

**Directions for Catholic Educational Leadership in  
the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
The Vision, Challenges and Reality**

**DIRECTIONS FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP:  
A PERSONAL RETROSPECTIVE**

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*This paper explores Catholic educational leadership from the author's personal perspective of many years' involvement in senior Catholic educational leadership positions. In addition to leadership experiences in diocesan adult education and higher education, the author enjoyed the privilege of working within the Parramatta Catholic school system between 1990 and 2005. From 1997, she was Executive Director of Schools in the Diocese, with overall responsibility for a system of around 75 schools for 42,000 children served by nearly 4000 staff.*

*The central focus of the paper is an attempt to answer the question: What lessons of substance has the author learnt about Catholic educational leadership through her personal experience? What elements of that learning might be of value to others – either those who presently hold Catholic educational leadership positions and those who might hold them in the near future; or those who educate people for such responsibilities and those who are in a position to shape the expectations upon Catholic educational leaders?*

The abstract for this paper reads more ambitiously than my intent. After forty years' experience in various domains of Catholic education, including at least twenty years in leadership roles, I write from a sense of responsibility to share some of my insights that might be relevant to those in leadership in Catholic education now and in the immediate future. This is a simple exchange of those insights. If they prompt productive discussion on leadership in Catholic education, encourage those in Catholic education and lead to some specific actions then they will have more than served their purpose.

The paper is structured around two questions:

1. What are the current strengths of Catholic education in Australia at this time that Catholic educational leaders can draw on to enhance their work into the future?
2. What are some of the significant issues facing Catholic education which have implications for leaders facing the next 5-10 years?

In responding to these questions, I stress that I do so from the limitations of my own perspective and context. I have had the privilege of working across adult education, higher education and school education, and have enjoyed some access to Catholic education in most Australian states and beyond. However, in this paper, a predominant perspective arises from my work within the Church in Western Sydney since 1990. My reflection will reveal some my beliefs about Catholic educational leadership. I offer my comments with the hope that they might also pertain to Catholic educational leadership in other parts of Australia, and in other countries.

When I refer to “educational leaders”, my intention is broad. It includes those ultimately responsible for Catholic education, our Bishops; our parish priests; members of Diocesan and school Boards and Councils; school and system leaders; those considering leadership; those who educate our leaders and potential leaders.

The comments are little like those one might make as you hand over a familiar family car to a new owner: pointing out the quirks, the charms, where it needs coaxing and its inherent capacity to do what a good car must do – get people places.

As I write, I have been dealing with what happens when a young driver neglects to pay due heed to ongoing maintenance of an older loved (and preloved) car: a head gasket blown, - and not for the first time! In Catholic education, it is likely that we also make some mistakes, not once, but several times over. What are some of those potential actions, or omissions, which could threaten to “blow” the gasket on Catholic education?

### **Contemporary Catholic education: a rich resource to serve the future**

Contemporary Catholic education is a well-tuned, carefully-cared-for vehicle for the Church’s mission. While it has travelled long distances, it has been reliable on the journey. Now, it is primed and ready, with the capacity for more long distances. For the purposes of this paper, I have selected four strengths for particular attention. They are:

1. The legacy of Catholic education in Australia
2. The current public credibility of Catholic education in Australia
3. The sophistication of Catholic education as an organisation
4. The rich academic support for Catholic education in Australia.

#### *The legacy of Catholic education in Australia*

Catholic education is solid vehicle which has been on the road for 200 years. Within Australia, it has travelled reliably and grown in power since the first Catholic school was opened in inner Sydney in 1806: 200 years ago. Catholic schools in Australia have a living, unbroken link which goes back to the school opened by

lay man, George Morley in Hunter Street, Parramatta, in 1820.

Commercial companies often proudly display their foundation date, whether it is the former Bank of New South Wales “since 1817”, a legal firm which has scored 60 years, or a local fruit shop, “serving the community for 27 years”. With good reason.

Organisations survive over long periods of time for a number of reasons, that include, at least, the ability to adapt to meet changing needs and requirements; the competence to provide a service which is valued enough to be recommended to the next generation; and constant learning which adds depth and quality to the service provided.

Catholic education in Australia has an enormous wealth of experience and wisdom on which it draws. It is an honourable legacy. This is an invaluable strength that contemporary Catholic educational leaders have at their disposal, both to honour and to draw from. Perhaps, we who are in the midst of this legacy, and who are in the process of creating a new chapter of that legacy to hand on to those who come after us, can tend to take this family jewel a little for granted. It is not unlike the precious Chinese porcelain plate that hung on the wall of our family home for decades. To us, it was simply part of the place, rarely attended to; to a newcomer, it was a thing of beauty and monetary value.

My informed appraisal of the women and men currently teaching and working in our schools is that they too carry forward that culture of generous commitment to children’s learning. I know that. I have asked teachers what energises them. To watch them speak of children *blossoming*, of growing, of *breaking through* and learning tells me a lot about their zest for the best for

the children in their care. The wonderful experiment of the *Focus on Learning* project in Parramatta between 2001 and 2005 demonstrated the professional capacity of so many staff to research aspects of teaching and learning in their own schools and to very competently share that with colleagues.

Without going into the details here, I want to draw attention to the treasure of our Catholic education history, - a legacy which was borne out of love for needy children and our faith, which has been further built with heroism and tenacity, and developed into a sophisticated system characterised by professionalism and caring service.

Other large global companies would pay billions for such a tradition.

*Current public credibility of Catholic education in Australia*

My second strength relates to the current credibility of Catholic education within Australia. On the one hand, there is public acceptance of the worth of Catholic education by Government, public figures and the Administration. My sense is that Catholic education is presently at a high point in such public acceptance. This is attested by the formal place Catholic education occupies at the tables where policy regarding education is determined: in New South Wales, the curriculum-policy body of the Board of Studies; the New South Wales Institute of Teachers; deliberations around early stages of legislation affecting schools and education; ongoing communication at Ministerial level. These NSW examples are replicated in other states and territories.

Having sat on a number of these bodies, I have experienced first hand the respect accorded Catholic

education and Catholic educators. It is my sense that Catholic educators have not disappointed in their ability to contribute to influence policy and directions. In particular, there is a recognition that they bring to the tables a commitment to the common good, - not just a partisan interest in Catholic schools.

At another level, ongoing enrolments are a sure indicator of the public appreciation for the education which Catholic schools offer. Until 2004-2005 in New South Wales, there was a consistent growth each year in Catholic school enrolments. In 2005, this growth began to show signs of slowing down, and most significantly, in the primary schools, which of course implies a flow on seven years later in secondary schools. What this slowing of growth means, and how it progresses is unclear. It does not automatically mean that Catholic school leaders should panic or go about shoring up numbers. I think it provides a moment for more careful analysis, - especially about who is choosing not to enrol, and why. Perhaps this is the opportunity for Catholic schools to really get serious about facilitating access for the neediest children who at present do not attend our schools.

Despite this tapering of growth, support for Catholic schools is strong. We know from work done over a number of years in the Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of Sydney, that parents choose Catholic schools for a number of reasons. Religious education is not rated as the top reason. Yet, Catholic schools present strongly as religious schools. They do not apologise for being religious or faith-based. Rituals, prayer, teaching in our schools and communication with families are explicit, and unmistakably "Catholic" in brand.

Therefore, knowing this, what does it mean when parents who are generally not church-going choose a Catholic school for their children? Are they making some – perhaps unarticulated - statement about being open to discover, or to re-discover, the religious element in their family lives? I think we must not undervalue the fact that so many families choose a Catholic school, when there is little cultural pressure to do so, and where fees could be seen as a deterrent. To me this is a strength for Catholic educational leaders, whether in schools, Catholic Education Offices, parishes or dioceses, to exploit and to further understand.

*Sophistication of Catholic educational as an organisation*

Over the centuries of experience as educators, Catholic education in Australia has emerged in the late 20<sup>th</sup>-early 21<sup>st</sup> century as a sophisticated organisation employing high quality practice in all areas of operation: governance structures and strategic planning and review; human resource practices of recruitment, induction, professional development, performance review, grievance, due process and staff welfare; financial management, audit and risk management, administrative support and staffing; commitment to ongoing review and enhanced quality; and finally, most importantly, in the core area of mission, - instructional support, curriculum development and support, Religious Education, special needs provision, indigenous education, program evaluation and pastoral care and welfare of children.

There has been public recognition of some of these: for example, a national award for Occupational Health and Safety to the Catholic Schools Office in Broken Bay; the outstanding audit reports from the NSW Ombudsman to

Parramatta Catholic Education office in the area of Child Protection; commendations from the EOWA to Parramatta for their achievements for women in the organisation; no fewer than five National Quality Awards to schools in Parramatta, as well as those awarded to other Catholic schools across the country with which I am less familiar. These few examples chosen from areas I am familiar with would be, I suggest, just the tip of the iceberg of organisational achievement. Education can be easily intimidated by the loud voices of business and these organisational developments are not sufficiently celebrated.

In particular, I highlight the processes developed around people as the result of many years' consistent striving for transparency, justice and the securing of the best possible people to teach in our schools, to support our teachers and to lead our schools and systems. Open fair processes of this kind are to be prized and protected. So too, is the tradition of investing seriously in the ongoing professional development of all staff. This commitment to invest in our people pays its own dividend.

*Rich academic support for Catholic education in Australia*

The fourth strength that I have chosen to highlight in this paper is the support to the leadership of Australian Catholic education through a wealth of academic programs and research. In particular, I highlight the graduate programs in Leadership, as well as others in Religious Education, Curriculum, Theology and other specialist areas which have been offered by ACU National over many years. The research conducted through the Flagship for Creative and Authentic Leadership led by Professor Patrick Duignan is highly regarded well beyond Catholic education. I recognise

also the contribution of other academic institutions, such as University of Notre Dame Australia, and other theological institutes, but I have had less to do directly with these and can speak more strongly about ACU.

In 1990, in my early days in Parramatta, we noted the need to strengthen the religious education qualifications of RE teachers in secondary schools. We invested \$1-2 million in this need and with ACU's assistance, developed an intensive program to fill the gap. About ten years later, the formal qualifications in religious education of teachers in both primary and secondary schools has been enhanced many times over with a solid core of Religious Education teachers holding post-graduate qualifications in their field.

Also, when I joined Parramatta, I was one of the very few, - if not the only person, - in the school system, - holding a doctorate. ACU National currently has 500 post graduate students engaged in Leadership studies around Australia, - a figure which has been similar over a number of years, - and has over forty doctoral students.

Catholic education needs the depth that universities such as ACU National offer. They provide a very sound service in strengthening the capacity-building of Catholic educational for the future.

These are four strengths that I would like to highlight in my retrospective on Catholic educational leadership. To consider the directions forward, I will discuss four significant issues (among any number of issues) which have implications for Catholic educational leaders into the immediate future.

## **Issues for Catholic educational leaders into the future**

The four issues I have chosen are these:

1. The graduates of Australian Catholic schools are an unknown resource
2. What does it mean to be Catholic in Australia 2010?
3. The relationship between parish and school has not been fully grasped
4. Build on and develop existing strengths

*The graduates of Australian Catholic schools are an unknown resource.*

The graduates from Australian Catholic schools are largely invisible. They are active in society influencing the shape of our nation, whether they choose to or not, but we do not know enough about how their Catholic education has shaped them.

Are they practising Catholics? Well, they are less likely to be church-going Catholics, whether you judge from instruments like the Church Life Survey or simply by looking around one's local church on Sunday. However, CLS does indicate that of those who do attend, more are likely to have had some religious education, which suggests to me that information and instruction can enhance the likelihood of regular church observance.

Are they informed literate religious people? A paper which I completed in another forum indicates that more and more of our students are undertaking Studies of Religion within their Higher School Certificate program which is designed to educate them within their own tradition and about other religious traditions, - surely a critical requirement in a multicultural pluralist society such as ours.

Are they motivated by a sense of the common good and of social justice? Anecdote and personal observations indicate this is a strong characteristic of our graduates. What they do with this is unknown. One small group I am close to followed up their involvement in World Youth Day 2005 by organising a series of monthly seminars on racism over about 6 months, culminating in a public stall and campaign during Blacktown City Festival in 2006.

Do they pray? Some of the most unlikely are certainly open at times to praying with each other, in their own way, using their own tools. They wear crosses. Why?

Watching these young people at their final year graduations, I have always marvelled at the capacity of the brightest to strive for academic excellence at the same time as they have offered wonderful student leadership and engaged themselves in community work and outreach. As they walk with pride across the stage, I have marvelled at the joy with which the development and gains made by the academically weakest have been so warmly encouraged and celebrated by their teachers. I have often wondered about those in between who might sometimes have been lost along the way.

In summary, there are many conjectures about the graduates of our schools, simply because we have not learnt enough about them. I believe that they are a resource and a strength waiting to be explored. And until we know more, we will not fully understand the strengths of Catholic education or some of the directions it must be led in the future.

*What does it mean to be Catholic in Australia 2010?*

Understanding our graduates and how they have been shaped by Catholic education is related to the second issue I would like to highlight: what it means to be authentically *Catholic* in an affluent, pluralist, multicultural, interconnected world. Within the central mysteries of faith, how is revelation of the mystery of God's love through the incarnation and saving action of Jesus named and recognised? What follows are some of the questions which "being Catholic" poses for contemporary Catholic educational leaders.

In the face of a people whose actions say they have little time for organised religion as it has been traditionally practised, is there a risk that church leaders, including Catholic educational leaders, might, in the words of one concerned priest, try to attempt to "retreat to a temple, rule-driven, cultic Catholicism" rather than respond to the Spirit leading us to a radical Jesus who breathed the sacred into the mundane, who made every human action holy, - and who challenged the temple guardians?

This parish priest saw that our students and younger teachers, - the Generation Y and beyond, - understand the radical Jesus, - or at least could, where he shown to them. They respond to the Spirit in different ways from the past, - and in their own way. This experienced pastor believed that the Spirit is indeed alive and present among these young people. This can challenge those from another generation. Do we need to re-articulate what it means to be "Catholic" in our world, with forms and practices that reflect our times and history, and are not restored relics from another culture and time?

If young people are not finding their way to parish Mass and community life, should parishes reach out to them

in their schools or wherever they gather? Do those who are leaders in ministry in the Church – including Catholic educational leaders, - really understand younger staff and how they see their religious and faith journey?

In a society which is threatened by violence allegedly along religious (and ethnic) lines, our Catholic schools can certainly offer strong programs of study in religion, and the different religious traditions in order to enhance their understanding of others' faith as well as Catholicism. In what additional ways beyond their present practice, can our schools strengthen students' experience of living faith, or a lived religious experience, when they do not experience it in their families?

In a society such as ours, will it become appropriate for Catholic schools to welcome those of other faiths in order to support them in their own faith and to provide an environment where faith and religious belief are valued? To define "Catholic schools" as places where all religious practice is nurtured and understood?

Finally, to be an authentic Catholic school at this point in time, how can Catholic schools radically re-name their priorities for enrolment to give greater priority to the (i) neediest, whether they are financially needy or those with greatest learning needs, no matter what their faith orientation, and to those seeking faith?

*The relationship between parish and school has not been fully grasped*

A perennial issue in discussions regarding Catholic schools, whether with priests or with educators, is the relationship between the school and the larger parish(es) which it serves. At local level, there is often a very high degree of satisfaction expressed about the

relationship between parish and school; at the local level, there are very positive and warm relationships between many parish priests and their school leaders. Yet, this issue continues to be named again and again. It seems to me that, notwithstanding goodwill, considerable effort and good results, this relationship still has not been fully grasped/resolved, or even exploited.

If this is the case, and I am correct, then, we are at a very precarious point in time, given the uncertainty around the future of parishes with the prospect of no clergy, or only a diminished older clergy body, in the proximate future. This is a critical point in time for parishes. It is, therefore, a critical point in time for Catholic educational leaders. With this in mind, I would pose some questions for consideration.

Is it part of the scenario that Church leaders and Catholic educational leaders envisage a future for Catholic schools independent of parish, and without a local church context? This is already emerging in some parts of Australia. If this is one direction forward, it too raises a number of questions regarding the relationship between such schools and local church.

Alternatively, do we as educators believe sufficiently in the priesthood to encourage young men to consider it amongst their many other career options, and to encourage young women into other ministries? Or not?

Do our Bishops and priests believe enough in the future of the present Church structure and ministries to proactively develop a strategy around ministry and parish? How has this been resourced across the country? In other words, what is the future of parish ministry or other models of ministry worth?

Catholic education has pertinent skills and experience to contribute here? Are we as leaders willing to offer it, within the constraints and propriety of our funding obligations, for the common good of the Church as a whole? Are others willing to use those skills and experience?

Have our schools fully respected and built up the relationship of schools within the local church? This is certainly not suggested as another layer of task within the already complex, messy and demanding role of school leadership. (My other paper at this Conference is on the area of sustaining leaders through a balanced life style.) It is more about a mindset which locates school within the mission of the local church and which strives for the synergy which can come from being part of a creative community of shared mission and faith.

However, my experience leads me to caution – gently - that schools can sometimes slip unconsciously into the old Chinese “middle kingdom” mentality. In ancient China, the outlying populations were expected to focus on the centre where government resided, to bring their taxes and their tributes all to the centre. It was not a federalist system. So too, without meaning to, school leaders can act from an assumption that parish priests will always come to the school. The very size and unpredictability of school life almost sets this up. School leaders need to actively keep pushing against the walls of their school’s business which grow up overnight, locking them within their own “middle kingdom”. The larger and more complex the school, the easier this becomes. I believe that from time to time, school leaders, including Religious Education Coordinators, including large secondary schools, should physically

make the journey to the parish. A small step, perhaps, but a strong statement.

There are those who assume that the existing parish model is in its last days. I don't know if the parish will survive or not. It is a good grounded, local model. Maybe, there are new models or modifications of the parish model emerging. However, parishes are still with us, and I believe the potential for evangelisation and pastoral care for joint action by parish and school have not been fully exploited. I offer some ideas which might be illustrate what I mean. Many of these ideas are borrowed from those communities which are already exploring this exploitation of potential for mission.

If a parish were to work with all ministries in the parish, including the school, to develop an integrated pastoral and evangelisation plan, it seems to me there could be more potential points of intersection between school and parish. For example,

- At Baptism, parishes link parents with the future religious education of the child with the Catholic school as a support to them in their responsibilities.
- Between Baptism and school-age, regular contacts with family (eg, annual postcard, visit) to remind them there is a community who remembers them, and alert them re school as school age approaches
- At enrolment, school links them back to parish
- Older parishioners are a valuable resource to help children with learning difficulties and to offer families pastoral support
- Locate RCIA or adult education programs (such as CAFÉ) during the day in school, making it open to parishioners and school families
- Schools make more explicit the expectation regarding worship and practice

- Parishes plan liturgies and other events from the perspective of the young, that is, those between 10 years and 35 years. What's it like for them to attend Mass here? Does it make any difference to what happens that they are there? Does it make any difference when they are absent?

The fourth and final issue giving direction to Catholic educational leaders for the future is to build on what they have inherited.

*Build on and develop existing strengths*

The credibility which Catholic education enjoys has been won over many years, - centuries. The strengths it has have been carved out with the personal labour of many people, religious and lay, working long days and nights, and bringing great love to the task. These strengths cannot be taken for granted. They are not fixed. They are dynamic and must be nurtured.

Within this last direction, I have selected four directions for developing and building on what has already been achieved.

In the first instance, I would stress the importance of protecting the organisational strengths which are reflected in good practice processes, in particular those around recruitment, induction, appraisal and development of our people, especially our leaders. Established processes for the selection and appointment of staff, especially senior staff, serve the mission of the church in Catholic education by making processes more open and just and supporting the appointment of the most appropriate and available person to a position of influence and responsibility. Likewise, processes for dealing with grievance, performance review and even non-renewal of contract

are well-established and serve the cause of justice and respect for the dignity of all involved.

Good organisational practice is not in conflict with good ecclesiology. I believe that open, transparent and just processes relating to human resources in the Church can, in fact, enhance the implementation of an ecclesiology consistent with the Second Vatican Council, - now forty years behind us.

When established good process is over-ruled or abandoned, - and very occasionally, there *might* well be an exceptional need for this, - there are a number of risks: (i) the full pool of most talented people do not have the chance to be considered, so their capabilities are lost to the Church's mission in this role; (ii) an individual who is, for example, simply appointed without any process, has to fight harder to establish their credibility with their colleagues, adding to their burden and distracting them from the role in hand; (iii) the abandonment of known process corrodes the morale of others in the organisation. They do not know where they stand, or whether they will be treated with justice. When morale is shaken, people do not give of their best; (iv) a culture of "toadyism" can be created, since people no longer rely on merit but on favour. This, in turn, stifles creativity in an organisation; and (v) justice becomes a victim.

These are serious risks with disabling consequences for the Church's mission.

The second direction I wish to stress for this strong organisation which is Catholic education is to continue to take calculated risks (but not those named above). When one is strong, then it is timely "to leave my boat behind", or to drive the vehicle into new territory, and to

encourage creativity. Catholic educational leaders are in a good position to experiment with new vital ways of teaching and learning; through their creativity, to contribute to enhancing the overall quality of all education in our society; to experiment with new ways of making Jesus present and visible to the children and their families.

If there is no risk-taking to try better ways of educating and caring for young people and of leading them to Jesus, then there will be no creativity and no vitality.

The third direction I would suggest to build on existing strengths is for Catholic educational leaders to welcome diversity, especially amongst those who are in leadership roles or aspiring to leadership roles. This includes diversity at both school and system levels in:

- Gender. (In NSW at present, there are about twice as many female teachers in Catholic schools, but about equal numbers of men and women as principals. Still.)
- Age. (The young are under-represented among school leaders. Do we make our criteria too restrictive so that we lose the energy and drive of younger people?)
- Leadership style. (We don't want clones.)
- Ethnicity. (Surely our educational leaders should represent the communities present in our schools. At present, they do not.)

The final direction I have chosen is to argue that it might be timely for Catholic schools across the country and states to think more as part of the one Church endeavour in the sense of pooling of some skills and resources. The commitment to Church is not my point: I have been inspired by colleagues and their faith and commitment. There is a delicate balance to be found.

On one hand, there is great value in small systems (such as dioceses) which have the flexibility to move and respond locally, to build a sense of community within their own diocese. However, at the same time, can we afford not to consolidate some of our support services a little more? Perhaps this would not yield any saving of resources. I have not done the sums. But it might. More importantly, it should provide more equitable access for all students, whether city or remote rural, to the best learning opportunities.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has attempted to answer two questions relating to the current strengths of Catholic education and significant issues facing Catholic education in the immediate future. Both questions have direct relevance to Catholic educational leaders at all levels and domains within the contemporary Church, - school, system, parish and diocese.

In response to the first question, the paper has selected four characteristics of contemporary Australian Catholic education as particular resources that educational leaders can draw on into the future: (i) the legacy of Catholic education in Australia; (ii) the current public credibility of Catholic education in Australia; (iii) the sophistication of Catholic education as an organisation; and (iv) the rich academic support for Catholic education offered by institutions of higher education. These are just four of many strengths which contemporary Catholic education demonstrates.

In response to the second question, the paper chose to identify the following four issues: (i) vague understanding and knowledge regarding the graduates of Australian Catholic schools leaves a gap in the information available to educational leaders planning

future directions; (ii) the need for all in the Church to explore and reflect upon what it means to be “Catholic” in Australia at this time is undeveloped and at times appears to be a taboo subject, - one which we ignore to the church’s detriment; (iii) the under-exploited pastoral and evangelisation potential of the relationship between parish and school carries with it another set of questions relating to the future of the local Church, - and again seems to be another area of taboo; and (iv) the need to build on and develop existing strengths, and to protect those elements of good practice which Catholic education has worked hard to achieve is action which will serve the church’s mission.

In another paper in this conference, my colleagues, Michael Bezzina and Charles Burford, are discussing their exciting research pilot with nine schools from four dioceses in this state. The project is called *Leaders Transforming Learning and Learners*, which I will hereafter refer to as LTLL. Foundational to this project is a framework for transforming learning and learners which Mick and Charles have developed from discerning study of key literature. A key influence, - but not the only one – has been the work of Professor Jerry Starratt, from Boston College, on ethical leadership.

The Framework starts by identifying five Values which are the fundamental beliefs behind why we do what we do in Catholic education before moving to other elements of leadership which transforms learning. For my purposes here, I wish to restrict myself to the five fundamental values which the LTLL model proposes for Catholic educational leadership. They are: Catholicity, excellence, justice, transformation and the common good.

Having been immersed within the Church's mission of education for over forty working years, it is my strong belief that Catholic schools in Australia are in a very healthy position with regard to demonstrating and living these five core values. Of course, there are ways to do things better; of course, there are substantial issues challenging Catholic education, and there will continue to be such challenges. However, Catholic educational leaders in 2007 have the privilege of working within strong, vibrant and authentic Catholic schools and Catholic education systems. Catholic educational leaders can face the future with great confidence.