and good.

Added to these general factors are other institutional factors which impact more specifically on the work of schools and educational systems, such as:

- rapid increase in government control over education exercised through statutory regulation and control of funding
- professionalisation of teaching and the transfer of teacher development from employing authorities to statutory bodies
- escalation of accountability provisions for the outcomes of schooling, often quite narrowly defined

3 Dr Paul Sharkey discusses this project in detail in Chapter 11.

4 Published by the bishops of NSW and the ACT August 2007, with the assistance of the Catholic Education Office Sydney.

- increased dependence of schools and systems on technology and the skewing of priorities that often accompanies the development and maintenance of technology systems.

All of the above factors now converge to render Catholic schools' contexts fraught with major organisational, educational, ethical and religious challenges.

In liminal periods meaning is at a premium

As we shall see later, anthropologists hold that, in the liminal period between cultural eras, meaning is always at a premium. In the eras of Catholic education referred to above, as meanings expanded, so too did the mission of the Catholic school. The experience has been that, when meaning and mission again more clearly coincide, then school communities gain added confidence in their own identity. A new set of understandings comes to be taken for granted, and with this the anxiety associated with always having to think things through decreases.

The real challenge of leading for mission in a liminal period is to help members of the school community make sense of the context in which teaching and learning occur so that what they are doing becomes more meaningful, and so has added significance for them.

This requires high quality mission thinking, and it is the contours of this thinking that we want to pursue in this book, calling on the resources available in the wisdom of our cultural and faith traditions, and the lived experience of leading for mission.

DETERMINING THE CONTOURS OF MISSION THINKING

Mission thinking, like its cousins operational thinking and strategic thinking, involves skills which leaders now have to master. Mission thinking requires a framework at the heart of which lies the leader's conception of mission. This understanding, of necessity, draws on both religious and secular sources. This introduces ambiguity, and the possibility of mission thinking becoming secularised. This possibility reflects the simple fact that Catholic school and system leaders work at the interface of the Church and society and so are influenced by the aspirations and demands each now make on schools. While there is much about the future shape of Catholic education that remains to be determined, what we do know is that, in order to go beyond the present transition period, there is need for a common project for which responsibility will have to be shared *across the whole Catholic community.*

What is at stake is the re-creation of the Catholic tradition in a qualitatively new context. This will require leaders—lay clerical and religious—to work and dialogue together, mindful of each other's gifts, experience and wisdom. A second necessary component is to construe mission in terms of Jesus' project of making present the Kingdom of God, or as Australian biblical scholar Francis Moloney suggests, 'the reigning presence of God'.[5] This presence has the power to transform the relationships that define a person's life-world—with God, family and friends, culture, faith community—and also the natural environment. Anything less than this re-creation will not take us where we must go in the coming era of Catholic education. *A mission framework embracing both these elements calls for serious renewal.*

Mission thinking is not for the faint–hearted. It is complex because terms like mission, that have explanatory power, tend to be overused almost to the point of incomprehensibility. It is here that missiology, which is vitally concerned with the interplay of faith and culture, has an important contribution to make to the contemporary concerns of Catholic school and system leaders.

Cultural construction of mission

The cultural construction of mission is associated with the ideas of 'purpose' and 'direction'. The common understanding is that the leaders of a group need to define *the preferred future* of the group and so determine in which directions the group needs to move, so as to make this preferred future a reality. Secondly, the leader needs to establish the criteria by which decisions about 'directions' are to be determined. The 'preferred future' constitutes 'the vision' of the organisation, and the criteria used in determining directions are the group's 'values'. Vision and values play an important role in determining the purpose or mission of the group. Groups then seek to articulate and communicate their mission in terms of a 'mission statement'. This statement is meant to convey to constituents the *aspirations of the organisation and the directions in which it seeks to move*. A mission statement is the expressed outcome of the group's mission thinking.[6]

5 This is an alternative wording for the phrase used by Jesus to describe his mission commonly translated as 'Kingdom of God' or 'reign of God'. See Francis Moloney *Mark: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2004), 126. In the view of some scholars, this wording captures the dynamism of Jesus' image better than do the alternatives.

6 The above way of construing 'mission' was popularised in the early 1980s by organisational consultant, Gerard Egan. Egan, a priest of the Chicago diocese and adjunct professor of Loyola University in Chicago, is also well known for his work on counselling. Now in its ninth edition, with a tenth about to be released, his book *The Skilled Helper: A Problem-Management and Opportunity-Development Approach to Helping* (Belmont: Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning, 2010) is regarded as a seminal work in the field.

Religious constructions of mission: two paradigms

The religious construction of mission has a long history within Catholicism. At present there are two competing paradigms of mission in official Catholic thinking. Each has validity and complements the other.

'Mission' is what the Church does.

In the first paradigm, mission is understood in terms of 'what the Church does'. Used in this sense, the paradigm holds that *God's Church has a mission*. This understanding of 'mission' is framed in terms of the 'mission command' found in Matthew 28:18–19. Here, the Gospel writer concludes his reflection on the life of Jesus by having Jesus, depicted as the new Moses, exhort his community as follows:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

While all four Gospel writers include a post-resurrection 'mission command' in their account of Jesus' life,[7] this one has been the most influential in determining the meaning of 'mission' within the Christian tradition, and in many ways has come to define the essential 'mission' of the Church. As a consequence, 'mission' is often understood as proclaiming and being a witness to the message of Jesus with the ultimate aim of building up the Church. Used in this way, 'mission' can become synonymous with what the official Church does in spreading the Gospel to peoples who have not heard it (or in the case of the 'new evangelisation' re-proclaiming it to those who have heard it but have ceased to be influenced by what they have heard). Under this paradigm, the official Church 'commissions' people, that is, it sends people out 'on mission' and so legitimises it.[8] This way of interpreting mission, at least in the Catholic tradition, results in mission being taken for granted at the local level as 'what Church professionals do'. This is unsatisfactory in today's context and, as we shall see in Chapter 7, does not of itself fully do justice to the recent magisterial teachings on mission which guide the Church community.

7 Matt 28:18–20; Mk 16:15–16; Lk 24:47–49; Jn 20:21–23.

8 The idea of a 'new evangelisation' currently receiving much official attention within the Church is often presented within this frame of reference. For a discussion of what Pope Paul VI calls a 'partial and fragmentary' approach to evangelisation, as opposed to an approach embracing 'all its essential elements', see *Evangelii Nuntiandi* #17 and ff.

'Mission' is what God does.

The alternative paradigm construes 'mission' in more expansive terms. 'Mission' is understood as God's action in time which begins within the very life of God, flows forth in creation, and is ongoing across the entire universe. The Church's role in this conception is to be the community of Jesus' disciples who are intentionally at the service of God's mission in time as this mission has been revealed firstly in the Old Testament, and most definitively in the mission of Jesus as depicted in the Gospels. The central motif in this view is Jesus' proclamation of, and witness to, the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom embodies a preferred future for all of creation. The mission of Jesus, carried on by faith communities, is to put in place conditions for human existence consistent with the Kingdom present in time, by giving specific meaning and witness to what the 'coming of God's Kingdom' looks like in particular contexts. In this paradigm of mission meaning-making becomes an integral part of Christian leadership.[9]

In Jesus' teaching, the Kingdom of God has both a temporal and an eschatological dimension. It can never be fully realised within time, and so presents a continuous challenge to the human imagination. Jesus' life and mission set the trajectory for any authentic Christian understanding of what 'making the Kingdom of God present in time' means. As human contexts change, it invites us to continually think about what the 'preferred future' which God has in mind for creation might be. Jesus' teaching also spells out clearly the values which guide decisions that need to be taken to move society and culture in 'Kingdom directions'. Rather than focussing the mission in the first instance on the Church, this paradigm suggests that *God's mission has a Church*. The Church is a community of disciples, and also an institution, at the service of God's mission, and therefore at the service of those who make God's Kingdom come in all the sets of relationships which constitute human life.

The Kingdom and the Church are integrally interrelated. As Pope John Paul II clarifies:

> *… one may not separate the kingdom from the Church. It is true that the Church is not an end unto herself, since she is ordered toward the Kingdom of God of which she is the seed, sign and instrument. Yet, while remaining distinct from Christ and the kingdom, the Church is indissolubly united to both. Christ endowed the Church, his body, with the fullness of the benefits and means of salvation.*[10]

9 For a discussion pertaining to the two paradigms above see Stephen Bevans & Roger Schroeder *Constants in Context* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis, 2004), 396–398 et al, and also Stephen Bevans 'The Mission has a Church: the Mission has Ministers: Thinking Missiologically about Ministry and the Shortage of Priests' *Compass* Vol 43, No 3, 2009, 314.

10 Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) #18.

Nevertheless, God's action occurs both within and beyond the Church. As a consequence, in fulfilling its mission, the Church has to be sensitive to the many ways in which God is at work in the world, and the ways in which the Church community can be at the service of God's action. The Church is of its nature a sacrament of the Kingdom.[11] It both points to the Kingdom and makes it present. Being at the service of mission commits the Church community to discernment and dialogue both within the community and with the wider world. In this understanding, 'mission' has multiple dimensions. It addresses the *quality of life within the faith community* and *the condition of life for all of God's creation*. This is one reason why the Church sees Catholic education as integral to its mission. The Catholic school links the Church with the wider world in a variety of ways.

MISSION IN CATHOLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS: GENERIC AND CONTEXTUAL UNDERSTANDINGS

Some Catholic educational leaders see mission in *generic* terms, others see it in *contextual* terms. Both of these understandings have a pedigree in Catholic teaching. They can usefully be thought of as 'ideal types' rather than clear-cut descriptions of life 'on the ground'. As such they serve to throw important leadership issues into clearer relief.

Mission: generic understanding

In the generic perspective, all Catholic schools have essentially the same mission. This is usually understood as helping the students to 'integrate faith, life and culture' as set down in *The Catholic School* (1977)[12] and repeated in all subsequent documents on Catholic schooling from the Congregation for Catholic Education. This understanding often results in mission becoming a taken-for-granted aspect of Catholic schooling and, partly in consequence, important questions remain unanswered. For instance: What do we mean by 'integrate'? What assumptions sit behind this meaning? Are they valid? What do we mean by 'culture'? What understanding of 'faith' is embodied in this generic construction of mission?

The generic construction often carries within it a large number of unstated pre-suppositions that are rarely acknowledged, let alone critically explored.[13] When mission is given taken-for-granted status, the thinking of

11 For an historically influential discussion of Church as sacrament see Avery Dulles S.J. *Models of the Church* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1976), 58–70.

12 Congregation for Catholic Education 1977 *The Catholic School* #41.

13 Vatican documents on Catholic education use the term 'culture' with a variety of meanings and it is left to the reader to determine which is which. This is not uncommon in other Church

school leaders focuses on operational and strategic concerns. As we will argue later, this opens the way for the rapid secularisation of the Catholic school or school system.

The generic understanding of mission is often employed by Catholic school system authorities to set priorities for schools. The school then develops its mission directions with respect to these. System leaders devise various processes, often referred to as 'system processes', to monitor outcomes and make interventions with respect to an agenda that is centrally-directed but locally-adopted and implemented. Career structures are developed to support and reinforce these arrangements. This model is often based on the unstated belief that the system has a mission in which schools participate.

Mission: contextual understanding

A second approach construes mission in contextual terms. The mission of the school in this perspective is formulated as a response to needs that arise within a specific educational community, living in a particular environment, at a particular time. Mission thinking requires knowledge of the community and the needs of members, which implies the need for dialogue with them. It also requires some understanding of the social, cultural and ecclesial environments, the times in which people live, and how they understand and relate to these. The aim of 'integrating faith, life and culture' takes on a localised meaning. Criteria based on shared values have to be devised to guide discernment so that decisions can be made and priorities assigned. The result is that mission is often articulated in terms of 'directions to be pursued'. These are then accepted by all participants as aligned to the aspirations and needs of a community, and thus underpinning the mutual commitments that bind the community together. Because the process of articulating the mission of the school *is dialogical, it is also educational*. As such it becomes an exercise in community-building.[14]

The role of a central office in this model is to facilitate the work of school leaders in *community-building* by helping the individual school communities identify the shared values that underpin group life and the shared aspirations that enable the group to set common goals, thus to negotiate the commitments

documents as Catholic anthropologist Gerard Arbuckle has pointed out. See Gerald Arbuckle *Culture, Inculturation & Theologians: A Post-Modern Critique* (Collegeville Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2010), 139ff. See also the discussion in Jim and Therese D'Orsa *Catholic Curriculum: a Mission to the Heart of Young People* (Mulgrave: Garratt Publishing, 2012), 88–100.

14 A helpful discussion on the nature of community can be found in Evelyn and James Whitehead *Community of Faith: Strategies for Developing Christian Communities* (Minneapolis: The Winston Seabury Press, 1982), 49–60. The Whiteheads argue that a community is a group of people held together by shared values, common goals and mutual commitments. The values shared by members of a Catholic school community may be sourced in faith, in culture or in both.

needed to meet those goals. A second aspect of the role is to work with the community to explore how it will *hold itself accountable* for meeting its commitments. The central office also plays a third role, that of *critical friend* seeking to lift the level of local aspiration so as to set challenging goals. This aspect of the role often needs to be prophetic, involving advocacy for the marginalised whose voice may otherwise not be heard.

The mission agenda in the contextualised model is locally-directed and centrally-supported. Mission is advanced by ongoing central office–local school dialogue. A contextual approach to mission acknowledges that mission has to be continually re-formulated as contexts change.

Mission in a liminal era

Leadership today requires a level and quality of thinking that is often new, and always demanding. This is because, as societies become more complex and interconnected, many once taken-for-granted 'truths' simply no longer hold. As a consequence, people are losing confidence in the meaning-systems that once anchored their lives. While this is certainly true of religion, increasingly it is true of culture as well. It is no simple matter to lead others when the meaning systems by which they make sense of their lives are contested or in transition. We are rapidly losing contact with many certainties once taken for granted, and find it hard to live with the uncertainties of the post-modern world.

The Second Vatican Council brought the Catholic Church into a new relationship with the modern world just as the modern world was yielding ground to the post-modern. The gap between faith and post-modern culture has been widened by the abuse scandals that have seriously undermined the confidence of Catholics in the Church as institution, and in its institutional leaders. Within the context of this prevailing climate, the Catholic school rather than the Catholic parish, remains, as has been the case for some time, the major point of contact between the institution and many of the faithful, and with this situation come new responsibilities.

Leadership in Catholic schools and systems now mirrors the situation in many other service agencies. Leadership is becoming more diverse and diffuse as it is shared across various levels of operation. Expectations about the technical competence required of school leaders in operational and strategic thinking have risen sharply as a result. However, there seem to have been no equivalent demands for technical competence in mission thinking.

The leadership of Catholic organisations today is also complex because of the different ways in which people understand what it means to be 'Catholic'.

'BEING CATHOLIC'—THREE PARADIGMS

In our experience of working with school communities, and of accessing a variety of literature related to Catholic education, the term 'Catholic' is today used in three principal ways.

'Catholic' as marker of institutional identity

Common usage interprets 'Catholic' as *a marker of institutional identity*. The hierarchy and clergy, as authoritative voices within the Catholic community, rightly seek to preserve this identity. 'Catholic' used in this sense operates across a spectrum of meanings. Interpreted in a quite narrow way, the institutional usage can be compared to that of a franchise in which strict conditions are applied as to who can claim the name 'Catholic'. On the other hand, used in a quite broad way, it can refer to all the officially sanctioned actions of Catholics. The meaning which the term 'Catholic' has for the formal bodies that make up the institution, such as Catholic schools and Catholic Education offices, seems to lie somewhere between these two limits, as determined by the local bishops.

There is an inherent tension between 'Catholic' understood as 'institution' and Catholic understood as 'community of faith'. In the broader culture people do not trust institutions because they are seen as self-serving. However, in the Church it is the existence of the institution that has provided the conditions needed for communities of faith to come into and remain in existence. It is a question of both/and rather than either/or.

'Catholic' as marker of personal identity

As membership of the Catholic community has become more diverse, the term 'Catholic' is now used as *a marker of personal identity*. Many people today identify themselves as 'Catholic' without much reference to the institution or even to a community. This designation is now used by the majority of parents supporting Catholic schools and, by extension, the young people who attend the schools. The parents' connection to the school community is often their one remaining connection to the institutional Church. The irony in many dioceses is that the loyal support of this group makes the existence of Catholic schools and systems possible. The majority of the group see 'being Catholic' as something that they can opt into, or out of, several times during a life journey without this compromising an underlying commitment to 'the Church' and what they see as the 'values of Jesus' which they wish to nurture in their homes. While institutional Catholics see such a position as untenable, it is the reality with which school and system leaders have to work.

'Catholic' as marker of communal identity

The position the Catholic school holds within the Catholic community, broadly considered, means that it is capable of bridging the gap that often exists between the institution and the individual. Schools attempt to do this by introducing and re-introducing Catholics living in the fragmented post-modern world to the experience of community.

Catholic educational policy in regard to Catholic children is that schools be inclusive rather than exclusive, on the grounds that all have a right to education and that the Gospel should be available to all.[15] While we may not yet know precisely what lies beyond the post-modern period, inclusiveness is most likely to characterise schools in the fourth era of Catholic education. The emerging leadership challenge for school and system leaders lies in knowing how to address the needs of Catholics with quite different understandings of what 'being Catholic' means.

LEADING FOR MISSION

The idea of leadership evokes notions of how leaders manage their interactions with colleagues in order to influence them. They seek to do this in a way that strengthens the organisation by achieving goals that contribute to its mission and to the growth and development of all involved.[16] 'Leading for mission' gives a particular orientation to this definition. It is a form of leadership that seeks to influence colleagues *by highlighting the significance of what they do, in the process of affirming who they are, and so lifting their level of aspiration*. Leading for mission in Catholic educating communities involves engaging colleagues, transforming outlooks, and sustaining the efforts that bring the reign of God into being in a particular place and time.

While school and system leadership share much in common, they also differ in significant ways. Defining the 'preferred future' for a system is quite a different task from determining it for a school. As we have noted above, the relationship between system and school can be construed in multiple ways, and this has important consequences for the culture of the school system.

The mission of a system has regard not only for the schools and their sustainability, but also for the teachers and school leaders who live out their

15 E.g. Vatican II's *Declaration on Christian Education* (1965) and the *Congregation for Catholic Education's Catholic Schools on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1997). Local bishops and other Catholic educational authorities interpret these documents in terms of the availability of places in Catholic schools. *The Declaration on Christian Education* interprets the Church's responsibility even more widely than the Catholic community, on the basis that education is a human right and should be available to all.

16 This conception of leadership is more fully developed by James Kouzes and Barry Posner in *The Leadership Challenge* (4th ed.) (San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, 2007).

careers in the context of the school system. System goals, more so than school goals, are tied to those of the institutional Church which sponsors the schools as 'Catholic'; to those of the government which sponsors schools as 'schools'; and to those parents who, as clients, also sponsor Catholic schools. Balancing the multiple, and sometimes contradictory, demands of these sponsoring bodies is challenging enough in stable times, but extremely complex in a liminal era such as exists at the present time. If school leaders have to be meaning-makers, then so too do system leaders. Both groups face a common challenge with regard to how this is best done.

Our contention is that theological reflection, the process of 'doing theology', is essential to meaning-making in a Catholic school system, and so is a key skill in mission thinking. Put simply, 'doing theology' involves taking human experience seriously and interpreting it meaningfully in terms of the wisdom of our culture and that of our faith tradition. It is a skill that needs to be reclaimed by leaders. The methodology of this book seeks 'to model the message' with regard to theological reflection.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

Following this introduction, *Leading for Mission: Integrating Life, Culture and Faith in Catholic Education,* unfolds in five sections. In Part A we explore human experience as a resource in leading for mission, borrowing the concept of social drama from anthropology. Chapter 2 explores the experience of liminality. Chapters 3 and 4 examine the social dramas that unfolded as Catholic leaders negotiated the transition processes associated with earlier eras of Catholic education. The focus here is on the wisdom generated through these experiences. In this respect leading for mission has an impressive Australian heritage.

In Part B the focus is on what the wisdom of our faith tradition has to say about leading for mission. The chapters in this section address core religious constructs in leading for mission. Our experience has been that many Catholic leaders have quite naïve ideas about concepts such as 'culture' and 'mission', and have little sense of the Scriptural foundations on which Christian leadership stands. Chapters 5 and 6 deal with the emergence of leadership heritages in the New Testament, and Chapter 7 looks at key understandings of mission as these have evolved in the official teaching of the Church since Vatican II.

Part C seeks to access the wisdom of our cultural tradition in addressing the challenges of leading for mission by exploring competing conceptions of culture and the process of meaning-making. The section draws heavily on the fields of cultural anthropology and hermeneutics. Chapters 8 and 9 outline two understandings of culture: the one modern and the other post-

modern. Chapter 10 introduces readers to hermeneutics and the process by which people customarily make meaning in their lives.

If the aim of Catholic education is to integrate faith, life, and culture, then the question is: how is this being done in our Catholic systems today? Part D explores current practice. Here a number of contributors offer reflections based on particular experiences of leading for mission. In successive chapters Paul Sharkey reports on a major project sponsored by the Catholic University of Leuven and the Victorian Catholic Education Commission which seeks to re-contextualise the mission of the schools as a response to the present challenges of liminality; Br Michael Green presents the interpretation Marist Brothers place on leading for mission in liminal times; Anne Benjamin and Michael Bezzina outline how the Australian Catholic University is preparing school and system leaders to address the contemporary challenges; and Chris Barrett looks at the way in which leadership for mission was managed in the Archdiocese of Sydney under the leadership of Br Kelvin Canavan.

The final section of the book, Part E, draws the conversation to a close by posing these questions:

- What is the 'heart of the matter' when it comes to leading for mission as the Church embarks on the fourth era of Catholic education?
- How do we best respond in leading for mission?

Discussion here focuses on priorities, frameworks and processes. Chapter 15 examines the nature of the evangelisation–secularisation tension at work in the life of all Catholic schools and school systems. Chapter 16 outlines a specific model of theological reflection for use in leading for mission. Chapter 17 draws the themes of the study together, exploring the relationship between mission thinking, strategic thinking, and operational thinking; and concludes by outlining the characteristics of mission thinking.