



# FRANCISCAN SCHOOLS AUSTRALIA

## LIVING THE FRANCISCAN SCHOOLS AUSTRALIA FRAMEWORK:

**the concept of a Franciscan spiritual framework in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and how that framework could be given life in an educational community.**

This paper has been informed by the enduring work completed by Franciscan religious, staff, parents, students and Leadership Teams in many FSA communities since FSA was established. There is an accompanying graphic on the FSA website that illustrates the words within. Together both documents offer a scaffold for schools to implement in their own distinctive context.

This paper will briefly consider four broad themes:

- **The Journey** - “following in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ”
- **The Spirit** – the spirituality of Francis of Assisi and Clare of Assisi whose life and writings inform the Franciscan tradition
- **The Values** - the core values of the Franciscan tradition that give life to the identity of any FSA school community
- **The Dream** – is the lived experience within a school in the Franciscan tradition. It will be unique for each member school because of each school’s distinctive context.

Compiled by Alison Stone and approved by the 2020 FSA Executive Team.  
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# 1 Preamble

“Francis, go now and repair my church which, as you see, is falling down.”

Francis’ knew that to ‘*repair the church*’ of his day he had to live the Gospel. Nothing has changed ~ we are still all called to live a Gospel life full of love and compassion.

This paper reflects the conviction of Franciscan Schools Australia (FSA) that committing to the Gospel way of life - *following in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ* - through developed resources, engaging formation and connections are central to our purpose as a not-for-profit organisation.

FSA believes that our organization has an important role to play in the formation and education of staff and young people who are in a school with the Franciscan tradition.

FSA desires to be actively engaged in the rapidly changing Australian educational landscape. Of fundamental concern for FSA, is the express need for schools to *embed the spirit of Francis* in all they do. Live the Gospel! Simple as that.

FSA schools need to reflect a Franciscan Christology by embracing the sacramental vision of creation, notions of universal fraternity and the call to rebuild the church first heard by Francis over 800 years ago.

The spirit of Francis could manifest itself in an FSA school community through the following *Living Stones*, but is not limited to these *Living Stones* only: see FSA

Education Framework

- Live-giving education
- Kinship with creation
- Peace
- Embrace
- Prayer
- Active service

FSA believes that embracing these *Living Stones* will empower school communities to carry in their hearts the desire to be generous with their gifts for the good of all. How each school community enacts this is The Dream.

## THEME 1: THE JOURNEY

The Journey - "following in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 2:21)

Francis of Assisi (1182 – 1226) is one of the most thoroughly documented figures in history and, in our ecologically-conscious and pet friendly age, he is one of the best known and perhaps even the most popular of all saints. Persons, not otherwise known to be particularly religious or spiritual know of and speak fondly about this Saint, his life and the enduring characteristics of his brothers that span more than eight centuries.

The two authors who continue to inform much of the understanding of Francis of Assisi, are Thomas of Celano, who wrote two lives (legends) of Francis in 1228 and 1248, and St. Bonaventure who had published the two versions of Francis's life by 1262. This considerable body of material was really hagiographies, that is, writings about people who are considered holy. Francis' life, words, virtues, and miracles are described in loving detail. These first biographies are marked by cultural and religious upbringing, the outlook of those who provided them, by the atmosphere and ideals of the times and by the writer's personal choice of material.

Thaddee Matura OFM in his book *Francis of Assisi The Message of His Writings* explains that Francis left a message, a view of reality, an overall vision of God, of humanity, and of the world, as well as a plan for life's journey. His message concerned the Christian life and therefore can be called a "spirituality". But a Christian spirituality cannot be centred on any mere human, no matter how great or



1: Image part of larger painting called "The Banner of the Plague" by Nicolo Liberatore

holy, but only on Him "who alone is holy, Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> He implores us to distinguish between the person and the writing to discover the essential message. However, Francis is a special case. His message is simply himself and his way of life.

Francis takes St. Peter's admonitions: "You should follow in Christ's steps" (1 Pet 2:21) very

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<sup>1</sup> Matura, T. OFM, *Francis of Assisi The Message in His Writings*, (Franciscan Institute Publications: St. Bonaventure, New York: 1997,2004) p.4.

seriously. In various forms this statement, according to Matura and other scholars, occurs five times in Francis's writings (RegNB 1:1; 22:2, 2EpFid 13; EpOrd 51; EpLeo 3). For Francis, these words apparently summed up the whole aim of the Christian life. It is often said that following Christ, *sequela Christi*, is also the essence of the Franciscan life,<sup>2</sup> and probably no-one throughout history sought to follow Christ's life and ministry so literally. His spirituality is grounded in the Lord Jesus Christ at all times. He does not deviate from this, but embraces Christ's whole life, especially his self-giving surrender to God in his passion. In the Earlier Rule 22

*'All my brothers, let us pay attention to what the Lord says: Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you for our Lord Jesus Christ, whose footsteps we must follow, called His betrayer a friend and willingly offered Himself to His executioners.*

Franciscans extend love to all, including enemies and those whom one finds difficult and whose behaviour and demeanour one may find repulsive". (see Francis and the Leper) To follow in the footsteps of Christ is to live according to all the demands of the gospel, suffering and death included, and to open oneself to the promises that the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaims.



2: St Francis and the Holy Spirit - <https://cac.org/changing-places-2019-11-15>

This understanding of Francis' message may explain why many artistic depictions of the Saint portray him with his neck extended, his eyes raised towards the heavens and his gaze firmly on God.

However, many artists also depict Francis dancing and singing, with animals, or with his arms raised in wonder at the beauty of creation. In

Assisi there is a wonderful bronze sculpture of Francis gazing reverently downward as he watches the Holy Spirit diving into the earth. Francis understood the mystery

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<sup>2</sup> Matura, Th. OFM, Francis of Assisi The Message in His Writings, (Franciscan Institute Publications: St. Bonaventure, New York: 1997,2004) p.132 – 133.

of Christ's incarnation and his invitation is for us to follow his way of inclusion and compassion – of love.

Following Christ makes demands upon us, especially inner demands, but Francis, Clare and other holy men and women, assure us that it leads to the life and glory promised in Christ's resurrection. Francis's way of life teaches us that in following in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ, we open ourselves up to *mystery and promise* – to opportunities and blessings we are not privy to at the outset.

In this sense Francis proposes "following Christ" as a program for life to all and summarizes very well the spiritual message FSA subscribes to. This is further recognized in the quality Catholic education that member schools offer to the broader community. FSA holds at the heart of all we do goodness and good relationships – *with God, with others, with resources, with creation and with ourselves.*

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures (Prov 8:22-31; Wisdom 7:22-23) the wisdom of God is often portrayed in the feminine. The Greek work for wisdom is Sophia. Sophia was with God from the beginning and fashioned all good things. In John's Gospel we find the beautiful account of God's Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us (John 1: 1,14). The incarnation was central to Francis' belief – that God's Word had come among us as Jesus. Francis was amazed at the thought that Jesus was born as a tiny, vulnerable baby. It was the footsteps of Jesus, the Word-made-flesh, that Francis wanted to follow!

As an organization we "follow Christ" by being intentionally available to build a strong FSA community in Australia. Christ (or Sophia), the 'wisdom of God', resides in the gathering of communities who believe. God dwells among us when we assemble in community. *"Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them."*<sup>3</sup>

God is present when we open ourselves to God's words.. When we dwell in Him, and His words – *spirit and life* – dwell in us and give us life, then we encounter others and *follow in the footsteps of the Lord.*

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<sup>3</sup> Earlier Rule 22, vv. 33-35, p.81.

God comes to us in Eucharist – celebration and communion.

God comes daily in the ordinary.

God comes to us in humble appearances – colleagues in the staffroom, children in classrooms, the parents at reception, and in all the faces at the communal bus stops and drop off zones.

The journey is not over until all dwell with God in the eternal.

## **Strategy 1a.**

Affirm the journey of following in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus as the foundation stone of a school in the Franciscan tradition.

### **THEME 1: THE JOURNEY**

The Journey - “following in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:21)

#### **ACTION ITEMS FOR AN FSA MEMBER SCHOOL**

Build a strong Catholic education in the Franciscan tradition by;

- enhancing synergy between the different facets of educational life (spiritual, curriculum, cocurricular, and social/ emotional wellbeing).
- Leadership Teams, Middle Leaders and staff working collaboratively to formulate a coordinated architectural map of the curriculum, PD and faith formation programs.

Enact policies and deploy resources to build a sustainable future to:

- Create a culture of kinship with creation.
- Ensure responsible governance of school resources and more broadly integral ecology to care for Sister Mother earth.
- Promote wellbeing of all – human and creation - to enable authentic relationships that embrace care, compassion and mercy
- Uphold peace making and foster peacebuilding.

Enact policies and deploy resources to ensure sustainable access to:

- deep learning across all areas of curriculum. School and organizational life.
- broad faith experiences including Eucharist, prayer, contemplation and other ritual forms both within the school and out of school.
- comprehensive developmental formation programs for staff at all levels of professional life as part of a broad and holistic staff professional learning program.
- comprehensive retreat / formation programs for students at all levels of schooling as part of a broad and holistic education.
- active ministry and formation programs for a diverse cross section of the

school community, including students, staff and parents.

### Establish systems of lifelong, intercultural and intergenerational learning in, about and through curriculum units and formation programs:

- Ensure students from all social, economic and cultural backgrounds have access to the school.
- Develop opportunities for justice, ministry and formation experiences among different age groups.
- Promote active curriculum, ministry and formation programs in a wide range of community settings – to include intercultural and intergenerational contexts.

### Build capacities for educational leadership, advocacy and formation development

- Build staff and student capacities for excellence in teaching and learning by providing formation and professional development opportunities.
- Apply a youth ministry and formation framework in Religious Education classrooms to build capacity in students through innovative pedagogies and creative approaches to curricula that will engage a diversity of learners.
- Communicate the individual and social impact of global values and Franciscan spirituality to raise the awareness of Catholic education and to encourage support for the school in the broad community.
- Enhance communications and advocacy by reinforcing good relations with the wider community, using the established language and branding of the school for communication, and
- utilizing information technology and virtual networking systems to link existing local and regional initiatives.

## THEME 2: THE SPIRIT

The Spirit– the spirituality of Francis of Assisi and Clare of Assisi whose life and writings inform an education in the Franciscan tradition

When we accept that spirituality is meant to be all-encompassing there can be no other centre but God the Father, Christ and the Holy Spirit. Francis so awakened by the spirit was impregnated with this spirit and lived it out: both in his life and in his writings so that he leaves a spiritual path – a spirituality – for others.

It is this spirituality that informs the education tradition of an FSA member school. It is this understanding that God is central to everything we do that directs the school and organizational life through policy making, curriculum directions, pastoral structures, well-being programs, prayer life and formation.

Francis, layperson without a clerical culture, has at his heart, the poor and the ‘little ones’. The spirituality of Francis is based on his personal experience and it is in his personal writings that these are revealed. He believed that this spirit was livable, that the gospel life brought joy indeed, and that every word that Jesus uttered could be lived by those who heard His words with open hearts. Clare hears the echo of her own voice in Francis’ words. She drew her ideals from Francis’ words. Both Francis and Clare leave the ‘walls of the city’ and go to the people in need. They are pilgrims in spirit, living the word of God in their hearts and lives.

Other religious men and women do the same. They hear the word of God with Franciscan spirituality making it possible for them to live what they believe in. With open hearts they continue in the 21st century to respond to the needs of the people wherever that takes them.

This Franciscan spirit must inform all areas of life in an FSA school by:

- advocating for the earth, the poor and those ‘little ones’ – unimportant, insignificant or on the margins in the context of society.
- being responsive to the identified needs by those directly involved. We will ask what is required not impose or assume what is required.
- promoting authentic relationships; offer conversion of heart that Jesus challenged his disciples to.
- providing classrooms and groups of the right size in number. The need for face-to-face contact, direct personal contact will direct a policy of limited growth.
- creating opportunity for personal writing, prayer and reflection.
- being open to all in the community while ensuring safety and risk is managed.

## **THEME 2: THE SPIRIT**

The Spirit– the spirituality of Francis of Assisi, Clare of Assisi whose life and writings inform our education tradition in an FSA member school.

### **ACTION ITEMS FOR AN FSA MEMBER SCHOOL**

#### Strategy 2a.

Authenticate existing and future curriculum, school and organization structures that are responsive to local community needs with the spirituality of Francis and Clare of Assisi.

- Establish high standards for the teaching and learning in an FSA school.
- Ensuring responsible governance of the school facilities and resources.
- Providing formation experiences and professional learning that are rich in Franciscan spirituality.

#### Strategy 2b.

Ensure that sustainable formation in Franciscan spirituality is available to staff, students and other members of the community

- Offer growth in skills and knowledge for all staff – teaching and non-teaching - through sustainable professional learning mechanisms.
- Offer formation and spiritual experiences for students, parents and other members of the community.
- Ensure the implementation of Franciscan spiritual understandings in the life of the school through the development of quality monitoring procedures such as supervision and mentoring that promote the bonum (goodness) in all of creation.

#### Strategy 2c.

Stimulate exchange between Franciscan spirituality and classroom practice.

- Promote the Franciscan intellectual tradition as foundation for classroom excellence, wisdom and rigour.
- Encourage research and distribute professional readings as well as exemplary educational practices through education and Franciscan structures .
- Link theology and research to educational pedagogies and practices.
- Evidence the impact of a Franciscan spiritual tradition and Catholic education on staff and students by employing exit interviews.
- Support spirituality, theology and faith research nationally and globally.

## Strategy 2d.

Facilitate collaboration between school and community service organisations that work with the 'poor little ones' of society.

- An FSA school would create partnerships between community service organisations and the school when delivering authentic curricula experiences in a variety of learning environments.
- actively involving parents, family members and community members in various learning programs.
- Build partnerships within religious communities worldwide to strengthen the role of active ministry and formation programs in an FSA school, especially across educational and cultural sectors.
- Engage private sector entities including foundations and philanthropic agencies as partners in the teaching and learning programs in a school.

### THEME 3: THE VALUES

The Values - the core values from the Franciscan tradition that give life to the mission and vision of an FSA school

FSA has identified a number of possible Gospel values from the life and writings of Francis and the Franciscan spirituality of Clare. An FSA school could select a number of these core Gospel principles or values of our tradition as the infusion of that indescribable something we brand 'Franciscan'.

Compassion	Contemplation	Courtesy	Diversity	Hospitality
Humility	Joy	Justice	Love	Peace
Respect	Reverence	Simplicity	Service	Trust

Further to the identified values, schools should pay attention to what qualities would be, even now, meaningful to students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. FSA suggests you consider these qualities below as an example, and then align the principles with your unique school context.

- o [Embrace conversion](#) - the ability to be adaptable to circumstances of the times; the ability to change and exchange - both in and of self and others.
- o [Courage](#) – to take risks; growth mindset; to see possibilities; to venture into the unknown.
- o [Co-create](#) – embrace change and allow oneself to be changed in the process; to initiate change.
- o [Missionary / Messenger](#)– to go out to where the need is; to be a disciple of God, a messenger of peace and joy.

Another Franciscan, Br Bill Short, OFM in his address to the Franciscan Friars and educators in 2005, as they began to prepare for the 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Rule of St Francis tried to make sense of the spirit that is captured in the various forms of ministry. This Franciscan spirit is palpable at an FSA school, it is the obvious 'feel'; the 'experience' one gets when they come into the community. Visitors, staff, parents and students comment on it while Franciscans struggle to identify just exactly what it is. However, Br Bill Short OFM suggests five themes to help describe this "indescribable something" that animates Franciscan ministries such as an FSA member school. These themes, offers some food for thought in this context and adds to the richness and significance of the Gospel values that are woven into the fabric of an FSA school.

- Focus on the person over concern with the product.
- Generosity with gifts over ownership of earnings.
- Washing feet over reserved seats.
- Cortesia to people along the way.
- Joy, cheerfulness, the smiling countenance.<sup>4</sup>

### **1. 'Focus on the person' over 'concern with the product':**

“Consider, O human being, in what great excellence the Lord placed you: he created and formed you to the image of his beloved Son according to the body, and to His likeness according to the spirit.”<sup>5</sup>

This saying, from Francis' Admonitions (his pithy sayings that the brothers recorded – see FSA website: FSA04 Spirituality -Times, Life & Legacy of Francis\_J BB OFM) points to the great dignity of every human being as a living icon of Christ, the image of God. There are stories of Francis being deeply troubled whenever he saw or heard his brothers insulting the poor or cursing any creature. Just as we approach images of Christ with reverence, touching them delicately, embracing them with our sight, then we must do the same to those persons and creatures we meet during our daily experiences within our schools.

Here we touch on the personal that is typical of Franciscan ministries. The highest value is the person, not the coffee or the style of shirt. In the long run, it is always the people that count, not the other things in the paperwork, the meetings, the funding. It is always about people.

This 'personal touch' helps to explain why an FSA school will work best when it is a certain size; why a Franciscan school will call for retreat numbers to be smaller rather than a large year cohort; why we limit ministry and formation numbers and why we know what the right size is for the classroom. The need for face-to-face, direct personal contact helps to nurture relationships because we know that the heart of religion is relational. For the Ministry and formation dimensions of an FSA school that means a limited but sustainable size, in terms of staff on the Identity team, programs offered and resources needed or used.

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<sup>4</sup> Short, B. OFM. *What does it mean for a school to be Franciscan?:* Address to Padua College and St Anthony's School, Brisbane, Queensland. July 26, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Admonition V, in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents(FA:ED) I*, (New City Press: New York, London, Manila: 1999) p.131.

## **2. 'Generosity with gifts' over 'ownership of earnings'**

"Let us refer all good to the Lord God Almighty and Most High, acknowledge that every good is his and thank Him, from Whom all good comes, for everything."<sup>6</sup>

This profound insight of Francis' acknowledges that all of creation is of God's will, not ours: this includes our lives and what we have been individually given – talents, intelligence, family, friends to name a few. Our task therefore in an FSA school must be then twofold: to thank God and to generously distribute them to others. In this way we act out who we really are. We are like God when we share what we have been given.

We are not to 'hold onto' privileges or titles, establishing a pecking order in the hierarchy. The person who is served and the person serving are to be treated equally with equally great dignity and highest respect.

This equality is revealed in differentiated curriculum and pastoral structures but can be stressed in the ministry and formation programs we offer through low-key, informal, first-name relationships that are common in retreats and outreach activities. An FSA school should ask of the students, staff and community members to give of themselves with no outwards signs of difference. This is based on an idea of great fundamental equality – of kinship -: we are all brothers and sisters to each other. We can find no greater example of this directive than in the "Canticle of the Creatures" where Francis goes so far as to include every creature under heaven as brother and sister to him.

## **3. 'Washing feet' over 'reserved seats'.**

"Let those who are placed over those boast about that position as much as they would if they were assigned the duty of washing the feet of their brothers. And if they are more upset at having their place over others taken away from them than at losing their position at their feet, the more they store up a money bag to the peril of their soul."<sup>7</sup>

As Franciscans we do not cling to "reserved seating" at the Lord's right or left. On the night before he died, Jesus removed his cloak, tied a towel around his waist and, taking a basin, began to wash the feet of his disciples.

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<sup>6</sup> Francis of Assisi, earlier Rule XVII, in [FA:ED I](#), p. 76.

<sup>7</sup> Admonition IV, in [FA:ED I](#), p. 130.

Here is the revelation of the great dignity of Christ: he is like you and I, willing to get his hands dirty and be of service to others.

This picture of the “humility of God” is one we enact in an FSA school not only in the ministry and formation programs but throughout the entire school. When we lower ourselves, when we are humble, lowly and poor, we reveal our own likeness to God.

#### **4. *Cortesia* to people ‘along the way’**

“They must rejoice when they live among people considered of little value and looked down upon, among the poor and powerless, the sick and lepers and the beggars by the wayside.”<sup>8</sup>

In the time of Francis *cortesia* (in Italian) implied that one has the manners one would expect ‘at court’ – *courtliness*. Here is something noble, the code of behaviour of knights, but according to Francis, one of God’s characteristics. God is so just that he makes the sunshine on the just and the unjust, and sends the rains to fall for sinners, and for righteous people. Francis lives *cortesia*. He kisses the lepers, feeds robbers and includes women as his brothers.

This *cortesia* must be the code of conduct we live in an FSA community. Today a school might use words such as courtesy, manners and politeness to explain the code of conduct but it is good to be able to link the code to Francis and his ways. All must wash dishes, stack the chairs, sit with whoever comes along, serve whoever arrives and involve everyone in conversation regardless of their culture, dress, idiosyncrasies or class. All members of an FSA community are required to make people feel at home, to honour the God within everyone, and to do the menial as well as the sacred.

In doing this we – the individual involved – will be a place of welcome, in the spirit of community, and we will be touched by a deep appreciation for human frailty.

#### **5. Joy, cheerfulness, the smiling countenance**

“Let them be careful not to appear outwardly as sad and gloomy hypocrites but show themselves joyful, cheerful and consistently gracious in the Lord.”<sup>9</sup>

If you read an earlier version of this “Dictate on true and Perfect Joy” you have to laugh. When things become truly tragic Franciscans are known to quote the phrase:

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<sup>8</sup> Earlier Rule IX:2, in FA:ED I, p. 70.

<sup>9</sup> Earlier Rule IX:2, in FA:ED I, p. 69.

“This is perfect joy!” However, be careful how you understand the phrase. This is no shallow, happy go lucky attitude: joy is a responsibility towards others, a powerful spiritual force in the Franciscan tradition, one powerful enough to drive out forces of doubt and darkness.

All members of an FSA school have to have a genuine delight in people, in life, even in the absurdity of the hopeless challenges overwhelming us every day in school life: this is one characteristic of Franciscan spirit. It hopes in God’s power, not in individual efforts, and is therefore rather more optimistic than reasonable. There is no money for that, we can’t feed another ten because they didn’t register, there is no hot water left on the coffee van; yet somehow, in God’s great generosity the money is found, the food stretches and people are happy with iced coffee. This “let go and let God” attitude has been witnessed to by great founders and promoters of Franciscan ministries. Clare and her Poor Sisters must have embraced this attitude. One only has to listen to the stories and laugh with the Franciscan Sisters, Friars and the laity for a few hours about their experiences all over the globe to know this is true. They are great people with great insight, and a great faith to go with it. We must promote this same attitude and faith in students and staff in an FSA school.

These are only a few of the characteristics and values that give life to an FSA school community. They are simply expressions of Francis’s reading of the Gospel and following the life and teaching of Christ. With reflection every school can live Gospel understandings. Perhaps over time these characteristics and values have come to mark that special “Franciscan way” of our tradition. At FSA, we are sure that these characteristics and values, when lived with purpose, will be defining hallmarks of any FSA school.

## THEME 3: THE VALUES

Core values of the Franciscan tradition that give life to the mission and vision of an FSA school.

### ACTION ITEMS FOR AN FSA MEMBER SCHOOL

#### Strategy 3a.

Weave Gospel values throughout all policies, structures and programs to enhance the educational capacity of an FSA school.

- Living a renewed Christian mission advocating for the earth and those on the margins as a way to respond to urgent call from Laudato si' and Fratelli Tutti.
- Developing ministry, formation and pastoral programs throughout a school to foster the social and justice capacity of individuals.
- Enabling staff and students to exit with a social conscience; add to a new generation of socially active and justice focused citizens.

#### Strategy 3b.

Ongoing development of the religious and social well-being dimensions of ministry and formation programs.

- Create a culture that develops & conserves Franciscan identity and heritage.
- Actively provide opportunities for ministry and formation as a living example of the Gospel of Creation.
- Use faith in action as a way to enhance student engagement in the religious life of the school.
- Promote the religious and social well-being dimensions of ministry and formation to include the value of a full range of traditional and contemporary [e.g. embrace new technologies] justice and outreach experiences.

#### Strategy 3c.

Support and enhance the role of formation programs in the promotion of social responsibility, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue

- Build a culture that embraces diversity and dialogue.
- Enable intercultural dialogue skills, pedagogy, equipment and resources in support of co-curricular and formation programs, particularly as they apply to immersion experiences.
- Advocate for cultural diversity in the school through staff, community engagement, partnerships and artistic expressions.

#### Strategy 3c.

Foster the capacity to respond to major global challenges, from peace to sustainability across all areas of curriculum, school and organisational life.

- Promoting a wide range of contemporary Franciscan and societal issues such as the environment, peace, MDG's, and sustainable development by

partnering with Franciscans International, YouFra, Catholic Mission, Caritas and other Catholic / sustainable organisations.

## THEME 4: THE DREAM

### A Franciscan view about learning and teaching

St Bonaventure wrote that “wisdom ought to take possession of the entire person . . . the intellect, the affective life, and the person’s action.”<sup>10</sup> He also said that we study “in order to become good people.”<sup>11</sup>

FSA strive to help staff and students flourish as human beings. Our member schools aspire to educate and form staff and students who are challenged to live the gospel of Jesus Christ so that the entire community has the ability to live life to the full. FSA advocates that it is the responsibility of the whole community to enable deep learning across all areas of curriculum, school and organisational life in order for the fullness of life God most desires for us to transpire.

The Franciscan tradition imbues specific characteristics to a school mission, vision and work.<sup>12</sup> Franciscan education is an 800 year-old tradition born of the insights of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi and shaped by the example of their extraordinary lives. The tradition took root in the great medieval universities of Paris, Oxford, Cambridge and Cologne, where the followers of Saint Francis distinguished themselves as teachers and scholars. It was nourished by the philosophical and theological speculations of Saint Bonaventure, Roger Bacon, Blessed John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, to name a few. It was transplanted to Australia by Franciscan missionaries who have been working in Australia almost since the time of first European contact. When ships steamed into Australian harbours and ports in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century among the passengers were religious and clergy who had left their ministry in schools in Ireland, the United Kingdom, Italy and the United States to travel to Australia. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century it continues to inform the distinctive mission of FSA member schools to enrich the lives of staff and students by opening their minds to wisdom and their hearts to love.

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<sup>10</sup> St. Bonaventure, Sermon II on the Kingdom of God, 34.

<sup>11</sup> St. Bonaventure, Commentary on the Sentences, I:13.

<sup>12</sup> Seven Tenets of Franciscan Education, Siena College, New York, USA.

## Seven Principles of Franciscan Education for an FSA member school

The rich, ancient Franciscan Intellectual inquiry and spirituality is distinguished by, but not limited to the following features,

### 1. **Franciscan education is incarnational.**

Like St. Francis, Franciscan education takes the Incarnation seriously. It is convinced that the Creator is found in creation, the divine in the human, the spiritual in the material, the abstract in the concrete, the theoretical in the practical, and the exalted in the humble.

### 2. **Franciscan education is personal.**

Like St. Francis's approach to everyone he encountered, Franciscan education is based on love of the human person & on reverence for his or her God-given dignity. It values each individual as a gift. It sees that person as family of "Our Father," to be treated not as a commodity, a number or an object, but as a beloved brother or sister. That is why Franciscan schools know their students and staff well, call them by name and wrap around them in support and care.

### 3. **Franciscan education is communal.**

Like St. Francis, the education that bears his name is not only personal; it is profoundly communal. While it encourages individual achievement among its students and prods them to move beyond their comfort zones, it also provides a welcoming and inclusive home, a supportive community in which students are expected to participate in a spirit of mutual respect and to which they are expected to contribute to in a spirit of mutual service. Franciscan education is committed to providing ample opportunities for common worship, & it seeks to comprehend, cherish and sustain the profound interrelatedness & integrity of all of creation. It takes place within a community of shared values, and it prepares its students and staff to take their places in a global, indeed, cosmic community as responsible citizens & loving kin of the world's resources.

### 4. **Franciscan education is transformative.**

Like the preaching of St. Francis, Franciscan education is more than informative; it is transformative. It rejects the secular model of "value-neutral" education and is committed to a more traditional understanding of education as the value-based intellectual, moral and spiritual formation of students: formation that is ongoing and life-long; formation that leads to an ever greater openness to truth, beauty, goodness and love; formation that results in an ever more attentive, intelligent, compassionate & responsible embrace of our world.

### 5. **Franciscan education engages the heart.**

St. Bonaventure said that "*great as [the intellect] is in itself, its nature is to move the affect; to move a person to love.*"<sup>13</sup> Franciscan education has as much to do with opening

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<sup>13</sup> St. Bonaventure, Commentary on the Sentences, I:13.

the heart to love as it does with opening the mind to truth. It values interpersonal skills as much as intellectual abilities. It encourages passion for one's field of study certainly, but it also promotes compassion for one's neighbour in need. It defines human flourishing not in terms of how much one gains for oneself but how much one gives of oneself to others.

## **6. Franciscan education develops servant-leaders.**

- Most educational institutions would claim that they train the “leaders of tomorrow.” Franciscan education trains the servant-leaders of tomorrow. It considers the pursuit of a formal education to be a privilege, not an entitlement, and believes that with great privilege comes great responsibility for those who are not so privileged. The outreach and service dimensions of Franciscan education go deeper than the promotion of “volunteerism.” It encourages students—the future leaders of our society—to see themselves as humble servants and to understand their life's work as service in solidarity with their brothers and sisters, especially the least among us.

## **7. Franciscan education pursues wisdom.**

- The Catholic intellectual tradition is home to some of the greatest minds in human history. It is a tradition of inquiry that, at its best, has refused to divorce right thinking from right living, theory from practice, reason from faith, theology from spirituality, or pursuing the truth from seeing the beautiful and doing the good. In short, the Catholic heritage is a **wisdom** tradition.
- For Francis, the surest signs of the wise person are humility, personal integrity, lack of pretension and a preference for right action over mere words when sharing one's learning with others. Being right without being in right relationship with others, knowing what's right without doing what's right are betrayals of the Franciscan tradition and the Catholic intellectual heritage. St. Bonaventure insisted that “*wisdom ought to take possession of the entire person . . . the intellect, the affective life, and the person's action.*”<sup>14</sup> He also said that we study “*in order to become good people.*”<sup>15</sup>

These seven principles offer some explanation of how to encapsulate The Dream of Francis and Jesus in a school. Franciscan education is in the service of becoming “good people,” men and women of integrity who are equipped with a sensitive moral compass, the ability to discern what is of real and of enduring value, and a commitment to live whole and healthy lives.

Franciscan Schools Australia is at the service of our member schools.

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<sup>14</sup> St. Bonaventure, Sermon II on the Kingdom of God, 34.

<sup>15</sup> St. Bonaventure, Commentary on the Sentences, I:13.