

The Use of Media in Religious Education

Guidelines for assisting Religious Education staff in developing a school based policy on the use of media in the Religious Education Classroom.

Introduction

These guidelines are developed to assist schools in developing their own policy on the use of media in Religious Education. A number of principles have been considered. The document aims to establish guidelines for the use of all media: television, radio, newspapers, magazines, discs, tape recordings, video and audio cassettes, Compact Disks, Digital Video Disks, information access and retrieval from websites, computer music files (MP3's) as well as the entire range of audio visual aids.

Most teachers of Religious Education are aware of the need to make lessons relevant to students and aim to bring the Gospel message into their daily life by the use of best current practices for media usage in their classes.

This understanding is reflected by Pope Paul VI: "The Church would feel herself guilty before God if she did not avail of those powerful instruments which human skill is constantly developing and perfecting..." (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*. para. 45)

John Paul II in the document *Ecclesia in Oceania* emphasised a similar understanding by calling for: "a greater awareness of the power of the media, which offer an excellent opportunity for the Church to evangelise, to build community and solidarity. They should be employed in a creative and responsible manner." (*Ecclesia in Oceania* para.14)

Pope Paul VI and John Paul II are keen to ensure that the materials used by Religious educators would be inculturated:

"Evangelisation loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life." (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*. para.63)

"...Christ must be presented in a way well adapted to the younger generation and the rapidly changing culture in which they live." (*Ecclesia in Oceania* para.14)

The General Directory of Catechesis echoes Pope Paul VI in identifying several steps for passing on the content of the faith to today's children (*General Directory Catechesis* para.203-214). It highlights the importance of making sure that the language used is accessible to those receiving catechesis.

The teacher of Religious Education today is challenged to design learning experiences that have the same systematic demands and rigours of other learning areas (*The Mandate* para. 62) and requires that teachers be aware of the impact of the use of various media. They need to be mindful of the integrity of the content presented to students in so far as it is in accord with the Catholic faith.

The use of media is reliant upon the teacher being aware of points that can contribute or inhibit the successful achievement of learning outcomes.

Principles and Guidelines

Principle One:

Religious Education teachers need to be aware of their moral and legal obligations in presenting media to students.

- 1.0 Religious Education teachers are to consult and follow the CECWA Policy Statement on Selection of Appropriate Texts.

Principle Two:

Religious Education teachers base the use of media in their class on the Archdiocesan learning points.

To support this principle, Religious Education teachers apply the following:

- 2.1 The showing of feature length movies will be unusual and the usual practice will be to show excerpts of videos.
- 2.2 Teachers will preview the media to be used before use with their class.
- 2.3 It is recommended that students conducting research on the Internet may be provided with a list of some sites to use.
- 2.4 Where a video is shown to a class, an accompanying learning activity sheet, preview focus questions and discussion questions should be used. This may well apply to the use of other media also.
- 2.5 Schools to create resource lists for each learning area so that the duplication of use is avoided.

Principle Three:

Religious Education teachers use recommended resources.

- 2.6 A resource not on the recommended list is to be discussed with the Leader of the Religious Education Learning Area for approval as a new resource.

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Congregation for the Clergy. (1997). *General Directory for Catechesis*.
Homebush St Pauls Publications

John Paul II Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania* (22 November 2001)

Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975): AAS58
(1976)

The Bishops of Western Australia (2009 -2015) *Mandate, Mandate Letter Terms of Reference and Membership of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia*