



## Editorial

Peta Goldberg rsm<sup>1</sup>

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It seems that 2022 is a year for Jubilee celebrations. Not only has Queen Elizabeth II celebrated seventy years on the English throne but the *Journal of Religious Education* is also celebrating its seventieth year!

The *Journal of Religious Education* has grown over the past seventy years and with each growth spurt it has occasioned a new name. In 1952, when the first issue was published under the auspice of the De La Salle Brothers, its title was *Our Apostolate*. The decision to publish a religious education journal ten years before the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) was indeed visionary. In the sixty years since the Council, much has changed in the teaching of religious education especially within Catholic schools not just within Australia but worldwide.

When *Our Apostolate* first appeared in Australian Catholic schools, the method of instruction in religious education emphasised memorisation, the teacher was considered as ‘herald of the message’, and there was a strong connection between school and family and parish life. Towards the end of the 1950s, Kerygmatic catechesis, which began as a European renewal movement in the 1930s, was influencing teaching and learning approaches in religious education classrooms. In Australia, the kerygmatic method with its biblical-liturgical approach to catechetical instruction was most clearly evidenced in the *My Way to God* series which in September 1962 was mandated for use in all Catholic schools by the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Committee for Education.

As we moved into the 1970s, the anthropological or life-centred approach to religious education attempted to enliven the teaching religion. This method focused on the life experience of students and used a variety of teaching sources including audio-visuals, newspapers and magazines! Some schools even changed the physical set-up of their religious education classrooms. Often, students moved to a different section of the school into a space that was ‘neutral’ where there were no desks, chairs, or textbooks. This changed environment was intended to create an atmosphere in which discussion and sharing could take place freely.

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✉ Peta Goldberg rsm  
peta.goldburg@acu.edu.au

<sup>1</sup> Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Religious Education, Australian Catholic University, Brisbane, Australia

An adverse effect of the changed classroom environment was that it set religious education apart from the ordinary curriculum and made it less of an academic subject.

By the late 1970s many people were disillusioned with the anthropological or life-centred approach. Its strength was also its weakness. While beginning with human experience, it relied too heavily on discussion and failed to move forward; in fact, in most cases, it lacked academic rigour. It was during this time (1977) that the title of *Our Apostolate* changed to *Word in Life*.

The 1980s and 1990s was a time of huge development in religious education for Australian Catholic schools. Teaching and learning approaches to classroom religious education were influenced by academics such as Gerard Rummery, Thomas Groome, Terence Lovat, Graham Rossiter, Patricia Malone, Mary Boys, Norman Habel and Basil Moore, Gabriel Moran and Maria Harris all of whom published their research in the journal. In 1998, in response to the changing nature of religious education in schools, the journal was rebranded to its current title the *Journal of Religious Education*.

Throughout its significant history, the publication was led by an extraordinary group of men and women: Dr Christian Moe fsc; Br Gerard Rummery fsc; Dr Anne Benjamin; Dr Charles Hill; Dr Laurie Woods; Dr Louise Welbourne op; Dr Marian de Souza, Dr Jan Grajczonek as well as other guest editors.

In this Special Issue, we include peer reviewed articles and two articles republished from the Jubilee Volume of 2002 as well as reflections from a number of the members of the journal's Editorial Board.

The first article, *Assessing the affective dimension of religion within Muslim societies: The Sahin-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Islam, Short Form*, by Leslie J Francis, Hymeyra Guleryuz Erken & Andrew Village presents a study which developed and tested a Turkish translation of the 23-item Sahin-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Islam.

Tarcisio Carvalho's article, *Towards an ethical-dialogical approach to religious education: a theoretical analysis from the cases of Ireland and England*, draws on the experiences which support different conceptions and practices of religious education, in order to provide a normative framework for the organisation of RE in multicultural states.

We have included two articles from the 2002 Jubilee edition which are as relevant today as they were then. Terence Lovat's article, *Religious education: robust and bold for a multi-faith era*, and Mary Boys' article, *Educating Christians in order that strangers become neighbours*.

The reflections from some members of our Editorial Board included in this edition have not been peer-reviewed but provide their particular insights on the journal and other facets of religious education. Terence Lovat presents some personal reflections on the journal. Friedrich Schweitzer examines functions of religious education journals and international knowledge transfer. Richard Rymarz reviews "What's old is new again", while Kate Adams delves into religious education, children's spirituality and the problems of academic silos. Stephen McKinney discusses child poverty and the challenges for Catholic schools in the post-pandemic era, and Sandra Cullen describes the "pieces of a jigsaw" – developing a theoretical framework for research in religious education. David Hall and William Sultmann focus on contemporary religious education in their reflection, *Beyond the school gates*.

Peta Goldberg's review of *The Memory of Goodness: Eva Fleischner and her contributions to Holocaust studies* is included in the book review section. This text, edited by Emeritus Professor Carol Rittner rsm and John K Roth, published by Seton Hill University

Catholic Center for Holocaust Education (NCCHE), highlights the significant writings of Professor Eva Fleischner, a dedicated Catholic who was a pioneer Holocaust scholar and educator.

At the time of the Golden Jubilee of the journal in 2002, the then editor of the *Journal of Religious Education*, Dr Louise Welbourne op said “The discipline faces some major crises and religious educators are challenged to be prophets of the future. The privilege of the journal is to help religious educators to engage in teaching that liberates the minds and hearts of the learners from any oppression that could come from religious education that does not accommodate the best of research and scholarship” (p.1). This challenge remains as does the *Journal of Religious Education* and we look forward to it providing an avenue for research related to religious education for another seventy years!

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