

PASTORAL CARE IN OUR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

DIRECTIVES

Catholic Board of Education

1st June 1993

FOREWORD

After much consultation and with the help of your precious feed-back, I have finally drawn up the following Directives: “Pastoral Care in our Catholic Schools”.

This “Statement” touches on values and practices that are important and should be given careful consideration in all our Catholic Schools. The “Action/Activities” Section offers some suggestions for the carrying out of the values mentioned above. These are not meant to be exhaustive. Further suggestions from schools will be most welcome. Since each school has its own history, its unique situation and its particular needs, the adoption of such activities will vary accordingly.

The term “Pastoral Care” for us implies the loving attention and concern we show to those under our care as we help them grow into maturity, especially in the moral and spiritual dimensions. We do this with the same tender care as that shown by our Model, Christ Jesus, the Good Shepherd (the “Pastor”) for us His sheep, for whom He went so far as to give up His very life. This same commitment is asked of us Catholic Educators. Yes, it is indeed a very high ideal for us, poor little shepherds and shepherdesses... And yet, this is possible, but only by the grace of the one True Shepherd with whom we need, therefore, to be constantly in contact!

I sincerely hope that these Directives will serve to unite our efforts to impart a truly “Catholic” Pastoral Care to our students and staff in all our Catholic Schools.

May the Lord continue to bless our efforts and make them fruitful for His glory!

Sr. Marie Remedios
Episcopal Delegate for Education

1st June, 1993.

PASTORAL CARE IN OUR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Mission of Catholic Schools

Catholic schools are very important as a *means of spreading the Good News* and of *training young people* whose lives are guided by Christian principles and values.

In our Diocese, our Catholic schools have contributed an invaluable service over the years to the people of Hong Kong. They share in the *salvific mission* of the Church and carry out Christ's command to His Apostles "Go and teach all nations".

What makes a Catholic school different from other schools is *Christ*, His life and teaching, *as the Model* for both teachers and students to follow. Its *religious dimension* is to be found in:

- a) *the educational climate or atmosphere;*
- b) *the personal development of each student*, Catholic and non-Catholic alike;
- c) *the relationship established between culture (everyday life) and the Gospel;* and
- d) *the illumination of all knowledge with the light of faith.*

(cf. "Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School" Introduction)

In our schools, only some of the teachers are Catholics and the vast majority of students are non-Catholics. We must *respect the religious freedom* and the personal conscience of individuals. This freedom is explicitly recognised by the Church.

On the other hand, a Catholic school cannot give up its own freedom to *teach the Gospel* and to offer a formation based on *values* to be found in a Christian education. This is its right and its duty. To proclaim, teach or offer is not to impose. To impose suggests a moral violence which is forbidden both by the Gospel and by Church law.

DIRECTIVES

We, Catholic Educators, have something very valuable to share: the light of our faith. These *directives or guidelines* are meant to help us foster and develop the unique charism of our

Catholic schools. They do not cover every aspect of school life in detail. Each school has its own traditions, experience and particular circumstances, but we are united in our desire to make our schools more apostolically effective.

In order to carry out our mission in Hong Kong, the following are some directives or guidelines:

1. All Teachers

All teachers should have opportunities during the school year of sharing, renewal and reflection on their career, their joys, successes and the areas of needed growth and development in the school. This can be done by setting aside special days for the School Staff to gather together in a relaxed atmosphere to reflect.

2. Catholic Teachers

The main responsibility for creating the unique Christian atmosphere in our schools rests with the Principal and the teachers, as individuals and as a group. The Catholic teachers in particular are very precious as sharers of the light of their Christian faith, love and spirit. Without them the school would cease to be a Catholic School.

Catholic Teachers play a very important role as living examples of their faith and Christian values in the schools. Often they are called upon to teach religion or ethics and to care for the religious activities in the school. Their involvement in religious activities should be taken into account by Heads of schools when assigning them other duties.

Training and developing their spiritual lives is very important. There should be opportunities for them to develop a deeper knowledge of their faith and their spiritual lives both as individuals and as a group. This can be done in retreats, in prayer groups etc.

Since a school can hardly be called a Catholic school if there are no Catholic teachers, every effort should be made, all things being equal, to employ good Catholic teachers.

It is most valuable to have a Pastoral Team in the school, made up of a number of good and dedicated Catholic teachers, who are interested in developing their own and the students' spiritual life. This Pastoral Team should seek the help and support of a Chaplain, and be responsible for Catholic activities. Through them, a religious atmosphere is maintained in the school, and the students will be inspired by their faith, commitment and loving service, since example speaks louder than words.

3. Non-Catholic Teachers

While we respect the freedom and personal conscience of non-Catholic teachers, we should help them understand our aims, the philosophy of the school, and our role in promoting Christian values based on love and service. We expect them to be united with us in promoting a school which is a caring community, inspired by love and respect for each individual and where we are willing to serve each other. All teachers are expected to help the students develop their self-control and sense of responsibility.

4. All Students

Students to-day are exposed to a secular, materialistic, pleasure-loving, freedom- to-do-what-you-like kind of atmosphere. There is little thought given to God as the Centre of their lives or to Christian values as directives for their behaviour. They need our help in developing into people who have respect for themselves and others, who have learned self-discipline and are willing to care for and to serve generously people in need. They need the Good News of God's love and to discover the real meaning and value of their lives. To help them achieve this is the mission of the Catholic School.

5. Catholic Students

Nowadays, because of the society in which we live and the pressures on family life, the development of the students' faith and prayer-life, their understanding of the importance of the Eucharist, the Sacraments and Christian moral teaching will largely depend on what help, instruction and experience they receive at school. For this reason, whenever possible, the intake of Catholic applicants for discretionary places should be given priority.

Students naturally like to feel they belong to a group. Support from their peers is important for them. In our schools we should have a Catholic Society and encourage small prayer groups, Bible study groups, the Legion of Mary, Basic Christian Communities, Christian Life Communities etc. In these they can experience, share and pray together. Together they can learn and grow in faith.

It is very valuable to provide outlets for the students' generosity and self-sacrifice by having them participate in service projects within the school and outside. Christian love is shown in action.

6. Non-Catholic Students

It is our duty to introduce all students to Christ and His teaching since we are all children of the one same Father. Religious education must be a priority in our schools, therefore

there should be at least a minimum of 2 periods a week/cycle for this. We must share with the students our moral and Christian values so that they too can contribute to the Christian atmosphere of the school.

One may begin with life-centredness and then lead on to Christ, or vice-versa, whichever way proves to be more efficacious, as long as one can ultimately achieve the apostolic goal of making Christ known and loved in the reality of each person's life.

Opportunities of doing this can be in class, in assemblies, para-liturgies using the Bible etc.

7. Relations with the Parish

Since the Catholic school shares in the evangelizing mission of the Church, it is important to develop a very good relationship with the clergy of the Parish in which the school is situated. They can both help each other and serve each other, collaborating closely for greater witness and effectiveness.

8. Relations with Parents

Parents are the first educators of their children and their involvement in the school's educational programme and planning, even from the earliest years of schooling, is desirable. Since their interest and co-operation with the school is essential, the school should provide opportunities for parents to come to the school when the aims, philosophy of the school, the services provided etc. can be explained, while parents can speak about their problems and worries. This can be done by having a Parent-Teacher Association, a Parents' Day, inviting parents to some school activities etc. Catholic parents should be invited to religious celebrations whenever possible.

ACTION / ACTIVITIES

These suggested activities are to be applied according to the various needs and circumstances of individual schools.

1. Religious Atmosphere

- 1.1 This democratic, family-like spirit of loving concern, of justice and of kindness in mutual relationships has to be lived out concretely in the daily administration and management of the school, by all concerned.
- 1.2 A Religious Board or Corner could be set up to put up the “Golden Words of the Bible”, the news of the Diocese and the Parish, the works of the prize-winners in Poster and Slogans Competitions on themes such as “Love” and “Peace”, etc. Meditation, and recitation of the Rosary in the Month of Our Lady and other devotional practices could be introduced.
- 1.3 Short and simple liturgies such as morning prayers, Bible reading, hymn-singing and Rosary-saying at assembly could be organized to help students form a habit of reading the Bible and saying prayers, and attention should be paid in teaching students the right attitude towards such practices.
- 1.4 Special Liturgical or Prayer Services on special occasions could be organized (e.g. at the beginning and the end of the school year, Patron’s Day, Christmas, etc.) for the whole school or for Catholic students and staff, according to the needs and situation of each school and its traditions.
- 1.5 Social service activities and campaigns which express Christian love and care such as paying visits to the Handicapped, the Home for the Aged, or an Orphanage are also useful ways to foster a good atmosphere.
- 1.6 The physical presence of Religious images (e.g. crucifix, statues of Our Lady, pictures of the Saints etc.) often help the viewer to raise the mind and thought to God and to higher values.

2. School Administrators

- 2.1 Management Committees and Heads are to give proper encouragement and support to Catholic Teachers in their difficult task of keeping alive the spirit of Christ in their teaching and in the animating of Catholic activities.
- 2.2 Two or three days per year could be set aside as formation days for staff members, with special gatherings/activities for Catholic staff members (including non-teaching staff).
- 2.3 As Religious Education is an important subject in Catholic schools, due recognition should be given it by the consolidation of a Senior administrative post for the

properly qualified Religious Education Panel chairperson, if and when this is possible.

- 2.4 Sufficient periods of Religious Education (a minimum of 2 periods per week/cycle) should be given to each class (3-4 periods for examination classes). These should not easily be sacrificed for the sake of other subjects.

3. Catholic Teachers

- 3.1 Special functions could be arranged for Catholic teachers to give them a greater sense of solidarity and support (Catholic Teachers Day, Liturgies,) and to help them understand the school founder's charism, educational philosophy and policy
- 3.2 They should be encouraged to join retreats and up-dating courses in Religious Education, counselling etc. in order to give them better preparation to be effective Religious Education teachers.
- 3.3 Audio-Visual Aids from the Diocesan Catechetical Centre and the Diocese Audio-Visual Centre could help to enliven Religious Education lessons, which should preferably be taught in a language more easily understood by students in order to make the personal sharing of the students more spontaneous and natural.
- 3.4 With the shortage of personnel, schools might consider sharing the same chaplain for valuable guidance to students and teachers alike.
- 3.5 Catholic teachers not teaching in Catholic Schools should be notified of vacancies in Catholic schools and be encouraged to apply for employment.
- 3.6 Catholic teachers should be encouraged to read Catholic newspapers and periodicals for greater sensitivity and involvement in local Church affairs, and to guide and encourage students to do the same (e.g. using such newspapers for dictation, essays, quizzes, etc.)
- 3.7 A Core Group/Pastoral Team could be set up to be responsible for religious functions, curriculum planning and revision, teaching aids, Catholic activities, etc.

4. Catholic Students

- 4.1 Catholic activities for students may include liturgies, Catholic Week, Catholic book exhibitions, retreats, visits to Churches, Religious Education quizzes, Bible storytelling, competitions, Bible camps, videos on spiritual themes with discussions, service projects etc. Such activities during long vacation are also an effective means of Christian education and a practical way of caring for our students.
- 4.2 Catholic students should be encouraged to help in the Parish as members of the choir, the Altar Society, the Legion of Mary, etc.
- 4.3 It is laudable to have Catechetical instruction classes available for Catholics as well as for non-Catholic students who are interested.

- 4.4 Dedicated Catholic teachers should be chosen to look after the Catholic students, to understand their family background, their study habits, spiritual needs etc., and to encourage them to frequent the Eucharistic Celebration and the Sacraments.
- 4.5 Special leadership training camps for our Catholic youth would be an ideal way of forming young apostles to witness effectively within their own peer groups.

5. School/Parish Relationship

- 5.1 To foster and maintain a good relationship and communication with the Parish, it is advisable that the school provide the parish with the names and up-dated addresses of Catholic students annually.
- 5.2 The school may invite the priests of the Parish to participate in its religious functions, to hear Confession at school or at the Parish Church and to hold various religious ceremonies.
- 5.3 The school should co-operate with the Parish in preparing and making arrangements for Catholic students to attend Holy Communion and Confirmation classes and to join interest groups such as The Little Fellows of Christ, Children's Choir, Altar Boys' Association and Catholic Scouts/Guides, etc.
- 5.4 It is advisable to introduce Catholic graduates to the Parish's catechetical class or other groups so that their spiritual care will not be terminated when they leave school.
- 5.5 The school may send representatives to attend the Parish Council and Parish functions, always in agreement with the Parish Priest and his collaborators. This will help improve mutual understanding of each other's needs and problems, and increase co-operation especially in the use of school premises and staff.

6. School/Parents Relationship

- 6.1 Schools are encouraged to have a Parent-Teacher Association for better communication between the family and the school in the formation of their children.
- 6.2 Inviting parents to religious celebrations in school may be a good means for parents to be more involved in their children's religious life and, at the same time, also be influenced by their children's interest and devotion.
- 6.3 The school could also help the family by giving counselling, guidance and family-life education when appropriate, either to individuals or to groups with the help of experts.