

## ACU faith formation experts inspire education leaders in UK, Ireland to evangelise in schools

Growing numbers of Catholic educators in the United Kingdom and Ireland are leading evangelisation efforts in Catholic schools thanks to a unique faith formation program developed by Australian Catholic University (ACU).

The Spiritus program, developed by ACU's La Salle Academy, aims to support and equip Catholic teachers with the practical skills to evangelise in Catholic school settings. The accredited program has been presented in nine countries this year, including a recent presentation to Catholic school principals in England, Scotland, and Ireland.

Director of Teacher Faith Formation Programs at La Salle Academy, Peter Woods, said Spiritus offered a contemporary approach to evangelisation in Catholic schools based on two high-impact areas.

"First is peer-to-peer student ministry within schools, and the second is what we call staff witness and leadership," Mr Woods said.

"When these two high-impact areas work well within a Catholic school, the evangelising impact can be high."

According to Mr Woods, evangelisation programs in the UK and Ireland are predominantly led by ecclesial movements, rather than by educators.

"The general sense in the UK is very similar to Australia, with decreasing numbers in Church attendance and the increasing lack of student formation and evangelisation when students arrive at a Catholic primary or secondary school," Mr Woods said.

Barbara Coupar, Director of the Scottish Catholic Education Service said Spiritus 2022 had not only given the participants the key to unlocking the New Evangelisation for young people in schools and parishes, but the strength to push open the doors too.

"The programme was sensitively created to offer human, spiritual, pastoral and intellectual formation that connects apostleship with discipleship," Mrs Coupar said.

"The days were full of deep discussion, fraternal sharing, prayerful reflection and a profound sense of hope and joy.

"This is the third year that Scotland has participated in Spiritus with our English, Irish and Australian friends and we are very much looking forward to the fruits of this work, and growing the network of faith-full Catholic leaders in the coming years."

Headmaster of Worth School, Sussex, Stuart McPherson, was one of a number of principles who registered for the Spiritus program, saying it was "deeply encouraging of mission, revitalising of faith and rich in fellowship".

"Peter Woods, Nathan Galea and Br David Hall brought characteristic energy and truly inspirational presentations on various aspects of the New Evangelisation and how it can be made to live at the heart of every Catholic school," Mr McPherson said. "We can't wait for Spiritus 2023 at Worth next September."

ACU's La Salle Academy aims to develop and deliver quality teaching and research programs in realising the aspirations of the New Evangelisation.

**Peter Woods is available for interview.**

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