



THE GOOD SEED WILL GROW

A Formation Framework for Edmund Rice Communities in Oceania

In presenting this Formation Framework we acknowledge the First Nation Peoples of Oceania and the part that they have played in shaping our understanding of the region and its place in the world.

Formation experiences are a journey, an encounter with another. This journey calls us to sit with many experiences and to make sense of our own mission in the context of daily life. It is in the patient and respectful listening we are gifted with and are called to honour the sacredness of another. It is in the stillness that we discover ourselves. **Donella Brown**

*Naku te rourou nau te rourou ka ora ai te iwi –
With your basket and my basket the people
will live.*

This Maori proverb invites co-operation and sharing of resources for mutual benefit of all creation. Co-creating and co-evolving is central to our understanding of God, calling us to imagine and expand a vision of creation that offers fullness of life for all. What do you have in your basket?
Cathy Harrison

A message from the Congregation of Christian Brothers

Dear Formation personnel,

Everything contained within this foundational Formation Framework reflects what we, as a Congregation Leadership Team are sharing with our Brothers around the world. The present Pope is also giving voice to much of this in promoting a Church that aligns itself on the side of the marginalised of the world.

There are two elements that I would stress to you in your role as the designers and facilitators of Formation in your region of the world. The first is that as each dominant culture begins to open itself more to those new arrivals coming to its shores, it will discover a face of God that it never knew, a face that will challenge its values and way of living. This is where inter-religious dialogue will be at its best. I believe more and more that Jesus was never about a new religion, but about a change of culture. This has been at the heart of the Congregation Leadership Team's efforts since 2002: to change the culture of the Congregation. I am so affirmed to discover that it is precisely what Pope Francis is about as well. And this

was precisely what Jesus was calling us to. This is the deep meaning of "Repent, the Kingdom is at hand" — the heart of metanoia.

The second element is really discovering anew the story of Jesus. Our role is to help people to move towards a self-discovery of Jesus as God via relationship with Jesus as man. Jesus was showing us the way to be fully human, and promoting fullness of life as opening us most wholly to the Mystery we name God. Modern scholarship is discovering more and more the implications of the human Jesus on his society. To read the Gospels this way is so very enriching and sheds fresh light on much of our faith journey. This is where the challenge will lie: to develop people who can share this vision of Jesus.

May this framework provide you with the wisdom and inspiration to continue to enrich the lives of those you serve in the name of Jesus and Edmund.

Br Philip Pinto cfc
Congregation Leader
January 2014

The Oceania Province Leadership Team and the Edmund Rice Education Australia Council proclaim this Formation Framework and invite its use by all Edmund Rice Communities in Oceania. **19 May, 2014**

CONTENTS

Introduction	02
An Invitation to Use this Framework	03
Our Conceptual Understandings	04
Mission	04
Charism	04
Formation	05
Church	05
The Framework	06 - 07
Overview	06
<i>The Spiral</i>	06
<i>The Sails</i>	07
The Visualisation of the Formation Framework	06 - 07
Our Sacred Story	08
The Mystery of the Divine	08
The Life of Jesus	08
The Response of Edmund	09
Our Participation	09
The Dynamic of Formation	10
Moved by the Spirit	10
Alive in Relationship	10
Called to Liberation	11
Principles of Formation	12
Endnotes	13



INTRODUCTION

THIS FORMATION FRAMEWORK IS THE RESULT OF A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN OCEANIA PROVINCE AND EDMUND RICE EDUCATION AUSTRALIA. IT DRAWS UPON THE FOUNDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE *EREA FORMATION FRAMEWORK* (2007) AND THE OCEANIA DOCUMENT *CONVERSATION OF HEARTS: A FRAMEWORK FOR FORMATION* (2008). IT THUS REPLACES THESE TWO FORMER DOCUMENTS.

The Framework draws upon the core documentation and experience of Christian Brothers Oceania Province and Edmund Rice Education Australia as well as the insights gained through community dialogue about formation conducted during 2013. It grows out of a strong and vibrant partnership between these two entities which has provided quality formation experiences across Oceania since 2007. It is also informed by the current thinking of the Congregation of the Christian Brothers as expressed in *Our Way into the Future*. Finally it draws inspiration from Scripture and the Tradition of the Catholic Church, particularly as currently expressed by Pope Francis.

In addition to drawing together our two former frameworks, this Framework seeks to reimagine the way we look at formation for mission in our communities. It takes as its starting point *Our Sacred Story* and then explores how the *Dynamic of Formation* emerges from and continues to animate this story.

This Framework is neither exhaustive nor inclusive of the full depth and breadth of formation. As such it intends primarily to address the formation needs of people working in Edmund Rice communities. These communities exist as part of the wider Catholic Church as well as the “community of kin” that is life on Earth.¹ In light of this we acknowledge that people will seek and experience formation outside of and beyond our communities as well as within them. It is our hope, however, that all within our communities will find a place where their own personal gifts might contribute to the greater good of all.

As believers, we also feel close to those who do not consider themselves part of any religious tradition, yet sincerely seek the truth, goodness and beauty which we believe have their highest expression and source in God. We consider them as precious allies in the commitment to defending human dignity, in building peaceful coexistence between peoples and in protecting creation.

(Pope Francis, 2013, Evangelii Gaudium, #257)

AN INVITATION TO USE THIS FRAMEWORK

THIS FRAMEWORK PROVIDES A STRUCTURE THAT SUPPORTS FORMATION IN EDMUND RICE COMMUNITIES ACROSS OCEANIA. IT IDENTIFIES THE KEY ELEMENTS OF OUR COMMUNAL UNDERSTANDING OF FORMATION, WHICH ENABLES US TO ENGAGE IN MISSION.

This Framework can be used to:

- 1/** Affirm and situate current formation experiences within the Framework;
- 2/** Shape formation plans for individuals, groups, networks and communities;
- 3/** Design new formation experiences to meet emerging and changing needs;
- 4/** Enable communities to create formation experiences tailored to their particular context;
- 5/** Enhance review and evaluation of existing formation experiences.

This Framework can be used by:

- 1/** Schools and entities governed by or associated with Edmund Rice Education Australia;
- 2/** Ministries governed by, sponsored by or affiliated with Christian Brothers Oceania Province;
- 3/** Christian Brothers and Christian Brothers communities;
- 4/** Individuals and groups inspired by the vision and mission of Edmund Rice.

This Framework will be supported by:

- 1/** Resources to support engagement, understanding and application;
- 2/** Processes and resources that support review and evaluation of current formation experiences;
- 3/** The creation of national, regional and local networking groups to enable the sharing of exemplary practice;
- 4/** The creation of learning circles to build the capacity of individuals and communities to use this framework.



OUR CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDINGS

Mission

Mission is the Mystery of the Divine, whom we name God, constantly at work in the movement of the Spirit, drawing all of creation towards the wholeness embodied in the life and teaching of Jesus. As participants in the creative work of God we are invited into this loving and life-giving relationship.² Mission asks us to be consciously and compassionately present to the needs of the world, especially those made poor and marginalised.³ Authentic mission engagement sheds light on situations in which the dignity of life is being denied and offers instead God's radical vision of wholeness. Mission invites us to work together for the good of all creation so that God's vision is made real.

The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts.

Vatican II, 1965, Gaudium et Spes, #1

Charism

Charism provides a particular insight into mission. Though it historically emerges from the vision and experience of one person, ongoing re-imagining of charism expression helps shed a contemporary light on the life and teaching of Jesus. Charism has the power to draw people into the gospel vision of wholeness and love, giving a sense of direction and authenticity to mission engagement. Charism fosters a deeper understanding of and connection with communal identity, but only when it takes us beyond our immediate community to consider the good of all. Charism invites us to engage with all creation in a spirit of openness and generosity.

Deeply aware of the Father's providential presence in his life, Edmund Rice was moved by the Holy Spirit to open his whole heart to Christ, present and appealing to him in the poor.

Christian Brothers Charism Statement, 1982



Formation

Formation is a lifelong process that gifts us with a deeper awareness of our union with the Mystery of the Divine. In enabling us to deepen that union by reflection on the charism, formation helps us to identify those personal gifts which enable our fullest participation in mission. The dynamic of formation is relational, providing opportunities for individuals and communities to learn from one another in a spirit of mutuality and complementarity. The process of formation intentionally creates space for reflection, conversation and action that embodies and ignites a charism-inspired response to mission. Formation invites us to continually open our hearts and minds to the many possibilities of participating in this life-giving mission.

Effective formation methods address the whole person: emotions, imagination, will, heart, and mind. It is the whole person who ministers, so the whole person is the proper subject of formation.

USCCB, 2005, Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord, p. 33

Church

The purpose of the Church is to enable God's mission. It is not an end in itself, but exists rather to show God to the world.⁴ At the heart of its identity is the life and teaching of Jesus. Taking inspiration in the example of Jesus, the charism of Edmund Rice is a gift to the Church and the world. The Church is called to be "good news" for others, especially those made poor and marginalised. We are invited in humility, integrity and simplicity to bring new life to the Church as we seek to engage in God's mission.

I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures.

Pope Francis, 2013, Evangelii Gaudium, #49

THE FRAMEWORK

Overview

The Visualisation of the Formation Framework has two parts:

- 1/ *The Spiral*, naming *Our Sacred Story*;
- 2/ *The Sails*, representing the *Dynamic of Formation*.

The Spiral

A spiral is a powerful representation of the spiritual journey, simultaneously looking inward and outward. Present throughout the natural world, it represents growth and the unfolding of creation in the story of the Universe. In Celtic tradition the spiral symbolises both divinity and infinity. Its open-endedness reminds us that life is a process that is both creative and ever-revealing.

In its entirety, *The Spiral* embodies the *Mystery of the Divine*, present in the unfolding of creation. Representing our ever emerging consciousness of this Mystery and this all embracing presence, the white strand of the spiral unfurls into life, infusing all space and time. This ushers forth new revelations of God in *the life of Jesus*, which in-turn inspires *the response of Edmund*. *Our participation* as co-creators invites us to bring ongoing life and contemporary form to this ever expanding story.





The Visualisation of the Formation Framework

At the heart of Our Sacred Story is the Mystery of the Divine whom we name God.

The Sails

The sails of a windmill transform the energy of the wind into rotational energy, traditionally used for the milling of grain or the pumping of water. In recent times windmills have been used to generate clean renewable energy. The movement of the sails reminds us that life is a process that is both dynamic and transformational.

The Sails represent the three elements of the *Dynamic of Formation*:

Moved by the Spirit

- breathing life into all that we do

Alive in Relationship

- in solidarity with all life on earth

Called to Liberation

- agents of transformation in our world

Each element provides us with ways to interpret, integrate and to engage with *Our Sacred Story* in order to continue to bring that story to life. The Visualisation captures the continuous movement of *The Sails* emerging from and spiralling through *Our Sacred Story*.

OUR SACRED STORY

AT THE HEART OF OUR SACRED STORY IS THE MYSTERY OF THE DIVINE, WHOM WE NAME GOD, BREATHING LIFE INTO, AND EVOKING WHOLENESS WITHIN ALL CREATION. BY ENTERING INTO AND IMMERSING OURSELVES IN OUR SACRED STORY, WE ENCOUNTER THIS MYSTERY.

The Mystery of the Divine

The Life of Jesus

The Response of Edmund

Our Participation

The Mystery of the Divine

Eternally present in the unfolding of creation

- 1/** The expansive presence of the Mystery of the Divine is revealed in the story of the universe and the natural world in which we belong.
- 2/** The First Nation Peoples of Oceania experienced the Mystery of the Divine in their relationship with creation and expressed this in their stories, rituals and traditions.
- 3/** We have come to know this Mystery dwelling among us, through the witness of Jesus Christ and the Church that continues his mission.
- 4/** Our appreciation of God's presence has been further enriched by the wisdom of other religious traditions and modern science's offering of new awareness of the wonder, complexity, beauty and interdependence of the expanding and evolving Universe.
- 5/** Our relationship with the Mystery of the Divine deepens when we dare to imagine a vision of creation brought to wholeness and, with the open heartedness of Mary, risk participation in the creativity of life as God's partners.

The Life of Jesus

Incarnation of the love of God

- 1/** At the heart of a Christian understanding of God, and central to our identity as Edmund Rice communities, is the life and teaching of Jesus.
- 2/** Filled with the divine Spirit and formed within his Jewish tradition,⁵ Jesus lived and preached a gospel of love, compassion, liberation and peace.
- 3/** Jesus' life, words and actions emphasised God's love for all creation: a love that places widows, orphans, strangers, and those made poor at the centre of our attention.
- 4/** Recognising the centrality of relationship to the gospel vision, Jesus' followers formed communities that would become the Church, the continuation of his historically tangible reality.
- 5/** The followers of Jesus are invited to share his attitude of humility, emptying themselves in their humanity and opening themselves to live in solidarity⁶ with all life on this fragile planet (see Philippians 2:5-8).

The Response of Edmund

Answering the call of Jesus

- 1/** At the heart of Edmund's charism is his life experience and his response to the call of Jesus.
- 2/** Edmund experienced the intimacy of love and the pain of loss as a husband and father. His personal experience of suffering heightened his consciousness of the brokenness of others, just as his experience of love enabled him to respond compassionately.
- 3/** Edmund's response to those made poor and marginalised was in many ways ahead of its time, challenging prejudices and mindsets which unjustly maintained the status of some at the expense of others.
- 4/** Edmund used education as a means of providing the young people of Waterford, Ireland with greater access to the knowledge and skills that would allow them to participate more equitably in society.
- 5/** Attracted by this liberating call, others soon joined Edmund in brotherhood. Communities of Brothers spread throughout Ireland and the rest of the world giving new life to Edmund's charism.

Our Participation

The story continues

- 1/** At the heart of our identity as Edmund Rice communities is the call to be a presence in today's world that, inspired by our founding charism, reveals and responds in contemporary ways, to the loving reality that is the Mystery of the Divine.
- 2/** Men and women attracted by this charism, alive in the work of the Brothers, have joined them in prayer, community and work as members of Edmund Rice communities.
- 3/** This spirituality and work of education, advocacy, justice and solidarity are expressed in the variety of communities and contexts that exist throughout Oceania.
- 4/** The Mystery of the Divine in the world today challenges Edmund Rice communities to integrate the consciousness of Jesus and the charism of Edmund with an ever expanding worldview.
- 5/** Christian Brothers Oceania Province and Edmund Rice Education Australia invite all members of their communities to participate in formation experiences that will support their participation in the mission we share.



THE DYNAMIC OF FORMATION

Moved by the Spirit Alive in Relationship Called to Liberation

Moved by the Spirit

Breathing life into all that we do

Formation opens us to being moved by the Spirit and invites us into a space which places God and God's vision of a world made whole at the centre of our lives. This is not always a comfortable space and is often one that is at odds with the prevailing culture. The movement of the Spirit in our midst inspires imagination and invites us to live creatively with life's questions in a spirit of openness and discovery (see Acts 2:1-13).

In recognising the gifts of the Spirit, formation in Edmund Rice communities:

- 1/** Gives authenticity to our purpose and strengthens us in mission as individuals and communities;
- 2/** Examines the movement of the Spirit in the many life, death and resurrection cycles that are part of the unfolding of history and *Our Sacred Story*;
- 3/** Provides space for silence, prayer, contemplation, mindfulness, ritual, sacrament and reflective practice;
- 4/** Gives people the opportunity to discern how their personal gifts give contemporary expression to Edmund's charism;
- 5/** Engages our traditions in dialogue with science, the Universe story and the wisdom of the First Nation Peoples of Oceania.

Alive in Relationship

In solidarity with all life on Earth

Formation opens us to being alive in relationship and invites us into dialogue locally, nationally and internationally, crossing boundaries of race, culture and religion. We are called to form meaning from the diverse stories and realities in our communities and in the world. This invites a shift in our worldview, opening us to a deeper level of relationship with God and neighbour (see Luke 10:25-37).

In recognising the interconnectedness of all life, formation in Edmund Rice communities:

- 1/** Invites people to deepen their awareness of the Mystery of the Divine in all creation;
- 2/** Encourages people to engage in dialogue and listen to others with understanding and compassion;
- 3/** Affirms that personal and organisational relationships are grounded in the principles of the dignity of all life, the common good,⁷ subsidiarity⁸ and solidarity;
- 4/** Builds a sense of community that is inclusive: respecting difference, diversity and culture;
- 5/** Invites people into a practice of communal prayer and ritual that nurtures their relationship with God and builds communal identity.

Called to Liberation

Agents of transformation in our world

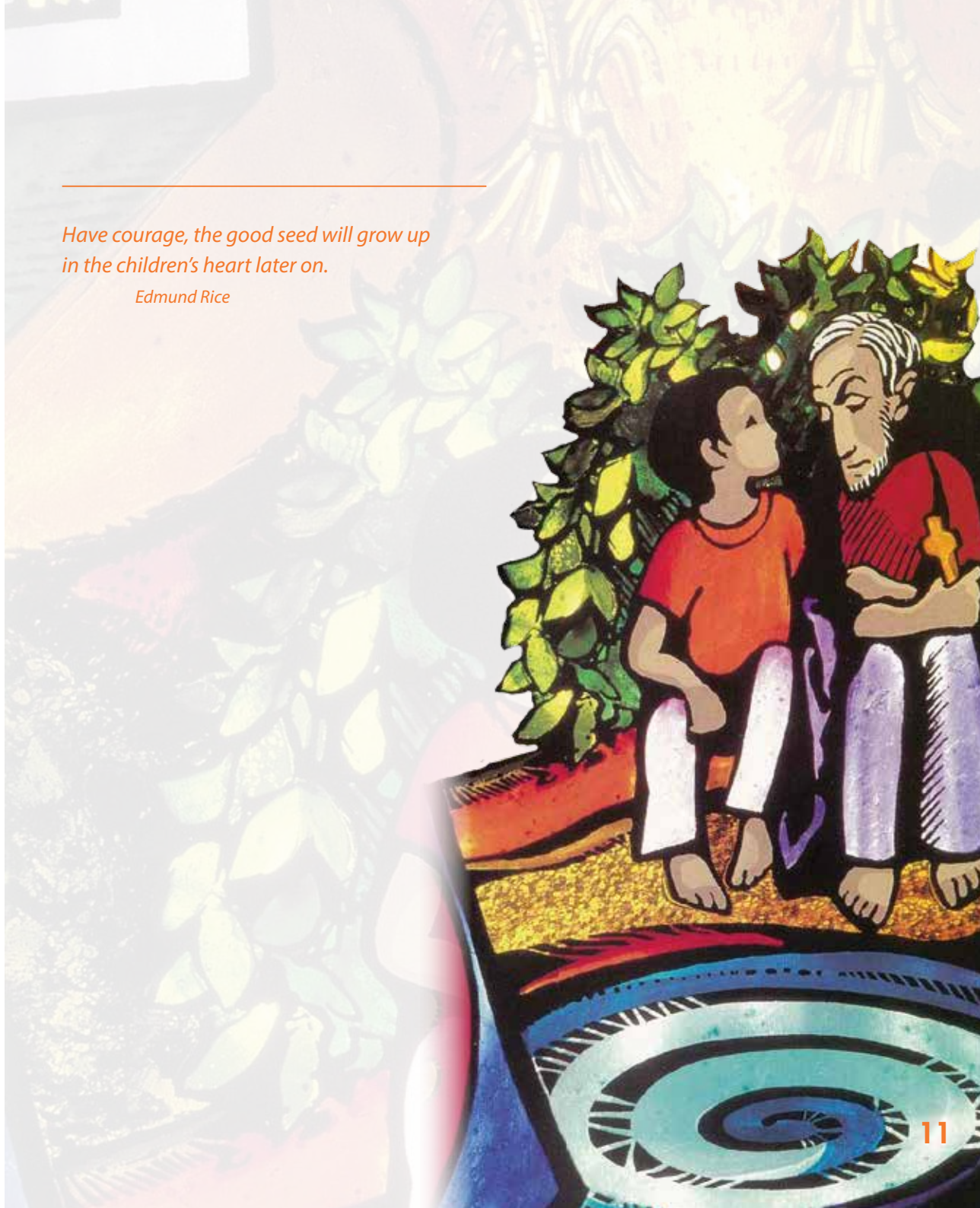
Formation opens us to the call of liberation and invites us to seek the fullness of life for all creation (see John 10:10). It challenges us to speak with authority as a prophetic voice in the Church and in the world. Liberation requires us to be present to others in a way that respects their dignity, worldview, hopes and dreams and invites us to work collaboratively with communities to experience mutual transformation.

In recognising the daring discipleship call, formation in Edmund Rice communities:

- 1/** Applies the Gospel message and Catholic social teaching as a means of societal and cultural critique;
- 2/** Develops the capacity to advocate for a just and sustainable world, encouraging a simplification of lifestyle that places needs over wants;
- 3/** Provides opportunities for people to form relationships with those who are marginalised within our society;
- 4/** Creates an environment where people can speak safely, with authenticity and in hope of a world where all live well;
- 5/** Challenges us to take risks in moving beyond our safe and known realities into often unsettling futures.

*Have courage, the good seed will grow up
in the children's heart later on.*

Edmund Rice



PRINCIPLES OF FORMATION

- 1/** Formation always acts to transform hearts and minds.
- 2/** Formation is a canonical responsibility and a mandated priority of both Edmund Rice Education Australia and Christian Brothers Oceania Province in building and sustaining a mission-based focus in each Edmund Rice community.
- 3/** Formation is essential to maintaining the authenticity and identity of Edmund Rice communities.
- 4/** All members of Edmund Rice communities should have access to formation opportunities at a level appropriate to their role, circumstance and needs.
- 5/** Formation is ongoing, dynamic and respectful of the diverse experience and spiritual journeys of communities and individuals.
- 6/** Formation is responsive to cultural contexts and respectful of the wisdom of the First Nation Peoples of Oceania.
- 7/** Formation is shaped by humanity's emerging understanding of its place within the greater web of life on Earth.
- 8/** Edmund Rice communities share responsibility for strategic planning, development, design and facilitation of formation experiences, in partnership with Edmund Rice Education Australia and Christian Brothers Oceania formation personnel.
- 9/** Edmund Rice Education Australia and Christian Brothers Oceania Province acknowledge our many partners in formation in the Catholic Church, ecumenically, with religious traditions and with women and men of good will.
- 10/** Formation is most effective when it is conscious of the need to balance professional responsibilities, family life and involvement with the wider community.

Nothing else will change a person's life except an experience of God. You may use all the other terms you want – but – at the heart of it – is a spirit that flows through our Universe that almost demands from us a response.

Brother Philip Pinto

ENDNOTES

¹ “Earth is a precious living habitat, a fragile web of ecosystems and a community of kin.” Norman Habel, *An Inconvenient Text* (ATF Press, 2009) 43

² When Jesus is asked, “What is the greatest commandment?” he replies, “love God with all your heart, soul and mind and love your neighbour as yourself” (See Mark 12:28-34; Matthew 22:34-40; and Luke 10:25-28. The roots of this response come from Deuteronomy 6:4 and Leviticus 19:18.)

³ If the whole Church takes up this missionary impulse, she has to go forth to everyone without exception. But to whom should she go first? When we read the Gospel we find a clear indication: not so much our friends and wealthy neighbours, but above all the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked, “those who cannot repay you” (see Luke 14:14). (Pope Francis, 2013, *Evangelii Gaudium*, #48)

⁴ Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007, *Educating Together In Catholic Schools*, #45

⁵ Jesus’ faith in God was shaped by the covenant at Sinai, nourished by Jewish narratives about God’s saving deeds in history, and expressed by the prayers, rituals and practices of Judaism as well as by observance of Torah. (Edward Kessler in Cunningham et al. Eds., 2011, *Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today*, Eerdmans: Michigan, p. 158)

⁶ We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic and ideological differences. We are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbour has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Pope Paul VI taught that “if you want peace, work for justice.” The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict. (<http://www.usccb.org>)

⁷ Besides the good of the individual, there is a good that is linked to living in society: the common good. It is the good of “all of us”, made up of individuals, families and intermediate groups who together constitute society. (Benedict XVI, 2009, *Caritas In Veritate*, #7)

⁸ [The principle of subsidiarity directs that] a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good. (John Paul II, 1991, *Centesimus Annus*, #48)

The images featured within this document are from The Icon of Edmund Rice by Desmond Kyne.



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