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2008

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Shane D. Lavery
University of Notre Dame Australia, shane.lavery@nd.edu.au

Chris Hackett
University of Notre Dame Australia, chris.hackett@nd.edu.au

THE UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME
AUSTRALIA

*Dr Shane Lavery (cfc) and Dr Chris Hackett**

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Abstract
This article sets out a rationale for implementing Christian service-learning in Catholic schools. The article initially explores Jesus' Gospel call to serve. A brief summary of Catholic social doctrine is then presented and the concept of service-learning is discussed. Four categories of community outreach by Catholic schools are outlined, these being community service, Christian service, service-learning within a Christian context, and faith-focused Christian service-learning. Finally, various implications for promoting Christian service-learning in Catholic schools are considered in the light of the principles of charity and service as outlined in the encyclical letter *Deus Caritas Est*.

A commitment to service is an indispensable feature of a life lived according to the Gospel. In the Catholic tradition it is not possible to live out a complete life of faith in the absence of such a commitment (Benedict XVI, 2005, para. 20). The Catholic Church also has a rich tradition of social justice teaching. The last one hundred and sixteen years have seen a sustained response by the Church on issues of social inequity and injustice (McKenna, 2002). This article seeks to explore the role of Catholic education in promoting the Church's understanding of charity and justice. In particular, the concept of Christian service-learning is explored as a practical way of assisting in the formation of the conscience of students, and providing them with genuine experiences of service in the spirit of the Gospel.

Jesus' Call to Serve
The Gospels are replete with examples of Jesus' concern for the poor, the sick, and the people kept on the margins of civil and religious life. At the beginning of his public life Jesus proclaimed in the synagogue of Nazareth:

> The spirit of the Lord has been given to me,
> for he has anointed me.
> He has sent me to bring good news to the poor,
> to proclaim liberty to captives
> and to the blind new sight,
> to set the downtrodden free,
> to proclaim the Lord's year of favour (Lk 4:18-19).

These were not empty words. Jesus healed the sick, cast out devils, ate with "tax collectors and sinners" (Mk 2:15-17), and involved women in his ministry. He drew his disciples from the weak, the poor and oppressed of the day, which caused scandal and notoriety among the powerful religious leaders (Brown, 2005). The beatitudes in Luke's Gospel (Lk 6:20-22) are all addressed to those who are poor, hungry, weeping, or hated and condemned on his account. The love of neighbour concept, which Jesus proposes, is that shown by the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37). The indifference, which Jesus condemns, is that of the rich man (Lk 17: 19-31) who lets Lazarus die of hunger at his gate (Baker, 1999, p. 12). Through his words and actions Jesus thus made it abundantly clear that he stood by those on the margins of society. By his compassion for the sick, the possessed, the outcasts and public sinners, Jesus was telling such people that they were especially dear to a loving God (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, 1992).

Catholic Social Doctrine
"Continuity and constant renewal" (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, 1992, p. 13) are distinguishing features of the history of Catholic social doctrine. This doctrine, inspired by the Gospel, has developed in response to events and experiences which change the contexts of people's lives. Catholic social doctrine has taken a variety of forms, principally encyclicals, which have presented the Church's position on various matters of concern. For example, *Rerum Novarum* (1891) addressed issues of family wage and workers' rights. *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) was written in response to a worldwide economic crisis that saw startling levels of unemployment at the beginning of the Great Depression. *Mater et Magistra* (1961) highlighted the need for global justice between rich and poor nations. *Pacem in Terris* (1963) dealt with human rights and social responsibilities. *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) challenged the Church to

scrutinise external signs of the time. *Popolorum Progressio* (1967) warned against the widening gap between poor and rich nations. *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971) encouraged lay Catholics to take political action to combat injustice. *Justitia in Mundo* (1971) argued that justice is a critical dimension of the preaching of the gospel. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) stated that the salvation promised by Jesus offers liberation from oppression. *Laborem Exercens* (1981) endorsed work as the key to human dignity. *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* (1987) focused on the negative impacts of the growth of international trade. *Centesimus Annus* (1991) decried the consumeristic greed in the new knowledge economy (Massaro, 2000, pp. 73-79). The most recent encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est* (Benedict XVI, 2005), exhorted service and charitable works motivated by love of God and neighbour. This last encyclical forms the basis of the rationale for a distinctively Christian form of service-learning.

Service-Learning

Definitions of service-learning vary among those who employ it. One definition, which reflects the most commonly enunciated principles of service-learning, comes from the Centre for Service and Learning (n.d.):

> Service-learning is a teaching method, which combines community service with academic instruction as it focuses on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility. Service-learning programs involve students in organised community service that addresses local needs, while developing their academic skills, sense of civic responsibility, and commitment to the community (p. 1).

Students of all ages and most ability levels can participate successfully in service-learning activities (Kaye, 2004). As a method of teaching and learning, service-learning aims to enrich the lives of students by engaging them in meaningful hands-on service to address real-life needs in the community, while also gaining valuable knowledge and skills that connect with classroom studies (Schoenfeld, 2006, p. 1). Implicit in the practice of service-learning is that the service and learning goals are of equal importance (Jacoby, 1996, p. 4).

Pivotal to the implementation of service-learning are four interdependent stages: preparation, action, reflection and demonstration. Preparation involves identifying a need, investigating and analysing the need, and making a plan for action. Action is the direct result of preparation. Reflection enables students to consider how the experience, knowledge and skills they are acquiring relate to their own lives and their communities. Demonstration requires students to exhibit their expertise through public exhibitions – displays, presentations, letters to the editor, class lessons – that draw on the preparation, action and reflection stages of their experiences (Kaye, 2004, pp. 10-11).

Increasingly, Catholic secondary schools and universities have drawn on service-learning methodologies as a way of educating students. For example, Catholic secondary schools in Western Australia have developed comprehensive service programs that range from Year 8 through to Year 11 or Year 12 (Lavery, 2007b). The University of Notre Dame Australia offers a designated Christian service-learning unit as part of the Bachelor of Education

(Secondary) Course within the School of Education (Lavery, 2007). At the Mount St Mary Campus of the Australian Catholic University in Sydney, students studying the Bachelor of Education (Primary) and Bachelor of Teaching/Bachelor of Arts (Secondary) Courses undertake the Community Outreach Social Analysis and Action Program (Groundwater-Smith, Ewing & Le Cornu, 2007, p. 54). Given this rising popularity of these programs, what, if any, are the distinctive features of service-learning in Catholic schools?

Community Outreach by Catholic Schools

Pope Benedict XVI's first encyclical provides some clues about the nature of community outreach by Catholic schools. Through serving others, students have the opportunity to learn about God's love and actions, in the world and for them personally (Benedict XVI, 2005, para. 18). Service to others is a fundamental responsibility of each Christian person and agency. As such, it "needs to be organised if it is to be an ordered service to the community" (Benedict XVI, 2005, para. 20). As a part of the school's evangelisation plan, community outreach or "exercising the ministry of charity" has importance alongside "proclaiming the word of God [and] celebrating the sacraments" (Benedict XVI, 2005, para. 25). Therefore, a service program needs to be a core part of the curriculum of every Catholic school.

Community outreach by Catholic schools can be considered within four broad categories: community service, Christian service, service-learning within a Christian context, and faith-focused Christian service-learning. All four categories are valuable and authentic means of social outreach, in which Catholic schools legitimately engage. While these forms of community outreach have certain common traits, each is distinct because of their intent and likely outcomes. The similarities and differences are critical, given the increasing number of Catholic schools that are developing Christian service-learning programs for students. Table One provides an outline of the compatibility between the types of service that can be conducted in a Catholic school and the evangelisation process. The listing of service events is presented for illustration purposes and schools can choose their own events and resource them accordingly (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2005).

Table 1: Community Involvement in Catholic Schools

Service Type	Service Events	Evangelisation Process[3]
Community service[1]	Charity appeals, Missions, volunteerism	New Evangelisation
Christian service[2]	Altar serving, Eucharistic ministers, Liturgical choir	Catechesis
Service-learning within a Christian context[1]	Outreach projects, Immersion activities, Street retreats	New Evangelisation
Faith-focused Christian service-learning[2]	'Young Vinnies', Young Christian Students, Remar, Edmund Rice Camps for Kids	Catechesis

Note:
1. Involvement is expected from all students.
2. Involvement is invitational to students.
3. The focus is on the majority of students who may experience an "essential moment" in their evangelisation or faith development (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 49)

Community service

The value of community service towards active citizenship has become enshrined in legislation in Western Australia (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 2007, p. 42). From 2009, senior secondary students in all WA schools will be expected to complete a minimum of 20 hours of community service and, in Catholic schools, many students currently complete more than 20 hours that includes reflection of their experiences (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2005). Traditionally, Catholic schools have allowed their students to contribute to the Missions, Project Compassion or other charitable appeals (Curtis, 2004). The "fruitful link between evangelisation and works of charity" (Benedict XVI, 2005, para. 30) is readily accepted within Catholic schools. Some students are given particular recognition for their contributions to the (school) community through Christian Leadership awards. The emphasis on community service is the experience itself; learning from such an experience may be significant but informal, subject to the vagaries of the 'hidden curriculum'. For many young people in Catholic schools, community service allows students to exercise their community mindedness and to respond first hand to human needs. As a form of New Evangelisation (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 58c), the experience may reawaken within them a sense of the "Golden Rule" (Mt 7:12) and a respect for the inherent dignity of all. At the very least, the experience will allow students to fulfil graduation requirements sanctioned by the State.

Christian service

Some students in Catholic schools, because of their Catholic family and parish backgrounds, what

Rymarz and Graham (2006) refer to as "core Catholic youth", offer particular types of service to their school communities. Such service may be deemed as catechesis because it allows the students to place their faith commitment into action for the school faith community. Examples of this type of Christian service are altar serving or acting as Special Ministers of the Eucharist within school Masses. The encouragement and support offered by the school for Christian service is important because these students need to know that their faith commitment is valued and valuable to the Catholic school community. As with community service, the emphasis in Christian service is on the actual experience rather than on any formal learning.

Service-learning within a Christian context

As the name suggests, "Service-learning within a Christian context" is a teaching and learning process that uses service as its *modus operandi*, and frames the teaching and learning in the spirit of Jesus' call to serve others. Fundamental to this process is that students are prepared for their service-learning, they are mentored while completing the service, and have opportunities to reflect on their service experience, usually through journal writing and presentations (Lavery & Richards, 2006). The service work is normally categorised into areas of welfare, empowerment and advocacy (Levision, 1994), and there is an expectation that students will participate in the program. For senior secondary students in Catholic schools and students in Catholic universities, this service work often involves interacting with people on the margins of the community.

The learning outcomes of programs that utilise service-learning within a Christian context, and those of service-learning programs *per se*, are often quite similar. Possible outcomes are that students will apply academic, social and personal skills to improve the community. They will make decisions that have real, as opposed to hypothetical, results. Students grow as individuals, gain respect for those they work with in the community, and increase their civic responsibility. They experience success, while gaining a deeper understanding of themselves, their community and society. Students develop as leaders who exercise initiative, solve problems, work as a team, and demonstrate their abilities by helping others (Kaye, 2004, p. 6). What is core for Catholic schools is that, firstly, Catholic social doctrine informs learning outcomes, and secondly, the outcomes are grounded in the Christian values of charity, justice

and service. Finally, a result of the reflective process may be a renewed awareness or insight for recognising the Christ in others.

Faith-focused Christian service-learning

Faith-focused Christian service-learning is directed towards students wishing to place their faith into community action. The service-learning aligns itself with catechesis and requires an "apprenticeship process of formation" (Holohan, 1999, p.23). Suitable adult mentors need to support the students through the service program. As a form of catechesis, the service needs to be planned, discussed, reflected upon and importantly, to be experiential (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 35). The voluntary nature of this service-learning provides not only for students to develop competence in serving but also for service leadership. In faith-focused Christian service-learning, students consider how they respond to Christ's call to serve (Luke 4:18-19) as part of the ongoing reflective process. The process allows "faith and conversion [to] arise from the 'heart', that is, they arise from the depth of the human person..." (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 55). Students participate in regular prayer meetings as a group between their service experiences, leading perhaps to a community prayer event at the end of the service program. There are a number of Christian youth groups which involve themselves in service to others and provide a method of prayer reflection for students to share and engage with their faith commitment.

Promoting "Christian" Service-Learning

The focus of Christian service-learning is to provide experiences that complement and enhance the understanding of the Christian message taught in the Catholic school curriculum (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 157b). There are three central elements of Christian service learning for Catholic education. Firstly, the concept of Christian signifies that the Gospel informs the service-learning. Students interact and serve others with compassion as Jesus commanded: "For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me" (Mt 25:35-36). Secondly, the term "service" implies that students are actively engaged in outreach to the community. Thirdly, learning is drawn from lessons of experience in performing the service work through a practice of guided reflection for the students (Lavery, 2007). Such guided reflection will also include

opportunities for prayer (Benedict XVI, 2005, para. 36). Christian service-learning, therefore, provides students with the opportunity "to develop and learn through thoughtfully organised service that: (a) is based on the Gospel imperative; (b) meets the real needs of the community: and (c) includes structured time for students to reflect on the service experience" (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2006, p. 2).

The authors believe there are three important questions for Catholic schools to consider in evaluating their service programs. Does the service program constitute a form of service-learning linked with the Christian understanding of the theological virtue of charity? Does the methodology of service-learning within the schools complement the Christian spirituality of this "service of charity" (Benedict XVI, 2005, para. 19)? How can Christian service-learning contribute to the systematic catechesis of young adult believers in Catholic schools? The next section outlines some of the contexts schools may wish to explore in addressing these questions.

School contexts

Service-learning programs within a Catholic school assist the formation of students in a number of ways. The programs contribute to the development of their conscience, sense of spiritual awareness, resilience in the face of challenges and a motivation to promote justice (Benedict XVI, 2005, para. 28). As an educational activity, the programs are designed to help students learn how to care for others. The students should become "professionally competent: they should be properly trained in what to do and how to do it, and committed to continuing care" (Benedict XVI, 2005, para. 31). Such competence may be achieved by the academic outcomes of the service-learning program (Billig, 2000).

A range of service programs need to be offered within a school's evangelisation plan. Students today have diverse spiritual and faith backgrounds. Catholic schools have a responsibility to cater for non-believers, believers, and searchers and doubters (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 75). Service programs should provide diverse experiences because:

> The process of evangelisation....is structured in stages of 'essential moments'...... These moments....are not unique: they may be repeated, if necessary, as they give evangelical nourishment in proportion to the spiritual

growth of each person.... (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 49).

Furthermore, as part of their service program, students need the opportunity to develop a "heartfelt concern....a heart which sees....where love is needed and acts accordingly" (Benedict XVI, 2005, para. 31). Such concern, it is hoped, will develop a spirituality of humility (Benedict XVI, 2005, para. 35):

> The one who serves does not consider himself superior to the one served.... Those who are in a position to help others will realize that in doing so they themselves receive help; being able to help others is no merit or achievement of their own.

As part of their reflection, students should have the opportunity to do a "signs of the times" analysis (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 32) – finding the goodness and the divine in their experiences – as part of their post-service reflection. The reflection goes beyond reciting a formal prayer to mark the beginning and end of the activity. For example, in 'Service Learning within a Christian context', students can reflect upon the good they experienced and are invited to consider whether a person could see Christ (Matthew 25) in the situation they experienced. Such an invitation may culminate in a community prayer event.

An appropriate spirituality assisted by prayer may help students to avoid certain pitfalls in their service formation (Benedict XVI, 2005, paras 35 and 36). These include:

1. That students are the only ones who can and should change the world;
2. That students are driven to believe they can resolve the problems they encounter; or,
3. That students become apathetic to the plight of others because they cannot change the situation.

Through prayer, students can draw upon Christ's strength of hope, for "time devoted to God in prayer....does not detract from effective and loving service to our neighbour but is in fact the inexhaustible source of that service" (Benedict XVI, 2005, para. 36). Furthermore, Benedict XVI (2005, para. 37) warns: "It is time to reaffirm the importance of prayer in the face of the activism and the growing secularism of many Christians engaged in charitable work."

Conclusion

It is not surprising, given the rich tradition of Catholic social justice teaching, that Catholic schools (and universities) have embraced Christian service-learning programs. These programs focus on the formation of young people as *Christian* men and women, and the leading of these young people towards discovering Christ through others (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 47). Christian service-learning involves genuine outreach to those in need, linked with prayerful reflection in the spirit of the Gospel. It also includes opportunities for demonstrating religious learning outcomes, and for liturgical or community prayer celebrations at the completion of the service. The goals of Christian service-learning include not only civic responsibility, but also the invitation to students for discipleship, to "be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others" (Benedict XVI, 2005, para. 31).

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*Shane Lavery is coordinator of postgraduate studies, and of the Christian service-learning program, in the School of Education at The University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle Campus.

*Chris Hackett is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at The University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle Campus and teaches Religious Education at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.