

The Meaning of Life



Caravaggio 'The Call of Matthew'



mbfallon.com

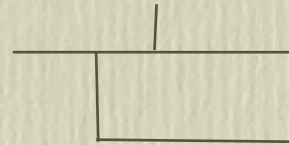
left menu: Education

Chevalier 2014

Busy - Iso gashii



Heart



Destruction

Jesus said to his apostles, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure ... And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.

- The word "educate" comes from the Latin "ducare"(to lead)
- with the prefix "ex"(out from).
- Michelangelo



‘The joys and the hopes,
the griefs and the anxieties
of the men and women of this age,
especially those who are in any way afflicted,
these are the joys and hopes,
the griefs and anxieties
of the followers of Christ.

Indeed nothing genuinely human
fails to raise an echo in their hearts,
for theirs is a community composed of men and women.

United in Christ,
they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey
to the kingdom of their Father
and they have welcomed **the news of salvation
which is meant for everyone**’(n. 1).

Catholic is not a brand name

We are to reverence and respect the unique mystery of each person's experience and the many ways in which people's experience is expressed culturally.

- The Church's mission is to share (with everyone who wants to listen) the Good News of what Jesus revealed about God

about the meaning of life

about how we can best live to the full.

- The Church aims to do this by what we teach, but words won't do it on their own.

We are to create communities that live the love that filled Jesus' heart and to invite people to share this experience.

The Church is not given a mission to control or force. The Church is only to present and attract, leaving people free to accept or reject, for that is the nature of love. That is the nature of God as revealed by Jesus.

Respect for people's experience and freedom

- Central to the mission of the Church is respect and reverence for each and every person

for the ways in which God is acting in their lives

and the ways in which, whether they realise it or not, they are responding to grace.

This means respecting people's freedom as to how they choose to respond to the Good News that we never cease to offer them.

‘The quality and effectiveness of religious education are dependent on how much individual freedom is respected’

(Crawford & Rossiter, page 47).

‘Create a respectful free ‘space’ around the young people’s faith. There is no principle more important than this in religious education’(C&R, page 48).

‘He was nine years old; he was a child; but he knew his own soul and treasured it, guarding it as the eyelid guards the eye’(Tolstoy L. Anna Karenina)

What, then, is the mission of your school?

We would like to be able to welcome every parent and every child and every person who would like to be part of, and contribute to, the school community.

As a school that is committed to be Catholic, we would want to welcome everyone's gift, everyone's experience, and share everyone's journey in an environment where the Good News of Jesus is lived in word and in lifestyle.

Our heart wants to be as large as the heart of Jesus and the heart of God.

While it is important that we have a truly Catholic heart, there are constraints of space, and so selections have to be made, obviously.

It is reasonable that, granted the limited available space, the school offers education especially to those families who are committed to the life and mission of the Church,

and, with a view to creating an effective Catholic environment in which to nurture the children and their parents, to invite onto the staff teachers and others who share this same commitment.

There is no point in inviting someone to be a member of an orchestra if they have no interest in playing an instrument.

But for staff and students we are not talking about a baptismal certificate. We are talking about commitment to the mission.

- The mission must include complete respect for the gifts and talents and commitment of each and every person here, for the Church is committed to such respect.

What we are asking today is: how can I see myself contributing to the school's mission?

How can we, as a staff, embrace this contribution with joy and gratitude.

We are all on a journey. We can only do our best.

The widow's gift

- Essential to the mission of the school is that together as a community we live to the best of our ability the life shown by Jesus,

and present this life to the children in the spirit or ‘feel’ of the school, in the way we treat each other, and in our teaching.

The Roman Congregation with special responsibilities for Catholic Education, in a document entitled: Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, states: 'The Catholic Educator must be committed to the task of forming men and women who will make the civilization of love a reality'(n.19).

As regards what we present in our school, the 1994 Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes with approval a statement from the Preface to the Roman Catechism published in 1566, just after the Council of Trent:

‘The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends.

Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action,

the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love.’

To summarise:

Some of the elements of our mission are

- to be open to embrace every person in his or her uniqueness, to be open to welcome each child, each parent and each member of the staff into the community of the School and the community of the Church of which the school is a most significant missionary arm.
- to welcome each person's gifts and insights
- to respect each person's freedom

So what is our vision? What will give us energy to engage in this mission?

We are to love one another as Jesus loves us (John 15:12).

God dwells in our community and makes his home in each person in it (John 14:23).

If we stay close to Jesus we will bear much fruit, but if we are separated from him we will be unable to produce that special fruit of love that he inspires (John 15:5).

We are invited to allow grace to purify our minds and hearts to be as pure as Jesus in our loving (1John 3:3).

- ‘God is love’ and that ‘if we live in love we are living in God and God is living in us’(1John 4:16).

We might find inspiring these words of Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin SJ. In an essay on purity of love he wrote:

‘Some day, after harnessing space, the winds,
the tides and gravitation,
we shall harness for God the energies of Love.
And then, for the second time
in the history of the world,
we shall have discovered fire.’



Matthew 11:28-29

Make these sentiments
my own in relation to
the school community.

A short break to chat with those beside you



Gustave Doré

Let there be light!

Wood engraving

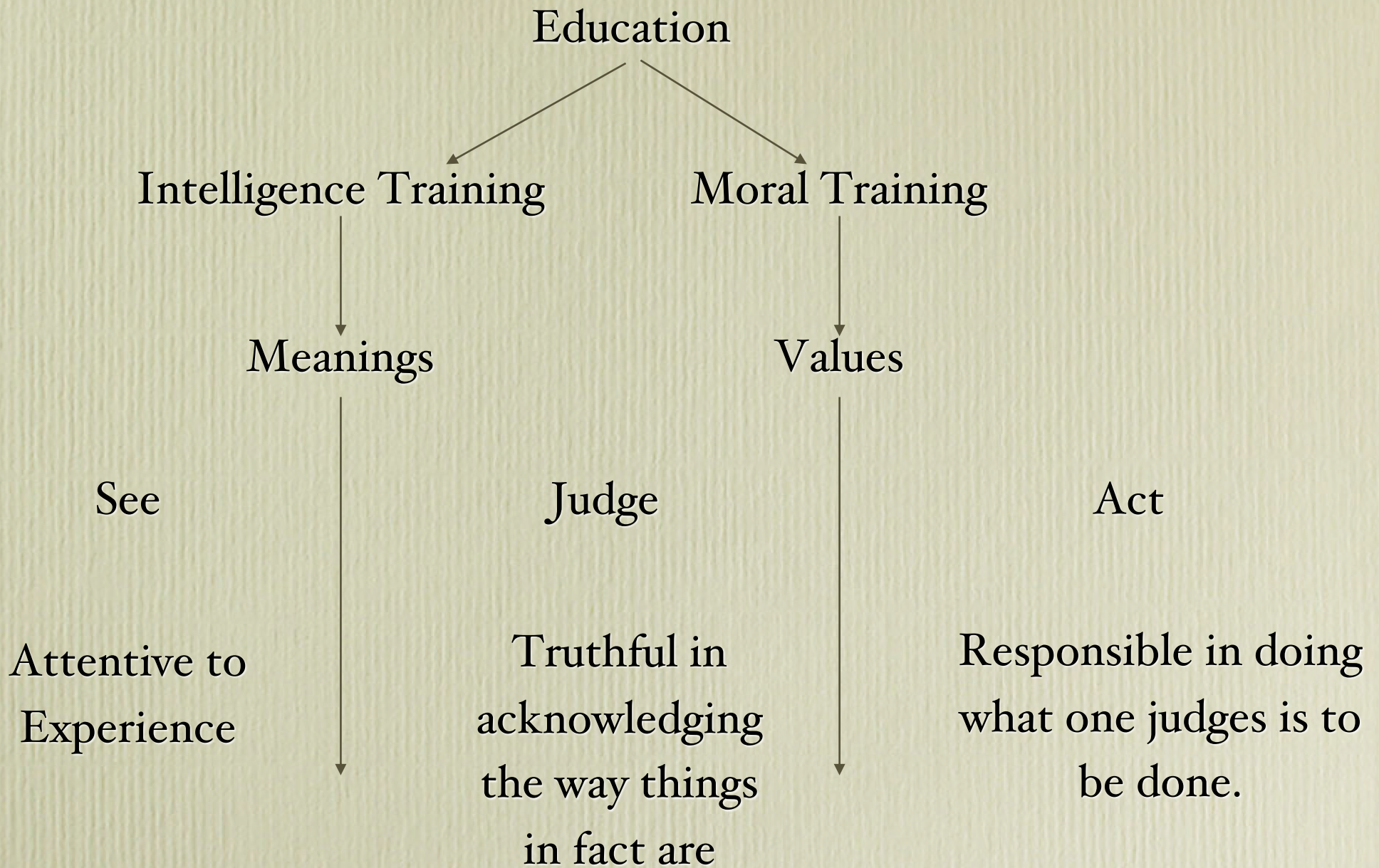
Education may be defined as drawing people into communion in the meanings and values that are the riches of our culture (including our Catholic culture), and enabling them to contribute to them.

Bernard Lonergan SJ Philosophy of God and Theology 1973

The person does not come first.
What comes first is the community.

It is within community
through the way persons relate
that the individual person emerges.

Since persons are the products of community,
and since the strongest and best of communities
is based on love,
religious experience and the emergence of
personality
go hand in hand.



Education / Teaching heals



The people were astounded
at Jesus' teaching,
for he taught with authority,
not like their scribes' (Mark 1:22)

Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith

‘The communication of truth as a professional activity is fundamentally transformed into a unique participation in the prophetic mission of Christ, carried on through one's teaching’(n.16).

‘The Catholic Educator must be committed to the task of forming men and women who will make the “civilization of love” a reality’(n.19).

Saint Paul urges us to 'do the truth in love'(Ephesians 4:15).

This is an ongoing process.

Bernard Lonergan lists 5 demands:

1. We must **be attentive** to reality and to our response

In everyone there exists a spontaneous, dynamic drive to experience life

- witness a small child / a teenager / an old person

This drive can be dulled so that we become

UNinterested, INsensitive, INattentive

We can exist in a world dominated by undifferentiated feelings

- either states such as fatigue, psychic contagion or drives such as hunger, sexual desire, the need to dominate

2. We must **be intelligent** –

we must look for meaning in our experiences

In everyone there exists a spontaneous, dynamic drive to inquire, to seek insight, to understand.

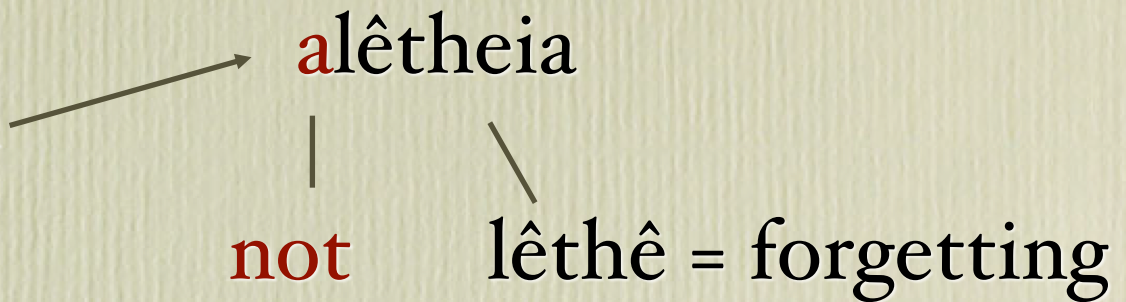
This required focus (concentration), discipline (method) and perseverance as we try to penetrate our experiences and persevere in seeking answers to the questions that experience awakens in us.

We can dissipate our energy in distraction

We can lapse into a stupour (we can be stupid!)

We can substitute memorised answers for understanding

3. We must **be reasonable** – we must check our insights to know what is real (how things are, and not just how things seem to me to be).

- We must want the **truth** 

What really is is not hidden behind a mask

What we judge something to be is what it actually is

In everyone there exists a spontaneous, dynamic drive moving us to penetrate below appearances and the way things seem in order to come to know the way things actually are.

This involves subjecting what we think are our insights to reflection, to checking in order to make sure, and always leading to a nuanced judgment that something is possible, probable, certain.

- it is possible to MISunderstand, to MIStake
- it is possible to work from false assumptions
- it is possible to prejudge something
(to make a judgment without experience or insight)

- it is possible to be trapped in an ideology
(a fixed mind-set that is not open to evidence)
- it is possible to conform to habit or trendy opinion
- it is possible to be gullible, silly, careless
- it is possible to be content with answers that suit us
- it is possible to rationalise
(backing up one's point of view with arguments
instead of looking for evidence to get to the truth).

4. We must **be responsible** - respond to what we know to be true in a creative, personal way.

In everyone there exists a spontaneous, dynamic drive moving us to contribute creatively to life.

To do this we need to know how to respond
and we have to decide to respond

We can have unreal expectations of ourselves, of others

We can accept unreal limitations

We can avoid reflection through activism

We can live in an ivory tower, away from experience

We can be immoral, give up hope for integrity

We can procrastinate

We can quieten our uneasy conscience by ignoring truth

We can refuse to go beyond bias (personal, group, societal)

5. We must be **be-lieve**

- be open to receiving and giving love.

‘Do not seek to understand so that you may believe;
believe so that you may understand’(Augustine).

‘This is my prayer, that your love may overflow more
and more with knowledge and full insight to help
you to determine what is best’(Philippians 1:9-10)

The key responsibility of a staff is to create an environment that is loving (**be-lieving**).

It is this that encourages staff and students to

- **be attentive** to reality and to our response to it
- **be intelligent** - look for meaning in our experiences
- **be reasonable** - check our insights so as to know what is real (how things are, and not just how things seem to me to be).
- **be responsible** - respond to what we know to be true
in a creative, personal
way.



It's no longer I
who am living

words and music Brian Boniwell
sung by Paul Gurr
from *The Lord Delights*
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