

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO

Mission in Practice

DISCIPLESHIP IN ACTION IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS



Jim and Therese D'Orsa
with Audrey Brown, John Meneely
and Catholic Educators from the Ballarat Diocese



VAUGHAN PUBLISHING

The Educator's Guides

The Mission and Education Project of BBI-TAITE (The Australian Institute of Theological Education) presents a series of Guides to serve the educational mission of Catholic schools in Australia and beyond. The Guides, each dealing with a specific area, introduce educators to ways in which mission and education may be integrated in the life and work of Catholic educators and students. The mandate given to the expert writers who create these Guides is to tap into the best available treatments of mission and also to ground their work in quality practice.

Therese D'Orsa
Professor Mission and Culture
BBI-TAITE
Commissioning Editor Mission and Education Project



VAUGHAN PUBLISHING

Published in Australia by Vaughan Publishing
32 Glenvale Crescent, Mulgrave VIC 3170

A joint imprint of Garratt Publishing and BBI – The Australian Institute of Theological Education.

Copyright © 2019 Jim & Therese D'Orsa

All rights reserved. Except as provided by Australian copyright law, no part of this publication may be reproduced in any manner without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Cover design and typesetting by Marley Berger

Images supplied by All Saints Catholic School Portland, the Catholic Communities of the Hampden Region, St Francis Xavier Ballarat, St Patrick's College Ballarat, St Mary's Swan Hill, St Patrick's School Port Fairy, St Patrick's Stawell, St Alipius Ballarat East, Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations
Printed by Tingleman

The author and publisher gratefully acknowledge the permission granted to reproduce the copyright material in this book. Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyright material.

The publisher apologises for any errors or omissions in the above list and would be grateful if notified of any corrections that should be incorporated in future reprints or editions of this book.

ISBN 9780648524601



A catalogue record for this
book is available from the
National Library of Australia

Nihil Obstat: Reverend Monsignor Gerard J Diamond STD
Diocesan Censor
Imprimatur: Monsignor Greg Bennet MS STL VG
Vicar General
Date: 30 April 2019

The *Nihil Obstat* and *Imprimatur* are official declarations that a book or pamphlet is free of doctrinal or moral error. No implication is contained therein that those who have granted the *Nihil Obstat* and *Imprimatur* agree with the contents, opinions or statements expressed. They do not necessarily signify that the work is approved as a basic text for catechetical instruction.

Contents



Introduction	1
Chapter 1 Mission and God's Kingdom	3
Chapter 2 Forming Disciples for the Kingdom	7
Chapter 3 Mission and Identity – Catholic Does as Catholic Is	11
Chapter 4 Biblical Traditions of Mission	16
Chapter 5 Catholic Schools – Mission Within a Worldwide Family	23
Chapter 6 Mapping Mission Across Time	28
Chapter 7 Mission Between Peoples – an Unfolding Tradition	36
Chapter 8 Dialogue – a Vital Mode of Mission	40
Chapter 9 Mission – the Task of the Whole Community	46
Chapter 10 Theological Reflection for Mission	51
Conclusion God's Mission Has a Faith Community	56
Prayer	57
Endnotes	58
Further Reading	60

Meet the Authors

Jim D’Orsa

Jim D’Orsa’s contributions to Catholic education include teaching and senior leadership in Catholic schools and systems. He pioneered the preparation of lay leaders to take responsibility for the vision and mission of colleges, and has extensive experience in reviewing large systems and in pastoral planning. Jim is currently associate professor at BBI-TAITE where he specialises in teaching, research and writing in the areas of mission, leadership and theology.

Therese D’Orsa

Therese D’Orsa is currently professor of mission and culture at BBI-TAITE. She has a long experience of leadership in schools and school systems, and in adult education, and has taught in a range of tertiary institutions, both universities and theologates. Therese has led major projects in mission, education and justice. She has written widely on mission and education and has pioneered the Mission and Education project of which she is the Commissioning Editor.

Audrey Brown

Audrey Brown has been Director of Catholic Education for the Diocese of Ballarat since 2012. She has been a teacher, teacher coach, principal and principal coach, all in regional Victoria. A lifelong learner who has engaged in study and research throughout her career, Audrey has post-graduate qualifications in educational leadership, Religious Education, theology, education law and educational system leadership.

John Meneely

John is currently Deputy Director of Catholic Education in the Diocese of Ballarat. He has extensive experience in faith leadership at both school and system level. John has a passion for religious education that is reflective of the authentic dialogue between faith and culture and has been involved in curriculum development in this field for fifteen years.

Audrey Brown and John Meneely worked collaboratively with educators from across the Ballarat Diocese for this book.

Introduction

Mission in Practice in Catholic Schools



As the renewal inaugurated by the Second Vatican Council (1962–5) has taken root in the life of the Catholic community worldwide, the mission of Jesus has come more clearly into focus as the wellspring and *raison d'être* of its life.

It is also now clearer that strains and fractures in key human relationships must cause mission to take many new forms, and that familiar forms of mission must morph into new configurations. Justice, peace-making, reconciliation, care for the earth, and the ongoing challenge of inculturating the Gospel deeply into the cultures of each human grouping, are clear examples of forms of mission which are central to keeping hope alive in our time.

Vatican II inaugurated a paradigm shift in understanding about mission, moving God's action in the created world to the centre of mission theology and practice, and acknowledging the Church's vital role in the service of a mission which is, first and foremost, God's project. The Church is a community intentionally at the service of God's mission.

In recent decades, the Church community has come to understand more clearly Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God. In this perspective, God is the one who is in control of mission; the Church – every community and each of the baptised – has a vocation of collaboration in making present and sustaining the Kingdom of God. Jesus' ministry of teaching and healing provides the example of mission in practice. As faith communities gathered by the Church for the ministry of education, Catholic schools are privileged partners in the work of God's Kingdom.

The current context of mission, with its rapid globalisation, pluralism, and maelstrom of ideologies and philosophical currents impacting on the human community and the natural world, is substantially different from that of the times of Vatican II. In the light of the contemporary challenges, BBI-TAITE (The Australian Institute of Theological Education)

has entered into a partnership with a number of educational providers to initiate a series of explorations and conversations set at the interface of mission and education. These take the form of Exploratory Studies, Educator's Guides, and Monographs. In this Educator's Guide, Catholic educators from the schools and the Catholic Education Office of the Ballarat diocese, have worked with missiologists Jim and Therese D'Orsa, to provide an introduction to 'mission in practice' in order to support Catholic school communities in recognising the many opportunities they have for addressing contemporary mission challenges.

The Mission and Education Project is national, not only in seeking, and gratefully receiving, financial support from many diocesan and congregational school systems, but also in drawing as many educators as possible into the conversation. My sincere thanks to all those Catholic educational authorities who have supported this project over the past decade.

As Commissioning Editor, I take the opportunity to acknowledge the generosity and optimism of the Ballarat educators who assisted in the development of this Guide. The Director, Audrey Brown, and Deputy Director, John Meneely, worked with the skill and energy of true leaders to engage with school communities and prepare the eight case studies that emerged out of their conversations with school staffs. These case studies have been placed throughout the text. I feel sure that every Catholic educator in and beyond Australia will find they can recognise similar good practice occurring in their own dioceses and schools. This Guide is a call to affirm and celebrate good mission practice, and to go deeper in faith, spirituality and competence.

It can be a challenge to conceptualize and express clearly what we know intuitively about the many forms that mission takes today. My hope is that this Guide will help Catholic educators and leaders to do just that. In the unfolding story of God's mission, we are co-creators. We are also educators, and it is important that we are clear in our own understanding, and can explain mission to others.

Mission's scriptural foundations, touched on in this Guide (chapters 1 and 4), teach us much about the 'three steps forwards and two steps backwards' that mission entails. Our own experience provides us with similar insight on this score. We know that endeavoring to create and sustain kingdom times and spaces in our communities and contexts, is a 'long haul process'.

Pope Francis has issued a call for Catholic communities to form 'missionary disciples'. Such formation occurs in the process of engagement in mission practice, in deep reflection, and in respectful dialogue. Mission in Practice is offered to those entrusted with the ongoing formation of educators, in the hope that it may enable them to see contours of mission a little more clearly, so that as educators they may be confident in their missional vocations. Amid much brokenness, mission work engenders hope.

Educators who bring hope to others *must also be sustained in hope themselves*. In the words of one of the great mission texts of our time, may this Guide encourage and enable those who study it, to: 'Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is within you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence.' (1 Peter 3:15)

The Guide begins by outlining core understandings about mission in the context of Catholic schooling, drawing particularly on the teaching of Pope Francis (Chapters 1-3). It then goes on to outline the scriptural foundations on which the theology of mission rests (Chapter 4) and the way in which this relates to the Church's official understanding of Catholic education and its mission to students (Chapter 5). This understanding has sometimes struggled to keep pace with developments in mission theology.

In Chapters 6, 7, and 8 the Guide traces developments in the Church community's understanding and experience of mission as these have evolved across two millennia. These chapters make the point that God's mission can take many forms each of which

is related to the needs of people. As historical and cultural contexts unfold needs change and so too, in response, does our understanding of mission.

While mission may take the many forms outlined in the Guide, it always involves three fundamental modes; *witness* to the message of the Gospel; *proclamation* of the message of the Gospel; *dialogue* with others seeking their engagement in action on behalf of the needy and marginalised.

Mission has an essential *communal dimension* as it is the work of a community rather than of individuals (Chapter 9). Mission is also an *inclusive concept* in that all members of a school community have the talent needed to contribute in creating 'Kingdom spaces' in students' lives. The various examples drawn from the Ballarat schools make this clear.

The method of theological reflection presented in this Guide (Chapter 10) provides a way of processing life experiences in all their complexity to identify and meet human needs. The final chapter outlines a method of reflection that has a long provenance in the development of Catholic Social Teaching and the praxis of social action on behalf of the marginalised. It provides a general framework for working through issues thrown up by the reflections presented in the text.

Therese D'Orsa
Professor Mission and Culture,
Broken Bay Institute
Commissioning Editor

*Always be ready to make
your defense to anyone
who demands from you
an accounting for the hope
that is in you; yet do it with
gentleness and reverence.*

1 Peter 3:15

Mission and God's Kingdom

The Kingdom of God is not a concept, a doctrine, or a program subject to free interpretation, but is before all else, a person with the face and name of Jesus of Nazareth, the image of the invisible God. (Pope John Paul II *Redemptoris Missio* # 18).

Sometimes we hear people use expressions like: 'I'm on a mission to sort this out.' In the broader culture, 'mission' equates with purpose or direction, implying a desire to achieve something important.

In the language and culture of Catholicism, 'mission' equates to our faith community's religious purpose, its *raison d'être*, which is to be intentionally at the service of God's Kingdom, in our personal lives, and in communities, societies, and cultures. This is the sense in which we use 'mission' in this Guide.

We explore ways in which school communities understand and carry out the mission of Jesus in settings very different from those in which Jesus pursued his mission from God, to whom he related as Father. When Jesus spoke about his mission, he used a phrase that touched into the culture of the people to whom he was speaking. He referred to 'the kingdom (or reign) of God', in other words, 'what things would be like around here for people if God's wishes and intentions were making the running'.

The Kingdom of God and the reign or rule of God are synonyms. Sometimes people express this as God's dream for creation – an appropriate way of fostering understanding of Jesus' image for his mission.

In making the idea of the 'Kingdom of God' concrete for people, Jesus used images and parables. These often indicated that the Kingdom of God is different from what people first imagine, is very valuable, and comes at a high price for his followers.

The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it. (Matt 13:45-46).¹

Choices have to be made, and considerable effort exerted, in order for the Kingdom of God to break into the tangle of human relationships.

Engagement with the Marginalised

Jesus' teaching and healing ministries were directed at all who were open to receive the gift God was offering. Those on the margins of society were in great need of the healing and dignity that Jesus afforded them. For this reason, Jesus offered them particular attention. For all who were prepared to listen and follow him as disciples, Jesus showed that they were to authenticate their relationship with God by making choices similar to those that he was making. Effectively, Jesus was calling for a new form of human consciousness – the capacity to view things differently, to imagine a better situation and then make it happen.

Jesus' followers (disciples) were called to create 'kingdom times and spaces' wherever they encountered people in need, or any of the key human relationships – with God, self, others or the natural world – under stress.

The Kingdom is in the Process

Many of the kingdom images used by Jesus involve what we might term 'process' words – he spoke, for example, of a woman *searching* for a lost coin (Luke 15:8-10), a farmer *sowing* seed (Matt 13:1-9), a king *preparing* a wedding feast (Matt 22:1-14), yeast silently *leavening* the dough (Matt 13:33). The Kingdom of God requires serious work. It is present in the efforts

to create 'kingdom spaces' in areas of life where the values of the Kingdom are absent. The Kingdom is present as much in the *process* of endeavouring to bring it about as in the *outcome*.

While already among us (Luke 17:21), the Kingdom is never complete in this world, no matter how great our efforts or noteworthy our successes. That is why Jesus taught us to pray for the coming of the Kingdom in the prayer we know as the Our Father – 'Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven'.

Splendid gains are sometimes made, but that is not the end of it. There is always a continuing, or a new, challenge to be faced. This is because of the tendency for human arrangements to deteriorate, even when they are well established. Eventually renewal will be necessary.

Consequently, there is no justification for the disciple to rest on her laurels, to bask in mission accomplished. In this world, our achievements on behalf of the Kingdom are *always provisional, and only ever partially complete*.

Jesus Embodies the Kingdom

In his magisterial treatment of the Kingdom of God,² Pope John Paul II reminded us that Jesus reveals the characteristics of the kingdom through his words, his actions, and his person. Jesus is the kingdom made visible.

The Kingdom of God is not a concept, a doctrine, or a program subject to free interpretation, but is before all else, a person with the face and name of Jesus of Nazareth, the image of the invisible God. (Redemptoris Missio # 18).

Jesus proclaimed the Good News by totally identifying with what he was announcing – in him words were perfectly matched with deeds. We might say today that 'he walked the talk'.

As a result of his choices, he was to experience personally the price of living the values, responsibilities, and relationships of the Kingdom in daily life: conflict, bitter suffering and even death.

However, the Kingdom of God ultimately includes overcoming death. The Kingdom reaches its completion beyond this world and beyond time. When Paul and the Gospel writers wanted to present the

Good News after Jesus had sent the Holy Spirit, they proclaimed the totality of what the Good News entails – always telling the *full story* of Jesus – his life, mission, message, death and resurrection.

A Change of Mind and Heart

Pope John Paul II emphasised the change of mind and heart, and allegiance to Jesus (faith), which goes with acceptance of the good news of God's reign or kingdom.

This change of mind and heart is part and parcel of discipleship of Jesus.

This is the time of fulfilment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel. (Mk 1:15).

A change of mind and heart (sometimes termed 'conversion' or 'repentance') and the allegiance to Jesus which is its expression, transform all relationships – with God, self, others, and the natural world.

Jesus Formed a Community for Mission

Much of Jesus' effort in his short public life went into forming a community of disciples for the Kingdom. Following his resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit, these early followers were to go into the known world and participate in the Kingdom process just as Jesus had done. Most paid a similar price to Jesus in their service of the Kingdom of God.

Pope Francis has described the Church as a 'community of missionary disciples' (*The Joy of the Gospel* ##119-121).³ The forming and sustaining of such communities is the responsibility of all who lead in Catholic schools, and also of each community member – all are called to contribute to the strength and viability of missional communities.

Mission and Evangelisation

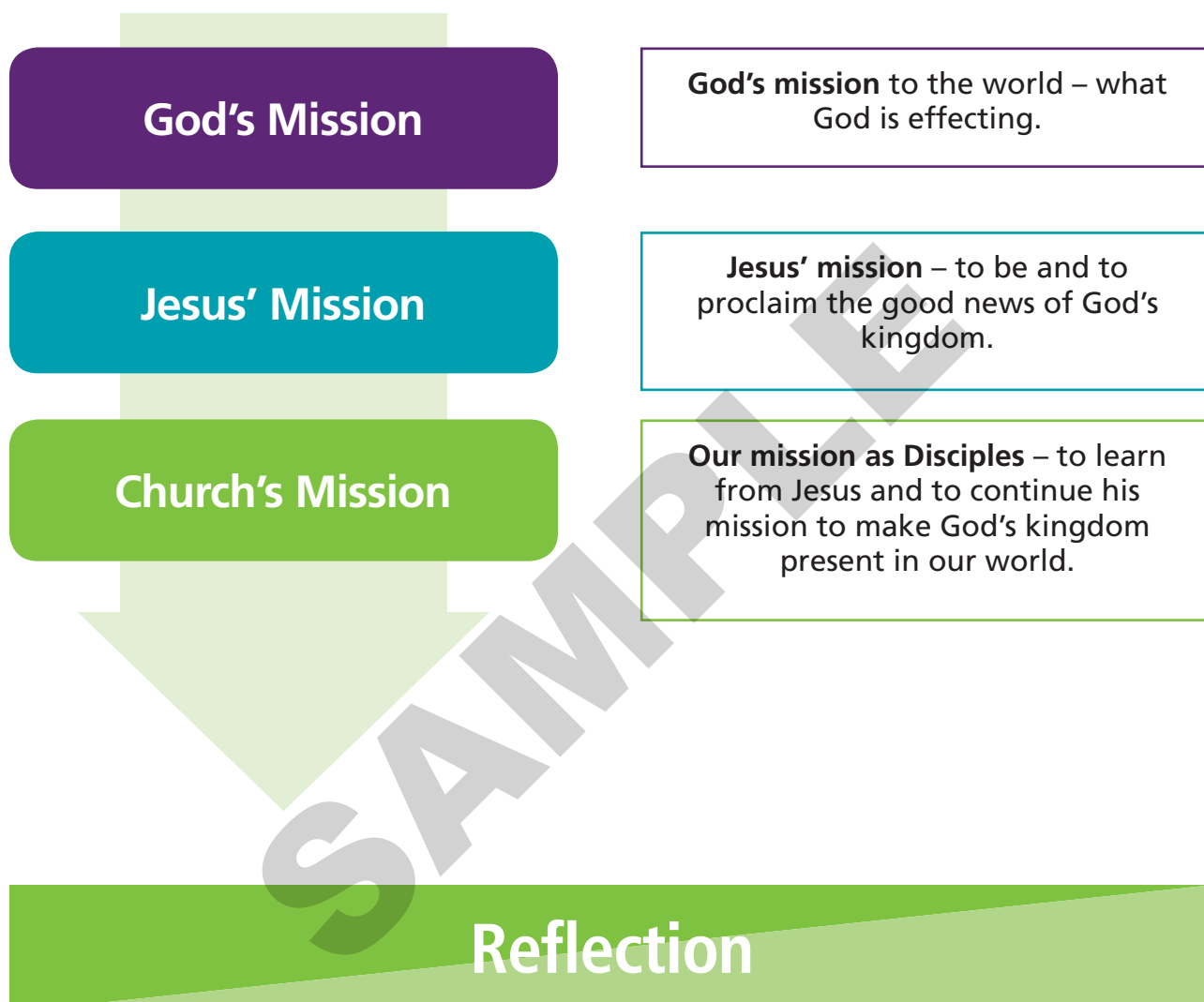
These are closely related concepts, sometimes used interchangeably. In simple terms, the relationship is as follows: the mission (religious purpose) of the Christian community comes from God, and it is to evangelise i.e. to make present, by deed and word, the Good News of God's kingdom as Jesus did. Service on behalf of this

kingdom of love, justice, peace, mercy and reconciliation is the *raison d'être* of the community we call Church.

The phrase 'new evangelisation' should not be taken to mean some kind of new, in the sense of different, understanding of the community's fundamental

mission. The phrase refers simply to the call to Catholics (first issued by Pope John Paul II) to renew their enthusiasm, and expand their capacities, for bringing the Good News *in all its many forms* to bear on the lives, communities and cultures of humans in the contemporary world.

Linking the Concepts⁴



In this Guide we endeavour to translate Jesus' teaching about the kingdom or rule of God into the idea of 'kingdom spaces' i.e. 'spaces' in school life where members of the community experience justice, reconciliation, peace and love, often in the form of compassion. All are hallmarks of God's kingdom breaking into human experience in concrete ways. While it is important to create such 'spaces' for all students, it is especially important to create them for those who are marginalised.

1. Reflect on your interactions with students and see if you can identify such experiences.
2. Who are the marginalised in your school, or class? What do you think a 'kingdom space' might look like for these students? How would you go about creating these? Be as specific as you can. Remember, mission always happens in the concrete, never in the abstract.

Proclamation of the Gospel as an Invitation to Prayer

All Saints Catholic School, Portland

With a diverse faith background of families and staff, All Saints Catholic School in Portland, Victoria, decided to create a prayer experience that was open and respectful of all members of the school community. Using funds and volunteer labour offered by Portland Aluminium, the school leadership decided to build a walking labyrinth that would provide a space and opportunity for prayer and reflection.

The school had taught students a range of meditative practices which provided the grounding to introduce the labyrinth. Labyrinth walking does

not presume a familiarity with the words and language of prayer but leads the seeker to an encounter. Ironically, proclamation of the Gospel, which may seem to some to be very much about words, does not necessarily come in the form of the spoken or written word, but as this community found, it can come very effectively through an invitation to silence, stillness and simplicity.

One way in which the labyrinth has been used by both students and staff is as a form of centring prayer prompted by a passage of scripture that could be used

as a focus if so desired by the participant. An important element of this tactile prayer is the feeling of pebbles underfoot that connects the participant with God's earth through touch and sound.

Plans are afoot to extend an invitation to the parent body and parishioners to learn about, and participate in, labyrinth prayer, thus strengthening partnerships in the education of faith. This provides an important opportunity to bear witness to the invitation of Jesus to his followers, to 'Come and See'. (John 1:39)

