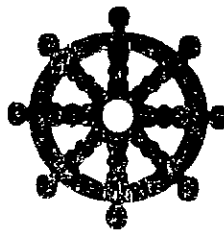




*The Teaching
of
World Faiths*

NATIONAL BOARD OF RELIGIOUS INSPECTORS & ADVISERS

1998



Two years ago at their AGM, members of NBRIA requested that a working party be set up to consider the teaching of world faiths in Catholic schools. Four valiant members agreed to undertake the task.

Since 1996, the working party has met frequently and has consulted NBRIA colleagues at regular intervals. The final text takes account of the various comments and suggestions offered.

I am sure that I speak for the whole Board when I offer David, Jenny, Mavis and Vicky sincere and warm thanks for remaining so patiently with the task. It is good to be able to share expertise with colleagues. "Teaching of World Faiths" should prove a most useful resource when working with teachers in schools. Rooted as it is in Church documents including the Catechism, it challenges us to consider how we enable teachers to make life-giving connections between the "Broad Areas of Attainment in Religious Education, "Religious Education - Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools" and the actual provision made for RE in our Schools.

Maura McMEnamin, SND
Chair of the National Board of Inspectors and Advisers

April 1998

Members of the Working Party

Mavis Langmead R.E. Adviser East Anglia Diocese
Jenny Pate R.E. Adviser Lancaster Diocese
David Wells Adult Education Nottingham Diocese
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The working party met a number of times from 1996 to
1997

(This document is primarily intended for the use of members of
N.B.R.I.A.

It was produced in response to a request from the Board)

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INTRODUCTION:

□ The Catholic Church and Other Faiths

Vatican II was a major step forward in openness of attitude and relationships to believers of other faiths¹. Catholics are called to be committed to respecting other faiths as areas in which God is at work. Further to this, to appreciate and learn from these religions wherever possible.

The Catholic church has encouraged and actively participated in a number of developments in the field of interfaith dialogue. There has been an acknowledgement of shared goals such as the need to work together for peace and to cherish the gift of creation.

Engagement with other faiths is an integral part of the Catholic faith, and the society in which we live, therefore we need an effective approach to teaching about other faiths in our Catholic schools.

Following the Dogmatic Constitution on The Church (*Lumen*

¹ see Catholic Schools & Other Faiths page 10

Gentium, 1964) the document on 'The Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions', (Nostrae Aetate, 25/10/65), was written. This document affirms that all peoples of the earth with their various religions form one community.

The Church respects the spiritual, moral and cultural values of Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. The first principle of Nostrae Aetate was:

*'all peoples comprise a single community'*²

Nostrae Aetate comes to a positive appreciation of the strengths of these other faiths.

'The Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions. She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and of life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all. It therefore calls upon all its sons and daughters with prudence and charity, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions and witness of the Christian faith and way of life, to acknowledge, preserve and promote those spiritual and moral good things as well

² Nostrae Aetate, paragraph 1

*as the values in their society and culture*³

Following *Nostrae Aetate* in December 1965 was the document *The Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, which provided some theological underpinning for the former. In part 1 chapter 1 it speaks of the dignity of the human person, in chapter 2 paragraph 29 it clearly condemns all forms of social and cultural discrimination and affirms the basic personal rights of everyone regardless of sex, race, colour, social conditions, language or religion. In the conclusion (paragraph 92) where the document urges dialogue between all people it offers the following advice:

'let there be unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is doubtful and charity in everything' ⁴

These developments which were begun by the Second Vatican Council were continued by successive popes and, most recently, have been incorporated into the *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (C.C.C.) (1994)*.

In 1975 Pope Paul VI in *On Evangelisation of the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi)*, spoke of the relationships of the proclamation of the Gospel to non Christian religions . He made it

³ ibid 5

⁴ Flannery, page 513

clear that the Church esteems and respects these religions

'because they are the living expressions of the souls of vast groups of people.' ⁵

Pope John Paul II in addressing the Secretariat for Unbelievers in 1984 and speaking of the relationship of the Church to peoples of other faiths made the following clear,

'No local Church is exempt from this duty (of dialogue), which is made urgent by continuous changes. Because of migrations, travels, social communications and personal choices, believers of different religions and cults easily meet each other and often live together. Therefore, an apostolate which promotes respect, acceptance and witness is necessary so that spiritual values inspire our societies, which are tempted to selfishness, atheism and materialism.'

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994)* reinforces this view and reminds us that:

'The Church's bond with non-Christian religions is in the first place the common origin and end of the human race' (842)

⁵ paragraph 53

In response to the question 'who belongs to the Catholic Church?'⁶ the Catechism offers Catholics a deeper understanding,

'all are called to this catholic unity of the People of God.....' (836)

The Church affirms the intrinsic religious value of other faiths and insists on the necessity and worth whileness of dialogue with them.

This dialogue is in fact one of the commitments that Pope John Paul II speaks about in his apostolic letter for the Millennium, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, (1996), paras 52, 53. Dialogue is not simply speaking to another but as the document 'Catholic Schools & Other Faiths' states

'The "dialogue of life" (entails) learning from one another, co-operation and common awareness'(page 11)

Other religions are seen as having something to teach Catholics about themselves, God and life. (ibid page 14)

⁶ C.C.C. paragraph 835

□ Some core teaching points

our church

Knowledge and understanding of Church's mission to proclaim God's love in Christ⁷ will inform and inspire our dialogue with other faith communities.

our selves

All people share a common humanity origin and destiny. God is at work in the whole world, so it is necessary to be open to the way of God in all faiths and be aware of our shared concern and openness towards an absolute, or transcendent reality.⁸

our faith

A study of other faiths should mean that one's own is enriched and has even greater relevance. It is necessary for pupils to evaluate their study from some norm or theological stance, which would be Catholic theology.

Whilst humbly acknowledging the shortcomings of Christians at

⁷ of Redemptoris Missio 18

⁸ Nostrae Aetate 1

different stages of history and even in our own days⁹ we rejoice and celebrate our faith in Jesus Christ who came to bring salvation to all people.

our society

It is important to educate young people to respect and honour the rights of others to practice their religion according to their own conscience and beliefs. The Catholic Catechism of Church (1994) in speaking of religious liberty explains that it is:

'a natural right of the human person to civil liberty, i.e. immunity within just limits, from external constraint in religious matters by political authorities. This natural right ought to be acknowledged in the juridical order of society in such a way that it constitutes a civil right' (2108)

This respect for the dignity and freedom of others, omit prejudice and stereotyping. The R.E. Curriculum Directory speaks of the context in we live and reminds us that:

'Families too, present the diversity of multicultural and multifaith society as do teachers' (page 9)

⁹ Pope John Paul in Tertio Millennium Adveniete para 35 . 36

our education

It is important that pupils learn to appreciate the ways in which the human spirit searches out its source and destiny and of the ways of the action of God in the world. Bishop Vincent Nichols (1995) suggests :

'An appreciation of other faiths, and an engagement with them is therefore, part of the Catholic faith. ... It should be a constitutive part of it. (Catholic syllabus).'

our programmes of study

At all key stages and according to the age and capacity of pupils, it will be necessary to use a systematic scheme of work which examines some of the key concepts. Teaching of other faiths should focus on the use of the key teachings of one faith at a time. It starts from the religion's own understanding of itself and an understanding of what it is to be a member of a particular faith community. This approach will offer the opportunity to appreciate and affirm the distinctiveness of each faith.¹⁰

¹⁰ see S.C.A.A. Model Syllabus pages 4 and 5

Some Key Texts

- Flannery. (ed.) (1975) *The Documents of Vatican II* Costello
- Barnes M. (1993)
On not including everything: Christ the Spirit and the other
in *The Way* Supplement Autumn 1993. The Way pub
- Bishops' Conference (1996)
Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools
C.E.S.
- Bishops' Conference (1997)
Catholic Schools & Other Faiths C.E.S.
- (1994) *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Chapman
- Cooling T & M (1993) *Teaching Religious Concepts*
in *R.E. Today* Autumn 1993 C.E.M.
- Congregation for Catholic Education (1988)
The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School C.T.S.
- Grey M. & Zipfel R. (1991)
From Barriers to Community Harper Collins
- John Paul II (1990) *Redemptoris Missio* C.T.S.
- John Paul II (1994) *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* in Briefing 24/11/94
- Nichols V. (1995)
The Catholic Church's Mission in a Multifaith Society
paper given at the Catholic Education conference 10/4/95
- Paul VI (1975) *Evangelii Nuntiandi* C.T.S.
- SCAA (1994) *Model Syllabuses for Religious Education Model 2*
S.C.A.A.

Key Stage One

At the end of Key Stage 1 each pupil (7 year olds) should:

at best have experienced **OR** **at least have experienced**

playing with	hearing about
talking and listening to	seeing on film
eating with	thinking about
praying with	talking about
a child of another faith	a child of another faith

and considered

some aspect of their faith life which is significant for the other

- some way in which life is the same;
- some way in which life is different;
- the why and how they pray;

For children at Key Stage 1 this planned and prepared encounter (which may be either a new relationship or development of existing relationships) should be limited to one other faith. Priority might be given to meeting with Jewish and Muslim children.

Where direct encounter is impossible pupils should be given opportunities to communicate with children of another faith through other means such as exchanging photographs, postcards, letters and videos.

If such contact is impossible pupils should at least be given the opportunity to learn about children of another faith using commercial resources.

Key Stage Two

At the end of Key Stage 2 each pupil (11 year olds) should:

At best have experienced -

meeting an adult member
visiting a place of worship
sharing important festivals with children
seeing a Sacred Book used by a member

of another faith community

or

at least have experienced

hearing
seeing a film
thinking
talking

about another faith community

and have considered

- that religion plays an important part in the lives of individuals, families and communities;
- the importance of showing sensitivity and respect for the feelings of people who hold religious beliefs different from our own;
- the stories celebrated at the festival;
- questions about the meaning and mystery of life;

have begun

- to acquire appropriate vocabulary for worship, beliefs and festivals;
- to appreciate the part played by symbolism in religions.

Key Stage Three

At the end of Key Stage 3 each pupil (14 year olds) should:

**At best have begun to reflect on and interpret
through encounter with members of other faith communities**



at least have a knowledge of

our common quest for God / spiritual search

the variety and similarity of worship:

faith traditions

lifestyles

values

names/ images of God

some diverse acts of worship within a faith community

customs and practices

some codes and creeds

the way in which faith affects life style

the way in which faith influences values

and have considered

- 'whether the teachings of religions might clarify the meaning of significant experiences in their (pupils) lives:
- what might be learnt from the lives of inspirational people.' (S.C.A.A. Model Syllabus 1)

Key Stage Four

At the end of Key Stage 4 each pupil (16 year olds) should: be able to explore the fundamental issues in the company of a member of another faith community such as Judaism

so that at best they will have an appreciation of the relationship between Christian and Jewish tradition

OR

at least have a knowledge of some Jewish

customs

culture

laws

traditions

belief

customs

culture

laws

traditions

belief

so that at best have an ability to apply Christian teaching to situations of religious

conflict

discrimination

fundamentalism

ignorance

indifference

at least have a knowledge of Christian teaching in relation to religious

conflict

discrimination

fundamentalism

ignorance

indifference

intolerance
prejudice
superstition

intolerance
prejudice
superstition

so that at best are able to exercise, through meeting people of other faiths ;

so that at least are able to recognise the need for people of different faiths to exercise

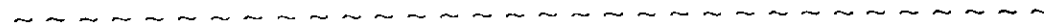
appreciation
collaboration
concern
dialogue
respect

appreciation
collaboration
concern
dialogue
respect

and considered

how they (the pupils) respond individually and collectively, to all that has been learned through the four key stages. Particular emphasis should be given to informing and maturing the pupils' values and attitudes.

What are the implications of living in a largely secular and multifaith culture. Pupils should be able to live and work effectively with people of different faiths and none.



At the close of this key stage, it is now what takes place out of school which will be the measure of the effectiveness of what has taken place in it.