

In session two Kevin Quigley shared with delegates a model of what distinctive Catholic schools look like. Delegates were encouraged to identify principles and practice that could be applied within all schools with a distinctive Christian character.

Session Two

Kevin introduced delegates to 5 ways schools can be distinctively Christian. In reflecting the early church schools should be places that are:

- A WELCOMING COMMUNITY-KOINONIA
- A WELFARE COMMUNITY-DIAKONIA
- A WITNESSING COMMUNITY-MARTURIA
- A WORD OF GOD COMMUNITY-KERYGMA
- A WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY-LEITOURGEIA

Kevin went on to give practical examples in each of the five areas.

A Welcoming community. . .

What do we mean by welcome? Engendering a welcoming ethos based on biblical values can be both radical and inclusive. We, as human beings, are wired up for community. It is part of life's connectivity.

A school needs to be a place of:

- 'Radical inclusivity', a commitment to covenant with each individual.
- Learning spaces, hospitable places and spaces – this means openness in allowing for people's creativity, but with boundaries as well in terms of structure and discipline.

A story is told of a Native American chief who shared these thoughts with French settlers: 'You love only the people of your tribe, we love all people of all tribes'.

Catholicity means 'Welcoming each and all.'

Jesus welcomed people, told them about the Kingdom of God and healed them (Lk 9:11) - this is a model of radical welcome.

How can this be distinctive?

Being a welcoming community has to do with the fact that the school becomes church. Headteachers exercise spiritual leadership, and can act as ministers of the gospel.

A Welfare community. . .

Jean Vanier comments about: 'Community and growth'

'We have a treasure of truth and a peace to share.'

We're concerned with the welfare/well-being of children and adults. My experience tells me that children don't care what you know until they know whether you care.

UNESCO asked a fundamental question for schools today: What do children need to learn for the 21st century?

Their findings were as follows:

1. To learn
2. To do
3. To be
4. To live with others

Notice that points 3 and 4 are 'being' and 'caring'.

On the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35), Jesus listened to the disciples' experience. He dialogued with them, drew out their thoughts. Explained the context and meaning. Re-framed and re-visioned it for them. And then he broke bread.

'No road is long with good company' – this should be true for the children in our schools.

Parker J. Palmer: 'Education is the pursuit of truth in the company of friends.'

What is our ontology? Do we believe that children are inherently good – made in God's image? How do we deal with difficult children? Do we 'sort them out' or do we go deeper? Are we treating children with reverence?

Relational ways of teaching and learning should be the norm in Christian schools.

Building ethical classrooms is important. Alec Salmond, when talking about RC education in Scotland, commented, *'These children were learning not just to be good students, they were learning to be good people.'*

Jean Vanier's vision:

'But when a child is loved
Seen as precious
Listened to
Touched with reverence
It knows it belongs
It is held protected and safe
It opens without fear'

In Christian education every child should be ...'cradled in Christian values.'

A Witnessing community. . .

How do we act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly (Micah 6:8) with our people? Children are quick to spot a fake: we need to walk with integrity. Live the mission.

Part of this process is to discern shared values - not just for staff and governors, but for children.

Witnessing doesn't have to be about words.

St Francis of Assisi - "Preach the gospel at all times, when necessary.....use words "

The big challenge is service and stewardship (2 Cor 4:1).

We need to have a sacramental perspective on everything that goes on in school. God is there in all, on the backdrop and the foreground.

The challenge of witness is to have a *'reality is sacred and the sacred is real'* mentality. We need to cultivate a non-dualistic approach to everything that goes on in our schools.

A 'Word of God' Community

Catholic schools should be communities in which God's Living Word is expressed through Sacred Scriptures, through the lives of those

inspired by it and through life itself.

We are to be living embodiments of the Word of God.

Vatican II talks about history being the medium through which God speaks with humanity. We need to become everyday mystics, who don't get caught up in the foreground but in the backdrop.

'I meditate not to escape the world but to listen more intently to its voices.'

Jerome Bruner asks three questions.

'What is it that makes us so human?'
'How did we become so?'
'How can we become more so?'

Being a *'Word of God Community'* is part of a 2000 year old tradition based on Christ. A 2000 year old tradition that tells us what it means to be human

I have come that they might have life and have it to the full' (John 10:10).

Jesus is Wisdom and the Word of God.

'Knowledge without wisdom is like a load of books on the back of an ass' Japanese Proverb.

In terms of the school community we need to know the =difference between 'Tradition' and 'Traditionalism'. The five 'C's of a tradition are:

Cherish it
Critique it
Communicate it
Contribute to it
Celebrate it

John Mayne talks about tradition in these terms: Tradition cannot survive by being talked about or written down, but because people enter into the experience of the tradition – a 'living' tradition, that possesses power to enlighten, guide and to warm.

So what is the role of the school, as a *'Word of God'* community, within that life-giving, life-enhancing tradition?

A Worshipping Community

We need to take spirituality seriously.

Spirituality has to do with awakening. Awareness. Seeing things as God sees them. Being attuned to discovering God in every facet of our lives.

David Hay – We are physically and biologically born for spirituality. Society represses this inborn sensibility that all children have.

Just as candle cannot burn without fire, man cannot burn without spiritual life.

Worship cannot be reduced to once a week! Thus, we're talking about a child's life journey. We are the wisdom resource for our time.

The session ended with a short question and answer session