

# **A RATIONALE TO UNDERPIN THE CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF VIBRANT AND RENEWED INTEGRATED CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES**

***“GRATITUDE FOR THE PAST  
ENTHUSIASM FOR THE PRESENT  
HOPE FOR THE FUTURE”***

## **INTRODUCTION**

*“Education is a collaborative task shared by home, school and parish and among these three there should be dynamic interaction, since they are chiefly responsible for the development of the whole person”*

*Evaluating the Distinctive nature of a Catholic School. Third Edition*

*“The vital partnership of home, school and parish provides the context for the life-long process of religious formation.”*

*Broad areas of Attainment in Religious Education*

When considering faith development in the Catholic community some people unnecessarily fall into the trap of either blame or despair, yet signs of growth and renewal are all around us.

In the Synod of European Bishops held in Rome in the autumn of 1999, John Paul 11 said:

*“Do not give way to discouragement, to ways of thinking and living which have no future, for we place our hope in the Word of God”*

The Bishops themselves go on to urge us:

*“ To proclaim the gospel of hope, to celebrate the gospel of hope and to serve the gospel of hope”*

The Irish Jesuit, Michael Paul Gallagher speaks of the need to

*“Recognise the smoke signals of hope that rise from what indeed may seem like a burntout desert”.*

As Catholics we speak of ‘the faith’ referring to the Christian faith within the Roman Tradition. Yet the term ‘faith’ needs to be understood more broadly, and in this sense it is not the prerogative of Christians or those who profess to be religious.

All humans try to find shape and meaning in their experiences of life. They need to make sense of birth and death, good and evil, hope and frustration. They try to understand and interpret the universe and their place in it. To this

extent all humans, so long as they go on living and seeking meaning and purpose in life can be considered to have faith.

- Some people have a **humanistic faith** and find meaning and significance in their experiences of life without making reference to any other reality beyond life.
- Other people have a **religious faith** that acknowledges the transcendent, something beyond human beings, as the source and end of the mystery of life.
- Christians, like Jews and Muslims profess a **faith-vision founded on divine revelation** rather than human speculation and express this faith within a community of believers.
- Our faith is expressed in statements of **belief and creeds**, lived out through **codes** of behaviour/conduct and **celebrated** through ritual, liturgy and symbol.

For Christians, faith is a response to the call of discipleship. It is a gift of God and at the same time a free human response to God. We cannot simply give faith to others, nor can we demand faith of them. Our task is to create the atmosphere, the conditions which will allow faith to develop in whatever setting. However, adherence or acceptance of faith is the fruit of grace and freedom and ultimately doesn't depend on anything we might do.

We need to recognise that every child, every adult, every school community, every parish and every family are at a different stage on their journey in faith.

Wherever you, and those whom you accompany are, on that journey of faith, we hope that this booklet will provide some practical strategies and ideas to enable you to create the conditions for faith to grow. It is important for us to be proactive, for faith development is at the heart of the Catholic community.

In October, 2003, colleagues from the North Eastern Dioceses gathered together at a workshop in Solberge Hall, Northallerton to produce this booklet. At the end of the two days we prayed with joy the words of Pope Paul VI in the document '*Evangelisation in the Modern World*'

**“Let us preserve the delightful and comforting joy of evangelisation, even when it is in tears that we sow. May it mean for us – as it did for John the Baptist, for Peter and Paul, for the other apostles and for a multitude of splendid evangelisers all through the Church’s history – an interior enthusiasm that nobody and nothing can quench.”**

With thanks to all colleagues who participated in the North Eastern Dioceses Conference - October 2003.