

Identity at SPC – A Series

These articles were published in the Especean (College Newsletter) over a series of weeks in 2021 as a reminder to all in the community about what we do at the College to reflect our Identity. They are a simple summary for all to understand and to help guide people's involvement.

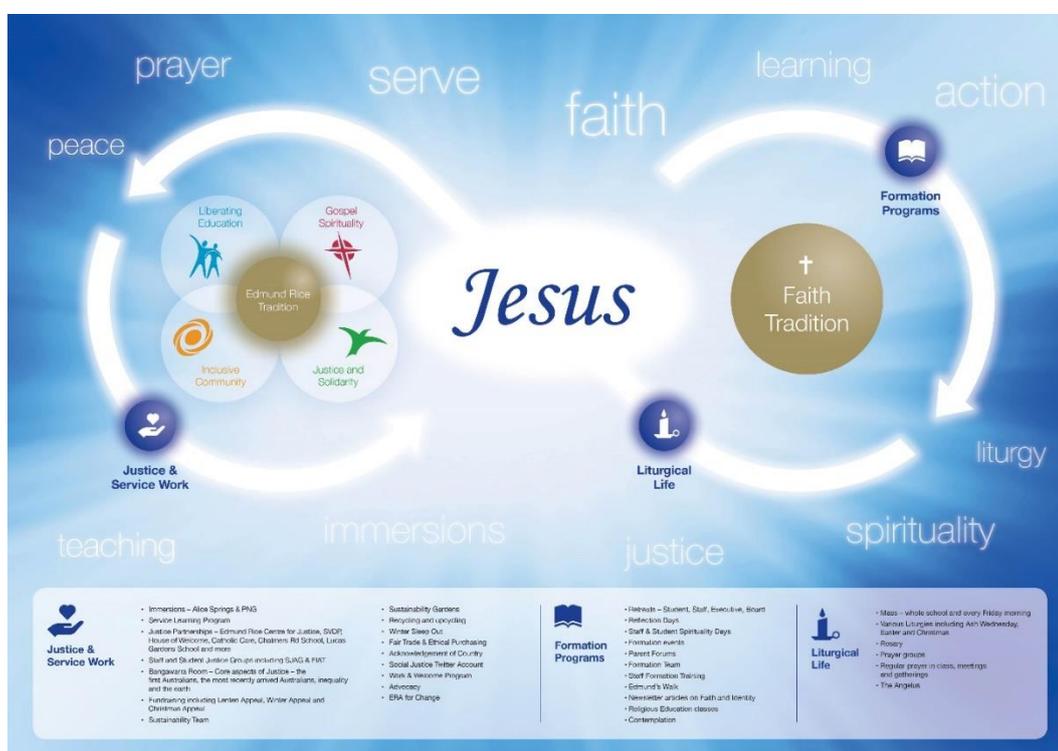
Gillian Daley

Director of Identity

Identity at SPC

So what is Identity all about at SPC? This really is a very big question, but essentially it is about ensuring the Catholic identity / direction / essence of the College through the lens of the Edmund Rice Charism or flavour, which is all about putting others at the centre of our lives. It can, at times, be difficult to put into words, but it is all that exists inside and outside the classroom to make St Patrick's College what it is. It encompasses all areas of College life as students are educated in the secular curriculum within the atmosphere of the Spirit, as St Mary of the Cross MacKillop talked about in her day. As a faith community this is the air we breathe while going about everything else. It is inextricably linked to who we are. It is the reason we choose to be at a Catholic school.

In recent years we have tried to summarise Identity at the College in a booklet which can be accessed on the website - [St-Pats-Identity-Publication WEB.pdf \(spc.nsw.edu.au\)](http://spc.nsw.edu.au) Below is the inside of this booklet. It tries to show the connection of all aspects with underlying themes and initiatives in our context. It is not all encompassing as there is always more that can be done and more that can be explained. It is a simple overview.



respect for the sacredness of the occasion, but not frowns and muffled voices or the like.

- An increasing number of people seem to think that prayer and ritual are passive events; something that happens **to** them rather than something they **partake in**. There is always time for silent and individual prayer, but communal rituals are about joining as one to deepen our collective and individual relationships with God and to connect with one another through this shared experience. Communal singing in celebrations is really important because “to sing is to pray twice” (St Augustine) and many other components of the ritual reflect our prayers going to God. Quakers are passive in their prayer, Catholics are not.

We celebrate many rituals at the College for a variety reasons, one of which is education (which is best when it is regular), but the most important reason is as pure and simple as worshipping God together. Our collective voices join to show our devotion and remind ourselves of God’s great blessings upon us.

Here is a basic list of events in the St Patrick’s College liturgical life:

- Whole School Masses - Opening Mass (start of the year) and Founder’s Day
- Parent Masses – Mothers’ Day and Fathers’ Day Masses
- Community Masses - Friday morning Masses in the Chapel at 8.15am nearly every Friday of the year; each led by a year group, house group or other group; open to students, staff, parents and friends
- Masses for Significant Events - Year 12 Graduation Mass, Year 6 Thanksgiving Mass, Year 5 Welcome Mass, Junior School Grandparents’ Mass, Junior School Mission Mass
- Masses on Senior Retreat and liturgies on all Spirituality / Reflection Days (Formation events)
- Whole School Liturgies - Ash Wednesday, Holy Week / Easter, Christmas
- Liturgies for many significant moments and rites of passage – Junior and Senior Leadership Voting Liturgies, Transition Liturgy for Year 11 students to receive their Black Tie
- Invitational Liturgies - The Festival of Carols and Readings in Advent, the occasional Mass on a Saturday connected to sport and/or Old Boys
- Other liturgies in class also take place across the year
- Reconciliation is offered to all Junior School classes and most Secondary RE classes throughout the year, as well as at lunchtimes especially in Lent
- The Rosary is led by a group of students in the Chapel each Wednesday, and students have the opportunity to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet at lunch on Fridays in the Chapel
- Various opportunities for prayer / liturgy in the Chapel at lunch especially in Lent and the Month of the Rosary (October)
- Prayer commences all gatherings from assemblies to class to meetings
- The Angelus (Regina Coeli in the Easter Season) is prayed over the PA each day for the whole community to join in
- Many staff and students represent the College at external celebrations
- Other Masses and/or liturgies take place for special events

While we would love to be able to hold all liturgies in the Chapel that just isn't practical, so it is important we remember that Christ is where we are gathered with the intention to pray. We can, in turn, receive Christ through Word and/or Eucharist. Both are valid and important, hence why our Sunday obligation involves both – the two peaks of our celebration.

Liturgies are usually student led and often created by students. They show that all of us are called to lead worship of God through our Baptismal promises. As a College we also have a Faith Formation / Spirituality Prefect who helps lead in this area, and the Faith In Action Team (Co-curricular for Years 7 – 9) not only work for justice but contribute greatly to the liturgical life often through leadership. In addition, we are also blessed with a wonderful College Chaplain, Fr Jack Evans, whom leads through compassion, love and example, and continues to minister to Old Boys of the College.

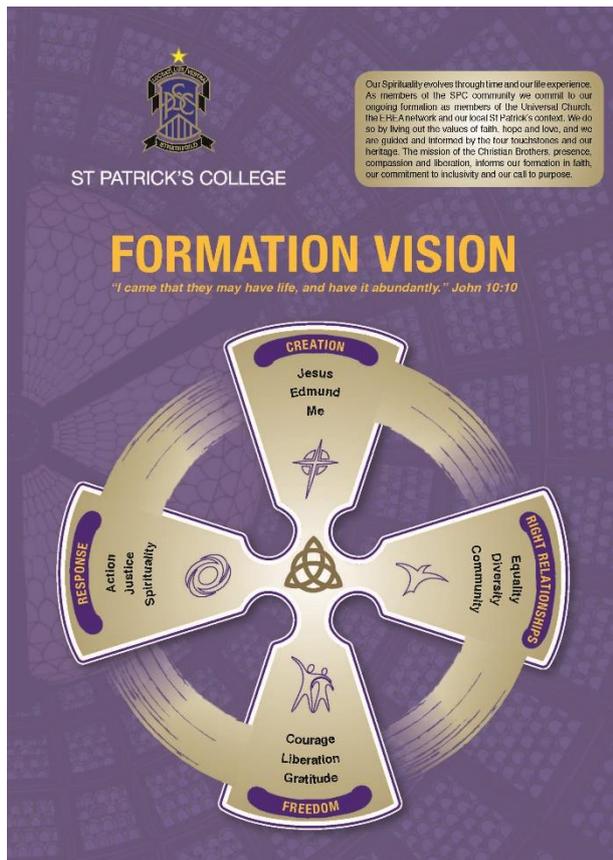
There is always so much more that can be said, but this is a simple overview of what happens in our liturgical life – the Church's liturgical calendar is rich and full, as is our College calendar.

Identity at SPC: Part 3

Formation

I continue looking at Identity this week through the key area of Formation. Technically everything the boys and staff do is a form of formation, as all activities, discussions, events and so on help form the person. Formation is defined by the College as “The path walked together growing our faith and understanding our beliefs and strengthening our relationships with self, others, creation and God.” (SPC Formation Framework) This area taps into students where they are at on their journey in life and looks at pertinent values, issues and faith development. All of Formation contributes to the holistic education of our young men.

The area of Formation is often known as or referred to as Spirituality. We talk of Reflection Days and Spirituality events. There is much that can be unpacked around spirituality, but we define it as “The awakening of the spirit within ourselves through our relationships. With challenge and surrender, in a dynamic context, we mature to embrace our whole self and reconcile our place in the world.” (SPC Formation Vision) Effectively, our spirituality is every part of our being from context to gender to education. Spirituality is all that **awakens** us in life. Everybody can access this in different ways, but as a faith community the foundation of our spirituality is our Catholic Christian Tradition. As a college it is our role to grow young men to understand what spirituality / formation is, what it involves, how it can be accessed now and beyond school, and then to have many experiences of it.



Formation is also not just for the young. We, as adults, continue to be formed through all our life experiences and through particular events we choose to take up. I'm sure none of us would say we are the same person we were at 21. Maybe our values are the same, but our understanding and approach definitely evolve, just as they do for the students and staff at the College.

We offer a graduated formation package outlined in our Formation Vision from Year 5 to Year 12 and for staff. Over the years we have also offered opportunities to parents and Old Boys to varied interest. Each family should have a copy of this document but you can also find it on the website [here](#). The cover page shown here points out the relationship between Formation and the EREA Touchstones, while outlining the core themes flowing through the program. The Formation

Vision is also very closely tied into the Wellbeing Framework, especially connected to the Spirituality Dimension. These two documents together help determine cohort themes, service work and focus areas throughout the year. Formation is NOT a one-off event. It is the culmination of many activities, events and discussions.

Here are some features and the structure of the SPC Formation Program:

- Each Stage is connected to a Touchstone.
 - Each event / program is different, but all build on the years before.
 - There is an entry point for every student in every year's program and many exit points to cater to a diverse range of students.
 - It may not always appear that a student has taken something away from a Reflection Day or the like. It is designed to sit with them, even without their knowing, and then come to the surface when needed after laying dormant for some time. Many students walk away profoundly affected and many others take time.
 - Specific programs are never the same as normal class and school, thus they take place off site, we wear mufti and activities are never the same.
 - All programs work towards the pinnacle of the Senior Retreat at the end of Year 11, then in Year 12 we step into a more individual approach to help prepare them for life beyond school, ensuring they never forget to feed their soul.
- Stage 3 (Years 5 & 6) – Gospel Spirituality
 - Stage 4 (Years 7 & 8) – Inclusive Community
 - Stage 5 (Years 9 & 10) – Justice & Solidarity
 - Stage 6 (Years 11 & 12) – Liberating Education

By the time a student finishes their journey at St Patrick's College they will have covered all areas and be able to apply to life beyond school.

Year	Formation Event	Core Theme
5	Belonging Day	Story – Jesus, Edmund and Me (Getting to know one another and SPC)
6	Camp Reflection	Creation (Reflective practice in nature)
7	Reflection Day	Right Relationships & Transition (Looking at uniqueness, friendship and teamwork)
8	Reflection Day	Equality, Diversity & Right Relationships (Human dignity in many different areas)
9	Integral Justice & Reflection Day	Action for a Better World (Connection to earth and people; sustainable practice)
10	Reflection Program (2 days)	Spirituality of Justice (Gaining purpose from doing what is right – reaping what you sow)
11	Retreat Day Senior Retreat (4 days)	Be Free – The Spirituality & Liberation of Men (What type of man you want to be and Gratitude) Stepping Out (All relationships, including self)
12	Spirituality Day	Diversity Within Unity – a personal approach (Selection of options that speak to the individual)

In addition to these events students are formed through their liturgical gatherings, assembly presentations, articles placed on Canvas or in the Especean, and their service and justice partnerships, to be looked at next week.

Fingers crossed for a completion of the Formation Program in 2021.

(Continued....)

Identity at St Patrick's College - Part 4

Justice and Service

Justice is at the heart of St Patrick's College, thanks to the legacy of the Christian Brothers. Edmund Rice is the foundation of this other person centredness - as he said, "give to the poor in handfuls", which can be applied to so many situations. Brother Philip Pinto, former Congregational Leader of the Christian Brothers worldwide, said that to be an Edmund Rice person you must put others at the centre of your life. This is a big request, and one that ultimately came from Christ, "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34) – others will know we follow Christ if we love one another. Justice is all about love, love in action.

The giving of money or almsgiving is really important because it is needed, but it is not the completion of this call from Christ. It is part of it and an important part, but if we simply throw money at something thinking we have done our bit, then we are not complete, and the cause of the problems will continue. The core of Justice at St Patrick's College is making a difference in the lives of others because we know "to whom much is given much is expected" (Luke 12:48). An authentic liberating education is one that allows the individual to learn and grow and then, in turn, use these benefits for the greater good of all. I could really talk about this for pages but want to simplify things today.

Our role is to not only bring action when we see injustice but also promote advocacy (amplifying the voices of those who are often unheard) and subsidiarity (ensuring those who are affected by a decision are included in the decision-making process). We need to help fix injustices or at least parts of them by speaking up. Silence is the enemy of justice. If we sit by, injustice grows. This can be seen in the famous words from Martin Niemoller, a former supporter of Nazi Germany:

"First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out— because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

Our role, our calling, our obligation is to speak for and with those who are marginalised. We must work for justice for refugees, First Nations peoples, the poor and lonely, and the earth. We must find the truth of issues, do something about them and help those affected speak. This is what underpins Justice and Service at St Patrick's College.

To be most effective we engage in everything from fundraising to awareness raising to campaigns for justice (e.g., the Petition to change laws giving refugees more stability in Australia - [SPC Making a Change for Refugees](#)), and the service of others. Everything ties together and does not lie in isolation, just like the area of service is connected to our Formation and our liturgical celebration. To be a Christian is to be all these things.

There are so many good causes in the world and so many things we can support. There are more than we can possibly handle so as a college, we have made a choice to focus on issues of injustice and support partners who get very little attention elsewhere. We are committed to our first Australians, our newly arrived Australians, those who live on the margins through poverty and societal rejection, and all of creation, specifically the earth. We need to balance what we do so we do not demand too much or cause 'charity fatigue', hence why often we do not add extra things even when some want them. We need to care for you as well as the other. Here is the basic outline of what we do or have in place as a College community:

Whole School

- Lenten Appeal – we have a 4-year rotation of Lenten Partners who we raise funds for and for whom we raise awareness.
- Winter Appeal and Winter Sleep Out – collection of blankets, toiletries, and food to support those who sleep rough; the small experience of sleeping rough.
- Christmas Appeal – collection of hampers for four different justice partners to bring joy in the Christmas season.
- Reconciliation Week (with Reconciliation Round of Co-curricular), Refugee Week and Laudato si'/Environment Week.

Cohorts

- Each Year group has their own Justice Partner. They raise funds, learn about, promote issues and the like with and for their partner. By the time a boy has moved through his schooling, he will have covered the full range of issues and partners. They are:
 - Junior School - Chetanalaya (House of Awareness) in Delhi, India, Catholic Mission and St Edmund's, Wahroonga [Importance of education, living in the majority world, young people with disabilities]
 - Year 7 – House of Welcome [Refugee support]
 - Year 8 – Caritas [Global issues including water and sanitation]
 - Year 9 – Pacific Calling Partnership, T-Bag Designs and TerraCycle [The earth – connects with their Formation event and is about sustainable action]
 - Year 10 – Chalmers Road School [People with Disabilities – includes a visitation program; and The Year 10 Justice and Advocacy Forum looking at many different issues and organisations]
 - Year 11 - St Joseph's Flex, Alice Springs and Edmund Rice Life Training Centre, Papua New Guinea [Economically, geographically, and culturally marginalised communities – connected to the Immersions in both places]
 - Year 12 – the Lenten Partners for the year
 - Staff – connection to cohort and whole school partnerships plus Work and Welcome [a program run to allow staff to contribute some of their pay to give work experience to refugees in Australia as we also learn from them].
- All these partnerships run throughout the whole year for learning but focus at a particular time for physical efforts.
- There are various forums and gatherings we participate in, as well as our Immersions in Year 11.

Service

- Shining Our Light (SOL) Service – Years 5 to 10 on a graduated program of serving your family, your community, your College and our community.
- Social Justice Service (SJS) – Year 11; working with and for various partners the College has, with those who are on the margins.
- Staff also partake in service work throughout the year; modelling to students and contributing to the common good, as is our calling.
- Parents too get involved in various ways, and it is the desire that Old Boys will continue to connect with partners beyond school. It is how our young men live their lives beyond St Patrick's College that is testament to what they have learned and who they are.
- One of the most notable contributions of our staff, parents and Old Boys is donations to and participation in our SVDP Night Patrol service. We go out twice a month and support three evenings with food.

Co-curricular

- Junior School Justice (JSJ) – one afternoon per week all year for boys in Years 5 and 6; working on various initiatives that support Justice at the College
- Faith In Action Team (FIAT) – one afternoon per week all year for boys in Years 7 to 9; working for justice with faith as its foundation and learning how to lead formation and liturgy.
- Social Justice Action Group (SJAG) – one afternoon per week for boys in Years 10 to 12; lead the College in Justice initiatives and campaigns; the voice of compassion.

All of us, whether adult or child, is called to contribute because it is the right thing to do. It is not about recognition and reward, but about humility and respect. Nevertheless, there are times people will be acknowledged as they deserve it, and in the hope it will encourage others. This is a very simple summary because it cannot all be included or even articulated – it is in the fabric of the College; a part of who we are. The mission of the Church is 'to make Christ known to others'. Our role in justice and service does just that – more than just words.

Hopefully this series has brought more light to what happens at the College around Identity. Please note it is not exhaustive, but I am here should you ever wish to ask a question.

Take care as we move gently through this time together. Yours in prayer and action,

The Relationship Between Identity and Wellbeing

In follow up to my earlier articles this term regarding what Identity is all about, I write today about the inextricable connection between Identity and Wellbeing at this College and everywhere else. One really cannot exist without the other, but often the lines become blurred and our human nature can lead us to thinking that the core of Identity is about ourselves. Despite what the name might suggest, the area of Identity (or

Mission) is really about the other, and how by understanding who we are we can make lives better for all. We all know that the Mission of the Church is to make Christ known to others.

Wellbeing looks to ensure the care and development of the whole person in a pastoral manner. Our College's Wellbeing Framework looks at the five core dimensions, being Spiritual, Academic, Emotional, Social and Physical, all of which could incorporate elements of our Identity; serving as a foundation in our Catholic context.

I want to stress that everything crosses over both areas at the College but sometimes we need to be reminded that our Identity (Catholic Tradition) calls us to go beyond. As a College, we put a lot of emphasis on Wellbeing, and rightly so. We look at mental health, care for our students in lockdown, matters around gender equality, self-esteem, goal setting, problem solving, getting out of our comfort zone, challenging ourselves, learning life skills and the like. We wouldn't be doing our jobs if we didn't tackle these issues.

However, the realm of Identity is to go beyond. While many issues like gender equality cross both areas, Identity in the field of Justice calls us to look at the big picture, like climate change, homelessness, the rights of refugees and people seeking asylum in our world, the position of and respect we have for First Nations people and more. It is to be outward looking. Nevertheless, you can't look outwards until you have looked inwards (which comes with liturgical practice and Formation, as well as our Wellbeing programs and initiatives), and then once you look outwards you can see better and succeed internally. Thus, both must go hand in hand.

This is difficult to talk about on 'paper', but something I have observed for a while. Often when people are asked to look at Identity at the College they name mental health and issues related to themselves. Without one bit of criticism, it speaks a lot to who we are as a society. Everything is important and all areas need to be covered. I simply raise this to help to remind us to look outwards; to see beyond and to know that some matters are more connected to Wellbeing and others to Identity. Ultimately one does not exclude the other, but each has their own zone.

Gillian Daley

Director of Identity

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