Session 1: Catholic perspectives within the explicit curriculum: Situating the Conversation within a range of current implementation strategies used by Catholic schooling authorities in Queensland.

The environments which we call Catholic schools are places created by those who work there. The curriculum structures within these schools – that is, what students are to experience and learn – are created by people: they are the expressions of their deepest hopes and dreams for themselves, for the young people in these schools and their families, and for the world.

Curriculum at the macro-level, at the level of ACARA and the QSA and Catholic Education Offices, is expressed in frameworks and structures, in statements of content standards, achievement standards, and programming rules. This curriculum is transformed, however, once it crosses the threshold of the school, and it becomes something new at the local level of the school. It becomes an expression of the local community. Within each classroom, it is transformed yet again, to become an expression of each teacher. And this curriculum becomes a learning environment within which teaching and learning happen, and expressed through pedagogy, which is the practice of helping students learn. Which is why I believe it is something of a misnomer to speak of ‘the curriculum’ and of ‘curriculum delivery’, as if curriculum were something fixed and deliverable, like letters and packages in the mail. Curriculum is transformed anew at each level to become an expression of those who transform it. Teachers are nurtures and performers, and who they are, and what they believe, and love, becomes an inherent part of their pedagogical performance.

There are Catholic understandings of the nature of human flourishing which may expressed in the curriculum decision making at the system, school, and classroom level, in the pedagogical practice, and the learning of each person – teacher and student alike. First, the Christian journey is a life lived in openness to the deep experience, for all people, of God’s love “flooding our hearts” (Romans 5:5). First comes the experience of love. Second, openness to God’s love transforms people, transforms human culture, transforms social structures – the good of order – which transforms the concrete realities of people in their daily lives². So it was in the lives of Jesus’ first disciples. So it is in our lives today. Openness

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¹ For working definitions of catholic pedagogy and catholic curriculum see the attached paper: A conceptual framework for Catholic Educational System Leadership.

² This is Lonergan’s scale of values: vital values (concrete goods), social value (values of social justice, the structures in society which give rise to the flow of goods to each person), cultural value (the world mediated through meaning, which gives rise to social values, which orders the world), personal value (authenticity: being attentive, being intelligent, being reasonable, being responsible, being in love), religious value (being in love with God, the mystery at the ground of all being). The solution to the problem of evil is to restore the scale of values, and openness to God’s love is necessary. From religious value, as defined by Lonergan, the world is transformed through the transformed person, transforming culture, transforming social structures,
to God’s love is the root of human flourishing, and the heart of Catholic Social Teaching. Our faith arises from this experience of God’s love, and out of which we appropriate the truths and values of our Catholic tradition.

We do not preach a philosophy – we invite all to an openness to the experience of God’s love – the Joy of the Gospel, a relationship with the risen Jesus – yet there are philosophical implications which need to be worked out, anew, in this postmodern world, if we are to do curriculum work. Why? Because curriculum implies a philosophical position on the nature of knowledge (epistemology), on the nature of reality (metaphysics), on the nature of what is good (ethics). In the 2008 Queensland Catholic Schools and Curriculum document prepared by Kevin Treston we read that “If there is one place where a Catholic philosophy and theology of education should be evident, it would surely reside in the curriculum and in how learning and teaching are experienced” (Treston, 2008). Yet John Elias (1999), the acclaimed professor of philosophy from Fordham University, in his article *What ever happened to a Catholic Philosophy of Education?* remarks that in the late 1950s the distinctive Catholic philosophy of education suddenly and dramatically dropped from view.

There is no time to attend to any details now, but this explains why we have a Diocesan Learning Framework in Toowoomba based on the philosophy and theology of Fr. Bernard Lonergan, who re-worked the Catholic intellectual tradition for the post-modern world. Lonergan’s was a remarkable break with the neo-Thomist tradition which began with metaphysics. Lonergan begins where the postmodern turn begins: with the depth of human experience, with a cognitional theory, and moves to an epistemology, and only then to a metaphysics and ethics. You see, in Lonergan’s thinking in *Insight* and in *Method in Theology* we found a deep Catholic philosophy to ground us in our curriculum work. For Lonergan speaks of being attentive to the depth and breadth of our experiences; of responding to our unrestricted desire to know, and of being intelligent in our inquiry into what these experiences mean; being reasonable in our judgments of the accuracy of our insights and understanding; being responsible in our decisions and subsequent actions: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible. For Lonergan, this leads to conversions: to *intellectual conversion*, where we can know truth and goodness through human inquiry – a profound challenge to the postmodern position and to neoliberalism; to *moral conversion*, were we appropriate values over satisfactions and develop the habitual willingness to do the good; and to *religious conversion*, where we fall in love – where we fall in love, with God, the mystery at the ground of our being – where we come to love unconditionally and without restriction; where each human life flourishes; and

maximising the flow of vital values. At the heart of Catholic social teaching is the transformed person, transformed through relationship with God.

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3 For and explanation of the framework, see the attached article: *The Diocesan Learning Framework: Foundations for Catholic Education in a Changing World.*

4 “Religious conversion is being grasped by ultimate concern. It is other-worldly falling in love. It is total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, 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. It is revealed in retrospect as an under-tow of existential consciousness, as a fated acceptance of a vocation to holiness, as perhaps an increasing simplicity and passivity in prayer. It is interpreted differently in the context of different religious traditions. For Christians it is God’s love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.” Lonergan, B. (1973). *Method in Theology.*
where the world in which these people exercise their will flourishes. Where God’s Kingdom comes.

There is now no time to go into detail: about how these ideas permeate our pedagogical frameworks, our planning, teaching, assessing, and even reporting processes, our digital curriculum management systems. That’s another story for another time. But long after we had built our framework on Bernard Lonergan’s philosophy, in fact late last year, I came across the 1982 thesis by a then Father John Bathersby, sent as a priest from the Diocese of Toowoomba to Rome to study. It is entitled: The Foundations of Christian Spirituality in Father Bernard Lonergan. Discovering this thesis brought a smile to my face. Archbishop Bathersby, who comes from Stanthorpe in the south-east corner of our Toowoomba Diocese, desired to bring us Lonergan many years ago: be attentive; be intelligent; be reasonable; be responsible; be in love. Be in love. This is for us a Catholic perspective on the curriculum.

5 See: http://books.google.com.au/books?id=-s6Vzyi_ujgC&pg=PA93&lpg=PA93&dq=john+bathersby+lonergan&source=bl&ots=Ul0fdh4psh&sig=FwX5fN-zKtwAc7F8Ho6ZanehM&hl=en&sa=X&ei=6g2aU8m7GMfOlAXvpICwCA&ved=0CBwQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=john%20bathersby%20lonergan&f=false