**What makes leadership of a Catholic School different?**

This is such a huge subject, colleagues, it is quite difficult to tackle it in an hour! So many aspects to it as you will be aware. It is impossible for me to cover everything in the time we have .

Therefore I offer only some of my thoughts on the subject in the hope it will give rise to some avenues of reflection for you as you go forward.

I think the title is good; when I first looked at it, immediately I started down the road of “**How is it** different?” and that is very helpful.

The profession of school leadership of any type is a vital one for the world. We hold such a power to influence so many others for good or ill.

We might have 200 young minds or more which we have to shape by the actions and decisions we make in school. Then we have the staff whom we lead and manage. We also have the power to facilitate all that they can bring, develop their skills and gifts, shape their future career positively or negatively, unleashing all their potential to inspire our young ones or dampen their enthusiasm.

Then our parents, families and communities. We are at the hub of all the things that go on in the school community, which is building the future of a whole new generation. If you are lucky and have a long career, that could be two generations. We can solve family problems, support them through crises, provide an oasis of calm during such times, enable the community to have a home where they can meet in a world which can be isolating for families and individuals.

All these things are true for all school leaders.

But what **makes** our job of **Catholic** leadership different?

I believe that in a Catholic school, there is a whole extra dimension. It is a sacred profession. It is your awareness and motivation that comes from mission.

Canon Luiz Rusillo- Parish holding close, school reaching out, ideal two arms working together to do both within the body of Christ.

Link with marriage prep sessions “being called”

As you embark on leadership, I feel you can have the sense that you “are called” story of SJB interview. Question asked “Why have you applied for this post?”

What makes leadership of a Catholic School different?

First and foremost it is your view of the child. It is a good thing to listen to some of the Government or the world’s views of the child. We talk about bright futures for our children, the aim for them to “achieve their potential”.

To look at Government directives and documentation you would be forgiven for thinking they are viewed as

1. an economic unit
2. a statistic
3. a competitor
4. future tax payer
5. a future consumer

Maybe this is unfair, but I feel if they were seen as much more than this, why do we have such an narrow curriculum? Why is our sports development programme so focused on elite sports development? Why is there such a paltry amount spent on the arts and cultural development of our children?

When we consider the outcome of the BREXIT vote and the American presidential elections, much has been made of the many disaffected people in forgotten areas of both countries who have seen their jobs disappear over the last few generations due to technological advances, the electronic age taking over from the mechanized age.

We hear about the threat of robotics to even more jobs in the future that our young people face, we wonder why the Government persists in its narrow view of the child’s education. Should we be educated them for more leisure time or how to cope spiritually with a lack of fulfillment?

**View of the child**

What do you see when you look at a child in school?

* A cutey?
* A hard worker?
* Someone deprived?
* His or her race?
* A problem?
* A bomb about to explode?

Whatever the child is, we have been entrusted by Almighty God with that child. What does he see?

Word of God:

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.

And even the hairs on your head have been counted.

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a people set apart.

**Question to discuss: How might my leadership change if I really took this on board?**

And of course, every parent is a gift from God! It is our task to walk with parents as they try to bring their child up in a life of faith.

We share with them the desire to ensure they and their families can achieve ‘life to the full”

Our task of leadership must be transformed by this view of the sacredness of the human person.

This can be a challenge when the parent is more disaffected than the child! E.g problems of attendance/ apathy/ hopelessness

**Catholic Social Teaching**

Our understanding of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching changes everything in our schools.

Underlying principles such as

* The needs of the whole person are to be met.
* Our respect for the sacredness of life of an individual from cradle to grave
* The preferential option for the poor.

All schools know we have to address the needs of the child within their whole life context and there are rightly strict laws of equality such as those relating to race, gender ,religion etc

All schools have to demonstrate they are giving extra life chances to the deprived through initiatives such as Pupil Premium, which as you know has become a management monster in itself.

This task for a Catholic Leader to tackle these issues is made all the more urgent and a priority when you know these precious lives have been given to you and your team by no lesser person than God our loving Father.

So the reason why we do these things and what we intend to re-create in the those we serve that makes our task so much greater and a source of inspiration.

As it says in Salford Diocese’s 5Ws framework:

“Our Catholic Schools………are called to proclaim and affirm that we are all created in the image of God, that Christ restores the image of God that is disfigured from original sin onwards and that through baptism we are formed into the likeness of Christ who is the ‘image of the invisible God’. The work of the Catholic School is to call forth each person’s unique God given gifts in the love and service of both God and others.”

**How can we as leaders ensure that what happens in school reflects Catholic Social teaching?**

**Sacramental Imagination**

By enabling the children to have a curriculum that enables them to experience first hand the riches and wonders of creation is crucial. But all members of the community need to be fully aware that our curriculum is shot through with an awareness that the truth that is learnt in the classroom is God’s Word, God’s truth, not just Science or History or the beauty of Maths or Language just for its own sake.

Daniel O’Leary “Begin with the heart”

Kevin Quigley is speaking so much about this at present (Word working party)

“Your lives are already full of God.”

“God is at your fingertips when you do the work you have to do.”

Richard Rohr “ We either honour God in all things or we lose the basis of all things”

We need to convince colleagues that God is the backdrop and the foreground of what is taught in lessons ,assemblies, the struggles to learn, in the playground, in ourselves and our relationships.

How does this affect our leadership?

* Vision of the child and all people in the community
* Curriculum
* Teaching and learning approaches
* Links up with the worship element in a Catholic School
* Affects the ‘ethos’ of the school.

**How might we as leaders encourage the Sacramental Imagination in children and staff ?**

This brings us to another huge area of our work as Catholic Leaders.

**Spiritual Leader**

It is so often said that School is Church for so many children. Leading in a Catholic School means that you are, with others, a spiritual leader.

This is definitely an extra responsibility that a headteacher in a community primary or high school would not have to consider!

We have to work as leaders to support parents in bringing up their children in the faith and helping to develop the child’s relationship with God.

We also need to have some concern for the spiritual development and refreshment of our colleagues too.

How do we do this:

* Bringing the community together in prayer
* Worshipping God together
* Ensuring that there are many ways for children to express themselves in prayer and to have moments of stillness in order to hear God’s voice in their hearts
* Exposure to the Word of God
* Providing role models of Christian life
* Working in close partnership with our clergy in all that they are trying to do, reinforcing their messages.
* Finding opportunities to reach parents spiritually

In Salford in the last few years as I am sure in other dioceses, there has been a great emphasis on developing the ‘Worship’ aspect in its Catholic schools. Particularly important has been the growing focus on pupil led prayer, alongside the growth of Chaplaincy. We talk about ‘Pupil voice’. Chaplaincy led activities or any prayer activity initiated by children and young people could be called ‘The child’s Sacred voice’

The mission for leaders in Catholic schools to develop this aspect is absolutely crucial to fostering the right atmosphere for love, family, confidence, togetherness and spirituality that we know must be at the heart of our schools.

We have all been privileged to have been involved in prayer and worship activities that have moved us. I always feel completely reenergized and motivated as a result of those experiences. This area of work as a headteacher has probably been the most fulfilling.

Our world is crying out for this spiritual refreshment.

**Share any such experiences you have had in school and say what positive effect, if any, it had on your work as a whole .**

**Share any initiatives you would like to develop in your role as spiritual leader.**

**Is this an area you would find difficult and why? Share this with your colleagues.**

**What sources of extra help are available to Catholic Leaders?**

We have looked at many special aspects of the role of the Catholic leader. The task may seem over whelming. Luckily God provides sources of extra help for us.

* Parish Community
* Shared values of families and staff though our faith
* Our own Prayer Life
* The Sacraments, Eucharist, Reconciliation
* The resilience that comes from our faith.

**Lead as Christ did**

Christ is at the centre of our wonderful Catholic schools.

We must take him as our role model. We are trying to lead the children closer and closer to their God. This was Christ’s mission.

Unlike our colleagues in non-Catholic schools, we are preparing our children and young people not just to be successful learners, workers, citizens and human beings for their life on earth, we are preparing them also for their final destiny in eternity.

To do this we have to try to follow Christ’ s leadership style in order create an environment in which we can all be Christ for each other.

* Christ as servant King (selflessness in leadership)
* Christ as a healer (mending broken relationships and lives)
* Christ the merciful judge (welcoming sinners and the imperfect).
* Christ who communicated the truth (honest communication)
* Christ who wanted all people to grow in his love and care (e.g. apostles and sinners)
* Christ who was prepared to bear suffering for his people (there will be difficult times when we have to be very strong for others)
* Christ who was faithful to his mission (resilient)

Mention words of Canon Luiz Rusillo when he talks about Peter offering his broken and imperfect commitment to Christ when Christ asked Him to “Feed my sheep”.

We as leaders offer ourselves as imperfect servants and we have the awareness that Christ will make of our leadership something good, strong and beautiful. He is a major player in all that we do if we invite Him into our leadership.

**Prayer Slide**

In Him I have found

A heart of a King,

A heart of a friend

A heart of a brother.