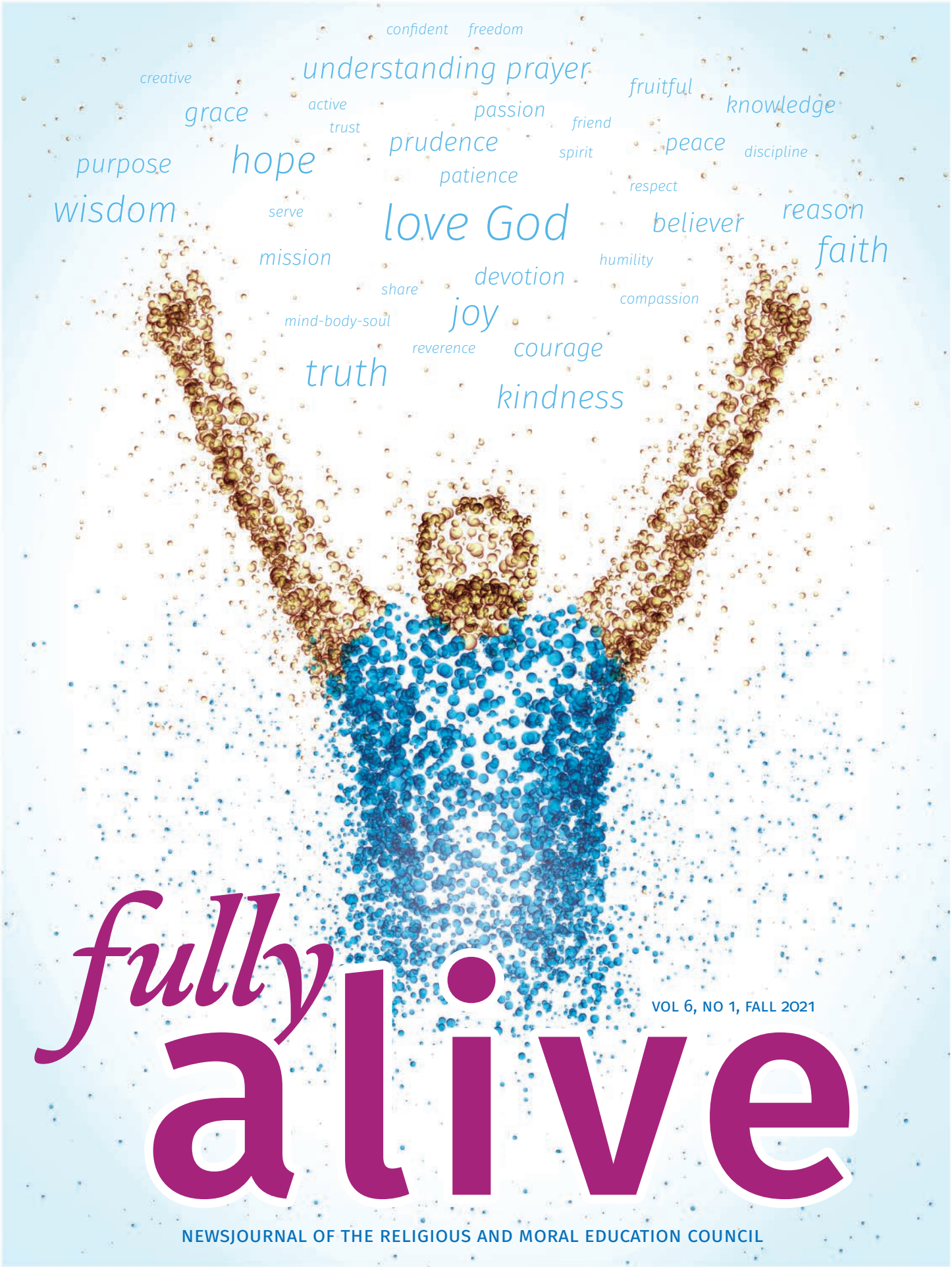

fully alive

VOL 6, NO 1, FALL 2021

NEWSJOURNAL OF THE RELIGIOUS AND MORAL EDUCATION COUNCIL

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VOL 6, NO 1, FALL 2021

In This Issue

From the President

Teachers are planners. We have our lesson plans, unit plans, long-range plans, our career plans. In our personal lives, we have a stable and predictable income, and that is how we like things. We certainly are not rigid and can adapt to unforeseen circumstances, as evidenced by the recent pandemic, but by and large, we are most comfortable when we have a clear direction to where we are going. One of the reasons that the pandemic has been hard on all of us is the uncertainty it has created. As the writer of these columns, I find it difficult to find something relevant to write months ahead of when you will read it when we don't know what will be happening in our world. As teachers, however, we always know how to do our best as we tackle the challenges put before us.

I am taking an optimistic view of where our world is headed and, honestly, I believe it is also a realistic one. It looks to me like the worst of the pandemic is over. Alberta lifted virtually all restrictions in July. While all Albertans over 12 have had access to vaccines for awhile, children under 12 should hopefully be getting access sometime in the fall. As this happens, schools will be returning to normal with the full slate of extracurricular activities, social events and graduation ceremonies.

One of the benefits of having to wait so long to do the things we once took for granted is that now we have a far greater appreciation for them. In our working lives, we no longer need to be fearful of the potential life-threatening disease around us and all the mandated precautions to address this threat. We now have a much more relaxed classroom and workplace without the rigidity we endured. We can have staff social events without masks, social distancing, or food and drink restrictions. We can attend conferences with our colleagues without peering through a Zoom app into a computer. In our personal lives, we now can see our friends and extended families. Going to restaurants, movie theatres, festivals, and art and sporting events has returned to our lives. We can celebrate the big events in our lives that way we want to—in person. Just like a child waiting to open their presents at Christmas, this period of waiting should help us to be thankful for all the great parts of life that we previously took for granted. Hopefully, this new appreciation will last our lifetimes.

In closing, I want to quote Psalm 40, which really sums up the journey we have travelled since the start of the pandemic:

> *I waited patiently for the Lord; And he inclined to me and heard my cry.*
> *He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay;*
> *And he set my feet upon a rock, making my footsteps firm.*
> *And he put a new song on my mouth, a song of praise to our God.*
>
> *Psalm 40:1–3*

Dan McLaughlin

Dan McLaughlin is a religious studies teacher at Bishop O'Byrne High School, in Calgary. He has been active in the areas of religious studies and youth ministry for over 30 years. Of special interest to Dan is leading a sacraments program at his high school that looks at delivering sacramental preparation to students so they can receive the sacraments of initiation they may have previously missed. He is married to Lynne and has three children.

A Note from the Editor

This edition of our newsjournal shifts its spotlight from a specific world religion to focus on the issue at hand for Alberta's teachers: how do we respond to the tragedy of the horrors associated with the Indian Residential School system that existed in Canada for over 150 years? You will read pertinent information and perspective from an Alberta teacher, followed by an article containing a broader discussion of moral injury. There follows a range of articles from the academic to the practical, including a representation of locations for retreat throughout Alberta.

The immense shadow of harm from residential schools, combined with pandemic problems, means that we teachers must dig deeply and reflect to help ourselves, our students and our communities navigate through the remainder of 2021 and into the future. May you find support for your work in education within these pages. May you feel hope and encouragement here.

Elaine Willette-Larson

The Religious and Moral Education Council

Mission

The Religious and Moral Education Council exists to improve the knowledge, understanding and practice of our members in the field of religious and moral education.

Vision

The Religious and Moral Education Council will, in search of peace and the common good, be a principal resource for Alberta teachers.

Values

We are committed to serving teachers through the values of faith, dignity, respect and collaboration.

How Teachers Can Humbly and Respectfully Address the Tragedy of Residential Schools

Angela Houle

All teachers, but especially Catholic religion teachers, are right in seeking insight into how they can humbly, respectfully and productively address the travesty of Indian Residential Schools. Just as teachers have valid questions and concerns, so do students and parents. All parties have reasonable questions about residential schools, and many focus on Christian churches' involvement in them. These questions need to be answered, and teachers need help to answer them. I promise I will get to that, but there is another, more important question: How can teachers themselves seek to understand this tragedy and how can they attempt to provide an atmosphere of healing?

Almost every teacher has had to teach a subject that they knew little about. For me, it was drama. Although I can be a drama queen, I had never even attended a drama class before I was assigned to teach it. What did I do? What all teachers do. I set about learning everything I could—attending professional development sessions, reading, listening, viewing materials I could get from the library, asking friends if they had resources to share. I was already an avid theatre goer, so that helped. Now you're thinking, yes, but that is just drama—it carries with it much less emotion and fewer consequences if taught poorly. You're absolutely right—so do not cut corners in the work you need to do in learning about residential schools, the Catholic Church's involvement in them and the process of decolonization. The consequences in this are immense. As teachers, we educate ourselves so that we can teach from a place of authenticity. Our students know when we do not know our stuff. They also know when we do know our stuff, and they respect it.

History and contemporary scholarship show that the education system was and continues to be one of the most effective tools of colonization (Smith 2012; Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC] 2015). The voices of the survivors of Indian Residential Schools (IRS) have begun to be heard. Recently, thousands of unmarked graves have been discovered on the grounds of residential schools; as we learn more, this number will surely continue to grow. These revelations have made it difficult to deny the atrocities that were and continue to be propagated against the First Peoples of this territory by the colonial education system (Daigle 2019; TRC 2015). Educational institutions across Canada have a definite call to implement decolonizing practices in their schools and classrooms through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Former senator Murray Sinclair, Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, has famously said, "Education is what got us into this mess and education will get us out of it" (Anderson 2016). This evolution in education is possible.

Situating Myself in This Work

Relationships are integral to all research and work done with and regarding Indigenous people (Wilson 2008). As a self-identifying Métis Indigenous education consultant working in Alberta, my leadership position directly pertains to Indigenous education and schooling. In my position, I am asked regularly by educators from my own school district, and from across the province and beyond, for advice on how to effectively pursue reconciliation, decolonization

and Indigenization in the education system. I am also the granddaughter of a residential school survivor. This makes the work of ensuring the progress of decolonization in schools critically important to me. A final important factor in my position on this subject is that I am a Catholic who works in a Catholic school district, and my children attend a Catholic school. I feel it salient to add that this article is written with the assumption that the educators reading it are actively seeking guidance in pursuing decolonization and reconciliation. The work of decolonization and pursuit of reconciliation is difficult and there are many barriers to it, including some educators' failure to see the value of transformation and resistance to or fear of leading the work (Tuck and Yang 2012; Regan 2010). It is my hope that this article may help those who are fearful or resistant to this work to see value and hope in decolonization, to consider starting their own journey and then possibly to aid their students toward reconciliation as well.

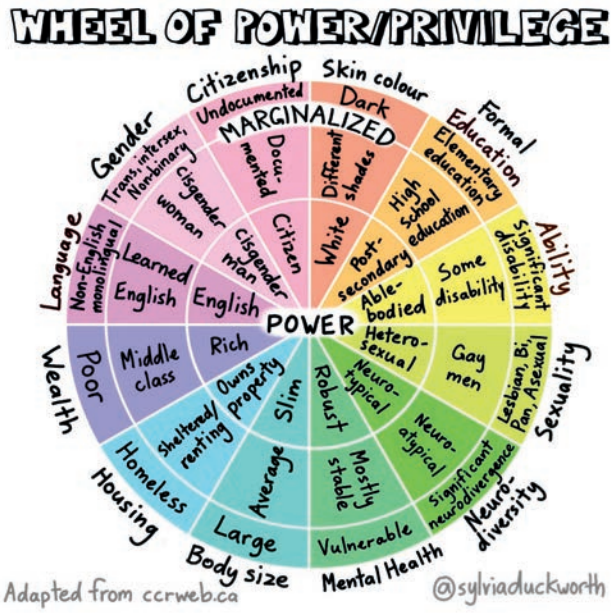
Wise Practices Toward Decolonization—Learn Your Place, Listen, Walk, Work

Teachers working in all schools, but especially Catholic schools—teachers of religion, in particular—hold a critical place in this work. Sixty per cent of Indian Residential Schools were run by the Catholic Church. In the eyes of many Indigenous people, the Catholic Church is also the only church that ran Indian Residential Schools that has not formally apologized. The church feels it has apologized because an apology was issued in South America, but many Indigenous people of this territory find that lacking and feel that an apology should be delivered here, where the schools were run. Obviously, Catholic school educators cannot control church-led apologies or whether Indigenous people feel that the one provided is adequate, so we must concentrate on what we can control: ourselves, how we lead our own lives and what happens in our classrooms.

Educators must educate themselves about Indian Residential Schools. They must gain more than a superficial understanding and have more than trite platitudes that oversimplify the situation and do not honour the suffering of the students of IRS or the questions from their justifiably conflicted students. This involves investing time and effort. It involves doing more than just reading or watching movies or listening to music—though, as you'll see, these are great places to start. Teachers must start the journey of authentically decolonizing themselves to be able to teach about the Catholic Church's involvement in residential schools from a genuine, informed place.

One of the best places to start pursuing this decolonization is identifying how colonization has affected one's own self (Ermine 2007; Poitras Pratt and Danyluk 2019). One must be aware of one's own place in the dynamics of the colonial agenda (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017). Honestly assess where you are on the Wheel of Power/Privilege:

"Without looking at how they are personally implicated in the colonial project, non-Indigenous



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educators may be narrowly focused on helping 'those' poor people thereby adopting a savior stance which can be disempowering" (Poitras Pratt and Danyluk 2019, 11–12). According to Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017), an educator's positionality includes factors such as race, class, gender, sexuality and ability-status, all of which inform their perspectives and reactions. To transform entire systems, these systems need to recognize their own responsibility to Indigenous peoples and articulate their responsibilities in the transformation (Pidgeon 2016). That starts at an individual level.

If educators become aware of, understand and acknowledge their place in the structures of the

colonial context, they will be better prepared to take action in an informed way. Educators must do the work to "unsettle colonial structures, systems, and dynamics in educational contexts" (Poitras Pratt et al 2018, 1).

I would recommend that every teacher read "Exploring Reconciliatory Pedagogy and Its Possibilities Through Educator-Led Praxis" (Poitras Pratt and Danyluk 2019). It directly delineates a process to pursue decolonization. Poitras Pratt and Danyluk suggest a three-step process for gaining the knowledge and experience required to feel confident and competent enough in beginning one's own decolonizing journey.

Poitras Pratt and Danyluk suggest that the first step in a personal journey toward decolonization ought to be private actions of *listening to and learning from* Indigenous people. This can be reading and viewing news from Indigenous sources, reading fiction and nonfiction literature written by Indigenous authors and listening to music created by Indigenous artists to gain knowledge and perspective. In this listening and learning step, learners must keep in mind that no one example of Indigenous writing or art represents all Indigenous people (Poitras Pratt and Danyluk 2019, 8). Listening to, reading and viewing a variety of sources is important and will emphasize the diversity of the many Indigenous people of this land.

The second step suggested by Poitras Pratt and Danyluk is more public and involves "*walking with* and learning from Indigenous peoples" (Pratt and Danyluk 2019, 8). Attending Indigenous events such as powwows, round dances, craft sales, and vigils or marches will give one a sense of the richness of Indigenous cultures and the diversity of Indigenous people. Going to learn at Indigenous cultural heritage sites may be helpful as well. It is important to embark on this step with an open mind and with humility. Educators "walking with" Indigenous people, witnessing the culture and actions exhibited, will gain an understanding of the truth of Indigenous peoples' realities and lived experiences. This may catalyze a coming to know of the educators' own responsibility in creating change. This second step will help initiate personal connections in the Indigenous community, which are vital to progress in decolonization.

The relationships one builds while walking with Indigenous people will help with the third step suggested by Poitras Pratt and Danyluk, that of *working with* or on community projects designed and led with or by Indigenous people. Participating in meaningful work with Indigenous people will give educators an intimate understanding of its importance. Educators may encounter real-world systemic barriers to change, the resistance and reluctance, from a first-person perspective. They may be surprised by who stands in the way of this work and who is unwilling to work with them. This creates a very personal experience and generates empathy. It will make for lifelong learning. After educators learn what they can by attending and then by helping do the work, they may feel the confidence and competence needed to lead their fellow staff and their students in the work of decolonizing schools.

Cautions in This Work

Educators must come from a place of humility and authenticity when doing the work of decolonizing a school. In doing the work of decolonization, educators must be careful they are not trying to "relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility" (Tuck and Yang 2012, 10). We must also reject any curriculum that perpetuates Eurocentric values (Battiste 2013; Smith 2012; TRC 2015) and repudiate the teaching of concepts that perpetuate ideas of European sovereignty or white supremacy (TRC 2015). Educators also cannot support anything in their school that reflects a "fragmented and distorted picture of Indigenous peoples" (Battiste 2013, 186).

Do not rush to reconcile or be tempted to create a grand spectacle of reconciliation efforts. According to Daigle (2019), a grand show of reconciliation can unintentionally secure, legitimate and effectively reproduce white supremacy and settler futurity in Canada. It may do this by creating a feeling of absolution in those attending large, elaborate reconciliation events. The scale of the production may actually erase the feeling of responsibility that non-Indigenous people feel toward doing this work by appearing to solve some of the struggles.

The work must be more than performative. It must be undertaken with an authentic, sustained intention to work toward reconciliation. An example of this was highlighted by Daigle (2019). In April of 2018, a grand

spectacle was held to great acclaim at the University of British Columbia (UBC), when it hosted the grand opening for the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre (IRSHDC). The event appeared to be a huge success, but, five months later, the UBC school newspaper reported that "the university had lost residential school records, and that the IRSHDC was understaffed, underfunded, and remained unable to formally open to the public" (Daigle 2019). It appeared there were still lessons to be learned by UBC when the Cree director of the IRSHDC, Mary Turpel-Lafond, very directly stated that the IRSHDC should never have been touted as a success so early on, but rather should be viewed as "a serious place that has to make an impact," and pointed out that it needs to be supported both financially and via infrastructure in kind (Chase 2018).

The IRSHDC example supports Poitras Pratt and Danyluk's caution not to feel like an "instant expert" on the basis of limited experience or participation. Educators ought to be wary of the desire to check a box rather than taking into consideration all of the context in a given situation, and they must take the time to authentically do the work. If educators take this advice to heart, they will be better equipped to lead their students effectively and ethically toward the decolonization process in schools.

Decolonization is not a metaphor for other things that schools can do to improve themselves and, in turn, society in general (Tuck and Yang 2012). As educators, we are mandated professionally to do this, but as human beings and Catholics, we are compelled ethically as well. Decolonization is specific to the dismantling of colonial systems and structures and to the inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing and being in systems such as education (Poitras Pratt et al 2018). Hopefully, this highlights how the work of decolonizing can be intimidating, but is valuable and is what we need to do before we have any of the answers to the questions of our students regarding residential schools. When we understand another's struggle and suffering, we can hope to provide an environment that is respectful of it and helps them to embark upon a healing journey.

I include these references in the hope that you will read the work of some of these brilliant scholars.

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Photo courtesy of Elaine Willette-Larsen

A Reason for Our Hope: Responding to Moral Injury

Sister Zoe Bernatsky

Christian Discipleship

As Catholics, our faith provides ethical guidance, moral norms, and principles elucidated from the tradition of the Church, Scripture and the experience of individuals and groups. To choose faith is to accept our graced human freedom to live according to the dynamics of Jesus's life, death and resurrection. Each time we face new ethical challenges, we do not need to start our analysis from scratch. We have a wealth of knowledge from which to draw. Our choices and actions form our character and express our commitments and values.

Still, ethical reflection is not always easy. It relies on thoughtful deliberation, demanding both analytical and intuitive reasoning, as well as prudential judgment. Ethics is, then, the art of choosing well and wisely for the good of self and others. Our faith in the Triune God assists us to choose wisely, according to Kingdom values demonstrated in the life and death of Jesus Christ. This sounds straightforward, but a dilemma would not be a dilemma if it were simply the choice between good and evil. Unfortunately, in recent times we have been faced with heart-wrenching situations with no quick or easy solution. The COVID-19 pandemic and the discovery of residential school burial sites are both situations that could shake our faith and cause us to lose hope.

Current Challenges

Moral injury, first used to describe the experience of military veterans, occurs when one's understanding of life, including long-held beliefs and values, is confronted with painful experiences, often beyond one's control.[1] Moral injury occurs when a person is forced to act in circumstances of considerable constraint. It can seem impossible to reconcile action (or lack of action) with long-held values that make life meaningful. The COVID-19 crisis significantly affected educators who were already acutely aware of the inequities caused by poverty in the lives of students and their families. The pandemic exacerbated these inequities, since students with less access to technology were more significantly disadvantaged. The experience of COVID-19 and the many challenges to student learning could result in moral injury to teachers and education administrators because of their inability to carry out their fundamental mission of bridging the gaps in the educational process. The need to keep citizens safe is a significant social value; however, the negative impact on the learning process for students was calculable. In this context, educators could quickly be made distraught by the unmet needs of students. Grading students who were distracted or even absent from online classes caused moral distress, which arises when one cannot respond to an ethical challenge due to various constraints. Rather than experiencing the consolation of work well done, the added stress left teachers experiencing spiritual desolation and moral distress.

As the challenges with COVID-19 began to recede, the discovery of the burial site at the residential school in Kamloops brought another wave of sorrow and distress. Hearing stories about the impact of the government's decision to force Indigenous children to leave their homes and attend residential schools undoubtedly causes us sadness and shame. Many residential schools were run by religious communities, leaving questions

about the motives and good will of those involved. Wrongs were committed, and the wounds will take generations to heal. It is the responsibility of all Canadian citizens to join in heart and mind to assist in the healing process. This wounding heritage, including the sorrowful story of each child, can also cause moral injury as we associate ourselves with serious wrongdoings.

Moral Injury

As educators, we work to enhance learning environments, but this was problematic during the COVID-19 pandemic. As members of the Catholic Church, we are typically proud of our faith community, rejoicing in the good works of many members. However, the suffering of Indigenous people, forced to attend residential schools, reminds us how colonialism has harmed Indigenous people. The Catholic Church participated in this unfortunate reality. We feel frustrated by our inability to make a difference. In these circumstances, our life narrative needs to be reconstructed to find peace and integrate this reality without the trauma immobilizing us. We need to integrate the painful memories into a new Canadian narrative rather than denying its existence. Beyond the long-term work required to address the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, how can we respond? Recognition of the dissonance and inner conflict created with the transgression of one's moral code is an essential first step. Engaging in spiritual practices and ethical reflection can also help to rekindle our hope and re-energize us for the journey forward.

Reintegration and Healing Are Possible

Theologian and spiritual director Sister Elizabeth Liebert offers four spiritual practices that can aid in recovery from moral injury: deep listening, participation in healing circles, praying psalms of lamentation and practising the daily examen (Liebert 2019). Engaging in spiritual practices (in addition to those usually practised by Catholics, such as participation in the sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation and other forms of prayer) will help us recover from situations when our moral identity is violated. People with a developed moral sense can be more vulnerable to moral injury because they have cultivated compassion and sensitivity towards others. However, they may also have increased resilience to support themselves in the recovery process. Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl attested to the reality that people do not only survive traumatic experiences (Frankl 1963). These resilient individuals may also undergo posttraumatic growth, demonstrated by a new appreciation of life, a more profound sense of one's inner strength, and the ability to forgive self and others. Morally resilient educators are not naïve about the cost of moral integrity. The realignment of one's moral compass does not come without the pain of dealing with adversity. The virtue of moral courage is required to meet the ethical obligations of Catholic educators.

Liebert affirms the need for deep empathic listening to self and others. Deep listening can occur in a one-to-one setting such as spiritual direction or counselling, or in group sessions such as healing circles. The experience of being heard helps one to regain a sense of safety and trust, renewing the ability to see ourselves with the same loving gaze with which God sees us. Listening together through a group process restores faith in the goodness of humanity. In such group processes, a facilitator can help to set and maintain the ground rules so that all participants feel safe and respected and their stories honoured. The practice of self-reflection and nonjudgmental acceptance of our thoughts and feelings can help us move forward creatively, free from the self-judgments that bind us.

Revisiting the psalms of lamentation, originally written from a place of moral disintegration and dejection, can be beneficial. One can even write one's own psalm of lamentation, which addresses God, laments the distressing situation, petitions for what one desires, and concludes with words of faith and hope and the promise to praise God even in times of difficulty. The examen (examination of consciousness) can also help us restore and maintain a connection with God, self and community as we reflect on where we have experienced God's love and closeness each day and where we felt disenfranchised from God. At a regular time each day, consider what good thought, word or action touched your life positively and thank God for the difference you make in the world. Grateful and blessed, ask God for strength and courage to meet the challenges of the day confidently.

Conclusion

The process of ethical reflection allows us to sift through the various facets of our experiences, name

our values and choose ways to integrate difficult moments into the greater life narrative. As scripture tells us, "We walk by faith and not by sight." [2] We strive to make sound ethical choices, but we do not always know that we are making the best choice. We discern according to an informed conscience, and we humbly rest our confidence in God as we do our level best in each situation. In these current situations, we have found that established norms (do good, avoid evil, act with kindness and love) help. Still, there are no easy solutions in novel cases, precisely because diverse situations oblige us to imagine new possibilities and make creative applications of existing moral principles.

At the heart of the Christian faith is insight into the goodness of God and the whole of creation. However, we also must acknowledge the existence of suffering and evil. We suffer for many reasons: our own bad choices or those of others, or the imperfection of nature. These issues are not bypassed by faith; rather, they draw us into the mystery of our existence. The answer to suffering and death is found predominantly in the person of Jesus. By word and deed, Christ shows us that suffering is real, that choice is crucial and that salvation is possible. We are called to see, judge and act in a way that connects our faith to every dimension of our lives, especially in difficult situations. Christian ethics thrive where people choose to live in the tension between what is and what ought to be. Our faith provides us with a moral horizon toward which we strive and which gives reason for our hope.

Notes

1. A definition of moral injury offed by Litz et al includes "perpetuating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations" (2009, 700). Moral injury is characterized by dissonance between a person's beliefs about how a person or the world should function and the actual experience. While we cannot equate our suffering as educators to the moral injury suffered by war veterans or Indigenous people themselves, we do share feelings of guilt, shame, anger and a betrayal of trust. Understanding moral distress and moral injury can help us to deepen our commitment to faith and Christian values, rather than abandoning our faith because of the difficult realities of sin, suffering and evil in the world.

2. 2 Cor. 5:7 (NRSV-CE)

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Balancing the Leadership Boat in Faith-Based Schools

Brandise Fehr

Being a leader in a faith-based school requires finding the right balance of leadership styles while navigating the calm and turbulent waters that school communities encounter. Faith-based leaders often gravitate naturally toward a servant-leadership model because it fits well with religious beliefs and values. However, they should note the darker, stormier side of this approach: it can dangerously encourage a hero-model leadership style that focuses on being "like Jesus," but can easily neglect the relational aspect necessary to build effective learning communities. The captain or leader can easily sink the boat because they aren't listening to or asking for help from the crew members when danger arises. Leaders may attempt to lead with humility, trying to save everyone from drowning. As a result, they might fail to set personal limits and boundaries, and subsequently lose their perceived managerial authority, while taking on water when trying to save others. Greater balance is needed in a relational leadership model that focuses on building community, and to help balance the leadership boat so it doesn't sink during the journey.

The idea of servant-leadership is attributed to Robert K Greenleaf, who wrote from a secular point of view. For him, it is no mistake that the term *servant-leader* is hyphenated, because a leader is first a servant and second a leader. Greenleaf (1970) received his inspiration and based the idea of servant-leader from Hermann Hesse's book *Journey to the East*. For Greenleaf, a great leader is one who understands themself as a servant first "and begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve" (2002, 27). Although Greenleaf didn't carefully work out the connection between leadership characteristics and service, his disciple Larry Spears identified several characteristics for servant-leadership.

Spears's (2010) characteristics of servant-leadership are applicable in faith-based settings, but can create so much focus on the role of leaders that not enough emphasis is placed on building relational capacity. *Listening and understanding* involves leaders listening before responding. This encourages others to have a voice and be heard, and asks leaders to act accordingly. *Empathy* entails connecting with others at the human level and is a core factor in building relationships. Leaders can convince others through *persuasion*, as opposed to the "do and tell" culture that is dominant in society (Schein and Schein 2021) and, sadly, can be seen in religious spaces. These "heroic" characteristics may be achievable by leaders, but they run the risk of overemphasizing the ability of leaders and neglect relational aspects within communities.

For Christians, Jesus Christ is the "captain" and often upheld as the ultimate example of servant-leader; however, faith-based leaders should not exclusively commit to this model, as surprising as that may sound. During the Last Supper, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and stated, "Anyone who wants to be great among you must be a slave to all."[2] This model presents a challenge to the hierarchal structure of leadership in biblical and in current educational settings. Does Christ expect leaders to walk on water? Or if they tried, would they sink like his disciple Peter? Earlier in my career as a band

teacher, I assumed full responsibility for the band's performance instead of recognizing the students' contributions. Once when a performance ended and I was cleaning up, the band started playing one of their favourite pieces without me. This was a shocker. The band's success didn't revolve around me! Focusing solely on a leader's or "captain's" ability to do heroic things, like saving the boat from sinking, is potentially dangerous, if leaders ashamedly try to dissect what they did wrong with a "zeal for instant perfection" (Greenleaf 2002, 25). *Improving a leader's relational capacity with the crew members and passengers—the school community—would be more effective*.

Bringing Balance to Servant-Leadership Is Possible

Balancing servant-leadership with relational leadership attributes strengthens and builds community. Branson, Marra and Buchanan (2019) talk about Jesus being a member of the "in-group" because he attended and participated in celebrations and other events to build trust in the community and enhance interpersonal skills, collegiality, cooperation and teamwork. He was an active member in the Jewish community and was the "champion" within the group because he had a deep understanding of what was happening and defended the vulnerable. I have found, as a band teacher and glee club director, that having a hands-on approach with students has increased my relational capacity and effectiveness as a teacher. *Relationships in the community are what keep the leadership boat sailing*.

Leading with humility is the most desirable characteristic of servant-leadership but needs to be balanced by setting personal limitations. Jesus taught, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."[3] Blanchard and Hodges (2016) describe humility as "God grounded confidence" (p 78) in which a leader knows their limitations and seeks God's assistance because they know *who they are and whose they are* (p 79). As a first-year teacher, I would do anything asked of me and sign up for every extracurricular activity possible in addition to working until the late hours of the evening. I was on the brink of drowning! But, I thought, isn't that being humble? Yes, we are committed to serve, but taking care of our own needs is just as important. *Humility is not being a "doormat" to others, but allows for listening and understanding, empathy, and awareness to serve others in ways that strengthen relational capacity*.

Servant-leadership can encourage leaders to give up managerial authority, but this can be balanced by maintaining a different kind of authority. Leading with benevolence creates trust and achieves balance (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran 2007). Can you imagine what would have happened to the disciples if Jesus hadn't taken charge during the storm? Peter became afraid and would have sunk if Jesus hadn't been there to pull him out—and the boat would have succumbed to the storm. Effective leaders inspire and influence the actions of those entrusted to their care through persuasion, instead of ordering and demanding (Rohr 2018), because they have their best interests at heart. Jesus persuaded his disciples to take courage because he knew they would be safe if they had faith in him. This increases ownership and freedom, not subservience, within a group. In my current teaching setting, I have the privilege of working with an administrator who doesn't order things to be done, but encourages team collaboration and decision making. There are no department heads because every staff member has an equal voice and shares responsibility; some may even find this radical. Religious celebrations are not only the music teacher's responsibility, but all staff are involved in some way. *This model has been successful in inspiring leaders within the school community because of the achieved balance of authority created through trusting relationships*.

The servant-leader model is easily adopted in faith-based settings, but should be used with caution. Building relational capacity in the educational setting is essential for fostering effective communities. Leading with humility is favourable, but it is important to set limits, which come from a faith-based leader's "God-grounded confidence" (Blanchard and Hodges 2016). Although servant-leadership requires a shift in authority, it does not imply a means to an end. Rather, it means leading with authority and benevolence to create trust. As much as faith-based leaders want to imitate Christ, the ultimate captain, we can't walk on water! However, when we inevitably do sink, like Peter, Jesus's hand will be reaching out to pull us through the stormy waters and keep the leadership boat sailing.

Notes

1. A definition of moral injury offed by Litz et al includes "perpetuating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations" (2009, 700). Moral injury is characterized by dissonance between a person's beliefs about how a person or the world should function and the actual experience. While we cannot equate our suffering as educators to the moral injury suffered by war veterans or Indigenous people themselves, we do share feelings of guilt, shame, anger and a betrayal of trust. Understanding moral distress and moral injury can help us to deepen our commitment to faith and Christian values, rather than abandoning our faith because of the difficult realities of sin, suffering and evil in the world.

2. Mark 10:43-44 (NIV)

3. Matt 23:12 (NIV)

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Toward an Authentic Pedagogy of Conversion

Lance Grigg

Introduction

This is part two of a paper, "Reflecting on Conversion," that appeared in *Fully Alive* in 2019. In that paper, I explored notions of intellectual, moral and religious conversion and, using the philosophy and theology of Bernard Lonergan SJ, I unpacked the meanings and relevance of those terms.

In this paper, I move into the murky world of teaching *for* and *about* conversion. I review key ideas from the 2019 paper, and introduce the problem of developing a pedagogy of conversion. Drawing upon insights from Lonergan and current, inquiry-based approaches to critical thinking, I discuss the possibility of teaching *for* conversion. My first paper was, in effect, an exercise in teaching *about* conversion. I was writing about the nature, purpose and value of intellectual, moral and religious conversion as per the work of Bernard Lonergan SJ—I wasn't teaching *for* a conversion to his philosophy or theology.

This paper broadens the conversation by exploring key questions associated with developing a pedagogy of conversion. For example, how might one actually teach *for* conversion? Is it possible to teach for an authentic conversion experience that respects and nurtures human dignity and freedoms? Importantly, when does teaching *for* conversion collapse into mind control?

These are challenging questions for any educator. This is especially the case in a K–12 context. Whether one is teaching religious education, math, language arts, social studies or science, there are moments when we're teaching *for* and not just *about* something. For example, in social studies, we teach *about* and *for* responsible citizenship. This is not the case when covering Fascist movements in World War Two. The distinction is relevant. Being aware of when one is teaching *for* and *about* something, especially conversion, might prevent educators from falling prey to dangers associated with manipulation and/or indoctrination.

Review: Intellectual, Moral and Religious Conversion

To begin, conversion is a powerful, transformative experience. It is different from notions such as development, learning, agreement and so on. Conversion is much more holistic; it influences all areas of one's life. When we teach about wars, we are teaching *about* them, not for a commitment to them. This is similar when learning a second language. When I was studying Greek, my professor was teaching me *about* the language, not converting me to it.

Conversion experiences involves a *metanoia*. This is a dynamic turning *away* from and a turning *toward* something different. For example, in a conversion experience we may turn away from a materialistic view of life and toward a more spiritual one.

Because it is a powerful experience, conversion involves a radical shift in one's perspective or horizon. This reorienting affects the deepest foundations of our lives. For example, it involves a change in one's ideas about what is true (intellectual conversion), about what is good (moral conversion) and about who God is (religious conversion).

This deep and profound reorientation to what is good, true and divine has an impetus, a focused exigency. Specific truths and values basic to a religious

tradition have a directing influence. They focus people so that they may live by them.

In a moral conversion, we turn away from selfishness/self-centredness, and toward other-centredness. Our moral lives are focused on the *common* good, not just on satisfying personal desires and appetites. We seek out what is best for all, not just what meets our own needs and preferences. For example, someone experiencing a moral conversion may turn away from being miserly toward being charitable. They may be moved to donate to a women's shelter, support tax reforms that help the poor and homeless, and so on.

An intellectual conversion has a similar impact. Herein, we turn away from what I *want* to be true toward what is *actually* or more probably true. Often, we are in the grip of an anchoring bias that can distort our understanding of things.[1] For example, we may hold a punitive notion of justice. When this position is challenged, we may fall into a flight, fight or freeze response. Alternatively, we could revisit our understanding of justice and see if it is actually/probably true. This may move us toward adopting a more restorative notion of justice. In turn, we could become intellectually converted to that belief.

In a religious conversion, we fall in love with transcendent mystery—that is, God. Herein, we experience the otherworldly reality that is divine. Such an encounter transforms our beliefs about the nature and purpose of God in our lives.

Further, religious conversion involves an active engagement with an ever-present unconditional care and concern. It is being in the presence of ultimate meaning and value. Lonergan puts it aptly:

> It is being grasped by ultimate concern. It is otherworldly falling in love. It is total and permanent self-surrender Without condition, qualifications, reservations. But it is such a surrender, not as an act, but as a dynamic state that is prior to and principle of subsequent acts. (Lonergan 2017, 240)

This underscores the dynamic nature of a religious conversion. Falling in love with God moves one to see the world and others through more compassionate and caring eyes. This is an ongoing process that can deepen and broaden our moral and intellectual horizons.

Importantly, conversion is a process. It takes place in steps, and doesn't occur instantly. For most, conversion is a slow process that occurs in stages. Even cult figures who want unquestioning obedience use methods designed to manipulate and indoctrinate over time. This is often the case with radicalization programs. As such, these approaches are antithetical to our notion of authentic conversion.

As well, conversion is not an end in itself. In the Christian tradition, conversion is directed toward the deepening of our loving relationship with the God of Jesus Christ in faith. This religious experience compels us to be a loving person. Religious conversion, therefore, is a twofold process of being loved unconditionally by God and responding to that radical gift by loving God, one another and ourselves.

Such an experience often occurs within a faith community. In many different traditions, converts are introduced to important customs and practices, sacred texts, liturgical celebrations, spiritual writings and so forth. These texts and activities introduce the member of that community to key beliefs, values and practices they can accept or reject.

Importantly, an authentic, religious conversion sustains a healthy balance between faith and reason. This is an important point for educators. In order to avoid charges of indoctrination and/or manipulation, an authentic pedagogy of conversion deeply respects the role of rationality in any inquiry.

Hence, our notion of conversion views human reason in a positive light. It's seen as a reliable capacity for belief formation. It has all the potential to help us engage us with the real world, genuine values and, ultimately, God.

On the other hand, if human reason is interrupted or restricted, we can get cut off from the world, ourselves and the divine. Important information that could be available becomes unavailable. Relevant questions go unasked. Subsequently, accurate and clear insights about what is good, true and divine don't emerge.

Further, oversights can be disseminated in the public sphere. This further broadens the divide between faith and reason. As a result, different forms of eliminative materialism and unfettered fundamentalism often rise to the fore.

The Problem

Nonetheless, there is a problem. Can anyone truly teach *for* conversion? Is it possible to teach for an authentic intellectual, moral or religious conversion? Such a pedagogy would have to nurture human

freedom and dignity while engaging people with accurate, moral, intellectual and religious beliefs. Moreover, in a conversion experience, we don't just learn about something, we commit to it. So, is such a pedagogy possible or even permissible?

Many businesses believe it's not only permissible, but admirable. They invest a lot of capital in building pedagogies of conversion. They spend millions of dollars designing the perfect 15-second commercial or sound bite, one that makes its viewers need and buy their products.

Most companies would love it if people were suddenly converted to their product after watching only one or two commercials. Whether it's toothpaste or automobiles, companies want customers to be radically reorientated toward their product and away from the competition.

For our purposes, however, this is neither desirable nor permissible. In Lonergan's sense of the term, I could not be morally and intellectually converted to a brand of toothpaste by watching a commercial. As well, I couldn't be converted to a model of a car regardless of how skilfully it highlights movie stars driving alongside picturesque oceanfront highways. Such viewing activities could give me data to think about and reflect upon. However, if I bought a certain toothpaste or car on the basis of a such input, I'd be indoctrinated into a belief about its value, and not authentically converted to it.

So, how might we teach for and about conversion to avoid such strategies and their dubious intentions? In this next section, I introduce for your critical consideration an approach to a pedagogy of conversion that applies the transcendental method (hereafter TM) of Bernard Lonergan SJ. Lonergan's TM is an interrelated dynamic model designed to nurture an authentic conversion to what is good, true and divine. As well, it's apt for educators because it nurtures key critical and creative thinking skills and attitudes.

Building an Authentic Pedagogy of Conversion

What might be some key features of a pedagogy of conversion grounded in Lonergan's TM? In a previous article, I wrote about how one might use Lonergan's TM in religious education (hereafter RE) to nurture critical thinking (Grigg 2010). For a deeper exploration of how educators might apply Lonergan's TM in a variety of K–12 contexts, please see that article.

In any case, Lonergan's TM comprises the following imperatives:

- Be attentive
- Be insightful
- Be reasonable
- Be responsible
- Be in love (with transcendent mystery; that is, God)

In *Method in Theology* and elsewhere, Lonergan uses the term *intelligent* instead of *insightful*. However, by intelligent, it's accurate to say he means insightful. For the purposes of this paper, it's permissible to use the terms *insightful* and *intelligent* interchangeably.

By *transcendental*, Lonergan means that these imperatives are applicable across cultures, times, places and so on. In short, they transcend these contexts; they are applicable beyond them. In this sense, they are transcendental.

Importantly, in this paper, *authentic* means something very specific. Inspired by Lonergan's TM, I define *authenticity* as a sustained effort to be attentive, insightful, reasonable, responsible and in love. In short, the more I strive to follow these transcendentals, the more authentic I become.

In this sense, objectivity becomes the fruit of authentic subjectivity (Lonergan 1972, 292). This oft-quoted phrase of Lonergan's means that the more one is attentive, insightful, reasonable, responsible and in love with God, the more objective their insights become. Hence, beliefs about what is true, good and divine will be true or will more likely be true.

Going into this in detail is beyond the scope of this paper. However, we can say that following Lonergan's TM nurtures an authentic subjectivity. Hence, it also becomes the condition for the possibility of forming objective scientific, philosophical and theological judgments. This is especially important if one is teaching for a conversion to such beliefs.

So, in applying Lonergan's TM to developing an authentic pedagogy of conversion, we need first to be *attentive*. Herein, this means we need to *be* attentive to a breadth of experience. We experience many things. Some pique our interest and others do not. Those that do can engage our intellectual curiosity and move us to ask questions about those

experiences. In turn, we do an inquiry, and arrive at insights, answers and conclusions.

In this context of conversion, being attentive means that we are simply attending to our experiences of truth, goodness and the divine. We are not trying to explain them. We are deepening our awareness of them. The data of sense and consciousness are the focus of our attention at this level. For example, sense data, feelings and images are the sources of our experiences and, as such, they are input for us to think about.

As per the second level of Lonergan's TM, we need to be *insightful* when seeking a range of explanations of our experiences. In doing so, we pose questions to our experiences. For example, we ask questions such as What is happening? Why is it happening? How often does it happen? We arrive at insights that answer these questions. Such answers take many forms: hypotheses, correlations, descriptions, explanations and so on.

Regarding conversion, we ask questions about truth, value and the divine. At this level, we ask What is truth? What is valuable? Who is God? What are key texts basic to the tradition I'm learning about? What are key themes in those texts? What are the core values and morals grounding the tradition? What are the religious experiences of its central figures? How do these experiences impact sacred texts and key documents of the religion? What is the history of the tradition? Is it contemporary or does it have deep historical roots? Here, educators can guide students toward these questions and get them to inquire into them. Educators can facilitate the formation of key insights and answers that are critically reflected upon by their students at the next level of TM.

This is key when teaching *for* intellectual, moral and religious conversion. For example, an educator directs individuals to important resources: sacred texts, conciliar documents, liturgical practices, biographies and so on. They contain the best available information about the tradition, thereby answering many of the questions about the religious tradition. Naturally, educators would organize these resources in an age-appropriate manner, respecting where people are situated in their journey toward moral, intellectual and religious conversion.

Given the nature of an *authentic* conversion, it's important that educators allow people to freely ask these questions. For example, the histories of most religious traditions are mixed. Historically, people have had a range of experiences with religions, some wonderful and others horrific.

During the plague, Catholic men and women did heroic things to help victims dying of the disease. During WWII, the Vatican forged thousands of fake passports to help Jews escape the Nazis. Today, many Catholic charities sponsor programs to help the poor and homeless. Other parts of the history of the Church, however, are not laudatory. During the Inquisition, the Catholic Church sanctioned the torturing, hanging and burning of thousands. The sexual abuse crisis and the legacy of the Indian Residential Schools continue to be serious issues needing public apologies and compassionate resolutions. So, alongside a tradition's positive histories, educators need to teach about the sorrowful and negative ones.

In a pedagogy of conversion, this underscores the importance of respecting human freedom, rationality and dignity. In short, there can be no coercion or pressure to accept the results of any inquiry into truth, morality or the divine. That would be antithetical to our notion of authentic conversion. Educators must always keep in mind that conversion occurs in freedom and over time, not coercively and overnight.

As per the third level of Lonergan's TM, we need to be *reasonable* in assessing the quality of proposed solutions, explanations, answers, beliefs and so forth. Not all insights, beliefs and/or conclusions are of equal merit. So, we need to judge which ones are the best *at this time*.

So, we ask the question, Is it so? In being reasonable, we fairly weigh evidence, seek out inconsistencies in beliefs, assess the quality of arguments and so on. We aren't seeking out new beliefs; we are critically reflecting on the evidence for existing ones. For example, in science, there are many competing theories about the nature of dark matter. Currently, however, one or two seem to have the best accounts of our experience of the universe. The same is the case in theological arguments; some are stronger and more valid than others.

Here, the individual is asked to exhibit intellectual courage, to be reasonable, and make a fair judgment. Being reasonable means that the student is given the personal autonomy to fairly judge among disparate accounts and explanations. For Lonergan, making

judgments grounded in bias and selfishness is unfair; it is being unreasonable.

Being reasonable empowers the individual. Here, we can freely consider and assess what has been presented to us. Hence, educators need to give room or space for students to assent toward or dissent from those beliefs.

At this level, a number of things are possible. For example, people may grow cautious by attending to a range of experiences basic to a religious tradition. After completing an inquiry into them, individuals may reasonably reject the tradition's claims about truth, goodness or the divine. Hence, they wouldn't experience an intellectual, moral or religious conversion.

On the other hand, positive judgments could happen. For example, after an inquiry, an individual may arrive at a number of beliefs about God, truth and the good. In turn, they could ground a number of positive judgments, prompting intellectual, moral and religious conversions. Educators must be open to all potential scenarios. This open-mindedness is key for an *authentic* pedagogy of conversion.

Next, we need to be *responsible* in acting upon those reasoned judgments. Since actions must be consistent with one's judgments, an educator stresses the importance of consistently acting upon one's reasoned judgments. If I judge a certain theological belief to be to be better than another, I must *responsibly* adopt it.

For any pedagogy of conversion, this is foundational. For example, if I've experienced an intellectual conversion, I need to responsibly apply that to my life. This may take many forms. Returning to our example of justice, having made the reasoned judgment that a restorative approach is better than a punitive one, I need to act on it. I might advocate for a number of things: prison reform, therapeutic approaches in sentencing, expanding the drug court system and other restorative reforms. Educators need to direct individuals to be responsible and act upon their moral, intellectual and religious conversions.

Lonergan's last level of TM, to be *in love*, is especially relevant for a religious conversion. Herein, the call to be in love with God transforms one's entire world view. Our desires, goals, aspirations, decisions and deeds are reoriented toward ultimate concern or God (Lonergan 2017, 63). As well, our moral and intellectual horizons are transformed by the overflowing, powerful, all-encompassing love of God poured into our hearts.

This is the ultimate goal of a pedagogy of religious conversion. Educators can direct and nurture this falling in love with God. Individuals are given opportunities to experience this all-encompassing care and concern, and freely respond to it. One might say that this falling in love with God occurs as a culminating activity of a lengthy process of inquiry. It is the goal of TM in action.

It is notable that conversion is always ongoing. For example, our beliefs about what is good, true and divine are always deepening. Beliefs about the nature of the universe, justice and God evolve as I continue to apply Lonergan's TM. Simply, this is human growth and a natural outcome of a sustained effort to be attentive, insightful, reasonable, responsible and in love.

On the other hand, people can refuse to grow, developing very limited horizons. Choosing to be inattentive, uninsightful, unreasonable, irresponsible and out of love with God can sorely restrict one's perspective. Following these imperatives often leads one into a state of deep decline, further inauthenticity and, ultimately, self-destruction.[2] Sadly, societies can be engulfed in a similar destructive pattern of decay.

Ongoing Conclusions

Given the dynamic exigency of Lonergan's TM and the ongoing nature of intellectual, moral and religious conversion, it's best to entitle this last section "Ongoing Conclusions." Any final word on a pedagogy of conversion is beyond the scope of this paper and the nature of conversion itself. Nonetheless, we can offer a few concluding remarks.

To begin, a pedagogy of conversion is complicated and challenging. It is multifaceted. It involves teaching for and about specific types of conversion: moral, intellectual and religious. Educators need to inform themselves of their specific features, and teach others about them.

In teaching *for* conversion, Lonergan's TM can be especially helpful. By asking people to be attentive, insightful, reasonable, responsible and in love with God, educators can nurture intellectual, moral and religious conversion in their students. Herein, students are taught about the religious tradition while being genuinely supported in their efforts to assess its basic beliefs and make decisions about its merit.

Notably, this takes time. Given the approach outlined here, it's clear that an authentic pedagogy of conversion isn't grounded in a specific number of hours of instruction. Unlike courses taught in colleges or universities, credits are not tied to instructional hours. So, it might take someone a long time to experience an intellectual, moral or religious conversion, and that's fine.

Also, such an approach is not instrumentalist. By this, I mean that an authentic pedagogy of conversion deeply respects rationality and human freedom. Religious educators are professionals whose expertise is key. They are not neobehaviourists who move students through coursework like rats through a maze. They themselves strive to be attentive, insightful, reasonable, responsible and in love with God. As such, they can guide their students along a similar path throughout the conversion process.

As I said at the outset, this is a general framework outlining an authentic pedagogy of conversion using Lonergan's TM. It is incomplete, and in need of ongoing input from professional educators who daily work in this area. Their insights into how Lonergan's TM might be further developed in a pedagogy of conversion are of paramount importance. My hope is that this article can be the start of a purposeful and ongoing discussion.

Notes

1. For more on cognitive biases such as the anchoring bias, see *Reason in the Balance*, by S Bailin and M Battersby, Hackett 2016.

2. For a thorough discussion of this topic, see "Fighting Decline in Toxic Times," by E A Gutiérrez, at https://bclonergan.org/fighting-decline-in-toxic-times/.

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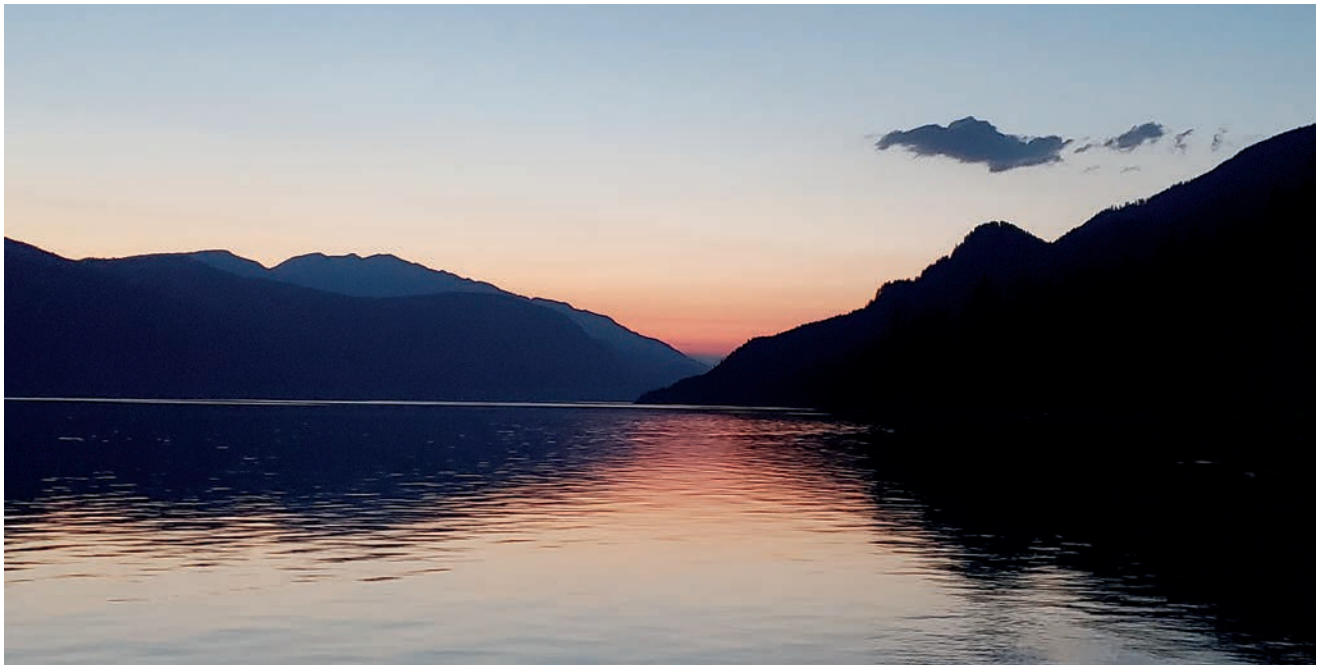

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Faith Permeation of the Curriculum: Don't Assume It's Happening

Matt Hoven

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Classroom teachers in faith-based schools find permeating the curriculum with faith worrisome to downright overwhelming. Whether in a science lab or a social studies classroom, or on a basketball court, this learning task is vital for bringing faith to life in the school. However, to complete this interdisciplinary work is methodologically difficult and time consuming, and requires a substantial knowledge base.

Generally speaking, faith-based schools today advocate for faith permeation. Educators enliven their mission by infusing or integrating the entire school with faith. In our secular age, people of faith shouldn't accept religion's marginalization from the public sphere, which leads to faith eventually becoming overly spiritualized, individualized and privatized. Whether at an Islamic academy or a Sikh school in Alberta, there are faith opportunities to be celebrated in a foods class, for example, to guide disciplining practices or to anchor young people's souls. Faith is something that needs to be publicly celebrated and outwardly thought about. Think of an arid desert that receives rainfall: that's how the school's purpose should be enlivened through faith permeation.

Faith permeation is not hyperreligious thinking. In the case of Catholic separate schools in Canada, it is part of the protected rights for denominational schools. This is made obvious when opponents speak ill of Catholic schools' receiving public funding: they often name the insidiousness of faith permeation throughout the curriculum. Canadian lawyer (and now judge) Kevin Feehan (2015) explains that several Supreme Court of Canada cases endorse Catholics' right to expect that religion will permeate all relationships and operations within a Catholic school system: its curriculum, pedagogy, school management and so forth. From how a school council is organized and operated to the relationships between trustees and teachers, Canadian law expects faith to infuse all thinking in Catholic schools as social entities.

The Ideal

For many decades, Catholic schools in Alberta have explicitly named the importance of faith permeation. For instance, Red Deer teacher Terri Lynn Mundorf (2010) reviewed the basics on the topic in an article found in the predecessor of this journal. She summarized, "The idea of permeation of Gospel values assumes a common core of faith in Christ that needs to be purposefully integrated by teachers and administrators ... they are incidentally, inherently and intentionally building up our Catholic school communities" (p 18). She referenced documents taken from Vatican II and Alberta educators like the prominent, but now deceased, Richard Laplante to argue for the fundamental importance of faith permeation. I've found the Congregation for Catholic Education's *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988) most helpful in articulating a particular type of faith permeation: that which involves the curriculum. It specifies how, especially in secondary schools,

educators must "give special attention to the 'challenges' that human culture poses for faith" (para 52), like evolutionary biology or quantum physics. Elementary teachers more naturally think about faith permeation, but every teacher is challenged to work through its implications.

Permeation is often related to the religious identity of the school. Studies, like one written by American John Convey (2012), asked educators to name elements that support schools' religious identity: for example, morning prayer, staff as faith witnesses, religious artwork, communal bond among staff, connections to the local church and so on. Permeation can be seen as synonymous with religious identity—how does the school's faith mission impact how it understands its purpose?—but here I am asking us to consider how the curriculum is permeated: bluntly, how do teachers infuse faith into the approved curriculum (also known as the programs of study)?

Faith permeation of the curriculum relates to religious instruction. While the latest revision of the *Directory for Catechesis* (Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization 2020, 354–93) asks religious educators to consider today's sociocultural context, its predecessor spoke directly to curricular permeation: "Through interdisciplinary dialogue religious instruction in schools underpins, activates, develops and completes the educational activity of the school" (Congregation for the Clergy 1997, 73). If religious education is about faith seeking understanding, then religious educators must consider how learning in other fields of thought affects how faith is embraced. This is the work of permeation; it's not for the faint of heart!

The Challenge

The holistic theory of faith permeation may be inspirational (and legally binding) for faith-based schools. However, when the rubber meets the road, curricular integration becomes increasingly difficult. Think about it: personal integration of religious teachings is a challenge; why wouldn't this infusion of faith be even more difficult to accomplish on the social, intellectual level? Australian religious educator Richard Rymarz makes this point in his critical assessment of faith permeation (2013, 90–97). First, he claims that there are no specific "Catholic" or "Christian" values when we take socioeconomic and cultural factors into consideration. People of faith don't have a monopoly on values like love, hope, justice, courage and so forth. Values permeation may be beneficial, but it's insufficient for the religious mission of schools. Next, completing curricular faith permeation with the program of studies requires adequate resources and time for educators, the opportunity to collaborate with other educators, a high percentage of the parent body who support it, and high levels of religious commitment among teachers. Rymarz, always the realist, argues that these are in short supply. Finally, even if professionally completed resources are made available, constant revisions to the provincial curriculum make the work fraught with constant revision. Without pulling punches, Rymarz raises critical questions for faith permeation.

Strategies Going Forward

Despite his criticisms, Rymarz isn't ready to pull the plug on faith permeation. Local schools must determine strategies for more coherent integration of faith-identity in the learned curriculum. This begins by recognizing honestly the challenges faced while realizing the discrepancy between the rhetoric in Catholic schools—including church documents—and the actuality of the Alberta situation (Rymarz 2013, 96). Below are three strategies to enable curricular faith permeation.

Teachers Collaborating with Teachers

The best professional development occurs when teachers collaborate with other teachers (Parsons and Beauchamp 2012). Planning among religious educators and other subject teachers is necessary. This takes planning on the part of school leadership, a collaborative spirit among teaching staff and dedication to the mission of the school. Further, it requires financial resources to make it happen. There are examples of this locally in Alberta. For instance, an Edmonton Catholic School District (ECSD) high school science teacher led writing a Chemistry 30 Alternative Education course, which included faith connections to chemistry: for instance, Pope Francis's denunciation of chemical weapons, Father René Just Haüy considered as the father of crystallography, and Father Julius Nieuwland's ground-breaking work with synthetic rubber (ECSD 2019, 11, 18, 21). Using local

knowledge and know-how creates synergy among teachers and encourages further work in permeation.

Finding Permeation Resources

Often undergraduate students pointedly ask me how they can permeate the curriculum. Outside resources are sometimes difficult to find, but can be a lifeline for an educator trying to infuse faith into their classroom. Next door in Saskatchewan, the Catholic School Boards Association has put together a number of faith permeation resources for that province's K–12 programs of study (www.scsba.ca/faith-permeation-resources/). It might not fit hand-in-glove for Alberta teachers, but there are a number of strong examples and insights for permeation of faith. Science and faith websites—like the US-based Magis Center (https://magiscenter.com/), the UK-based Faraday Institute for Science and Religion (www.faraday.cam.ac.uk/) and my colleague Denis Lamoureux's website (https://sites.ualberta.ca/~dlamoure/)—are educationally geared for science teachers and religious educators. Another fruitful area for faith permeation in faith-based schools has historically been extracurricular sports. Ecumenically minded, the Sport.Faith.Life. website (https://sportfaithlife.com/) provides blogs and podcasts about sport and faith, for instance. In the past, I wrote high school modules for sport and faith in cooperation with Edmonton Catholic Schools. (E-mail me if you'd like an electronic copy.) There are helpful resources out there, but educators need to find them and make time to incorporate their insight. (For a valuable theoretical look at integrating faith across the curriculum, Piderit and Morey [2012] edited a lengthy compilation of writings by academics studying in various fields.)

An Alberta-Wide Endeavour

For many years, Alberta Education has been rewriting the programs of study—a project that is politically charged and which currently has no end in sight. Once this document gets rewritten, piloted and approved, it would be most opportunistic to promote collaborative faith permeation projects. Many of you have already thought of this, I'm sure. Perhaps some leaders within the Religious and Moral Educational Council, the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association or the Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta are already discussing the idea. Funding to pay educational leaders to write curricular connections would need to come from somewhere. To help cover costs, perhaps the work could be considered more broadly and marketed as a resource book for schools in the English-speaking world. Why not dream big and see where we can go with faith permeation!

Don't Assume It's Happening

Because many of Alberta's faith-based schools use a government-approved curriculum, curricular faith permeation will almost always face a headwind. Facing that reality means that religious educators and all educational leaders must work intentionally to make faith integration an actuality. It's easiest to say that permeation should be left to individual classroom teachers, but collaborating with others at the school, district or provincial level can invoke fresh ideas and build momentum for faith-based schools and their students.

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Remembering Mr Delbello: Presence, Personalized Education and an Academic Paper That Changed My Life

Rodney B Dieser

> *But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?*
>
> *(1 John 3:17, RSV)*

I just attended, via live stream, the memorial services of Aurelio "Rel" Delbello, a high school teacher who made a huge impact in my life when I attended Catholic Central High school in Lethbridge in the late 1980s. Having completed multiple degrees from four higher education institutions, I have had some outstanding teachers and professors. Mr Delbello was extra special. My hope in writing this small tribute is that it will cause you, the reader, to pause and reflect on pedagogy and your role as a teacher. This is a story of an experienced teacher who looked beyond the classroom, one more lesson that can be learned from Mr Delbello. This tribute to my past high school teacher is in two parts. Part one is written in a descriptive story fashion, providing social context, as I remember Mr Delbello, my younger self and our interactions from over 30 years ago. The second part is an academic analysis of what made Mr Delbello outstanding as I draw on the academic labour of Noddings's care ethic in schools.

Part One: Mr Delbello and Me

I was the high school student that often does not make it to university. Both of my parents were immigrants to Canada; neither completed elementary school, and K–12 schooling did not come easily to me because I did not learn study habits. In elementary school, I was in remedial classes in the core subjects of math, reading and writing, and things did not change much through junior high and high school. My high school guidance counsellor suggested that I join the army after high school, as I believe he thought I had no other options.

In high school my life was a mess. First and foremost, my mother was dying of terminal cancer, and my parents, who did the best that they could, did not know how to deal with this life struggle. Due to their

own past horrors and trauma from World War II, homelessness and abuse, I think my parents had shame about illness and I think they dealt with post-traumatic stress disorder. I think their avoidance of reality, which included not ever talking about my mother's cancer, was a way to sidestep past trauma and their fears. My parents had me promise to not tell anyone about my mother's cancer. I hold no ill will toward my parents, and the older I have become, the more remarkable I think my parents were for the suffering they both endured. But due to my promise to my mother, I did not tell anyone about my struggles. The result was anger, fear and depression, and high school had no relevance for me. I really did not care about what I was learning and simply passed the most basic classes, as I was just trying to survive.

My way of coping was through powerlifting, and I spent most evenings and weekends, for hours, at a hard-core gym (McMurren's Gym) pounding the weights to deal with my emotions. It helped, and in the late 1980s I was good enough to qualify to compete at the Canadian National Powerlifting Championships.[1] Today I could cite all sorts of evidence-based research on how exercise helps with mental health, but back then, I just knew I felt better at the gym; it caused a distraction, and I found a sense of community in that weight room with other powerlifters.

Due to my struggles and lack of awareness, a month or two prior to graduation I learned I was a credit short to graduate. My high school guidance counsellor simply did not care and informed me that I would have to come back, for one class, after the summer (graduating six to seven months later). When my father spoke to the principal, it went nowhere. Feeling both fear and anger, I shared this with Mr Delbello. He had an idea that tapped into my intrinsic motivation. That last semester, Mr Delbello was my teacher for a law class, and he was always positive. He was always smiling, and every day in his classroom he made me feel unique. His way of making me feel of worth—acknowledging my presence or recognizing my existence—started with a fun ritualistic greeting. Most times when Mr Delbello saw me, whether it was walking down the hallway or when I entered the classroom, he would walk up to me in an extended and exaggerated manner, with buildup/anticipation, and then, suddenly, a whack to the shoulder from his hand and in a louder voice "RRROOOOODDDDD!" He would then just stand there, with a huge smile on his face, embracing the moment, embracing my presence or the fact that I existed. I would see Mr Delbello from afar, walking down the hallway, his vision clearly on me, and his eyesight would not move—his eyes honed in on me. As he came closer, a smile would break out, a smile that grew in a slow way in rhythm with his approach toward me, his smile widening, so very slowly, as he got closer; then the long, louder, passionate ritual of saying my name, with the care whack to the shoulder (open hand hitting shoulder)—not hard, but certainly not soft, a whack that clearly underscored presence. I was present to Mr Delbello; he was aware of me; I was someone of worth. If I walked into his classroom and he did not see me, perhaps because he was engaged with another student, he would walk to my desk, and the same care-ethic ritual would play out.

Mr Delbello was a former football player (he had played college football at Minot State University, in North Dakota) and retired high school football coach, and he took a keen interest in my powerlifting pursuits. One day he brought to class a cut-out photo of me deadlifting in a competition that a local newspaper reported on and asked me all sorts of question about this event. Again, I existed in Mr Delbello's eyes. On another day, he asked me to go to the high school weight room and, instead of giving me pointers, he asked me to give him pointers on how to squat and deadlift and asked me to help other athletes with strength training. For a short time, I was the teacher and he was the student, and I felt like I had something unique to offer. He came to McMurren's Gym one night to better understand the powerlifting I had spoken to him about. He did not say much, he just observed. He consistently asked me about my powerlifting adventures and activities, authentic in his curiosity.

When I sought him out, worried that I was not going to graduate from high school, Mr Delbello took the time to listen. An antecedent to presence and personalized education is the art of listening. He then asked if I was interested in taking an independent class so that I could gain that credit and graduate from high school. The bulk of this class was a rigorous research paper focused on the mental and physical health benefits of weightlifting, the unhealthy side effects of steroid use and the healthy use of nutritional supplements. It was as if Mr Delbello was reading my

mind—I was in the contemplation stage of using steroids and he was trying to persuade me not to and use healthy supplements instead. Today, what Mr Delbello did would be called personalized education—customize learning for each student's strengths, needs, skills and interests. Personalized school education has a focus on connecting classroom instruction to a student's life outside school in order to render subject matter interesting (Reber, Canning and Harackiewicz 2018). This simple act, of a teacher taking the time to know my strengths and passions, changed my life.

Something magical happened as I wrote that paper! I realized how exciting research and writing academic papers could be when based on intrinsic motivation. It was, in fact, the first paper I wrote that was an autotelic experience and I was in the synthesis stage of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy; I was formulating a thesis from existing knowledge and skills and was enjoying it. I read many papers that I found exciting and relevant, and the book *Death in the Locker Room: Steroids, Cocaine and Sports* (Goldman, Bush and Klatz 1984) had a serious influence on me when I decided not to use steroids. This paper for Mr Delbello, along with other variables, people and life events, helped me to realize that there were academic programs in sport psychology, therapeutic recreation and leisure services (subjects not offered in my high school) and that my future educational pursuits could be oriented toward studying something I found interesting—the connection of leisure pursuits and mental health. I eventually became a university professor and a licensed mental health counsellor, and have now written over 100 articles and 6 textbooks on the topic of leisure and its influence on mental health. I also use a wellness perspective with most clients who see me as a therapist. Mr Delbello was present and understood parts of my life—so much so that he asked me to write a paper that changed my life.

Part Two: Mr Delbello's Actions and Effect—Noddings's Care Ethic in School

As an adult, father, professor and licensed mental health counsellor, I see Mr Delbello's actions today, and the effect he had on me over 30 years ago, as an application of Noddings's care ethic in schools. Noddings (2002) defines education as "a constellation of encounters, both planned and unplanned, that promote growth through the acquisition of knowledge, skills, understanding and appreciation" (p 283), in which the relationship between teacher and student is the most paramount. As such, the teacher (the carer) is open to what the student (the cared for) is saying and experiencing and is able to reflect on it and use it in a personalized educational manner. In writing about how to change high schools through a care ethic, Noddings (2015) draws on Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue, in which the fundamental fact of human existence, often overlooked by modern schools, is the I/Thou encounter. The I/Thou dialogue occurs when two (or more) people authentically engage in the classroom or school—a bold leap into the experience of the other, while still being rooted in the here and now. Buber (1965) writes of a "dialogue which never breaks off" (p 98). To the student, this dialogue of relation provides safety. "Trust, trust in the world [classroom or school] because this human being [teacher] exists ... Because this human being [teacher] exists, meaninglessness, however, hard pressed you are by it, cannot be the real truth" (p 98) and that "He [teacher] need possess none of the perfections which the child may dream he possess; but he must be really there" (p 98). As Nodding (2015) suggests, "For Buber, and for the care theorists, the teacher must see things from the student's side" (p 122), an act of empathy. Mr Delbello's dialogue of relation made me feel safe around him, something lacking in my home as my mother was dying of cancer, and Buber's words now ring true to what I experienced 30 years ago: trust, trust in Mr Delbello's classroom because he existed, and fear and nihilism left when he was around.

I agree with Noddings (2015) that in the modern era a care ethic orientation in schools seems foreign, as so many schools in advanced capitalist countries are focused on students learning the skills of business, economy and global domination through STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education.

Conclusion

The last time I saw Mr Delbello was in 2003. I was hired as an assistant professor at the University of Northern Iowa and was visiting my hometown. I entered my high school, for the first time since I graduated in 1987; I wanted to thank him for what he had done for me, years ago. His room was the same and he was teaching that same law class. He was so enthusiastic to see me and, when he saw me, he performed the same ritual—an extended and exaggerated

walk toward me with buildup and then, suddenly, a whack to the shoulder and in a louder voice "RRROOOODDD!" I thanked him, and he just looked at me, with a huge smile on his face, and then stated, "I knew there was something great in you!" He was so deeply, deeply excited. Although Mr Delbello never shared scriptures or talked about our Catholic religion, he exemplified 1 John 3:17—he saw a person in need and reached out to help.

Note

1. Although I qualified I did not actually compete at the National Championships.

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Quiet Places of Rest

Mark Nixon

> *Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.*
>
> *Mark 6:31 (NSAB)*

In the Gospel of Mark, after Jesus had fed the five thousand, he saw that his apostles were overwhelmed and needed to retreat, to rest and to ponder on what they saw and heard. I would like to suggest that Jesus's love for his apostles is not directed just to them but to all of us. As teachers, we can become overwhelmed by our students, by their families, by our families and currently by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic both locally and globally. We too need to find "a quiet place and get some rest."

So, if you are looking for quiet—an opportunity to grow spiritually or to just be, retreat centres have been providing spaces and programs for doing this for centuries. We are blessed in Alberta with several facilities in both city and country settings. One place to find out more is online at Retreats Canada West. Their list is not all encompassing, but provides a good start for one to see what is available in the way of private retreats; themed programs, for example, awareness and mindfulness practice, centring prayer, spiritual direction; and various workshops.

Retreats Canada West (http://retreatscanadawest.ca/about-retreats-canada-west/) provides a list of retreat centres in western Canada, from British Columbia to Manitoba; only the Alberta retreat centres are highlighted in this article. The descriptions have been pulled from the sites listed, with permission.

FCJ Retreat and Conference Centre

The FCJ Retreat and Conference Centre is indeed an "oasis in the heart of the city." It is often difficult to journey out of the city to embrace opportunities for spiritual growth, for times of quiet or for musing with others about new theological perspectives, and for accessing a spiritual guide.

219 19 Avenue SW
Calgary, Alberta T2S 0C8
Phone: 403-228-4215
Fax: 403-228-9459
E-mail: info@fcjcentre.ca
www.fcjcentre.ca

FCJ
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King's Fold Retreat & Renewal Centre

King's Fold Retreat and Renewal Centre is a Christian retreat centre located in southwestern Alberta, an hour northwest of Calgary. We are situated on 166 acres of prime recreational land straddling the Ghost River, with a commanding view of the Rocky Mountains. We offer a place for rest, renewal and spiritual discovery in the context of Christian hospitality. Our guests come for personal retreat, group retreats and specific themed retreats.

Phone: 403-932-3174
Fax: 403-932-9531
E-mail: retreat@kingsfoldretreat.com
www.kingsfoldretreat.com

King's Fold
Retreat & Renewal Centre

Return, O my soul, to your rest,
for the Lord has dealt
bountifully with you.
Psalms 116:7 (NRSVCE)

Martha Retreat Centre

Martha Retreat Centre is a place to come away and, in the stillness and quiet, to listen to the Spirit of God in the Scriptures, in nature and in one's life experiences.

1130 Scenic Drive South
Lethbridge, Alberta T1K 7J1
Phone: 403-328-3422
Fax: 403-327-3487
E-mail: admin@martharetreatcentre.ca
www.martharetreatcentre.ca/

Mount St Francis Retreat Centre

Mount St Francis Retreat, located on the outskirts of Cochrane, Alberta, and overlooking the Big Hill Creek Valley, is a Christian retreat centre. For those wishing time apart in intimacy with God, the centre offers moments of silence within the hustle and bustle of modern life.

41160 Retreat Road
Cochrane, Alberta
Phone: 403-932-2012
Fax: 403-932-6151
E-mail: mtfrancis@shaw.ca
www.mountstfrancis.ca

Providence Renewal Centre

Providence Renewal Centre (PRC) is an ecumenical retreat and conference centre located in southwest Edmonton on 20 acres of beautifully landscaped grounds. Established by the Sisters of Providence in 1983, it has evolved and changed over the years. Today Providence Renewal Centre opens its doors to those who are looking for a Christian environment in which to nourish their spiritual lives as well as those who are looking for a peaceful environment to hold their meeting, seminar or conference.

3005 119 Street NW
Edmonton, Alberta T6J 5R5
Phone: 780-430-9491
Fax: 780-438-1639
www.providencerenewal.ca

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St Albert, Alberta T8N 1K1
Phone: 780-459-5511
Fax: 780-458-8877
E-mail: reception@starofthenorth.ca
www.starofthenorth.ca

Spiritual direction is, in reality, nothing more than a way of leading us to see and obey the real Director—the Holy Spirit hidden in the depths of our soul.

—Thomas Merton[1]

URSA Retreat Centre

The retreat centre and land were obtained by Universal Rehabilitation Service (URSA) in 2009, with the single purpose of creating a retreat space where all individuals, regardless of abilities, can experience the beauty of a relaxing and calming retreat. URSA has welcomed individuals with developmental disabilities and their families with a space specially designed to suit their needs.

Municipal address 50082 Township Rd 283
Just west of Dartique Hall at Horse Creek Road and Township Road 283
Cochrane, Alberta
Phone: 403-272-7722
E-mail: info@ursa-rehab.com
www.ursaretreatcentre.com/

Sanctum Retreat

Although Sanctum Retreat is not a member of Retreats Canada West, it is definitely worth a look. The following was supplied by mariette@sanctumretreat.ca.

Sanctum Retreat, established in 2004 and located west of Red Deer, is a unique facility of service, spaciousness and simple elegance. Nestled on a pristine 100-acre parcel of woodlands and open fields with a spring-fed river flowing through it, it is a home away from home for many who, year after year, take time apart to reconnect, reflecting on their unique stories and dreaming their futures forward.

Sanctum serves a variety of groups, including faith communities and all those who serve the common good. Along with supporting spiritual growth, Sanctum welcomes, facilitates and hosts educational programs and retreats, accommodating charitable organizations as well as both the public and private sectors.

kristoph@sanctumretreat.ca
1-888-442-0285
PO Box 550
Caroline, Alberta T0M 0M0
https://sanctumretreat.ca

> *Food for the body is not enough. There must be food for the soul.*
>
> *—Dorothy Day* [2]

Notes

1. https://albertasynod.ca/our-service/rostered-ministers/spiritual-directors/

2. https://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/182.html>

Mark A Nixon, BEd, DMin, has retired from full-time teaching and chaplain ministry after 28 years at Catholic Central High School, Lethbridge, Alberta. He remains dedicated to the teaching profession by serving as past president of Holy Spirit Catholic ATA Local 5 and past president of the Religious and Moral Education Council (RMEC) of the ATA. He still guest teaches in Holy Spirit Catholic Schools. From 2018 to 2020, he served as transitional executive director at the Martha Retreat Centre, in Lethbridge. Mark is married and has two married children plus two grandchildren. He owns and operates Living Your Mission Consulting, which specializes in spiritual direction and various retreats, such as Attentive Listening Through the Lens of the Medicine Wheel and Mission Statement Based Bargaining—Getting to Us!

On St Joseph

Mike Landry

The custom of adopting a patron saint has a rich history in the Catholic faith. We dedicate churches, schools and even entire countries to the patronage of a saint. This allows us the opportunity to learn more about them, to ask for their prayers and to seek to imitate their heroic virtue. Individuals, too, can adopt a patron saint for themselves. This often happens at confirmation, when candidates are given the opportunity to choose a confirmation saint as a patron—a companion to travel with them as they journey onward and upward in the life of faith.

My own patron saint is Joseph, the husband of Mary and foster father to Jesus. St Joseph is also the patron of my home diocese in Edmonton, of Canada (along with St Kateri Tekakwitha) and, since 1870, the patron saint of the universal church. Last December 8, Pope Francis published an apostolic letter, *Patris Corde*[1] (which means *with a father's heart)* at the same time as he declared 2021 a year specially dedicated to St Joseph. Looking at the role Joseph played in the life of Jesus, the pope's letter speaks very clearly to the different responsibilities of fatherhood and parenting in general: Joseph as one who is loved, who is tender and loving, who is obedient and accepting, who is creatively courageous, who works hard and who spends much of his time in the shadows.

Many of the things Pope Francis highlights about the virtues of St Joseph are qualities that would serve a religious educator well. When you consider the work of teaching young people about the love of God, there are three reasons we might look at St Joseph as an exemplary patron saint for religious educators.

First, the Gospel accounts imply that Joseph had to be a man of deep prayer. On three occasions (Matthew 1:20–24, 2:13–14 and 2:19–21), Joseph made a major life decision because God spoke to him in a dream. If God appeared to you in a dream, how would you distinguish what he had to say from the other random, miscellaneous and often confusing things that happen in our dreams? The only way that Joseph would have been able to distinguish God's voice from all the rest was because he knew God's voice. Joseph would have learned how to pay attention to God's voice by observing the Jewish law set out for him, by knowing the scriptures and almost certainly through a humble, active, daily prayer life. Like Joseph, we should be able to cultivate a deep, rich interior life—able to pray using the "… three major expressions of prayer: vocal, meditative and contemplative" (Catechism of the Catholic Church #2699). As we do this, we draw nearer to Christ, whom we are trying to share with our students.[2]

Second, we might take an example from St Joseph's silence. The Bible tells us of many figures who did heroic things: Moses's role in the Exodus, David's great victories in battle, or Mary Magdalene, who was the first to discover the empty tomb. We may wish we had that sort of a memorable role. Joseph's role, critical as it was, is much more hidden. Not a single word he spoke is written down in the scriptures. Pope Francis writes in *Patris Corde* that "Each of us can discover in Joseph—the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence—an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble. Saint Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the

shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation." The work you do as a teacher may not always be recognized, but it, too, is an incomparable role in the life of every student who walks into your classroom. Hear the invitation that comes from this example of Joseph: that we, too, have been called and chosen by God, and that our faith is expressed not simply in our words, but especially in our actions—the way in which we respond to God's call.

Finally, we can learn from St Joseph's willingness to adapt and to go wherever God called him. Every time the Gospels tell us of a moment when God spoke to Joseph, it required a major life change for him. Put yourself in Joseph's shoes for a moment. What would it be like to discover that your fiancée was pregnant and know that it couldn't be yours? What would it be like to realize that this child was the Messiah and that God had chosen you to play a key role in the story of salvation? Considering that the Holy Family was to leave their home twice—leaving Israel for Egypt when the danger to Jesus was imminent, and then returning once danger had passed—what would this have meant for Joseph himself? In response to each of these circumstances, we see Joseph's willingness to adapt and pivot, but we also see it in the context of his faith. Joseph knows that what's being asked of him fits into a much bigger story being written by the God who is love. The experiences we've all lived during the time of COVID-19 have made us experts at adapting and pivoting: in-class learning, online learning, isolation and quarantine, and much more. We should draw inspiration from St Joseph as we remember that, no matter what adaptations and changes are asked of us, God has been, is now and always will be with us.

Possibly, you already have a favourite or a patron saint. As an educator, I can tell you that there are many wonderful and worthy saints whose example may already encourage you. From Joseph, may you be inspired to cultivate a rich and vibrant prayer life and, in turn, more readily recognize the voice of God. May you be inspired to embrace your incomparable role (hidden as it might be) in a story that is much bigger than any of us. And may you come to see the challenges that come in education—even the chaos of the past couple of years—as an opportunity to choose to have faith in God each day.

St Joseph, pray for us!

Notes

1. The full text of the Pope's Letter can be found at www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap_20201208_patris-corde.html.

2. If you're not sure where to start on growing your prayer life, I'd suggest Beginning to Pray, *by Anthony Bloom,* An Introduction to the Devout Life, *by St Frances de Sales, and* Prayer for Beginners, *by Peter Kreeft, as excellent resources.*

Mike Landry is a speaker, writer, musician and diehard Edmonton Oilers fan. He works full-time as division chaplain for Evergreen Catholic Schools, serving students in five communities west of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. You can find him online at www.mikeisthird.com.

Too Much Learning …

… is driving you insane! Acts 26:24 (NCB)

Gerry Turcotte

As a young writer obsessed with the origin of things, I was always astounded to discover how many well-known phrases came from the Bible (with Shakespeare a distant, but impressive, second)—everything from "an eye for an eye" through to "giving up the ghost." When my mother said I was the apple of her eye or that pride comes before a fall, I had no idea she was quoting scripture. If my dad complained that he was at his wits' end, but that there was no rest for the wicked, he was drawing on an impressive knowledge of the sacred texts, even if he didn't realize it. Over time, of course, I delighted at tracing the origins of these well-known sayings, finding myself reading extensive passages of the Bible or Shakespeare in a quest for understanding.

It wasn't until much later that I began to study the different translations of the Bible, and to marvel at the varied ways translators chose to phrase their interpretation of ancient languages, though I always had a particular fondness for the more poetic, and at times more oblique, phrasing of the King James Bible. Sometimes the more colloquial translations felt too quotidian and lost the mystery of the sacred texts. This was true, it seemed, for most passages of the Bible, except for a gripping trial scene described in the Acts of the Apostles where, no matter the translation, the moment felt contemporary beyond words.

To put this in context, one quarter of the Book of Acts is focused on the riveting story of Paul's imprisonment and trial at Caesarea, where he was taken by Roman soldiers for ill-defined crimes. In what was a dangerously political circumstance, Paul found himself demanding to be tried as a Roman citizen to ensure that he was not returned to Jerusalem, where he knew he would be assassinated. In what could easily be an episode of *Law and Order*, Paul eloquently defended himself against his accusers. But in one remarkable moment he was interrupted by the well-meaning Roman procurator, Festus, who shouted, "You are out of your mind, Paul. Too much learning is driving you insane!"

Paul was essentially acquitted on lack of evidence and released, but I have always loved this unusual outburst, especially in some of the many different translations. The American Standard version translates this moment as "Paul, thou art mad; thy much learning is turning thee mad." The Bible in Basic English is more direct: "Paul, you are off your head." The Message Bible, with its focus on colloquialisms and accessibility, offers this: "Paul, you're crazy! You've read too many books, spent too much time staring off into space! Get a grip on yourself, get back to the real world!" (You almost expect him to say, "Get off that computer right now!") And of course, the King James Bible has the most literary version: "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad."

However it is translated, the notion that excess learning is bad for one's health is comically jarring and counterintuitive, and a reminder that so often those who fear difference also fear knowledge. I mentioned this passage to a colleague of mine and she replied with an e-mail about the impact that the study of zero had on mathematicians. A surprising number of them went insane in their quest to understand this numerical chameleon. Surely, though, the issue isn't the danger of enquiry, but, as my colleague

put it, "our intellectual limitation to understand the big ideas without going insane." Is this why, perhaps, so many of us skim the surface of our faith, and only dip meekly into the difficult questions that the Bible poses about responsibility to self and other, about accountability and courage, about acceptance and selflessness? Is the scope too big? Are we asked to grasp too much?

I've heard the Bible referred to as a comforting text, but the reality is that the stories it contains are deeply challenging. Not just the Old Testament narratives that speak of war, incest, violence and revenge, but also the New Testament tales that challenge our understanding of who and what is good and bad—that ask hard questions about our basic humanity. The tale of the Good Samaritan alone, so often offered as a bland parable to encourage us to care for others, is actually a searing indictment of hypocrisy and callousness. Christ deliberately references a priest and a Levite walking past their countryman on the road to Jericho, and describes a Samaritan, a traditional enemy of the wounded man, as the only one to take action. To its original audience, this would have been a shocking detail.

Time and again the stories in the Bible call on us to be courageous and accepting of difference. The stories invite deep reading and self-review. They refuse to allow us to take the easy path, and demonstrate countless moments in which truth is met with denial and violence, as we see through Paul's accusers. The same is asked of us as educators. We need to be courageous; fearless in our pursuit of truth. We need to allow our students to have their doubts, to ask their questions and to explore their faith. And we should never be afraid when the answers escape us; we need to be comfortable to research, investigate and seek out answers—for our students and ourselves. In the end, learning doesn't drive us mad. It opens the door for us to confront a wider truth—a greater world. Then it's up to us whether we walk through into the light of understanding, or stay sheltered in the shadows.

Gerry Turcotte

Gerry Turcotte, PhD, has been president and vice-chancellor of St Mary's University, Calgary, for 10 years. He is the author and editor of 18 books, and a regular columnist for The Catholic Register. *His columns have been collected in two bestselling volumes—*Small Things: Essays on Faith and Hope *and* Big Things: Ordinary Thoughts for Extraordinary Times. *He is an award-winning teacher, writer and columnist. He was awarded the Governor General's Award for Canadian Studies in 2011 and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2013.*

Photo courtesy of Elaine Willette-Larsen

RMEC Conference 2021

"Dr. Raymond Moody and Dr. Michael Duggan joined with 81 teachers for one of the best attended conferences we have had. While most specialists' councils cancelled their conferences for the year. We had dozens more sign up for the conference, so we expect many of them will take advantage of the sessions when they get posted on our website later this year."

Dan McLaughlin,
RMEC Annual General Meeting 2020-21
President's Report

Book Review

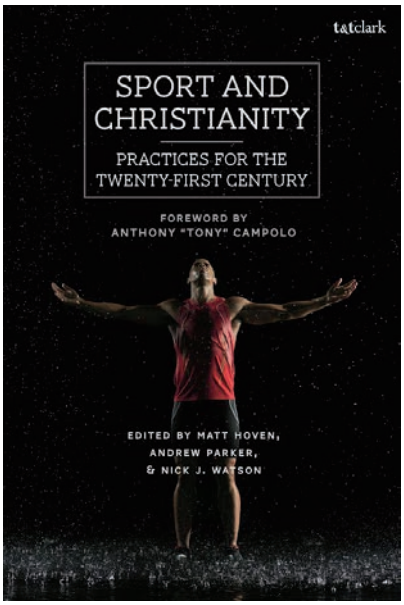
Mass at the Hockey Rink
Sport and Christianity: Practices for the Twenty-First Century

ed M Hoven, A Parker and N J Watson

T&T Clark, 2021

Reviewed by Chris Ferguson

I was born into a Roman Catholic family, so my first introduction to my faith was through the domestic church—better known to me as my family. Sunday mass and prayer at the dinner table were a regular part of my life. However, when I was 13, my family and I switched religions; we joined the religion known to many Canadians as hockey! Now, I playfully make this statement, because of course we stayed true to the Roman Catholic Church, but often we found ourselves trading out Sunday worship at church for Sunday night games at the rink. As a 13-year-old, I have to admit, the thought of being with my teammates and playing the game I loved surpassed my desire to sit in the pews of the church.



Some 25 years later, with kids of my own, I reflect back on what my Sabbath Day looked like and ask whether our family best used our time. Enter *Sport and Christianity: Practices for the Twenty-First Century.* Edited by Matt Hoven, Andrew Parker and Nick J Watson, this book is composed of the writings of thirteen amazing academics. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book as insight into my own sport and faith journey came to life. The guilt of trading in rosaries and Mass for hockey sticks and games lessened. Maybe I was living with Christ the whole time? As Fr Ron Rolheiser said, "Every seventh day we should taste a bit of play, unpressured time, worship, and heaven."[1] This book eloquently breaks down how sports can actually be a part of that taste.

The book is in sections: practices for the mind, practices for the mind and soul, and practices for the moral life. In the first section you are taken on an easily readable academic journey into the world of great theologians such as G K Chesterton, and a very intriguing chapter on flow theory. I strongly encourage coaches to read this chapter and connect it to the idea of athletes

"getting in the zone." In the second section of the book, you learn how sport as part of culture has evolved. Contributor and coeditor of this book Matt Hoven does a wonderful job of explaining how a lived experience with sports can bring about theistic, embodied and ethical spiritual practices. The Church can change the world and, by extension, sports can too! The final section of the book contains some of the most practical advice for athletes and coaches. Sport and Christianity come alive in servant leadership, put into perspective through envy and comparison and the revelation that love for sport is only true when our hearts are directed toward God first.

For the parent that needs to find balance between busy calendars when sports seem to bump Sunday Mass, for coaches who want to help their athletes grow in all dimensions of their lives and, finally, for athletes that need a connection between their love of sport and love of God, this book is a must read. I say this with confidence as a dad, a high school coach and a former athlete who can now reflect back on his time at the cathedral of the hockey rink and see how his relationship with God was alive the whole time.

Note

1. https://ronrolheiser.com/remember-to-keep-holy-the-sabbath-day-the-third-commandment/#.YSPstI5KiM8

Chris Ferguson is a teacher/chaplain at Archbishop MacDonald High School, Edmonton, Alberta. He also teaches high school physics, but whether it is in the religion or the physics classroom he is at home—both environments bring him closer to God.

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The RMEC newsjournal *Fully Alive* is published to

- promote professional development of educators in the areas of religious and moral education and
- provide a forum for contributors to share ideas related to religious and moral education.

Submissions are requested that will provide material for personal reflection, theoretical consideration and practical application. Where appropriate, graphics and photographs are welcome.

The following areas will be addressed in the newsjournal:

- Classroom and school projects
- Upcoming events
- Book reviews
- Reflections
- Feature articles and interviews
- Humour in religion
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Manuscripts should be submitted electronically, in Microsoft Word format. The manuscript should include a title page that states the author's name, professional position, address and phone number(s). Submissions should be typed and double-spaced and may be any length to a maximum of 5,000 words. References must appear in full in a list at the end of the article.

E-mail contributions or enquiries to the editor, Elaine Willette-Larsen, at amberzeroone@gmail.com.

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