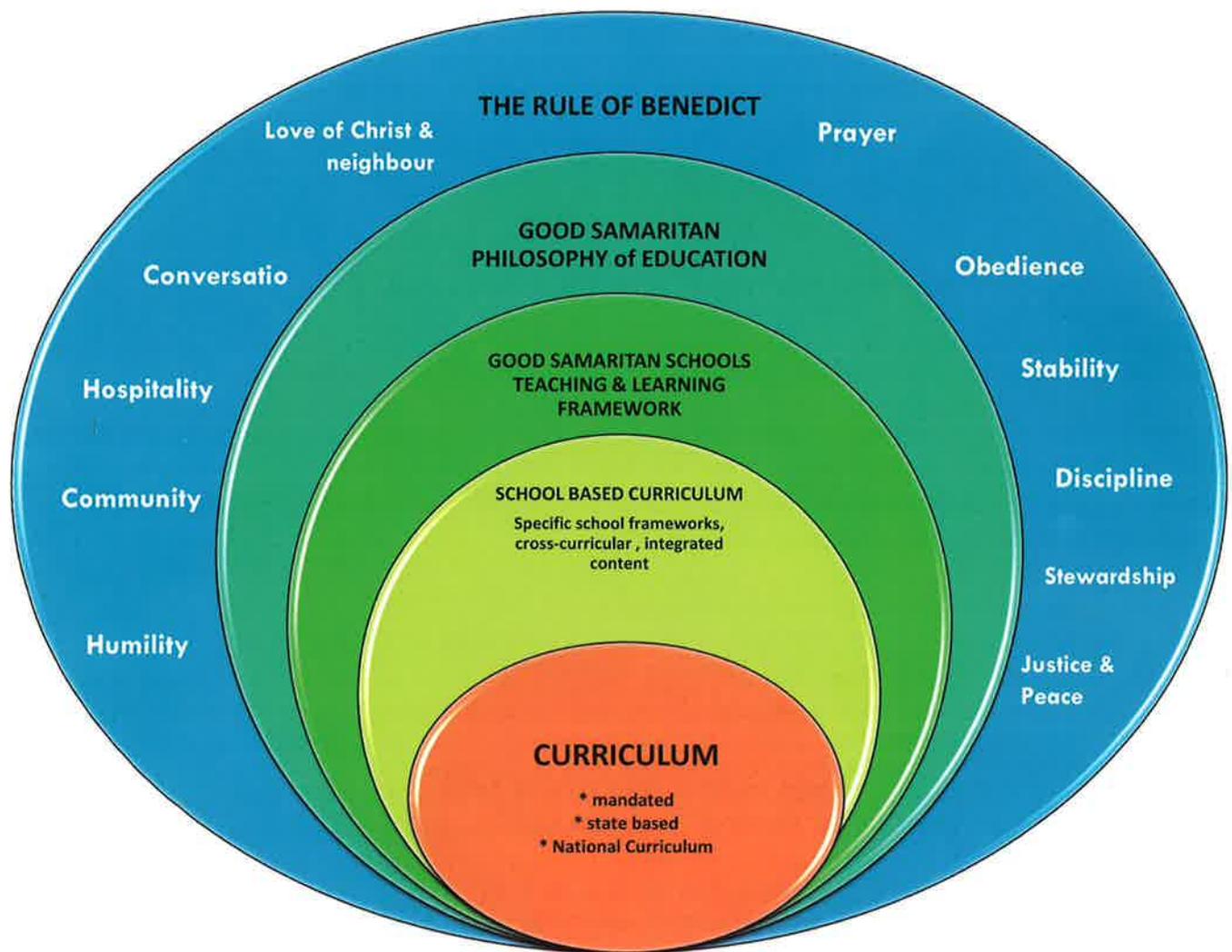


GOOD SAMARITAN SCHOOLS TEACHING & LEARNING FRAMEWORK



ORIGINS OF THE SISTERS OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

The Congregation of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan of the Order of St Benedict was founded in Sydney by John Bede Polding OSB, Australia's first Catholic Archbishop, on 2 February 1857. This new congregation, the first to be founded on Australian soil, was formed to care for disadvantaged and abused women. Polding, however, gave the congregation a broad and flexible scope in its mission and by giving the name, "Sisters of the Good Samaritan"; he indicated that the Sisters were to have a Christ-like attitude of compassion and care for those they served.

From the very beginning, the education of young people has been at the heart of the congregation's mission. Sisters began teaching in a school in Sussex Street, Sydney in 1861. In subsequent decades the ministry of Good Samaritan education spread to other Australian states and to Japan. Education in the faith and adult education are features of Good Samaritan ministry throughout Australia, in Japan, Kiribati and the Philippines.

from The Good Samaritan Philosophy of Education

THE GOOD SAMARITAN TEACHING & LEARNING FRAMEWORK

✦ **A Good Samaritan school develops a quality curriculum through effective teaching and learning. This is achieved by valuing ...**

an academic environment at the forefront of modern educational development ...

- providing student centred lessons where students are engaged in relevant, meaningful activities and tasks
- providing an environment with resources with which to support, enhance and enliven teaching and learning
- providing opportunities for team teaching experiences
- encouraging and valuing teachers as collaborative and constant learners

a love of learning ...

- building upon students' existing learning and experiences
- providing a collaborative approach to teaching which allows students to negotiate elements of the curriculum and make choices within their learning experiences
- building resilience in our students by allowing them to take responsible risks in choices within the curriculum and their learning activities
- developing skills in higher order thinking and critical thinking
- exploring problem-solving strategies with others
- designing flexible learning experiences enabling all students to experience success
- communicating high expectations to all students and supporting them in meeting these expectations

a holistic view of education and an integrated curriculum which will challenge the creativity, initiative and ability of each student ...

- engaging students in authentic, rich assessment tasks
- providing opportunities for interdisciplinary and integrated approaches, establishing real and relevant links
- exploring the global, local and personal dimensions of curriculum topics

respect for individual differences so that "the strong have something to strive for and the weak nothing to run from" (Rule of Benedict 64:9) ...

- providing targeted programs for students with special needs and for gifted students
- providing a differentiated curriculum, meeting the needs of all types of learners
- providing students with the opportunities to explore new types of learning
- providing opportunities for students to listen, reflect and evaluate in order to develop a deeper understanding of what they are learning and why they are learning

the integration of life and faith & wise stewardship ...

- providing opportunities for students to look for God's spirit in people, places and events and having the confidence to name God in what we see and do
- explicitly integrating Benedictine values in the development of teaching and learning programs



THE GOOD SAMARITAN PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Good Samaritan schools commit themselves to a vision of Catholic education which:

(a) draws on the strength of the Good Samaritan Benedictine tradition

We value:

- the dignity of each person
- an academic school environment which is at the forefront of modern educational developments
- a love of learning
- a holistic view of education and an integrated curriculum which will challenge and foster the creativity, initiative and ability of each student
- respect for individual differences so that "the strong have something to strive for and the weak nothing to run from (Rule of Benedict 64:9)
- the integration of faith and life
- an appreciation of beauty and the diversity of cultural values
- wise stewardship which reverences the earth and its resources
- a balance of prayer and work

(b) is directed to the seeking of God

Life is a journey in search of God, the Creator, Word and Spirit. We reverence the Scriptures as nourishment and guide in the seeking of God. We express our longing for and praise of God in personal, communal and liturgical prayer. Because God has become one with us in Jesus Christ, we believe that our lived experience is the meeting place with the divine. Our plans and endeavours are so arranged "that in all things God may be glorified".

(c) is centred on Jesus Christ and his mission

Personal commitment to Jesus Christ and his mission is central to our educational ministry. Inspired by the example of the Samaritan of Luke's gospel and by Polding's passionate missionary vision, we commit ourselves to a Gospel way of life, responding with energy and creativity to the challenge of our social reality. We have special concern for, and aim to stand in solidarity with, those on the margins of society.

(d) is committed to partnership and to Christian community

Our educational settings, where we work in a spirit of collaboration, teamwork and partnership, witness to the possibility of Christian community. We aim to foster inclusive communities where all are encouraged to contribute with the "good gifts" given them (cf Rule of Benedict Prologue 21) and so build up the Body of Christ (cf 1 Corinthians 12).

(e) is committed to participative leadership

We acknowledge the key dimensions of educational, spiritual and managerial leadership. We affirm a leadership style which fosters the gifts and leadership potential of all members of the school community. Drawing upon the wisdom both within and beyond the school community, we promote a discernment model of decision-making.

(f) is responsive to its cultural context

The Spirit's unifying force is what unites us in the midst of our cultural plurality. We recognise, accept and respect the differences among cultures and races in our school communities. We generously contribute to and critique the society in which we live.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN TEACHING & LEARNING FRAMEWORK

✦ **A Good Samaritan school develops right relationships through effective teaching and learning. This is achieved by valuing ...**

the dignity of each person & the hospitality of heart and place ...

- encouraging students to develop an awareness of their own capabilities
- encouraging students to assume responsibility for their own learning
- acknowledging each student as an individual and recognising that each student has their own story to share
- acknowledging the gifts of each of our students and providing opportunities for these gifts to be encouraged and shared
- developing characteristics of servant leadership amongst all students

the seeking of peace ...

- dealing with wayward behaviour in an appropriate and sensitive manner
- perceiving every lesson as a fresh start, allowing students the opportunity to restore and establish right relationships
- celebrating the successes of our students and supporting them when they fall
- encouraging students to listen carefully to each other
- providing support for students at risk and for families in need
- establishing an appropriate tone and climate and modelling appropriate and acceptable behaviours

the balance of prayer and work & an appreciation of beauty and cultural plurality ...

- promoting and modelling Gospel attitudes and behaviours
- fostering connections between the subjects that our students study and the fundamental, deep purpose of their lives
- providing opportunities for students to perceive the beauty of God's work around them so that *in all things God may be glorified*

BENEDICTINE VALUES: AN OVERVIEW

Adapted from Association of Benedictine Colleges & Universities Statement (The Ten Hallmarks of Benedictine Education): Education within the Benedictine Wisdom Tradition rev. 27 August 2007. Source: <http://www.abcu.info>

LOVE OF CHRIST AND NEIGHBOUR

Benedictine life, like that of all Christians, is first and foremost a response to God's astonishing love for humankind, a love expressed in the free gift of God's beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Love, the motive for monastic life and its goal, tops St. Benedict's list of tools for good works (RB 5:10, 7:67-69, 4.1-2). Yet the Rule recognises many ways in which monastics can fail to ground their lives in love. It sets up personal and communal practices that deal directly with human selfishness wherever it occurs and seeks to heal the resulting harm to one's self and others. Ultimately it is the power of God's love that is decisive. Indeed, the crowning good work for the monastic is "never to lose hope in God's mercy" (RB 4:74).

PRAYER

Benedictine schools cultivate a fundamental attentiveness to the ways in which God is present in the human mind and heart and, indeed, in all creation. St. Benedict directs that nothing is to be preferred to prayer (RB 43.3). This daily experience of prayer is supported and deepened by individual spiritual reading, a practice that Benedictines call by its Latin name, *lectio divina*. *Lectio divina* is the slow meditative reading of Scriptures and other sacred texts with the intention of discerning how God is at work right now in the world and calling within the individual's own heart. For a monastic, the daily movement between common liturgical prayer and *lectio divina* opens up new space within where qualities and virtues such as compassion, integrity and courage can develop and grow strong.

STABILITY

Stability shapes a Benedictine way of life. All of its members commit themselves to seeking God. They resolve to pursue this, their heart's deepest desire, together, day in and day out, in good times and in bad, throughout the entire span of their lives.

CONVERSATIO

The aim of life for Benedictines is the same as it is for all Christians - to be transformed in every part of one's life so that God's very image, in which each has been created, becomes palpable and transparent. The Benedictine word for this way of life is *conversatio*, the process of letting go in day-to-day life of self-centered preoccupations and false securities so that the divine life at the core of one's being becomes manifest in a trustworthy pattern of living. *Conversatio* is a commitment to engage in practices that over a lifetime bring about conversion into the likeness of Christ and, in particular, Christ's giving of self for others. This transformation proceeds according to small steps; and it is tested in unexpected ways over a lifetime. To come to fruition *conversatio* requires stability, discipline, faithfulness and resilience.

OBEDIENCE

Benedictine life is unthinkable without obedience, a value that cuts against the grain of much in contemporary life. It is often forgotten that the root of the word obedience is found in *audire*, "to listen." When St. Benedict begins the Rule with the exhortation "Listen," he emphasises the stance of obedience required of all who seek wisdom. He asks for obedience not only to the spiritual head of the monastery, but to the other members of the community (RB 71:1-2). Each has something of value to say about true fullness of life. For the monastic, obedience is putting into practice what is learned by listening to the other "with the ear of the heart" (RB Prol. 1). Centuries of Benedictine experience show that such listening requires a willingness to submit to imperatives outside of the self, something that is never easy to do, but that is deeply rewarding.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline is a way of focusing energy and attention on what matters most. Benedictine life is built around a fundamental discipline of prayer, work and relationships that is set forth in the Rule and that seeks to free people to take delight in God's presence within the self, the community and the world. New members are taught how to cultivate discipline and to realise that it takes a lifetime of practice to develop fully the skills needed to live life freely and wholeheartedly on the deepest of levels.

HUMILITY

Humility is St. Benedict's word for wisdom. He begins his extended description of the twelve degrees of humility by describing awe at the abiding presence of God and ends depicting a love that casts out fear (RB 7). The Benedictine way of life seeks an accurate knowledge of self, a pervasive awareness of God's presence in their lives and their dependence on others and creation itself. They recognise their limitations without losing hope and accept their gifts without becoming arrogant because the measure of their lives is not found in themselves alone. There is always room for additional personal growth, for giving one's self for the good of others.

STEWARDSHIP

At its core the Rule seeks to foster a fundamental reverence toward the creation that God has made. St. Benedict exhorts his followers to regard all the tools and goods of the monastery as the sacred vessels of the altar (RB 31.10). Benedictine monastics do not simply use up what has been given to them, nor do they aim to live in poverty. Instead, they prize good stewardship, the respectful use of material things for the good of all, with a special eye to frugality, integrity of form and function, and the capacity of beauty to communicate the presence and power of God.

HOSPITALITY

St. Benedict sees Christ present within the monastery in Scripture and liturgy, and in the person of the abbot, prioress, the sick, and each of the members of the monastic community. However, St. Benedict accords special attention to Christ's unexpected arrival from outside in the person of the guest, whom he describes alternately as poor and as a stranger. Christ presents himself in the outsider's vulnerability and calls the monastic to put aside individual plans and pre-occupations in order to let the unexpected person in, to help them get established, to respond to their most pressing needs. And when the outsider comes to experience being "at home" in this new place, for however brief the stay, the monastic discovers new awareness of the common journey in which all are engaged. A blessing accompanies both the offering and the receiving of hospitality.

COMMUNITY

Benedictine monastic community is rooted in a particular place in which mutual service, especially in the mundane areas of everyday life, is demanded of all with no expectation of individual reward. It is a challenge to contribute to a living, flesh and blood community on such terms. The qualities of character that are required are nurtured by the individual community's sense of its mission, the witness of monastic forebears and the broader communion of saints across the ages. The imagination to persevere and thrive in such a life is enriched through the example of communities across the world - monastic and non-monastic, Christian and non-Christian, religious and non-religious - that make sustained practical efforts to foster human well-being, often in the face of overwhelming obstacles. Though directly grounded in a particular place, the commitments and aspirations of Benedictine life can only bear fruit if they stretch to horizons that are truly universal.

JUSTICE AND PEACE

The aim of the Benedictine life is to find peace. It is not something that we sit about and wait for - we must pursue it, work for it, set out trying to achieve it. Peace is not another word for passive or disengaged or removed from the world. It is an active ordering of life so that peace is the outcome. Benedict is offering us a way to find peace in our hearts and beyond. Peace is a feature of just communities - disharmony and injustice create tension, jealousy and annoyance. Peace cannot exist in that environment. For peace to reign, justice is fundamental. So a Benedictine community has an inherent desire to bring about justice. This means that we recognise that there is nothing in the world that is not first in the human heart. In our hearts and in our communities, we must seek peace and pursue it.

