

# Catholic Education at a Crossroads?

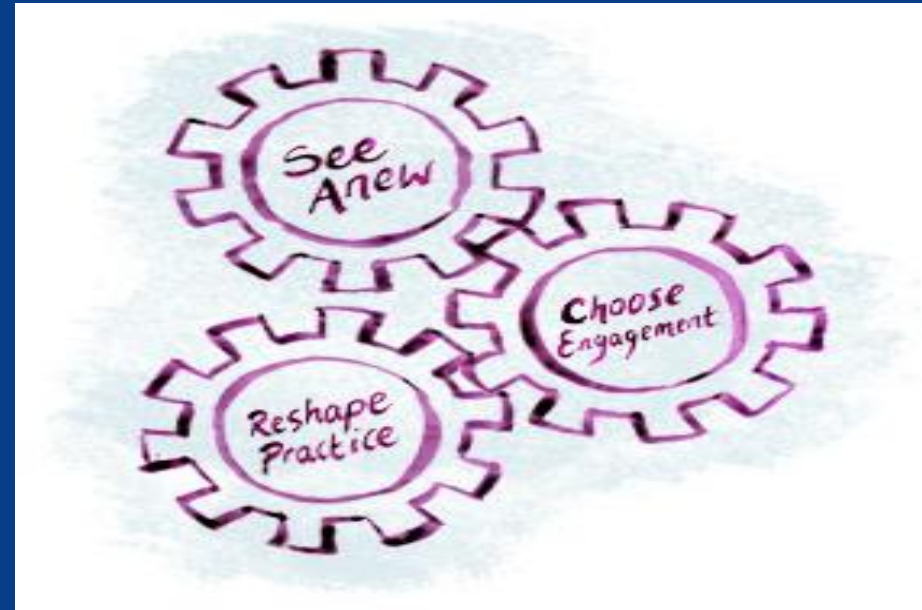


*Journeying Together Towards  
Future Directions*

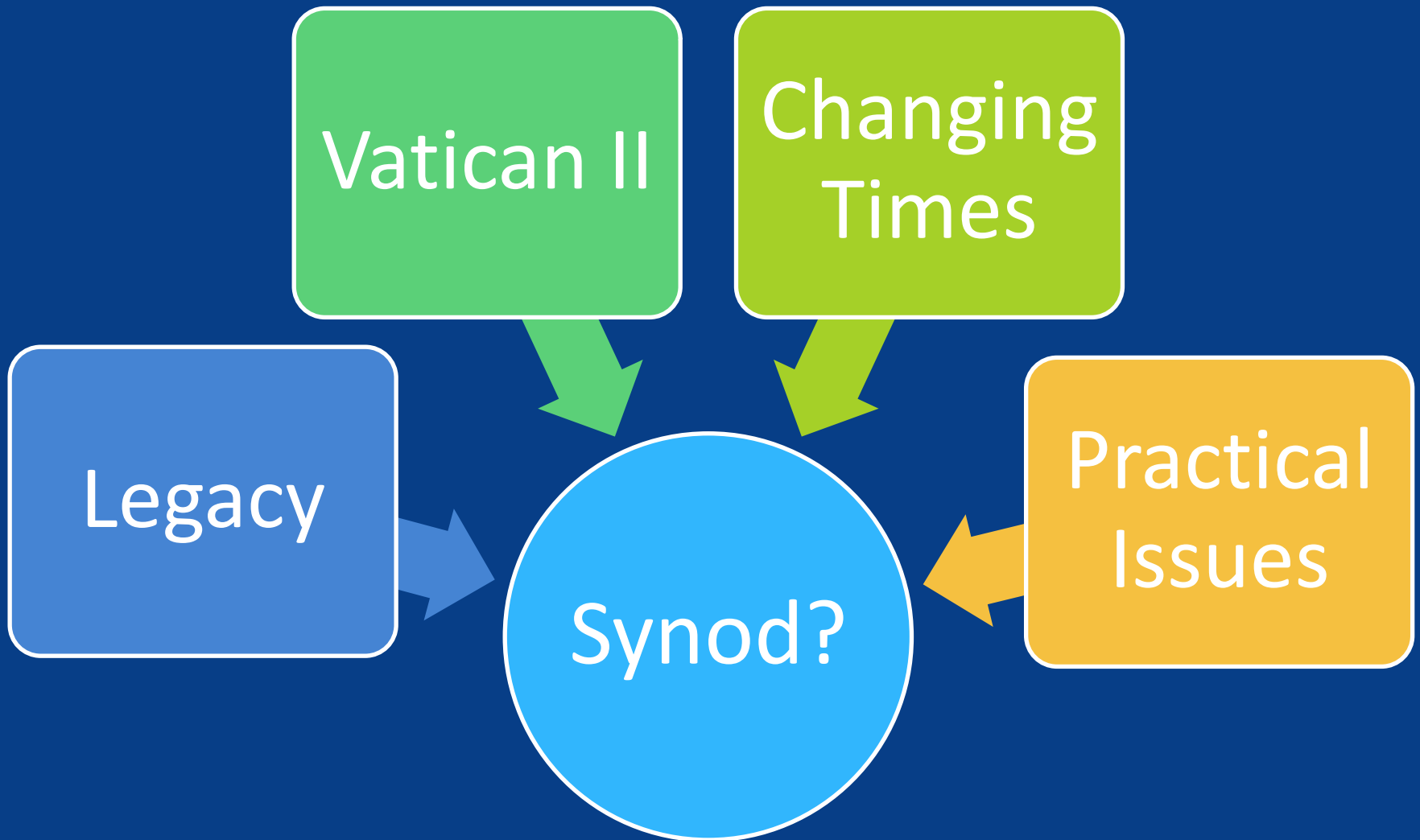
Limerick Diocesan Synod

# Purpose of the Workshop

- Opportunity to reflect on and discuss the Synod and the process for Catholic education.



# Why a Synod?



# And The Pope Francis Effect

- *“Teaching the faith is something beautiful! It is perhaps the best legacy we can pass on: the faith! To educate in the faith, to make it grow. To help children, young people and adults to know and love the Lord more and more is one of the most exciting aspects of education.”*

**Pope Francis**



# *What will the Synod mean for you?*

- “A call to rediscover the holiness and apostolic challenge that is yours as a disciple of Jesus. It is an invitation to wake up in the Body of Christ.”
- “...it will mean taking responsibility for the gifts that we have been given and bringing them to life. It will mean becoming Christian in the world and for the sake of the world.”

-Paul Philibert

## *Work* Gerard Manley Hopkins

It is not only prayer that gives  
glory to God but work,  
smitting on an anvil,  
sowing a beam,  
white-washing a wall, driving horses, reaping, scouring,  
everything gives God glory.

It being in his grace, you do it as your duty.

To go to Communion worthily gives God great glory,  
but simply to take food in thankfulness  
and temperance gives God glory too.

To lift up the hands in prayer gives God glory.

But a man with a dung-fork in his hand  
or a woman with a slop-pail,

They give God glory too.

All things give God glory if you mean they should.

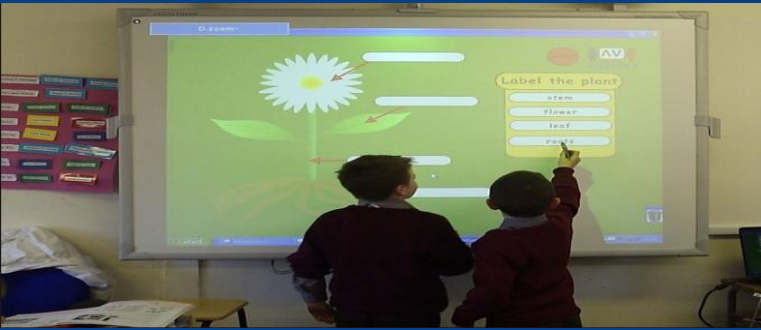
So then, my brethren, this is the way to live.

- Always be prepared “to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the *reason* for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15).

# The nature of Catholic Education

- Catholic schools are born of the Church to penetrate and infuse contemporary culture.
- **What makes the Catholic school Catholic?**
- **It is the dialogue of faith and reason. It is the spirit of Christ present and alive in the community.**
- Catholic Education is education imbued with the spirit of God, alive and active in each of us and in our communities.





# Catholic Education: The Mission

- ... But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow... (*Gravissimum Educationis*: 8)
- *'synthesis of faith and culture and a synthesis of faith and life: the first... integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in light of the Gospel; the second,... growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian.'* (The Catholic School, 1977)

# Catholic Education

- The Catholic understanding of education shares with many other education philosophies the idea that is rooted in the development of the human person from within.
- It is directed towards the growth of the whole person in the context of the relationship with God in Jesus Christ.
- Seeks to sustain and enhance people's capacity to discover the meaning of life. SGN 28
- Faith, hope, love
- **Relationships are the lifeblood of the school.**


# Developing a Sacramental Imagination

*Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God;  
But only he who sees takes off his shoes-  
The rest gather blackberries.*

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

A close-up photograph of a sunflower, showing the dark brown center and the bright yellow petals. The background is a soft, warm yellow gradient.

What if  
learning about  
**FLOWERS**  
led to  
**wonder?**

A young boy with brown hair and black-rimmed glasses. He is wearing a white shirt, a blue bow tie, and a grey and blue patterned vest. He is holding a yellow abacus with colorful beads (red, blue, green, yellow) on the strings. The background is a dark green chalkboard.

What if **math**  
created a  
**COMMUNITY**  
in which **all**  
could achieve?

**Education is an endless journey on which people are transformed through personal encounters and deep relationships.**

**This is education for formation, and transformation of the person and of society.**

**We wish to form a society where people will act -**

- **Through love, care and compassion;**
- **With a care for beauty and wonder;**
- **With a sense of hope;**
- **By serving the world by her/his gifts.**

**-B. McGettrick**



- *“It is my hope that we will pursue Pope Francis’ dream of a missionary option and achieve new direction for our mission of helping people rediscover the Church as a community of deep relationships and a place where meaningful answers can be offered to people’s deepest yearnings.”*

- Bishop Leahy



- “Saint Francis of Assisi used to say to his friars: “Preach the Gospel at all times; if necessary, use words”.

Words come... but **witness** comes first: people should see the Gospel, read the Gospel, in our lives.”

– **Pope Francis**



# Realising the Mission?

- **Mission Integrity:** *fidelity in practice and not just in public rhetoric to the distinctive and authentic principles of Catholic education.* (Grace, 2002)
- **Role of the Teacher**
- Awareness of the multiple dimensions of Christian faith and be aware of its various languages. *Attending to kerygma, proclamation, leitourgia, worship, koinonia, fellowship and diakonia, service.* Sullivan (2011: 106)



# Mediating the Mission

- ‘Text...is only ever encountered in a wider context. Contexts affect the encounter with the text and how it is interpreted.’ (Sullivan, 2011: 108)



- There is a limit to the extent to which any Catholic perspective on education (or indeed any other general educational perspective) can be abstracted from the practical circumstances in which the enterprise of education must be conducted at any particular time. (McLaughlin, 2002)

# Contemporary Context- National

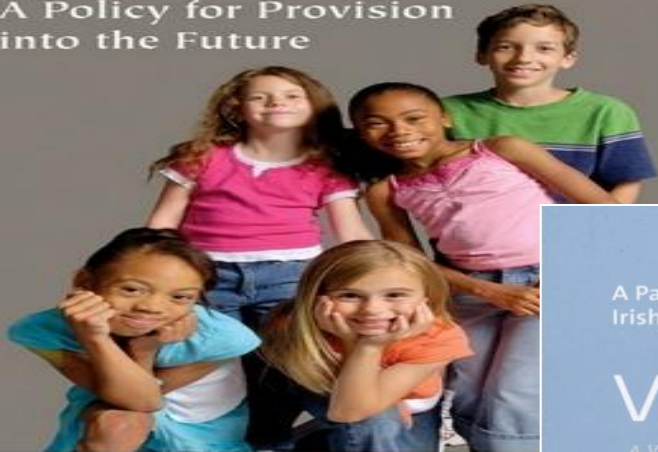
- Changing Socio-Cultural Landscape of Ireland
- Changing Educational Policy at all Levels- The clash of “world views” of education
- Place of Faith in Education
- Report of the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector
- Recent Church Documents



# Recent Publications and Initiatives

## Catholic Primary Schools

A Policy for Provision  
into the Future



IRISH CATHOLIC  
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE  
COMHAIRLE BISPION CAITLICEACHA ÉIREANN



## Catholic Schools Week 2014

Seachtain na Scoileanna Caitliceacha 2014

A Pastoral Letter from the  
Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference

## vision 08

A Vision for Catholic Education in Ireland - Executive Summary



IRISH CATHOLIC  
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE  
COMHAIRLE BISPION CAITLICEACHA ÉIREANN

## Share the Good News

National Directory of Pastoral Activities and Events

Irish Episcopal Conference



# Mediating the Mission

- Challenges: Cultural Context, Tensions within the tradition
- *'Catholic education faces a major challenge worldwide to keep the culture of the sacred not only alive but distinctive and publically located.'*  
(Carmody)

**MISSION VS  
MAINTENANCE?**

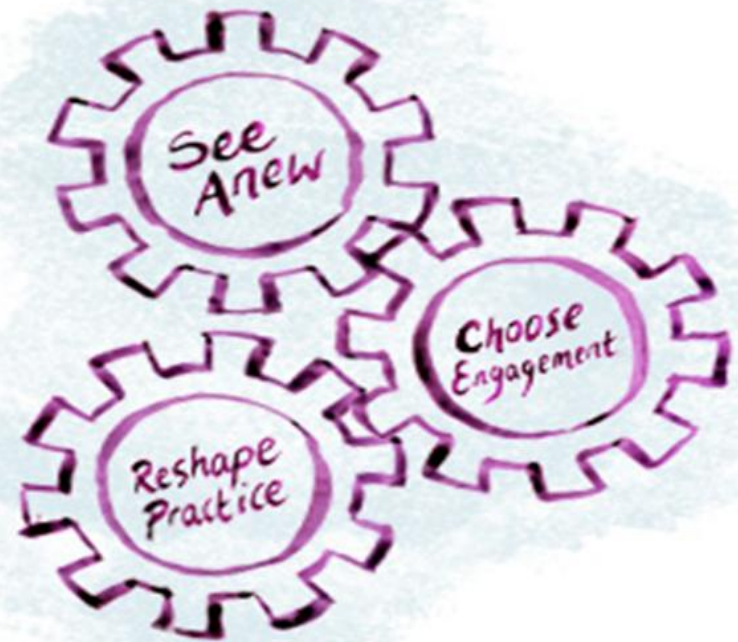
# Emptying Out...

- “The biggest ‘emptying out’ we have to do will be recalibrating our understanding of what the Church is and what our role within it must be. We must look beyond what we have long taken for granted.”

-Paul Philibert

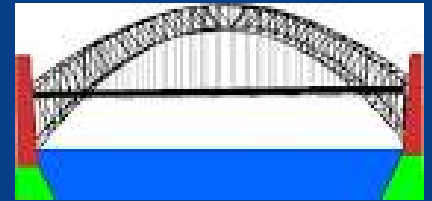


# Reflection and Discussion



# For Reflection and Discussion

- What are your reflections on what you have heard today...
- How might the Synod journey help us to **BRIDGE** the **Rhetoric** and the lived **Reality** of Catholic education?
- Ongoing translation & Reception?



- “It is my hope that we will pursue Pope Francis’ dream of a missionary option and achieve new direction for our mission of helping people rediscover the Church as a community of deep relationships and a place where meaningful answers can be offered to people’s deepest yearnings.”

## **MISSION Vs MAINTENANCE?**