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Since *The Pastoral Review* last presented a survey of recent books on Catholic education in May-June 2014, some noteworthy publications have appeared. Taken together they shed some interesting light on the current trends in thinking about Catholic education both in the UK and further afield. 2015 was a significant year for Catholic education because it marked the fiftieth anniversary since Vatican II's declaration *Gravissimum Educationis* was promulgated. A number of the books being reviewed here show a nodding recognition of this notable anniversary.

The first three can be taken together as in effect they form a trilogy of books published through Redemptorist publications. The authors borrow and adapt the title of another older but much loved Redemptorist work *How to survive being married to a Catholic* (1986). Each of the books in the trilogy takes an aspect of Catholic schooling and offers readers guidance and advice that will help them to survive working and teaching in the Catholic sector. The series begins with...

How to survive working in a Catholic School pp 88, pbk

Authors: Sr Judith Russi
and Raymond Friel

ISBN: 978-0-25291-404-3

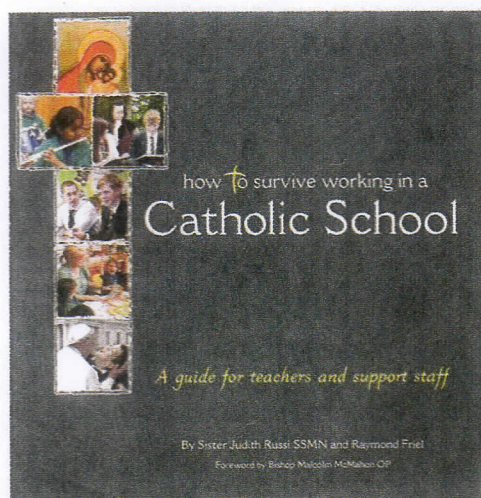
Date: 2014

Price: £6.95

Publisher: Redemptorist Publications,
Hampshire

This book is attractively presented. The chapters come in bitesize chunks and can be digested during a twenty minute break. The authors, both seasoned advocates of

An overview of seven books on Catholic education which would be useful additions to any pastoral theology library. Sean Whittle teaches RE at Gumley House Convent School in London, and is a Visiting Research Fellow at Heythrop College, University of London.



Catholic education, have written a text which seeks to induct new staff into the distinctive features of Catholic schools. In the opening chapter the reader is given helpful answers to some of the frequently asked questions about working in Catholic schools. Subsequent chapters go through the aims and distinctive features of Catholic education, ethos and Catholic social teaching. There is an accessible chapter on the liturgical year, which explains how Catholic Christians strive to mark out and celebrate the cycle of each year. The book does tackle tricky questions, such as whether or not there really is any difference in the teaching of the curriculum in a Catholic school. Each chapter ends with questions and reflections. One slightly odd feature of the book is that it contains an appendix which gives advice about how to address clergy and people in religious orders. In the Catholic Church under the papacy of Francis, drawing attention to these formal titles appears

anachronistic and out of step with the Catholic Church today. However, above all it is a book that could usefully guide and inform the induction of new staff and governors working in Catholic schools.

The second book is...

How to survive in leadership in a Catholic School pp 128, pbk

Author: Raymond Friel

ISBN: 978-0-85231-422-7

Date: 2014

Price: £12.95

Publisher: Redemptorist Publications, Hampshire

In contrast to the first book, this is a more substantial text which is aimed at those who are in senior leadership positions in Catholic schools. The author has served as a headteacher and had numerous leadership roles in Catholic schools. During his career he has clearly been very aware of the need for spirituality and reflection. What is pleasing about this book is that it is far removed from simply going through the nuts-and-bolts of being a senior leader in a Catholic school. The author has worked at blending some theological reflection into all the chapters. The book has been written to support both aspiring and current Catholic school leaders to think more deeply and spiritually about leading a Catholic school. Peppered throughout the chapters are questions for reflection. Other chapters are interspersed with thought-provoking quotations, many from serving Catholic headteachers. The author is drawing attention to spirituality and the need for leaders in Catholic schools to foster their prayer life and to see their work in terms of vocation. This is sometimes referred to as 'spiritual capital' and sociologists of Catholic education have drawn attention to the way in which our reserves of it are beginning to run low in

Catholic schools. The author is clearly very inspired by the papacy of Francis I and frequently quotes both his words and his gestures, in the hope that they will be a help to those who lead our Catholic schools to build up a deeper well of spiritual capital.

The third in the series is titled...

How to survive as a Governor in a Catholic School pp 88, pbk

Author: Sr Judith Russi ssmn

ISBN: 978-0-85231-434-0

Date: 2015

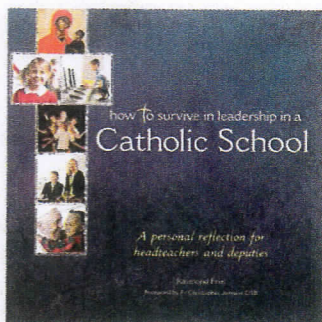
Price: £9.95

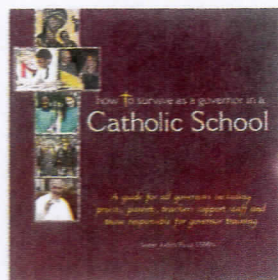
Publisher: Redemptorist Publications, Hampshire

This is a very helpful book for all those involved with governance of a Catholic school. This is not least because the practical support for governors of Catholic schools is minimal. This makes Sr Russi's book a much needed resource. As she

explains, there is a real need for all governors of Catholic schools to be given formation in how the Church understands the role of the school in terms of the wider mission of the Church. This book opens up many of the key teachings since Vatican II on Catholic education in order to show governors how they

provide practical insight for the big issues in Catholic education today. Questions about faith schools, academy status and the place of RE in the curriculum can be better tackled by governors who know some of the Church's rich teaching at Vatican II. There is a vision of education shared by Catholic schools which stands at odds with government policy in the UK. Governors of Catholic schools need to become confident in playing a leading role in drawing on and implementing this vision. To help build up this confidence the author presents an accessible but practical set of resources to examine what the key





priorities ought to be for governors of Catholic schools. The questions, quotations and reflections weaved into this text are intended to offer much-needed formation for both the individual governor as well as for the full governing body. This book would be the ideal gift for any parishioner who has volunteered to become a governor.

Taken as a series, all three of the *How to Survive* books provide plenty of practical advice, which is much needed. However, they also provide an intriguing snapshot of the concerns that committed advocates and practitioners of Catholic education are most concerned with in the opening decades of the twenty-first century. The repeated message linking all three books is the need for the formation of, rather than the training of, all those who are involved with working in and leading Catholic schools. Nearly always 'training' is more straightforward, in contrast to formation which is more open-ended and nebulous.

Another book that governors in particular might want to reflect on is...

Reclaiming the Piazza: Catholic education as a cultural project

pp180 pbk

Authors: Ronnie Convery, Leonard Franchi, Raymond McCuskey

ISBN: 978 085244 8441 Date: 2014

Price £12.99

Publisher: Gracewing, Herefordshire

This book offers a striking attempt to reframe and characterise in fresh terms Catholic education. The co-authors are part of the St Andrew's Foundation within the University of Glasgow. However, despite their Scottish context, they present an argument which is deeply influenced by ideas from Italy about the best ways to characterise Catholic education. It is easy for Catholics to conflate Italy with the Vatican or the papacy. Through focusing on

insights from Catholic education in Italy more broadly, the authors draw attention to some themes that could be easily overlooked or not fully

grasped. It is in this respect that one of the guiding metaphors of the book captured in the title, that of the 'piazza', fits in. The piazza is depicted as the meeting place where the various aspects of life and the wider culture of a town or locality come into contact with each other. The piazza lies at the heart of an Italian community. In essence the book argues that Catholic education in its broadest senses (formal schooling, upbringing and the communication of faith) can be reframed in terms of it being likened to a piazza. Catholic education can function as a meeting place for Catholic faith and the wider culture. According to the authors, this central image comes from the *Progetto Culturale* that the Italian Catholic Church was involved with during the years after Vatican II. This is a project that aims to engage the Church with the various facets of the wider culture. A fundamental part of this is accepting that the Church cannot lock itself away from the wider world and must be involved in it. This is to blur the distinction between the Church and the world.

In many respects the argument in *Reclaiming the Piazza* plays on the way in which the authors define Catholic education as at root, a means of communication. Catholic education can be framed as an expression of the Church's dialogue with the world and it is a prime location in which Catholic culture is communicated and built up. There is a practical challenge for how to do this. According to the co-authors there are four key elements in achieving this. The first is for the Catholic university to be the cradle and the guardian of Catholic culture. The second is to focus on the curriculum of the school. This involves reading the whole curriculum in the light of the broad tradition and culture of Catholic Christianity. The