Drawing upa School's Policy onCELEBRATING EUCHARIST



Brisbane Catholic Education

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The Liturgical Commission

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PREFACE | | |

This booklet is a resource to assist a Catholic school in drawing up a policy for the celebration of eucharist which meets the faith reality of that particular school. This exercise, of course, cannot be done in isolation. Naturally the policy must accord with Catholic teaching on the eucharist and with the principles and patterns given in the liturgical books. The discussion process offered here will allow those involved with eucharist in the school to think through the issues and grapple with the problems. The resource does not make any presumptions about whether or not eucharist will be celebrated in the school and, if so, how often.

The booklet is designed for extended reflection over a couple of days or a series of meetings. It is highly recommended that the sections be taken in order and that a record be kept of the group's discoveries after each reflection/discussion.

It will be essential to involve all interested parties in the process. This booklet could be used by a school staff, a school board, or another group of interested people. Parents may be interested to take part. Priests with pastoral responsibility for the students and the priests who will celebrate the Masses must be involved in the process of drawing up a school's policy, preferably in the whole discussion, but at least to review the policy once the process is complete.

Drawing up a School's Policy on Celebrating Eucharist has been written by a task group reflecting on 'Eucharist in Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Brisbane'. The task group was set up at the request of the archbishop to co-ordinate discussion of theological, pastoral and educational aspects of eucharist in the context of Catholic primary and secondary schools in the archdiocese.

This booklet is one element among a variety of educational, consultative and publishing activities carried out by the task group over the years 1991-1996. A major aspect of these activities has been ongoing consultation with teachers, clergy, parents and others with an interest in the topic of eucharistic celebration in Catholic primary and secondary schools. After the publication of *A Planning Guide for Celebrating Major Events in Catholic Schools* in 1992 and some articles in *Liturgy News* during 1992-93, the task group opened a conversation with a sample of people involved with eucharist in Catholic schools. In 1994, a study was undertaken of the school and the eucharist in Catholic theology and Church documents, in an attempt to bring them into dialogue with the issues facing people in the school situation. This work led to a reflection paper, *Towards an Understanding of Eucharist in the Context of the Catholic School*, circulated in 1995. It elicited a wide range of responses. Insights gained from

these consultations and educational activities over the last five years are utilised in *Drawing up a School's Policy on Celebrating Eucharist*.

Reflection on eucharist in the context of today's Catholic school is an ongoing challenge. The task group hopes that this booklet will be of practical use in stimulating reflection on, and planning for, eucharist in your school.

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■ ONE ■ ■ ■ The Catholic School

The aim of this section is to assist you in understanding those realities in your school which may have an impact upon the celebration of eucharist.

PROBLEMATICAL REALITIES

The realities listed below are often seen as problematical in terms of their impact on the celebration of eucharist. Schools manifest these realities in differing degrees:

- The increasing number of noneucharistic and unchurched students, parents and staff.
- The increasing difficulty of obtaining suitable celebrants.
- The discomfort of some priests with particular aspects of school celebrations, for example,
- student talkativeness;
- seeming lack of devotion and decorum;
- non-practising students receiving communion;
- degrees of formality, informality;
- lack of prior or continuing contact with the celebrating group;
- other Christians receiving communion.
- The lack of real linkage in many cases between school and parish(es), and between school and the wider Catholic community.

- Students, parents and staff who are sometimes poorly instructed and socialised into an understanding and appreciation of eucharist.
- Unhelpful experiences of eucharist at school or local parish level.
- Lack of a clear theology of eucharist and how that relates to the practical situation in Catholic secondary schools.
- The possibility of sharing communion for students, parents and staff of other Christian denominations.
- The debate about whether attendance at eucharist in schools should be voluntary or compulsory.
- The important symbolic value of the eucharist in terms of perceptions of the Catholicity of a school.
- The importance of eucharist in the minds of those staff, parents and students who are very committed to parish and wider church in contrast to its seeming relative unimportance for other staff, parents and students.
- Attendance at eucharist without sufficient prior instruction.

POSITIVE REALITIES

On the other hand, there are other realities that work in favour of the worthwhile celebration of eucharist in the Catholic school. Once again schools manifest these realities in varying degrees:

- The positive effects of worthwhile experiences of eucharist in the school and parish setting.
- The ongoing and effective education of staff, students and parents about the significance of eucharist and its worthy celebration.
- Celebrations of eucharist that are solidly based on sound liturgical principles.

- The effective and creative collaboration and participation of clergy, staff, students and parents in the planning and celebration of eucharist in the Catholic school.
- Celebrations of eucharist that arise out of, and feed back into, the life and concerns of the school community.
- Celebrations of eucharist that are appropriately planned and led in relation to the nature of the group gathered for eucharist.
- Good experience of creative worship in class groups and with the whole school, using symbol and gesture, but which does not include eucharist.

- Which problematical realities are most significant in your school?
- Given your possibilities and resources, which *problematical* realities are you able to change?
- Which problematical realities are you unable to change? Why?
- Which positive realities are most significant in your school?
- What can be done to enhance the *positive* realities?

The Catholic Church Community

The aim of this section is to assist you to reflect on the reality of your Catholic school in relation to the broader community of the Catholic Church of parish and diocese.

The opinions expressed below suggest a wide range of possible relationships between Catholic schools and the broader community of the Church.

We draw our students from only one parish. Most students and parents have had some connection with the parish over the years. Many families worship in the parish on a regular basis. The parish is involved in the life of the school and the school is involved in the life of the parish in real, ongoing ways. I would think that the local parish means something to our children and parents. The parish has worked hard at involving people and has had some success."

In the local area which takes in four parishes. The parish priests take an interest in the school and are involved from time to time, taking it in turns to celebrate eucharist and to meet with the students from their parish. As a secondary school we do not really belong to any one parish. Many of the families in our school do not go to church on Sunday. When the priest visits the school he meets with those

whose home addresses are within the boundaries of his particular parish."

As an inner city school drawing on many suburban areas our links with parish and the broader church are tenuous. I guess the priest who acts as our part time chaplain represents the Church to most of the students. I would think that in so far as most of the students are concerned, the community of the school is their church. I think the majority of them give the local parish a miss."

The institutional aspects of the Catholic Church are a real turn off for most of our students. In this modern age dominated by technology and instant communication many of them see the Church as being antiquated and irrelevant. Mind you there are a fair number of students for whom the Church has hardly any reality at all. They pretty well never give it any serious consideration."

I'd say the Church and its life have some reality for our children. The sacramental programs in our three contributing parishes are fairly worthwhile and bring the family and the Church together. The parishes try, with varying success, to sustain interest and goodwill though it's not easy once children begin to move into the upper primary."

The children know the parish priest well as he visits each class on a reasonably regular basis. We let children and parents know what is happening in the parish. I think the children respect Father even though he is a bit conservative and set in his ways."

Then the bishop visited the school recently with mitre and crosier, it seemed quite foreign to some of the students. Bishops, dioceses and that whole ecclesiastical scene are just not part of their world. There is such a change from my schooldays when bishops and the institutional Church were a big deal."

I think we are in a process of redefining what the word 'Catholic' in Catholic school means. Only a minority of our students and staff are practising members of the Catholic Church even though a majority of them are baptised Catholics. We certainly try to give the students sound values and help them to be good human beings but its hard to see how that is very different from a good government school. Being

an active members of the Church community receives little, if any, attention. Perhaps 'Catholic' just means being a worthwhile human being."

As a teacher in a Catholic school, I see it as my job to instruct young people in the Catholic faith. As for getting them committed to the Catholic Church, that's up to their parents and parish. If they're not going to Church, blame the parents and the parish, not the school."

I became more convinced, as did key members of the school staff, that we needed to question our own assumptions about the role of our school within our parish. I came to the conviction that the parish and its school were being called to be 'missionary' in a new way. I realised that the parish school provided a special pastoral link between Church and families who felt far away. If the school could promote a sense of belonging to the parish then maybe it could gradually help lessen that gap. This opens for the parish school a new and exciting missionary role."

- Which elements of the statements above reflect the situation in your school with regard to its relationship with the wider Catholic Church community?
- Describe in words, or by means of a diagram, the relationship between your school and the wider Catholic community of parish(es) and diocese.
- What would you need to change to improve the school's relationship with parish(es) and diocese? How could this be done?
- What are the implications for the celebration of eucharist in your school?

The Theological F

The Theological Reality of the Eucharist

The aim of this section is to assist you in understanding some of the theological dimensions of the eucharist so that you may choose wisely about the appropriateness of its celebration.

The five dimensions presented below all deserve to be considered when making decisions about the eucharist. Where one or other dimension is not understood or acknowledged in your situation, some further discussion may be needed.

While the proclamation of the word and the thanksgiving of the eucharist together constitute one single act of worship, these points concern just the theology of the eucharist.



The eucharist is a memorial celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus and as such is "the summit and source" of the Church's life and mission.



1. Other Christians and Communion
The eucharist is the climax of Christian initiation and presumes that those who continue to celebrate it have been baptised (and confirmed).

The eucharist also presumes that those celebrating share the faith of the Church, and hence communion is not offered to those not in full communion with the Catholic Church.

At the same time, admission of fellow Christians to the eucharist can be permitted under certain conditions on certain occasions



2. Serious Sin and Communion

The eucharist presumes that those celebrating have not broken their communion with the Church by serious sin which has not yet been sacramentally forgiven.

At the same time, the eucharist has no other criteria of worthiness, and is itself a sacrament of forgiveness and is always celebrated by sinners.



3. Eucharist and Church: local and universal

Those gathering for eucharist become most deeply an assembly of the Catholic Church, manifesting their communion with the whole diocesan Church, its bishops and pastors, and the whole universal Church, and the bishop of Rome.

At the same time, the eucharist serves to express and deepen the unity in Christ of the group gathered, by their common participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

4. Eucharist in Parish and School
The most fundamental events in the life of the local Church are Sunday eucharists, presided over by the bishop or pastors of parishes, where all the variety of God's people are assembled.

Those gathering for eucharist in a school on a weekday are presumed to join the other members of the Church for eucharist on a Sunday in parishes or other diocesan communities.

> At the same time, a school celebration of the eucharist might more deeply nourish the faith of a participant at a particular time in his or her life.

5. Eucharist: Entering the Mystery
The group gathering enters into the
mystery of Christ's sacrifice, his death
and resurrection, by their participation
in its sacramental memorial.

Their participation in communion is the reception of the gift of communion in this sacrifice, communion with the Father in Jesus Christ through the communion of the Holy Spirit, communion with the other members of the Church, and communion in the Church's mission.

At the same time, good liturgy educates, while remaining an altogether different event to religious education and other school gatherings and activities.

- Which of the above theological dimensions are not understood or acknowledged in your situation?
- In what ways can you act on the situation in your school to bring these theological dimensions into play?
- What effects might these theological dimensions have on your decisions whether or not to celebrate eucharist in your school?
- What effects might these theological dimensions have on your decisions how, when and where to celebrate eucharist in your school?

FOUR M

Drawing up a Policy for Celebrating Eucharist in Your School

The aim of this section is to help you frame a statement of principles, policy and practice for the celebration of eucharist in your school. In discussing and developing such a statement you will need to take into account what has been set out in the three sections above regarding the Catholic school, the Catholic Church community, and the theological reality of the eucharist. Your responses to the questions in the *For Your Policy Planning* sections will assist you in drawing up a policy.

St. Adalbert Catholic School

The following is an example of a statement of principles, policy and practice for an imaginary school called St. Adalbert Catholic School.

• At St. Adalbert Catholic School, the following PRINCIPLES form the basis of our policy on the celebration of eucharist.

Celebrating eucharist is an important part of what makes a Catholic school.

Our school is committed to evangelisation and outreach, and seeks to draw people into the community of the Church.

No individual will be compelled to attend eucharist, but individuals will be encouraged to attend.

Comprehensive and ongoing education in eucharist is a priority.

The celebration of eucharist in the school will be linked to the liturgical life of the parish community.

Sensitivity will be shown to the different ways in which members of the school community associate themselves with the Church.

• At St. Adalbert Catholic School, the following POLICY will regulate our celebration of eucharist.

At St. Adalbert Catholic School, it is our policy to encourage students, staff and parents to attend eucharist on a voluntary basis. The eucharist will be celebrated monthly, before school, in the parish church and will be open to all students, staff and parents. This celebration will be planned by a class group.

There will be a whole-school eucharist on the patronal feast day of St. Adalbert which students, staff and parents are encouraged to attend. On other occasions - for example, opening the school year, graduation, Holy Week, etc. - there will be school worship incorporating Scripture and song, but not the eucharist.

Education in eucharist will be part of the religious education program at each grade level. There is to be a period of more intensive instruction prior to the wholeschool eucharist.

The school recognises that significant numbers of students, staff and parents are not regularly worshipping members of the Catholic Church. The school will try to avoid situations where they feel excluded from the life of the school by not receiving communion; at the same time, it seeks to orient them towards participation in the life of the parish, and to deepen their understanding and appreciation of eucharist through careful planning and ongoing education. Ecumenical sensitivity will be displayed in the case of the minority of students, staff and parents who are not baptised Catholics.

• The following PRACTICES in St. Adalbert Catholic School will help implement our policy on celebrating eucharist.

There is an agreement with the parish that the 8.10 a.m. eucharist in the parish church on the first Wednesday of each month is designated a school eucharist to be prepared by a rostered class in collaboration with the parish priest.

The class preparing the eucharist will invite parents, staff, parishioners and fellow students to attend, using the internal communication system of the school, word of mouth, and the school and parish newsletters for this purpose.

The teacher of the class preparing eucharist is to ensure that students in that class are well instructed several weeks prior to the celebration.

Students who are not Catholic are encouraged to come forward to receive a blessing at the time of communion.

During the school week, each class will use the children's lectionary to read and discuss one or more of the Scripture texts for the next Sunday's Mass.

- Principles. Review your work on the theological reality of the eucharist in section three. Now write down the principles upon which you will base your school policy for celebrating eucharist.
- Policy. Review your work in sections one and two on the reality of your Catholic school and its place in the Church. Now make a brief statement of the policy in your school with regard to the celebration of eucharist.
 (Elements to consider might include: voluntary/compulsory attendance; how often the eucharist might be celebrated; catering for those who are not Catholic or not normally involved in worship; when other forms of worship would be preferable; where the eucharist would be held; religious education for eucharist; etc.)
- *Practice*. Finally, discuss and list the practices which will enable you to implement this policy on the celebration of eucharist.

FIVE

Preparing for the Celebration of Eucharist

The aim of this section is to help you develop the practices you established in the previous section, exploring the best ways to prepare for the celebration of eucharist in your school. The section presents four general observations and four practical considerations.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Celebrating Diversity

In a class or school Mass, everyone should be included. But this does not presume that everyone is the same. We need to celebrate and value diversity. Some students will be active and committed Catholics, familiar with the Mass; some will have had only occasional contact with Sunday worship; some will be baptised in another Christian Church; some may be Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim; some might have no religion. So though some of them may not read the Scriptures or receive communion, we do not lament their exclusion - rather we rejoice in God's mysterious plan which maps out different paths for each of us.

• Celebrating as the Church

Children and adolescents need to pray together in a variety of creative ways. A class Mass can be very personal and closely linked to the needs of the group. Nevertheless, we do not begin here; we come to the Church's rite which has its own structure (Liturgy of Word/Liturgy of Eucharist), its own symbols (hearing the word, eating bread, drinking wine), its own gestures and patterns of behaviour (responding, singing, signing with the cross, exchanging peace). The Mass does not provide an all-purpose structure in which we are free to 'do our own thing'; the events and concerns of the students' lives come into

play as they join themselves to the Church and make their own the ancient prayers and rites used today in every corner of the world.

• Celebrating Jesus' Death & Resurrection
How often do we hear the phrase, The theme of
today's Mass is ...! If we are not careful, we
can turn the liturgy into another lesson with a
particular point we wish to teach to the class.
Instead, we listen to the readings to rejoice in
and celebrate God's wonderful saving actions
in our world. In the eucharist, we join in
Jesus' passage from death to life; God reaches
out to us and we respond by offering
ourselves with Christ. In this sense, the only
'theme' of every Mass is the mystery of Jesus'
death and resurrection.

Celebrating the Sacred

Celebrating the eucharist with young people may be friendly and personal but never casual, informal but never careless. The symbols of the liturgy and the holy way they are handled must open up for the group the sense of the sacred. Opening the book of God's word and hearing it proclaimed should provoke a sense of wonder. Breaking the bread, pouring out the wine, eating and drinking, these gestures should allow those who take part to glimpse the mystery of Christ who is present. Reverence is not manifest in regimentation but in awe.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Organising Ministry

Everyone participates in the celebration but not everyone performs a ministry; liturgy is corporate worship not a series of individual performances. Readers should be Christians who understand the text, believe what they read, and have the ability to proclaim it well. The servers and those who bring forward the gifts of bread and wine should be chosen from among those who will go to communion. Those with talent might lead the rest in singing. Others might help with preparing the space and decorating it. Ministries are not multiplied needlessly for the sake of involving more students.

Organising the Words

Go to the liturgical books. After checking any special feast or liturgical season, start with the gospel from the Lectionary for Masses with Children. Build out from there. Is there a first reading to go with the gospel? Select a psalm to sing between the readings. Then look for an opening song which will prepare the assembly to hear the word. Next have a look in the *Sacramentary* for an Opening Prayer (you might have to adapt it carefully for children's use). Choose a Eucharistic Prayer (possibly one of the three given for children). Work out what acclamations to sing during this Eucharistic Prayer. Choose a song of praise to sing after communion. All this is there already organised in the liturgical books. Yes, there are some texts to be written: the general intercessions and introductions. Yes, other stories or poems can be incorporated in a secondary role. But we don't begin with a blank sheet.

Organising the Space

Where will the eucharist be celebrated? A classroom or assembly hall can establish links between liturgy and life, but it will be hard to create a sense of the sacred. Outdoor settings can sometimes speak of God's beauty, but will often be uncomfortable and distracting.

The parish church may evoke the transcendent and the connection with the wider Church, but may offer a sombre, formal space. When the place is chosen, think about how to arrange the seats to facilitate the group's participation. If children sit on the floor, remember that the priest may tower over them. There should be room for movement: processions for the entry, for the lectionary, for the bread and wine, for communion. There should be a good place from which to read the word and where the lectionary may be placed. The altar table could allow those present to gather round it during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Then the space may be decorated: candles, a vase of flowers, a bowl of smoking incense, perhaps a banner or poster to add colour.

 Organising the Communion Rite Special care is needed to encourage and support those who may receive communion, to counsel those who are unsure, and to affirm and guide those who may not. Receiving communion presumes we are one with the Church's faith, life and mission. If the seating is in rows or pews, it may be best for all to move out together, some to receive the body and blood of the Lord, the others to fold their arms and receive the minister's blessing. If possible it would be preferable for the group to remain in their place singing while those to receive communion come forward from various parts of the assembly. The young people can be prepared for this; parents might need a few words of introduction from the priest. It should be rated a success if, as a result of this experience at Mass, a young person comes and says, "I want to receive communion too. What must I do? Will you help me?"

- Are there statements in this section you disagree with? Try to understand why you disagree. Discuss these points to try to resolve any differences.
- Who will be preparing the celebration of eucharist in your school? What needs to be done to help them master the material covered in this section.
- Do you wish to modify the practices you established in the previous section?

SIX II II III

Resources for Celebrating Eucharist

The aim of this section is to provide some additional resources which may be useful in the process of framing and implementing a policy on celebrating eucharist in a Catholic school.

Lectionary for Masses with Children Published in the USA in 1993, it is approved by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference for use in Australia. It uses the Contemporary English Version of Scripture. Various editions are available, the most beautiful in four large hard-bound volumes (Sundays year A, B and C and Weekdays), the simplest in a single volume. This is undoubtedly the best children's lectionary to use and the only one with official approval.

Directory for Masses with Children This useful document comes from the Congregation for Divine Worship in Rome (1973). It shows how the Mass may be adapted for the needs of children. Teachers who are preparing children for the celebration of eucharist will need to be familiar with this document. It is to be found in the front of the Sacramentary or in The Liturgy Documents: a parish resource (LTP, Chicago, 1991).

Liturgy News

The quarterly journal of The Liturgical Commission regularly contains articles on the liturgical seasons, children's liturgy, music, Australian symbols, etc. The September issue always includes a Liturgy Planning Calendar for the following year which would be most helpful in organising the school's liturgical programme. Specific articles on the eucharist in schools were published in June 1992, September 1992, June 1993, December 1993. It is available for an annual subscription of \$18 from Liturgy News, GPO Box 282, Brisbane 4001. Phone (07) 3224 3329. Fax (07) 3221 1705.

A Planning Guide for Celebrating Major Events in Catholic Schools
This document was produced in the Archdiocese of Brisbane in 1992. It was designed to help schools in deciding how best to celebrate major events such as graduation, opening the school year, presenting awards, farewells, etc. It helps the school decide if eucharist is appropriate, how to organise and structure such events (with or without the eucharist). It is available from The Liturgical Commission, GPO Box 282, Brisbane 4001 for \$5. Phone (07) 3224 3329. Fax (07) 3221 1705.

Blessed and Broken

Published in 1995, these are the Archdiocese of Brisbane's pastoral guidelines for providing access to holy communion for Christians of other Churches. The question of 'intercommunion' or 'eucharistic hospitality' must be handled sensitively when celebrating eucharist in schools. This document outlines the diocesan policy on this important issue. Copies are available from the Commission for Ecumenism, GPO Box 282, Brisbane 4001. Phone (07) 3224 3354. Fax (07) 3221 1705.

Towards an Understanding of Eucharist in the Context of the Catholic School
This reflection and discussion paper was used by the diocesan task group on eucharist in Catholic schools during

1995. It deals with the reality of the Catholic school and the theology of the eucharist. It tries to establish a dialogue between the practical and the theoretical. Copies are still available from Faith Education Services, Catholic Education Centre, GPO Box 1201, Brisbane 4001. Phone (07) 3840 0400. Fax (07) 3844 5101.

Resource Centre

The Brisbane Resource Centre, located at the Catholic Education Centre at Dutton Park, has a wide range of videos and other material available for hire. They are happy to discuss your need and advise on what may be suitable. Phone (07) 3840 0403. Fax (07) 3844 5101. Similar centres may be found in many other dioceses.

- Find what resources may be helpful in the school library or teachers' resource library. Discuss their use. Do they need to be augmented with other materials?
- How can use of the diocesan Resource Centre be facilitated?

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