

## A Template for Understanding the Religious Identity and Mission of a School

This template for understanding and promoting the religious charism of a school comes from an address to the Conference of the Union of Superiors General given at Rome in 1987 by Fr Claude Maréchal AA. He presented it as a way of speaking more concretely about the charism of Religious congregations. It has been taken up and adapted for facilitating discussion about the religious identity of any community or institution, including schools.

Maréchal's model has been used widely in Jesuit schools as a way of looking at issues of identity and mission. It has been well received as a very intelligible and practical way of looking at elusive concepts of school "ethos", "character", "vision" and "identity".

- A story to enter** The shared history of the school, of its founding tradition, and of the individuals (staff and pupils) who make up the school community today
- A language to speak** The articulation of who we are and what we are about (a "spiritual theology")
- A group to which to belong** Development of personal identity through being part of a community; what each individual has to contribute; the importance of reconciliation and a "path back"
- A way of proceeding** "The way we do things round here"; a recognizable way of making decisions and implementing them which arises from the underlying values, vision and traditions of this institution
- A work to do** The apostolic dynamic of the school; "Men and women for others"; "God has committed some work to me which God has not committed to another"; a sense of mission
- A face of God to see** Encountering the Risen Lord; attentiveness to the activity of God in my life; all is gift

If a school is successful in promoting and living out its identity and mission, each of its members (staff, pupils, governors, parents, former pupils) will have something to say about each of the six headings Maréchal suggests.