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A study of 1st and 2nd year Catholic university students' perceptions of their senior religious education classes in Catholic schools in Western Australia

Leslie G. Saker
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**A STUDY OF 1ST AND 2ND YEAR CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY STUDENTS'
PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SENIOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSES
IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

Submitted by

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B.Ed (University of Queensland), M.Ed (Fordham University)

A dissertation submitted in
fulfilment of the requirement for the
degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

School of Education

Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences

EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

November 2004

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of 1st and 2nd year university students of their years eleven and twelve religious education classes at a Catholic school. A secondary purpose was to understand students' acceptance or non-acceptance of official Catholic Church doctrine/dogma and why. Four research questions were asked to direct the study.

1. Are Catholic schools in Western Australia carrying out the mandate for their existence, that is, the Catholic education of their students?
2. Did students perceive their religious education classes as aiding their religious development?
3. Are students accepting or rejecting important doctrinal teachings of the Catholic Church? If so, why is this the case?
4. How do students perceive their lived experience and the Catholic Church's teaching on morality?

Catholic students who had spent their senior years (11 and 12) at a Catholic school, who had studied religious education and who are now 1st and 2nd year students in the School of Education at Edith Cowan University constituted the participants for this study.

The study centred upon descriptive research using the interpretative paradigm with a variety of methods to build upon the descriptive approach. With the collection of data, there were two stages. Stage one of the study used the quantitative method of research, the questionnaire, which consisted of six constructs and 75 items administered to 133 1st and 2nd year university students. The analysis of the questionnaire allowed the researcher to prepare for stage two, the interview stage (qualitative research). This stage involved one-to-one interviews. The questions for the interview stage were developed from the analysis of the questionnaire data. To

enhance the validity and reliability of the study triangulation of the data was undertaken.

The major purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of 1st and 2nd year university students of their years eleven and twelve religious education classes at a Catholic school with the hope that the findings would assist framers of the religious education curriculum in designing religious education programs that meet the needs of senior students. Teachers of religious education, it was also hoped, would benefit from the findings of this study, by seeing how students perceived their religious education classes and why, and then acting upon the findings.

Catholic schools are established in Western Australia with a mandate from the Bishops. It is hoped that this study will discover whether Catholic schools are carrying out this mandate and that the Bishops will act upon the findings.

The challenges are there. The good faith of the people in educational leadership roles has been obvious to me during my eleven years in Western Australia. Let's now look at the findings of this study, the recommendations and conclusions arrived at so as to ensure that our Catholic schools are institutions where Christ is the centre of students' lives and the basis for the school's existence. Let us work together to ensure that the 2000 year tradition of the Catholic Church continues into many generation to come by ensuring our Catholic Schools are citadels of the Catholic Faith, the Faith of our Fathers.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best on my knowledge and belief:

- (i) Incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education.
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L. G. Saker



11/11/04

To

The Marist Brothers of the Sydney Province

and

the teachers of religious education in Western Australian Catholic schools

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This study would not have been possible without the co-operation of the 1st and 2nd year university students from Edith Cowan University. I acknowledge their assistance and thank them for their enthusiastic participation.

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Luke Saker

November 2004

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Catholic schools should offer an educational program which enables students to acquire knowledge which equips them for a technological and scientific age, but in the authentic Catholic school the content of the curriculum, the educational process used and the educational environment should enable the students to understand and experience that they are made in the image and likeness of God.

Quillinan, 2002a:52.

This study focussed on the description and analysis of 1st and 2nd year university students' perceptions of the senior religious education classes in a Catholic school. The study also explored university students' knowledge, understanding and acceptance of the Catholic Church's teaching of official doctrine/dogma and whether or not Catholic schools are carrying out the reason for their existence, that is, the Catholic education of their students.

This chapter discusses why Catholic schools were established, the reason for Catholic education, the role of the Catholic school, religious education in a Catholic school and how students perceive Catholic schools, to provide the link to the rationale and problem statement of the study.

Why Catholic schools?

The greatest challenge to the Catholic education system, as we move into the third millennium, is to revisit the whole rationale behind the establishment of Catholic schools and to discover if these establishments are carrying out the primary reason for their existence, namely the Catholic education of their students. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) in the document *Gravissimum Educationis* (Declaration on Christian Education), which was promulgated on October 28th 1965 (Flannery, 1975) states that all people have an inalienable right to education. Having

made a general statement concerning education, the Council Fathers then speak of the necessity for Bishops and Priests to ensure that within the school, all Catholic students, who are the hope of the Church, enjoy a Christian education.

Since the 19th century the Catholic Church, in Australia, has taken very seriously the establishment of Catholic schools and the Catholic education of their students. Collins (1984) speaks of the expectation of Catholic schools in the area of religious education:

The historic decision taken to continue with Catholic schools in all states about 1900 was based on the expectation that the religious education offered in those schools would be a solid base for the practice of the faith and be a protection against immorality and secularism.

Collins, 1984:14.

The schools that the Catholic Church has established, both in Australia and overseas, are primarily for religious education, and this decision to establish a distinctive form of education came at great financial cost to the Church and to the parents who sent their sons or daughters to a Catholic school. Vast sums of money were spent in keeping these schools operational, and this is a testament to the Catholic Church's belief that all Catholic students should have access to a sound secular education and grounding in the basic tenets of their faith. Catholic parents also sacrificed, and still do, a great deal in insisting that their child receive a Catholic education. This sacrifice, especially until the Federal government began to provide state aid in 1962, included monetary hardship for many Catholic parents. There was also the physical work taken on by the Parents and Friends Associations to save the school from huge debts. Parents who wanted to see the Catholic school system succeed spent many a weekend at the school repairing buildings, planting grass on a newly dug oval, or constructing toilet blocks. Their only tangible reward was a few drinks after the day's work with the school staff, who also assisted. Then there were the religious brothers

and sisters who conducted Catholic schools as a way of keeping school fees to a minimum and ensuring that the students at the school were receiving religious instruction. When the Marist Brothers, for example, took control of Parramatta Marist in 1875 school fees were a penny a week and would be collected by the Brother in the first class of the day each Monday morning. The period, before any form of government aid, was financially tough for the Catholic school but the Church, religious orders and parents were determined that a Catholic educational system should flourish so that students could receive an education. Campion (2001) speaks of the importance of religious brothers and sisters in the Catholic education system in the 1880s:

No one should take such heroic generosity (the work of religious in Catholic schools) for granted. The Catholic people and their leaders relied totally on this resource. In 1885, at their first Plenary Council, the bishops announced their major pastoral strategy; every parish should have a school; and in a new parish the first thing to be built was the school. They (the Bishops) felt confident that they would find religious to staff the schools; and they were right. In 1880 there were 815 teaching religious sisters in Australia; by 1890 more than 2000 and by 1910 more than 5000. So the parish school, staffed by religious, became the single most important element in the Australian Catholic story.

Campion, 2001:2/3.

The Church viewed the Catholic education of students as of the utmost importance. In fact, the New Code of Canon Law (1983) makes it quite clear, if there is no Catholic school in the diocese, the Bishop has the responsibility of establishing such a school. School first, church second! The Catholic Church would view the accessibility of Catholic education to all Catholic children as vital in the Church's mission, in its aim of evangelisation and in answer to the question, "Why have Catholic schools?" It is quite clear that the Catholic Church still places great emphasis and hope in Catholic schools. The Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education in its 1998 document, The

Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, says this of Catholic schools:

The Catholic school finds its true justification in the mission of the Church; it is based on an educational philosophy in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony. The Catholic school helps in achieving a double objective: of its nature it guides men and women to human and Christian perfection and at the same time helps them to become mature in their faith.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998:16.

Fahy (1992) states that a Catholic school is founded on the dual vision of seeking to become a community made up of parents, teachers and students who, together, attempt to integrate human learning and religious faith.

Keane and Riley speak of the expectations of a Catholic school system:

The ethos of a Catholic school is rooted in a 2000-year-old tradition of being a Catholic Christian. The Catholicism of the school is not an optional appendix to the identity of the school but a fundamental reference point for its ethos and the shape of its education. A Catholic school will seek to celebrate its Catholic identity by drawing from the deep wells of Catholic heritage. The Catholic school community should treasure its Catholic charism.

Keane & Riley, 1997:16.

The New Code of Canon Law (1983) states that a Catholic school must be based on the principles of Catholic doctrine and that teachers in the Catholic system must be outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life.

At the completion of Year Twelve many students from Catholic schools move on to tertiary studies, some of them intending to teach in a Catholic school (and to teach religious education) after graduation. This study investigated university students, who have completed senior religious education classes at a Catholic school, how they perceived the school they attended, and whether these perceptions were the same as those envisioned in official Church documents. Earlier, Saker (1998) found that

students did not perceive a Catholic school as being established for the Catholic education of the students but rather for its reputation in the community.

Catholic schools in Western Australia

The Western Australian Catholic Bishops, who are responsible for Catholic education in their dioceses, established the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia in 1971. The Bishops gave the Catholic Education Commission a mandate to oversee the implementation of their policies in the Catholic education system, through the establishment of the Catholic Education Office, which was officially opened in 1972. The present mandate was given by the Bishops in January 2001 and continues until January 2007. This document, being public, is open to scrutiny and questioning. The question this study asked was: Are Catholic schools carrying out the mandate of the Catholic Bishops of Western Australia?

Mandate from Western Australian Catholic Bishops.

We, the Bishops of Western Australia, mandate the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia to foster the development and improvement of Catholic schools, and to act on behalf of the Catholic community for the benefit of Catholic school-aged children.

The Commission is appointed by the Bishops of Western Australia and remains responsible to them. The Commission is to generate State-wide policies and also to assist individual Bishops with schools in their own dioceses.

The Commission will continue to recognise and make provision for Religious Institutes that operate Catholic schools in Western Australia, and will respect their particular charisms.

Bishops of Western Australia, 2001:5.

The purpose of a Catholic school is to proclaim the Word of God through its Christian witness and its curriculum in educationally appropriate ways, trusting always in 'the divine power of the Message'.

Op.cit:14.

Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia responds to the Mandate.

In a draft document, in preparation for responding to the Bishop's Mandate letter, Living the Vision (2000), the Catholic Education Commission said this of Catholic education:

We in Catholic Education seek to create environments that enhance learning, nurture young people and empower them to live the Catholic faith in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

Catholic Education Commission, 2000:12.

The Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, in 2002, issued its revised 1992 vision statement for Catholic schools. The revised vision statement places strong emphasis on the Christian vision and the Catholic tradition:

The Catholic Education Office is committed to serving Catholic communities in accordance with the Mandate of the Catholic Bishops of Western Australia. In a Catholic school, Christ is the foundation of the whole enterprise. All members of the school community are invited to share in the Christian vision as this is interpreted in the Catholic tradition. This vision and way of acting gives a Catholic school its special character. Gospel principles become the educational norms that provide the school with its internal motivation and purpose.

The Catholic Education Commission, 2002:1/2.

Catholic schools respond.

In response to the Catholic Education commission both primary and secondary schools in the Archdiocese of Perth were asked (by the commission) to draw up a mission and vision statement for their school. Newman Senior College published its revised mission statement in 2003:

Newman College is a Catholic co-educational secondary school that provides a rich, balanced and comprehensive education in an open, friendly and enjoyable environment where Christ is the focus. The families, staff and students of the College community aim to recognise and develop the full potential of each student.

Newman College, 2003:2.

Within the same document, Newman College stated the aims of its religious education program:

We believe that the person of Christ is central to our Catholic faith. Religious education involves the students in: Understanding their **Catholic tradition** and culture; **living their Christian values** in truth, wisdom and judgement and celebrating their faith (my emphasis).

Newman College, 2003:6.

The vision statement of St. Augustine's Primary School Rivervale (revised from 1996), states that developing full human potential in their students is important, as well as assisting students to recognise their worth as a human being:

St Augustine's is a **Catholic** community based primary school, concerned with the recognition of the blend of culture, committed to fostering a **total faith life development** showing tolerance and respect where children will grow to their potential and recognise their self-worth (my emphasis).

St Augustine's, 2003:2.

The mission statement of St. Augustine's Primary School continues with the aims of developing the full potential of the student, respect of all people and, importantly, creating an environment where the Catholic faith is valued and promoted:

St. Augustine's strives to provide a school environment: where the **Catholic faith** is valued and **promoted**. St. Augustine's encourages children to strive for excellence. It does this by providing opportunities for each child to develop their potential; to **respect** individuality; develop the special gifts of each person; to integrate and respect the cultures of others; to foster involvement between the **family, school, parish and community** and to raise parental awareness of their role in the education of their child (my emphasis).

St Augustine's, 2003:3.

In the mission statement from Parramatta Marist High School, in Sydney, New South Wales, Mulligan (1991) speaks of celebrating **traditional** Catholic occasions with appropriate liturgies, as well as teaching students about **traditional Catholic beliefs and symbols** (my emphasis). These are two important reasons, according to

Mulligan, for Catholic education and for the continuance of Parramatta Marist High as a Catholic school.

The role of the Catholic school

To gain an insight into what the Church believes the role of a Catholic school is, it would be beneficial to look at three official Catholic Church statements on what constitutes a Catholic school.

Pope John Paul II in his Address to the Bishops of England on March 26th 1993, speaks of the role of a Catholic school as being one of service to the common good, a role which encompasses bringing forth a person in whom moral excellence is developed to the fullest.

The Congregation for Catholic Education in the document, The Religious Dimension of a Catholic School (1988) sums up the role of a Catholic school:

From the first moment that a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illumined by the light of faith, and having its own unique characteristics. An environment permeated with the Gospel spirit of love and freedom. In a Catholic school, everyone should be aware of the living presence of Jesus the "Master" who, today as always, is with us in our journey through life as the one genuine "Teacher", the perfect Man in whom all human values find their fullest perfection.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998:12.

Holohan (1999a) speaks of the role of a Catholic school as one of evangelisation. He reminds us that Catholic schools are to be a community witness and the Catholic school exercises its ministry through religious education:

The Catholic school will strive to be a community witness, and to exercise the ministry of the word through primary proclamation, initiatory catechesis activities, and homilies appropriate to students and through religious education.

Holohan, 1999a:36.

Religious education in Catholic schools

Before defining religious education it is important, for this study, to differentiate between catechesis and religious education. Fahy (1992), Flynn (1993a), Flynn and Mok (2002) in their collective works have shown that catechesis is being carried out very effectively in our Catholic school system.

Classroom religious education is where concern has been raised, by various Parents and Friends Associations and Parish Priests, in recent years. Some Diocesan Bishops in Australia, (Pell, Sydney; Hart, Melbourne; and Hickey, Perth) have also expressed concern with the quality of religious education being taught in Catholic schools. All three Bishops have argued for a more content based religious education curriculum.

Catechesis is the faith development of the student, whereas religious education aims to instil the knowledge component of faith development. In the faith development of the student both catechesis and religious education are complementary. It could be argued that you can't have one without the other and justify the religious education program in Catholic schools. It is very difficult to argue a case for catechesis, alone, to meet the faith development of the student. Just as it is very difficult to argue for religious education, alone, to meet the student's faith development. The concern, mentioned above, is that catechesis alone is the predominant, if not the only, methodology used in the religious education classroom in Western Australian Catholic schools in 2004.

The General Directory for Catechesis (1998) tells us that:

Catechesis will always draw its content from the living source of the word of God transmitted in Tradition and the Scriptures, for sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the word of God, which is entrusted to the Church.

Congregation for the Clergy, 1998:101.

O'Collins and Farrugia (1991) speak of catechesis as referring to any instruction meant to deepen the Christian faith, even if it is given to those already baptised. The ultimate responsibility for catechesis lies with the whole community. In short, catechesis is the role of the child's parents, the parish and the child's close family, whereas religious education is the role of the Catholic school which is hopefully supported by parents.

The General Directory for Catechesis speaks of religious education classes as demanding the same scholastic rigour as secular subjects being taught at the school:

It is necessary, therefore, that religious education in schools appear as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigour as other disciplines. It must present the Christian message and the Christian event with the same depth with which other disciplines present their knowledge. Religious education in schools underpins, activates, develops and completes the educational activity of the school.

Congregation for the Clergy, 1998:74.

This is obviously not the case with catechesis. Crawford and Rossiter, (1985), give a clear and concise definition of religious education:

Religious education aims at deepening young people's knowledge, understanding and affective appreciation of the Catholic faith tradition. Religious education is thus especially concerned with informing young people about religion so that they will be in a better position to assess what religion and personal faith may contribute to their lives.

Crawford & Rossiter, 1985:42.

Change and confusion in the religious education classroom

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) had a profound effect on the teaching of religious education in Catholic schools. Out went the 'penny catechism' with its implied indoctrination methodology. A new approach to religious education classes was adopted (the kerygmatic educational methodology) that had, as its emphasis, proclaiming the good news of salvation. This was to be achieved with the aid of various Christian publications: 'My Way to God', 'the Catholic Catechism', books one

and two and supplementary magazines. These were the resources used by religious education teachers during the late 1960s. The resources tended to emphasise the catechetical approach to religious education classes.

The 1970s saw an experiential approach become the norm for the teaching of religious education. The emphasis was now on reflecting on the student's own experience as a basis of discovering God's presence. Contemporary texts and music were the resources used. One could argue that this was the 'feel good' method of teaching religious education.

Vatican II had changed so many of its 'unchangeable teachings' that religious education teachers were not sure what was official teaching and what was not. Now, there appeared to be no right and wrong answers. Personalism became the 'catchcry' of religious education classes. The covert danger with this methodology is that it may lead students to think/believe that 'if it feels right, do it!'

The cry of the humanitarian movement became the focal point of many religious education classes in Catholic schools, 'if it doesn't hurt anyone else, then it is ok.'

The early 1980's saw another shift in the way religious education classes were being taught. The emphasis was now on education, learning from and about a range of religious issues and religious traditions. The resources used included various textbooks and audio-visual material. It was said, of this methodology that when a Catholic student completed his/her secondary school they could tell you more about other religious traditions than their own faith tradition.

The post-Vatican Council era, for the religious education teacher, was a period of uncertainty. Some teachers of religious education became confused. There no longer appeared to be any certainty, no longer any black and white answers. Teachers became increasingly hesitant when stepping into a religious education classroom.

If teachers did approach authorities, on a particular Church teaching, they were likely to receive conflicting opinions about what the Council Fathers did say in certain areas of systematic and moral theology.

Being confused as to what the actual Church teaching was, many teachers lacked the confidence of passing on these teachings to their students. To add to this confusion in the area of religious education, the numbers of religious, brothers and sisters, in Catholic schools, who taught the majority of religious education classes, declined rapidly, leaving unprepared lay teachers (not the fault of the lay-teacher) to take over the teaching of religious education.

It would be many years before Universities and Catholic Institutes provided courses to prepare lay teachers to teach religious education in Catholic schools. By the late 1980s, the teaching of religious education in Catholic schools had reached a crisis point. Dogma and doctrine was (in general) no longer being taught. Many teachers were 'filling' their religious education classes with videos, for example, 'The Mission', 'Black Robe' and 'Romero'. The religious education curriculum was inadequate to assist teachers who were not trained to teach the subject. A parent who is a student in my moral theology unit said recently that 'the religious education classes of the 1970's and 1980's resulted in a generation of Catholics leaving school with little or no idea of what the Catholic Church was about'.

The 1990's saw more changes to the religious education curriculum, and the teaching of religious education, with official Church documents urging educators to return to the teachings of Vatican Council II. Holohan (1999a) speaks of the need for a religious education curriculum that will reflect the renewal of Vatican Council II.

Catholic Education Offices around Australia, from the early 1990s onwards, have been re-writing religious education curricula in an attempt to reflect official Catholic

teaching in the spirit of Vatican Council II. This study aims to discover if their efforts have borne any fruit.

How students perceive Catholic schools

When I was teaching religious education to senior students, in my first religious education class of the year, I would ask this question: "What is the difference between a Catholic school and a State Government or independent Non-Catholic school?" Invariably, my students would reply that Catholic schools had better equipment, better grounds, better, more caring teachers, better discipline, better Higher School Certificate results and offered better employment prospects. The list could go on. What I found intriguing and, to some extent frightening, was that very few, if any of my students gave as their answer anything remotely related to the stated purpose of Catholic schools. That is, to grow in my understanding of the Catholic faith passed on to me by my parents in the Sacrament of Baptism, and to come to love God and my fellow humans as unique people created in the image and likeness of God. These, as we have noted are the reasons quite clearly stated by the Bishops of Western Australia, the Catholic Education Commission, and are central to the vision, mission and religious education statements of Newman College and St Augustine's Primary school.

After spending over a quarter of a century in Catholic education I have doubts that Catholic schools, do, in fact, make a difference to the faith education of the majority of their students. It was during one of my religious studies units at Edith Cowan University in semester 1, 1998 that I asked students a question concerning their senior religious education classes: What perceptions do you have of your senior religious education classes? Their strongly negative responses (Saker, 1998) were the impetus for this study.

It could be argued that students who have completed their senior years at a Catholic school and have attended senior religious education classes should have a basic knowledge of the teachings of the Catholic Church and have moved towards integrating this knowledge (religious education) into a lived faith experience (catechesis).

The declaration *Gravissimum Educationis* (Flannery, 1975) states:

Education is, in a special way, the concern of the Church, not only because the Church must be recognised as a human society capable of imparting education, but especially it has the duty of proclaiming the way of salvation to all people, of revealing the life of Christ to those who believe, and of assisting them with unremitting care so that they may be able to attain to the fullness of that life.

Flannery, 1975:729.

It would appear that most students attending Catholic schools have very different perceptions of the mission of a Catholic school to that of the official statements issued by the hierarchy of the Church, especially in the area of religious education. Why is this so?

Rationale and significance of the study

In spite of the Catholic Education Office, in the Perth Archdiocese, constantly revising the religious education curriculum for both primary and secondary Catholic schools, the last revision taking place in 2002/2003, it would appear that students who have just completed senior studies and attended religious education classes seem not to be accepting the teachings of the Catholic Church. Nor do they appear to be greatly concerned about their lack of knowledge of Catholic dogma or, indeed, their acceptance of such teachings (Saker, 1998). The perceptions of their religious education classes are made up, mostly, of negative comments about the class being boring, or of no interest to them (Saker, 1998). To some students their religious education classes appear to be a 'free period' or a 'break' from the rigour of their

study in TEE subjects. This situation is not helped by the attitude towards religious education from some Catholic schools, for example, whenever there is need of an assembly for a year group, or the whole school, or making time for a visiting speaker, it is usually the religious education class that is used. What message is the school sending the students concerning their religious education classes?

I was at a Catholic school recently and the year twelve religious education teacher told me that she has had to 'battle' all year with her students who demand to have some 'study time' or watch a video in place of the scheduled religious education class. At another Catholic secondary school the Principal was complaining that the Catholic Education Office had mandated that as from 2001 all Catholic secondary schools in the Archdiocese must program five fifty-minute religious education classes into their weekly timetable. He was concerned that the secular TEE subjects would suffer because of such a mandate.

Catholic schools have to make a conscious decision, namely, are they going to concentrate on catechesis or religious education. Documents from the hierarchy of the Church would suggest that the concentration should be on religious education. Why?

You ask most Catholic students who have completed their senior schooling at a Catholic school and they will tell you: "The teachers were friendly and caring." "The atmosphere of the school was great" "There was a real sense of community." "The year 12 retreat was a moving experience." "The graduation Mass was wonderful" (see Flynn, 1993a). All this could be said to be catechesis which should enhance the faith development of the students. Yet, the question remains: How long does this 'experience' last? Has the catechesis been 'planted' in ground that has eventually allowed the students' faith to expand and grow? Or is it that after one or two years away from this 'caring' atmosphere the whole feeling of contentment has vanished?

The many positive feelings experienced by students in their senior years at a Catholic school would appear to have little or no roots for their faith experience to expand or grow. Have Catholic schools attempted to 'grow the crop' before the soil has been tilled? The tilling is the religious education component that the hierarchy of the Church would see as essential. (See definitions of catechesis and religious education pages 20 and 24 of this study).

It has been my experience that by the time students have reached 1st and 2nd year at university, catechesis is a happening of their 'past life.' Therefore, although this study is focussing on the perceptions of senior students of their religious education classes, it will also be necessary to include, in the questionnaire, items that refer to catechesis (faith development). This will enable the researcher to ascertain: (a) the effects of catechesis on the student and (b) to ask the question: Would a knowledge-based religious education program 'till the soil' and lay the foundation for more lasting faith development?

Fahy (1992), Flynn and Mok (2002) have researched faith education in Catholic secondary schools in New South Wales, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory. Ryan and Malone (1996) and Ryan (1997) have contributed greatly to our understanding of current methods of teaching religious education. Treston (1995) and Keane and Riley (1997) have looked at leadership and practice in Catholic schools. The Education Committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference (1990) and Rule and Engebretson (1995) researched Catholic religion and identity in Australia and Catholic Education in the future. Holohan (1999a) and his unpublished paper (1999b) expresses his concerns with the teaching of religious education in Western Australian schools. Papal, Congregational, Bishops and Catholic Education Office documents tell us what the outcomes of religious education classes should aim to

achieve. At the local level no relevant study has been conducted in Western Australia where the research is centred on students, to ascertain if these outcomes are being achieved.

Various authors tell us what should be happening in Catholic Education but few look at the area of religious education from the perceptions of senior students. The advantage of coming at the question of religious education from the students' perceptions is that it would assist the researcher to discover the problem and when the problem is discovered possible solutions may appear.

By focusing on the perceptions of senior students and their religious education classes, this study provided an opportunity to conceptualise what the students perceived to be the problems and difficulties with such classes. The study provided an opportunity for students to voice their opinions and concerns on the issues that were directly related to their religious education classes and, hopefully, suggest some method of improving the religious education classroom so that future generations of Catholic students may perceive these classes more positively.

Statement of the problem

McLaughlin (no date) in his unpublished PhD thesis, *The beliefs, values and practices of student teachers at the Australian Catholic University*, did pioneering work in the faith and beliefs of university students in New South Wales. This study looks at faith, beliefs and values of 1st and 2nd year university students in Western Australia through the effectiveness of their Years 11 and 12 religious education classes. The aim of this study was to better understand the year eleven and twelve religious education curriculum for Catholic schools in Western Australia and the impact it has on its students, in particular, those who intend to become teachers.

From the official teachings of the Catholic Church there would appear to be no doubt of her position in the area, for example, of human sexuality (moral theology). The problem occurs when students leaving a Catholic school, after twelve years, or more, of religious education are not aware of the reasoning behind the teachings on human sexuality (moral theology) and why the Church takes a particular stance on human sexuality.

If Catholic schools are primarily about the Catholic education of their students, then, it would appear that Catholic schools are not living up to their mandate, to be Catholic. After two years of attending senior religious education classes, it appeared to me that my university students intending to be teachers, in a Catholic school, and to teach religious education, had a poor perception of their religious education classes. There was little evidence of the outcomes, as suggested in the religious education curriculum, being achieved, while acceptance of official Catholic Church dogma and doctrine is rejected by the majority of the students (Saker, 1998). This being the case, this problem needed to be addressed which meant looking at the religious education classroom in Western Australian schools from the perspective of students who have completed their senior religious education course. I also saw it as necessary to determine if the teaching and learning processes of such classes meet the criteria of the developmental theorists in creating an atmosphere which is relevant to the needs of senior students and allows them to be positive about their Catholic faith in adulthood.

Research questions

The major research question to be assessed in this study is:

What are the perceptions of 1st and 2nd year university students of their senior religious education classes in Catholic schools in Western Australia?

The study, and especially the data gathering process, will be guided by the following sub-questions:

1. Are Catholic schools in Western Australia carrying out the mandate for their existence, that is, the Catholic Education of their students?
2. Did students perceive their religious education classes as aiding their religious development?
3. Are students accepting or rejecting important doctrinal teachings of the Catholic Church?
4. How do students perceive their lived experience and the Catholic Church's teaching on morality?

Definition of terms

Terms repeatedly employed and referred to are defined so the reader understands them as intended. Unless otherwise stated the definitions below are taken from O'Collins and Farrugia (1991).

Assent of Faith: The confession of God's saving self-revelation in the crucified and risen Jesus that involves a personal commitment to Christ the Lord and a hopeful confidence in the resurrection to come.

Bishop: One who has been ordained to the fullness of the priesthood and is entitled to lead a particular diocese by his teaching, pastoral care and liturgical ministry.

Canon Law: That body of codified law to be observed by Catholics, either individually or through various groups, which they form within the church. In particular, it refers to the code which was promulgated by John Paul II in 1983, superseding that of 1917.

Catechesis: Instruction meant to deepen Christian faith. The ultimate responsibility for catechesis lies with the whole community.

Catechism: A book explaining basic beliefs, moral teachings and prayers.

Catholicism: That worldwide unity in belief and conduct frequently identified with the Roman Catholic Church.

Church: The community founded by Jesus Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit as the final sign of God's will to save the whole human family.

Congregation for Catholic Education: A body of Bishops, and priests, appointed by John Paul II to oversee Catholic education throughout the world. (Saker, 2004e)

Conscience: The capacity to evaluate and choose a course of action according to the law God has written in our hearts.

Contraception: The attempt to regulate and limit the procreative potential of human sexuality. Contraception, which in the Catholic tradition has been understood to mean an interference with the sexual act so that conception does not occur. (McBrien, 1995:178).

Curriculum: The curriculum of a school can be conceived of as a series of planned events that are intended to have educational consequences for one or more students.

Doctrine: Church teaching in all its many forms, which is intended not only to communicate orthodox beliefs but also to feed Christian life, and hence binding now and forever on all the faithful.

Dogma: A divinely revealed truth, proclaimed as such by the infallible teaching authority of the Church, and hence binding now and forever on all the faithful.

Evangelisation: The proclamation to all peoples and cultures of the good news about Jesus Christ.

Ex Cathedra: A solemn and binding definition made by the Pope with his full apostolic authority as the pastor and teacher of all Christians in revealed matters concerning faith and morals.

Faith: The objective, revealed truth believed in (*fides quae*) or the subjective, personal commitment to God (*fides qua*). Faith is made possible through the help of the Holy Spirit. Faith is a free, reasonable and total response through which we confess the truth about the divine self-disclosure definitively made in Christ.

Faith (The deposit of): All that God definitively revealed through Christ for our salvation, considered as a treasure entrusted to the church to be preserved, interpreted and proclaimed faithfully to all people till the end of time.

Faith (development): A growth in living and understanding Christian faith that follows the stages of human maturation. Maturing in faith requires not only a full sacramental life, constantly in prayer and practical love toward the neighbour in need, but also a regular study of Christian revelation that keeps pace with one's intellectual growth.

Infused Knowledge: Knowledge freely given through the Holy Spirit for some special tasks in the church, and also given, according to a long tradition, to Christ and the Old Testament prophets. It is opposed to acquired knowledge, which is the result of normal study and effort.

Moral Development: Growth in awareness of one's responsibilities and a corresponding maturation in personal freedom. Modern psychology has illustrated how children often behave under constraint and only slowly interiorise moral principles to start acting freely as responsible persons.

Moral Theology: That field of theology which studies and teaches how Christians (and others) ought to live.

Natural law: The entire cosmos is good because it is created by God.

Reconciliation: Re-establishing friendship after a situation of conflict and alienation has been overcome. As it brings reconciliation with God and the church the sacrament of penance is now often called "the sacrament of reconciliation".

Religious Education: In a Catholic school religious education is particularly concerned with those experiences that are related to students' religious development. Its pedagogy, like that of other subjects, will reflect a Catholic understanding of religious education. Religious education contributes to students' development in Christian faith (Catechesis).

Sabbath: Saturday or the last day of the Jewish week.

Scripture and Tradition: The relationship between the written and inspired Word of God and the wider reality of the Church in her 'doctrine, life and worship' handing on to every generation all that she herself is, and all that she believes.

Sin: Any thought, word, or deed that deliberately disobeys God's will and in some way rejects the divine goodness and love.

Sin – Mortal: A mortal sin means a deliberate and radical turning away from God which comes through clear knowledge and full consent in a truly serious matter. It brings the loss of sanctifying grace and the risk of eternal damnation.

Sin – Venial: Venial sins truly harm one's relationship with God and others, but do not entail a fundamental option against God. Venial sins do not cause the loss of sanctifying grace and the risk of eternal damnation.

Sunday: The day of the Lord when Christians rest from work to remember joyfully Christ's resurrection.

Tradition: The process of handing on (tradition as act) or the living heritage which is handed on (tradition as content).

Vatican Council, Second: (1962-1965): Convoked by Pope John XXIII. The Council aimed at the updating of the Church's life and doctrinal formulations.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The aim of this study was to better understand students' perceptions of their senior religious education classes in Catholic schools in Western Australia. The study focussed on 1st and 2nd year university students from Edith Cowan University, in particular, those intending to teach religious education in Catholic schools.

This study looked at six constructs, Students' background; influence on students' religious development; students' perceptions of the Catholic School that they attended; students' faith development; students' perceptions of their senior religious education classes and students' acceptance of official Catholic Church teachings on human sexuality (moral theology), in order to clarify and develop the conceptual framework.

Developing a conceptual framework.

During my eleven years of lecturing from a Catholic tradition at Edith Cowan University, I have come to question some of the recent findings of Fahy (1992), Flynn (1993a), Flynn and Mok (2002) on the impact of religious education classes on senior students. Their studies mainly centred around faith development (catechesis) in religious education classes which they generally found as being positive, although Flynn and Mok's findings in 2000 (published in 2002) reported a more negative attitude from senior students and their religious education classes (catechesis) than did Flynn's studies in 1975 and 1993.

Saker (1998) found that very few 1st and 2nd year university students, who had recently completed their year eleven and year twelve religious education studies at a Catholic school, were aware of the actual teaching(s) (dogma/doctrine) of the

Catholic Church. Nor were they aware of the rich teaching tradition found in the Catholic Church. Saker also found that although most students were happy to attend a Catholic school, they did not believe that their religious education classes were beneficial. It is these initial findings that guided this study.

The conceptual framework of the study is built upon the educational developmental theories of Erikson (psychodynamic), Piaget (cognitive), Maslow and Rogers (humanistic), Kohlberg (moral development), Fowler (faith development) and Groome (Christian praxis).

A better understanding of the teaching of religious education, through an appreciation of the developmental psychologists, can address concerns about the present religious education curriculum meeting the needs of senior students as they leave the relative security of secondary school and begin to take their place in our secular society.

Why are some adolescents apparently ignoring official Catholic teaching(s)? There are multiple reasons: The post modernity era that ushered in the 21st century with its rapid changes in society's thinking (about) and acceptance (of) moral behaviour that previous generations would not have accepted; the open and frank discussions on previously taboo subjects; society's general disregard for institutionalism and a general disdain (for), and a rejection of authority; the growing influence of the media in forming public opinion, for example presenting alternative lifestyles as normal. These are some of the characteristics of a post modern society that influence not only senior students in Catholic schools but students countrywide.

Senior students are questioning the Catholic Church's teaching regarding the complete ban on the use of contraception (Saker, 1998). They are questioning why a valid sacramental marriage can never be annulled by the Catholic Church and why it is a mortal sin not to attend Mass on Sundays, to name a few issues (Saker, 1998).

What we do know is that, in making moral decisions, adolescents have learnt to value collaborative rather than authoritarian decision making (Saker, 1998). Do the religious education classes that senior students attend allow for collaborative moral decision-making or are they based on authoritarian statements that allow for no open discussion? Can both pedagogies be integrated so that knowledge (official Church teaching) and discussion (collaborative learning) take place? The answer to these questions will, no doubt, have a great bearing on how students view the Catholic Church's teaching on moral issues and more importantly, how adolescents and young adults come to accept these moral teachings as their own. This study will look to the developmental theorists in seeking an answer.

Developmental Theorists

Introduction

Kohlberg's (1971) research on moral development has shown that the path to acceptance of moral issues by individuals is a three-stage process. The first two stages refer to the moral development of young children: Stage 1: The child makes moral decisions on 'black' and 'white' judgements. Stage 2: The child adapts to normative standards and values. Kohlberg's third stage is appropriate to this study. Stage 3: Here the individual develops a personal commitment, where an awareness of legitimate competing alternatives is evaluated and a moral decision arrived at freely and, thus, without guilt. This decision is a personal decision and, as such, is more easily 'owned' by the adolescent than the authoritarian approach of 'don't do that'. It is hoped that the moral decision arrived at, by the adolescent, is not at variance with official Catholic Church teaching, and it is here that the religious education class, at a Catholic school, could play a major role in guiding students' decision making.

Various psychological developmental theories play a significant role in assisting educationalists to understand the maturation of adolescents. This study's conceptual framework was developed around an array of educational developmental theories so that in framing, and then in writing, a religious education curriculum, for senior students, an eclectic approach could be embraced.

Psychodynamic perspective

Erik Erikson.

Sigmund Freud's work on the psychodynamic development of the human person was ground-breaking in the 1930's. Since then, many developmental psychologists have refined Freud's work. One such person was Erik Erikson. Few theorists have had the impact or been as widely accepted and acclaimed as has Erikson. Erikson, who studied under Freud and was trained as a psychoanalyst, was uncomfortable with the emphasis that Freud placed on pathology. Erikson (1968) changed the focus of analysis from pathology to normalcy and positive adaptation and developed an awareness of the role of society in that adaptation. Erikson's emphasis on the interaction of the individual and society is encompassed in his choice of the term psychosocial (as opposed to Freud's psychosexual) to describe his theory of normal development. We are born with inherent structures that guide development (these inherent structures could be linked to the Catholic Church's teaching on The Natural Law). It is only in the context of our unique historical and personal environments does our development unfold (this would have implications for the family and the school). Through Erikson's emphasis on positive, adaptive development, his awareness of the importance of the social context of development, and his appreciation of ambiguity and change in development, Erikson was able to add a humanistic dimension to the Freudian perspective.

Erikson changed the focus of Freud's research from an emphasis on the gratification pleasure (id) to an emphasis on successful adaptation (ego). His theory is also known as ego psychology, which emphasises his belief that the unconscious ego (conscience) has the role of ensuring coherent behaviour, unifying the various aspects of the individual, maintaining individuality, within social contexts, and essentially, making sense. The epigenetic principle in Erikson's words refers to the observations that:

Anything that grows has a ground plan, and out of this ground plan the parts arise, each part having its time of special ascendancy, until all parts have arisen to form a functioning whole.

Erikson, 1959:52.

Implicit in the epigenetic principle are the following observations made by Erikson (1959): (1) We are born with a ground plan or blueprint. (2) We are all regulated by the same inner laws of development. (3) The bases of all the stages of development exist in one form or another from birth, but a particular stage commands more immediacy at a particular time of development. The stages of development are related to one another in a universal sequence. The successful resolution of one stage contributes to the successful resolution of successive stages, with overall adjustment depending on proper development through the stages in proper order. Erikson argued that the stages represented the ego's attempt to mediate between growth and environmental demands, which become ever wider as the child matures. Each of the eight stages holds both new potentials for development and new dangers, and the balance between the potentialities and dangers is highlighted by Erikson's term 'normative crises'. Each stage contains a normative crisis, which is merely a turning point, not a catastrophe and is seen as a conflict between opposing forces. For the adolescent the 'opposing forces' could well be Church and post modern society, the resolution of which prepares them for subsequent stages.

The first five stages of Erikson's psychosocial theory are directly analogous to Freud's five stages, but Erikson expressed them in terms of the psychosocial conflicts that the child faces during each. Erikson added three more stages, and associated conflicts, to describe adolescent and adult development. Each of Erikson's stages are important but only stages 5 and 6 are directly applicable to this study.

In Stage 5, puberty and the adolescent identity role, confusion is the focus. Erikson saw adolescence as the most complex, dynamic, and significant stage of all. The term identity crisis has become part of the vernacular and is usually misused to express frustration over the necessity to make a choice. For Erikson, the identity crisis is a process in which the individual achieves a sense of both continuity with all people and individual uniqueness, an ideology and commitment to values and to other people, a balance between the past and the future. Adolescents who manage this stage successfully have a strong sense of their values and directions and are generally at peace with who they have become.

In stage 6, early adulthood, intimacy and isolation is identified with conflict. According to Erikson, the task of achieving intimacy is not only a sexual task but one of mutuality, either in deep, committed friendships or in a loving sexual relationship. The main criterion for the achievement of intimacy is the successful resolution of the identity crisis. Erikson would see it necessary to lose one's identity so as one may be empathetic with another person and in doing so one's own needs and awareness of self are temporarily suspended. This can obviously occur only after individuals have succeeded in becoming comfortable with themselves and no longer suffer the pains of adolescent egocentrism. Those who have not achieved a solid sense of themselves will be unable to give in intimate relationships and may either withdraw from such demanding relationships or substitute formalised relationships or sexual encounters

that lack true intimacy. With true intimacy, individuals include in their own identity those people and things that they truly love (moral theologians would call this integral intersubjectivity). Erikson's statement, that in order for adolescents to develop fidelity, they must be offered a kind of way station between genital maturity and full adult responsibility, is a postponement of the commitments we expect of adults.

Adolescents need a commitment to an ideology, for it offers them a clear perspective on the future, a means of reconciling the inner world of ideals and the outer world of reality, opportunities for identifying with others and for experimenting with roles, a rationale for values, a clear world view, and every opportunity to follow important leaders. But because they are experimenting, adolescents may also change their commitments frequently; it is not unusual for a high school student to feel passionately committed to one set of ideals one week, only to change to an opposing set the following week. Such changes are to be expected, for they are part of the identity crisis, which takes place within a psychosocial moratorium.

Erikson, 1968:57.

Cognitive perspective

Jean Piaget.

That both conscience, the internalisation of society's rules and social learning, play important roles in the development of morality has been accepted by moral theorists without debate, however neither conscience nor social learning provides a sufficient explanation for the development of moral thought and behaviour found in the adolescent. It was theorist Jean Piaget's research that saw him propose a sequential and invariable development of the cognitive capacities that offered a comprehensive and complex description of the qualitatively different reasons individuals use for making moral choices. Piaget argues that it is the innate development of the cognitive capacity which combines with environmental stimuli to produce qualitatively different stages of moral development. Thus, the interaction of nature and nurture provides the most complete explanation of development (Piaget, 1932).

Piaget was interested in the qualitative changes that occur as children mature. He observed that as children mature, they move from a highly rigid interpretation of rules imposed by external authority to a considerably more flexible interpretation of rules based on reciprocity and social considerations. He specifically studied four aspects of moral development: (1) Behavioural, conformity to rules; (2) verbalised notions about rules; (3) more general moral attitudes and (4) perceptions of justice. Piaget viewed cognition as an activity, the structure of which is inherited and which develops in a predictable sequence throughout childhood and into adulthood. Each stage of development is marked by unique and identifiable mental structures that allow the individual certain characteristic cognitive functions. Development from one stage to another proceeds through the processes of assimilation, accommodation and equilibrium. The sequence of stages is constant and universal. Piaget argued that physical maturation plays an important but limited role in the development of new stages, and that development is the result of the interaction of maturation and experience.

Adolescence is preceded by the childhood stages: the sensorimotor stage, the pre-operational stage and the concrete operational stage. Adolescents are usually, at least partially if not completely, in the stage of concrete operations. This stage is characterised by the ability to perform operations mentally that previously had to be physically manipulated. The concrete operational thinker can understand concepts like reciprocity, reverse situations, and predict outcomes of concrete events, but applies these capabilities to things rather than to abstractions.

Humanistic perspective

It could be argued that the two developmental theorists discussed under the humanistic perspective would not have seen their research in terms of religious education, yet Papal statements constantly speak of developing the human person; the dignity of the human person and the rights and obligation of the human person. In presenting Rogers and Maslow as possible source material for developing a religious education unit, I have interpreted their theories with the aim of presenting to teachers the possible value of these two theorists their to religious education classes.

Carl Rogers.

Two of the major proponents of a humanistic-existential approach to personality development are Carl Rogers (1951) and Abraham Maslow (1971). This approach to personality emphasises the importance of *finding meaning in life*. People have the capacity to develop in self-actualising ways and to reach their *potential* if they are provided a climate of empathy and positive regard. For Rogers the idea of self-concept is central to this approach, for self-concept literally determines all behaviour. Rogers (1951) was committed to scientific research but he argued that psychology must not look only to the external behaviour of a person for its data. Science should accept the data of a person's consciousness to build a complete description of the mind and spirit of the person. As a person interacts with the environment and enters into relationships, *he becomes what he is*; he becomes a person distinct from all others. The developing self attaches values to certain experiences and sees other experiences as threatening. Some experiences are assimilated into self-concept, others are ignored and still others are given distorted meanings. For Rogers, man is primarily a being in relationship.

Man is defined by his relationships to others. Certain guidelines develop these relationships. People must be willing to listen to other people and they want to be heard by other people. They are dissatisfied when they are not heard by the other person or are not understood. Entering a relationship means the desire to be real or genuine in dealings with others, a desire to communicate this sense of realness to others, and a desire to encounter the deeper reality of others. It entails an acceptance of and a giving of love and having a respect for the freedom of others.

Rogers (1969) states that the goal of education (one could argue religious education) is to produce a fully-functioning person. The fully-functional person, according to Rogers, is one who has successfully progressed through the education system (the Catholic school?). The educated person is open to their experience; lives in an existential manner; is in the process of becoming; will trust themselves in the process of becoming and is a creative person. The educated person will be aware of their need for inner freedom to fashion the type of person that they will become.

This is the type of student that Catholic schools should aim at producing by the end of his/her senior schooling. The Western Australian Catholic Bishops (2001) speak (indirectly) of this type of person in their Mandate letter to the Catholic Education Commission.

Abraham Maslow.

Abraham Maslow (1971) identified a hierarchy of needs that he believed all must strive to meet. From his research, he found that it is only when the lower-order needs are met one is free to meet the higher-order needs. At the lowest level are the biological needs: the need for food, clothing, shelter and elimination. When these needs are not being met a person is incapable of attending to higher needs. For example, Maslow would argue that if a person is starving, he is not likely to be

attentive to needs for love and affection, and he will choose food over companionship. Until one has moved up Maslow's hierarchy of needs to, at least, belonging, peer support and social interaction, a person would have very little time for religious education, in general, and religion, in particular. In developing upon Maslow's schema it could be said that: A person cannot develop self-esteem without first having received esteem from a significant other(s) (Parents?); A person cannot love until he has experienced being loved, and a person cannot forgive, until he has experienced forgiveness. This theory is consistent with Rogers' observations that the healthy personality can develop only in an environment of unconditional positive acceptance, acceptance for just being alive. In general then, one satisfies one's biological and basic needs and moves to look for security. Once having achieved security one then seeks out self esteem from others (peer group) and when this has been achieved one arrives at self-actualisation. Maslow argues that rules and regulations do not develop a person morally (religiously) but that this comes about through relationships with other people (parents, peers and teachers) and, in particular, with a significant other.

Moral development perspective

Lawrence Kohlberg.

Over the last thirty years, Kohlberg and Kramer (1969), Kohlberg (1971), Kohlberg and Turiel (1972), Kohlberg (1975) and Kohlberg and Hersh (1977) have developed, researched, and refined the most popular of the moral development theories. Kohlberg built on the cognitive and moral developmental work of Piaget. In his research Kohlberg found that the formal operations stage of Piaget's research was a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the development of mature moral reasoning. Kohlberg describes how individuals develop moral judgement, that is, how they

decide which of the conflicting values to choose and act on in a situation of moral conflict. It does not address the content of moral decisions, which are subject to cultural determination, nor does it extend to moral behaviour, though it does suggest that moral judgement allows an individual the potential to act in a morally consistent manner. Both cognitive maturity and social experiences are recognised as vital ingredients in moral development.

Kohlberg (1971) delineated six clearly differential and identifiable stages that he classified into three more general levels of development, each containing two specific stages. Kohlberg's stages are a structured whole, individuals tend to act relatively consistently across content areas (the stages form an invariant sequence). People tend to move gradually up the scale of stages and do not regress or jump stages, and they are hierarchical. Each stage integrates and understands all those below it but also represents entirely new patterns of thought unavailable previously. According to Kohlberg, it is also important to note that it is not the choice that determines an individual's level of moral judgement, but the reasons given for the choice which provides the clues to moral maturity and this is where Kohlberg is able to provide some suggestions for teachers of years eleven and twelve religious education.

Faith development perspective

James Fowler.

In recent years, building on the work of Kohlberg and Goldman, a most fruitful approach to the study of the moral development of adolescents has been the theory and research of James Fowler. To understand Fowler's theory of faith development, it is necessary to understand his definition of faith. In his work he uses faith in a broad sense:

Faith is a way of knowing, construing, or interpreting experience. Faith is a human phenomenon, expressing the universal tendency to make meaning

and to give coherence to life. Faith is also relational in bringing the person in contact with others, with a community and with transcendent powers or forces.

Fowler, 1977:179.

From a series of three-hour interviews with adults and with children, Fowler developed his Stages of faith theory. For Fowler, each of the faith stages is a structured whole, a flexible organisation of interrelated patterns of operation.

Structures for Fowler refers to the:

Pattern of operations or modes of thinking and valuing which are constitutive of the person's ability to use and give form to beliefs, values, ideas and propositions. Structures in this sense could not be translated into systematic theology, but rather into a kind of epistemology of faith.

Fowler, 1977:178.

Fowler's theory of faith development may be used by religious educators in theory and in the practice of teaching religious education. Fowler has provided a valuable model for understanding the nature of faith and its developmental stages and has provided goals for religious education. Fowler proposes seven stages of faith development. The first 4 stages and the last stage, stage 8, are less relevant to this study. Those stages are: Stage 1, Primal faith; stage 2, Intuitive faith, stage 3, Narratising faith, stage 4 Synthetic faith and stage 8 Universalising faith. The two stages of Fowler's faith developmental theory that are particularly relevant to this study are: stage 5 Individuative faith and stage 6 Conjunctive faith. These two stages are summarised in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Fowler's stages of faith development

Stage	Name	Description
Stage 5	Individuative Faith	Individuative faith: Loci of authority being charismatic leaders. Personal judgement plays a strong role in determining beliefs. Personal experience and the experience of peers help determine beliefs.

Table 2.1 continued

Fowler's stages of faith development

Stage 6	Conjunctive Faith	Conjunctive faith: Loci of authority internalised. Tradition, and Scripture, customs and ideologies are accepted as normative. Knowledge of truth is partial, limited and often opposed to the views of others.
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Shared Christian praxis

Thomas Groome.

Thomas Groome (1980) researched a method of religious education that suggests a way of developing a positive attitude in students towards their religious education classes. Groome's method would appear to meet the requirements of the Catholic Church and allow senior students to share their faith story and vision. Groome tells us that this vision and faith story should be able to create a healthy tension between past traditions, present opportunities for growth and fruitful opportunities. When students leave school, Groome would maintain, they should be faithful to, and confident of, the truths handed down to them disregardless of societal values. In his developmental theory for religious education Groome draws heavily upon the work of Jean Piaget who tells us that:

The principal goal of education is to create men who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done-men who are creative, inventive and discoverers. The second goal of education is to form minds that can be critical, can verify, and not accept everything they are offered. The great danger is of slogans, collective opinions and ready made trends of thought.

Piaget, J, as quoted in Groome, 1980:248.

In developing his praxis for religious education Groome also draws upon the German theologian Karl Rahner:

Christianity is not an indoctrination into certain conditions or facts or realities that are always the same, but it is the proclamation of a history of

salvation, of God's salvific and revelatory activity on men with men. And because God's activity is directed to man as a free subject, Christianity at the same time is also the proclamation of a history of salvation.

Rahner, K, as quoted in Groome, 1980:264.

Thomas Groome opens his chapter, *Shared Christian Praxis*, with a statement relevant to religious education. He suggests that the religious education classroom be a place for shared dialogue and critical reflection on the Christian story with the view of living the Christian faith. Groome's studies integrated with other developmental theorists would be invaluable to the religious education classroom.

Groome suggests six components in his shared Christian praxis model: (1) Present action; (2) critical reflection, (3) dialogue; (4) the story, (5) the vision and (6) present dialectical hermeneutics. These six components could be adapted by the framers of a religious education curriculum to assist senior students in their quest for faith and truth. In speaking of present action, Groome states:

Present action is whatever we give expression to ourselves. It includes what we are doing physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually as we live on personal, interpersonal, and social levels. By reflecting on present action, we can uncover the pasts that have brought us to such action, and raise to consciousness the future.

Groome, 1980:184/185.

From the present action, Groome suggests we move on to critical reflection:

By critical evaluative analysis we can attempt to discover the interest in present action, critique the ideology that maintains it, and recognise the assumptions upon which it is based. This requires returning to the genesis of present action.

Groome, 1980:185.

In the dialogue component of shared Christian praxis, Groome states:

In an educational context using a shared Christian praxis approach, the participants reflect upon and share the stories and visions embodied in their present actions, and those stories and visions are critiqued in the light of the

faith tradition of Christianity (Story) and the promise of and response invited by that tradition (Vision).

Groome, 1980:191.

In the fourth component of Groome's shared Christian praxis, he sees story as important to religious education classes because:

God is still active in our history and we are constantly called upon to respond and participate in that activity. God is active in our lives, but God was also active in the lives of our parents and grandparents and so on, back over history the history of our people. If we are to know God and find salvation in our present, then we must remember the Story of that faith community.

Groome, 1980:193.

In the fifth component Groome (1980) tells us that vision is our response to the story and that the vision is the unfolding of the story. Vision calls for a faith response to the story of God's promise to humankind. In his sixth component he speaks of dialectical hermeneutics as the task which helps the Christian discern God's will for them in their lives. It is through dialectical hermeneutics that we integrate story and vision, from past tradition, into a meaningful, faith-filled experience, of the present, with story and vision allowing us to experience God's loving, compassionate and forgiving nature.

Developmental theorists and the conceptual framework for the study.

The developmental theories, as outlined above, are linked to the conceptual framework of this study in two ways: Educationally and in teaching religious education.

Educationally:

It could be argued that every activity a person engages in could be called educational or a part of education. Education is teaching. Education presents as a certain truth that which is believed to be truth. Education is concerned with the entire person: mind,

body, spirit and emotions. Education attends to the total experience of the person: his culture, language, family, peer group, music and art.

It is with the assistance of the developmental theorists, mentioned above that teachers could be shown that education has as one of its purposes, the purpose of enhancing the life of the student.

The developmental theories enunciated in this chapter aim at the enrichment of human life and the continued health of society and this should be the basis for all educational pursuits. It is in this context that the developmental theorists are used extensively in this study.

Religious education.

The developmental theorists would see religious education (some would call this a religious experience) as a way of leading students to a personal understanding, conviction and commitment of their faith tradition. It is through this understanding, conviction and commitment that beliefs, events, rites and codes of morality are developed in the student.

Extensive work has been done in recent years, by some developmental theorists, in describing and explaining the development of the person from their earliest years until the end of their life. Developmental theorists have attempted to understand the development of the human person, and the religious educator can benefit from understanding the work of these developmental theorists and this will, hopefully, assist in their teaching of religious education.

Some of the developmental theorists mentioned above, have contributed to an understanding of the teaching-learning process through their work on motivation, needs, evaluation, readiness and other important aspects of the learning process. The religious educator who sees his task as somewhat similar to that of the secular

educator will find much that is useful to him in the work of theorists who have looked deeply into the entire process of teaching and learning and it is this pedagogy that underpins the conceptual framework of this study.

The conceptual framework of this study

A conceptual framework provides a scheme for understanding a theory or perspective that provides greater clarity to a study. A conceptual framework sets the direction and clarifies a line of thought (see Table 2.2).

The conceptual framework, used in this study, will clarify a line of thought centring upon students' perceptions of their religious education classes at a Catholic school.

There has been tension and controversy in recent years between religious educators and the framers of the religious education curriculum as to the precise nature, content and methods of teaching religious education. The conceptual framework, (of this study) aims to clarify what religious education should mean, according to the Mandate Letter of the Bishops' of Western Australia (2001) to a Catholic school:

1. Religious education aims at the students arriving at a personal understanding, conviction, and commitment to God, church, others and self
2. Religious education should not be interested in the formation of faith unless it arises from commitment. In the presentation of religious truth, religious education classes should match the experience of the students with the religious truths to be presented.
3. Religious education respects past traditions that formed the basis for the faith development of many older Catholic people. These traditions are not to be viewed as an albatross preventing further development. Tradition does not present us with a set of answers but tradition does give us a springboard to be part of the living faith of the Catholic community.

4. Religious education can be taught with both objectivity and strong conviction.
5. Religious education classes should show a passionate commitment and involvement on the teacher's part. Tradition and commitment will no doubt present problems and tensions between the teacher and senior students (even within the teacher himself). But the teacher who respects church tradition and a person's fundamental option will be able to resolve tensions in their religious education classes so that tradition and personal growth, in their students, is possible.
6. Religious education must be deeply human. It must be rooted in the human, the social, the political, the historic, and the cultural. Religious education is concerned with ultimate human concerns that arise out of every area of life.
7. True religious education is prophetic in addressing itself to everything that concerns the human community. True religious education must be concerned with the totality of human experience.

Pope John Paul II, in his apostolic exhortation on the Family in the Modern World, writes:

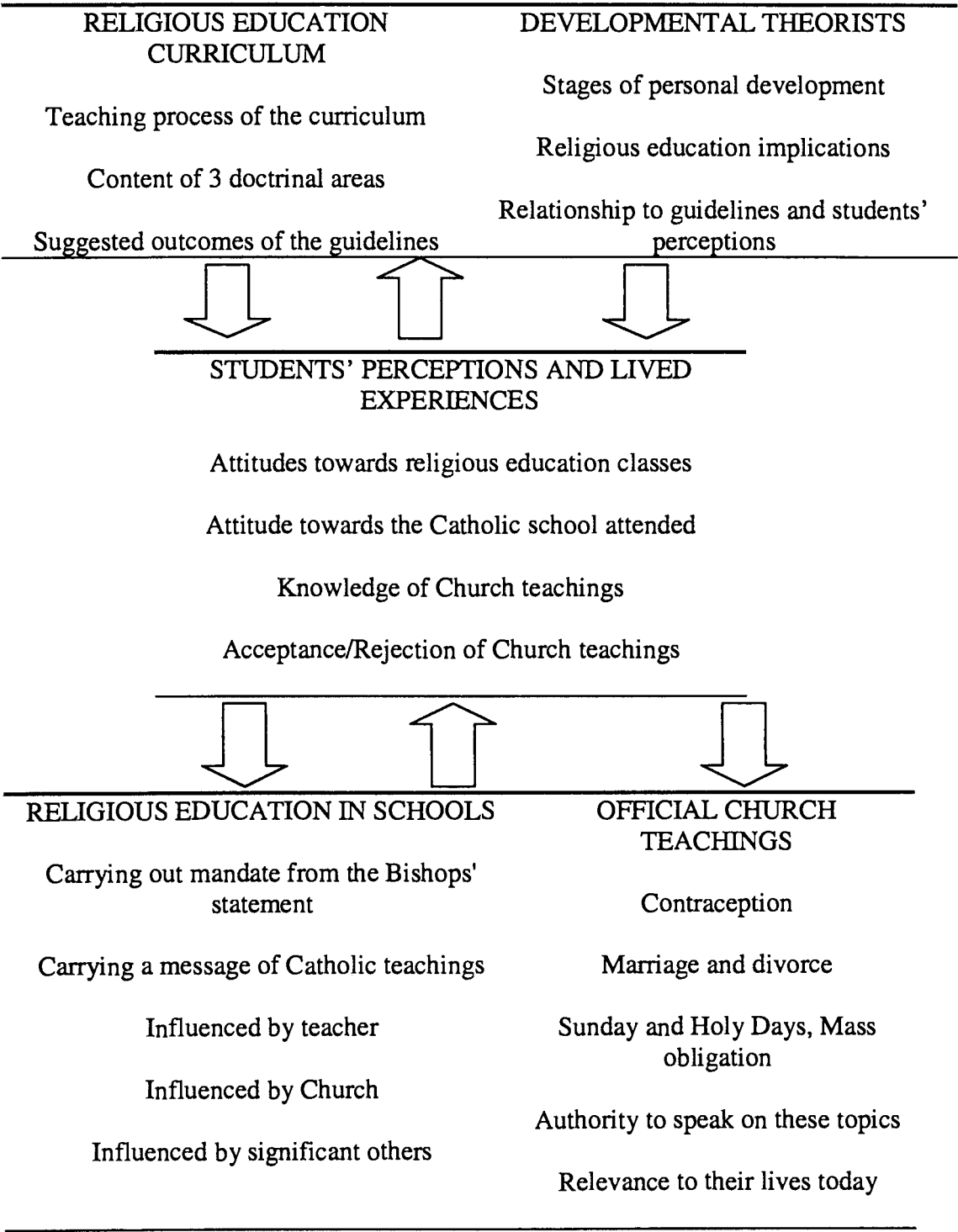
The great task that has to be faced today for the renewal of society is that of recapturing the ultimate meaning of life and its fundamental values.

Pope John Paul II, 1982:67.

This is the challenge facing the religious education classroom in the third millennium. This study aimed at attempting to shed some light on why 1st and 2nd year university students, who have attended a Catholic school, and who have received at least two years of religious education perceive their religious education classes as they do.

Table 2.2

Overview of conceptual framework



CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The Catholic school should convey the Christian message to students in the daily life of the school and be a milieu in which the integration of faith and life takes place in the students' lives.

Flynn & Mok, 2002:16.

The purpose of this review of literature is to locate recent, relevant and influential research concerning Catholic schools and religious education classes. This chapter uses the following sections as key foci of the study:

- Research into Catholic schools and religious education.
- Catholic documents on the 'what' and 'why' of Catholic schools.
- Primary source material used by the Catholic Church (to substantiate her teachings on contraception, marriage/divorce and Sunday Mass attendance).
- Perth Archdiocesan religious education guidelines.
- A Sense of the sacred integrating religious education into secular subjects.
- Curriculum framework for kindergarten to year 12 in Western Australia.

Research into Catholic schools and religious education

Catholic Schools.

There is a general concern, in some Catholic circles today, about the effectiveness of Catholic schools and the quality of the religious education classes offered by these schools. De Souza speaks of the need to bridge the widening gap between students' perceptions of the Catholic school and the institutional church as faith communities:

Apart from promoting knowledge and appreciation of the rich heritage of the faith tradition, the Christian story needs to be re-told and experienced in a way that speaks to contemporary lives and contexts.

De Souza, 2002:10.

De Souza speaks of the increasing difficulty for educators in contemporary society, where the vision of the Christian community often falls short of people's expectations and experiences. These concerns are also voiced by Parents and Friends Associations who have a close relationship with the school community. Holohan (1999b) when speaking at the Annual General Meeting of the West Australian Branch of the Parents and Friends Association agrees with De Souza when he speaks of some of the challenges facing Catholic schools. The first challenge concerns the movement of Catholic schools away from their 'roots', that is, to provide a Christian (from the Catholic tradition) education for Catholic students.

When Catholic schools were established in the colony of New South Wales in the 1850s' the Catholic population was marginalised and their religious beliefs, although not banned, were frowned upon by a colony founded upon the Protestant ethic. As Catholics in the 1850s had to address the problems of their day so, too, Catholic schools in 2004 have to address their problems (priorities). One priority facing Catholic schools is, for some Catholic families, an economic one:

The increasing pressure for our schools in many places to become schools for the wealthier in our society. The Catholic school is being endangered today by the upward socio-economic mobility of a high proportion of Catholics. It (the Catholic school) is being endangered also by current trends towards affluence across the country. A school can become materially ambitious, and focus too much on those who can afford higher fees.

Holohan, 1999b:2.

The mission of the Catholic school is the education of students to a more just society, a society of love and compassion, a society where a special concern for the poor and those with special needs is prioritised:

I am alarmed at times when I hear of school boards considering fee issues in terms of 'what the market will allow', or building projects which bring financial burdens that are beyond less wealthy parents. I am alarmed too when I hear parents say: 'We could afford the fees at that school with a bit of a struggle, but we cannot afford the uniform requirements and other additional costs for extra-curricular activities'.

The question here is: How do expensive uniform requirements and extra-curricular activities contribute towards a good Catholic education?

Holohan, 1999b:3.

Further, those responsible for the operation of Catholic schools (the Bishops) should challenge the school communities to live out the Gospel message of simplicity rather than society's message that affluence means a successful life.

Flynn speaks of a well-conducted Catholic school being a powerful expressive symbol and a marvellous human institution. In his research he asked students what they had come to appreciate, and value, about the Catholic school they attended. One student reflected the spirit of community when she wrote:

The College has been my home since year 5, that is, 8 years. I have been here longer than most of the teachers. I appreciate the happiness it has brought me and the friends I have made. This school, I think has made me more respectful and aware of others. It's really cool!

Flynn, 1993a:159.

It is interesting to note, that religious education classes, or the religious nature of the school are not mentioned by the student. Flynn justifies this by speaking of the special caring character of Catholic schools. An initial response to Flynn's conclusion is: "Could not some non-Catholic private and State schools have a similar response from their students?" The answer to this question is, obviously, "yes".

Churchlands Senior High School, in a document, *Moving Forward 2004-2008: A plan for Government School Education*, speaks of the vision it has for its students (very similar to the vision/mission statement of Newman College and St Augustine's primary school):

Churchlands Senior High School is a diverse community, which celebrates individual differences and promotes tolerance and self-respect. Churchlands aims to develop a culture which values achievement, encourages creativity and critical thinking and in which all members of the school community care for one another.

The school is committed to providing a challenging, enriching and supportive environment that enables students to achieve excellence in all endeavours. Churchlands' students will be prepared to face challenges with confidence and enthusiasm and will be able and willing to make a positive contribution to their wider communities.

Churchlands Senior High School, 2004:1.

Flynn and Mok (2002) argue that Australian Catholic schools have, over time, been eroded and that the correlation between Catholic school attendance and religious behaviour is falling into line with the general norm of the population, that is, those schools that have no religious education classes, for example, Churchlands Senior High School.

Flynn found there was evidence that the religious dimension of Catholic schools is being marginalised by pressures from university entry requirements, concern about unemployment and the secular culture of Australian society. Given such comments the statement from the Congregation for Catholic Education becomes significant:

(A Catholic school) would no longer deserve the title if, no matter how good its reputation for teaching in other areas, there were just grounds for a reproach of negligence or deviation in religious education, properly so-called.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988:32.

Religious education and the Catholic school.

The second challenge that Holohan refers to is religious education. He suggests, among other things, that the Catholic school should be promoting the importance of religious education, particularly by resisting pressures to reduce the time given to religious education so that other subjects may be studied, especially those subjects needed by students for entry into university.

Holohan states that religious education classes must be ready, and active, in playing their part in the formation of Catholic students.

Religious education needs to point to human experiences to help students understand God's revelation. Religious education needs to help them

understand the meaning of their significant experiences as human beings. This includes study of basic Christian concepts related to the 'formation of the Christian personality', such as conversion, vocation, commitment, and hope. Only as it does so will religious education in a Catholic school play its part in helping students to 'spell out the meaning of their experiences and their truths'.

Holohan, 1999a:63.

Dwyer (2002) speaks of religious education classes developing the dignity of the whole person which includes a call to action, a call to make a difference, a difference to others, to society and culture and to hasten the Reign of God.

Crawford and Rossiter state the role of religious education:

Understood correctly, it is essential for Catholic schools to have religion organised as a well established subject. This means that religion should have an important place in the timetable with an adequate number of periods for the coherent teaching of a comprehensive program. There should be a professionally organised department of religion teachers. Most of all, religion should be taught with the same degree of skill, intellectual challenge and rigour as other subjects.

Crawford & Rossiter, 1985:22.

Flynn and Mok's study of year 12 students in Catholic schools led them into the area of what students thought of their religious education classes. One student replied:

I dislike it immensely! I believe it should be voluntary. I find it has no relevance to my life, my faith or what I believe or wish to believe. It is narrow-minded, biased and unfairly imposed on us in year 12.

Flynn & Mok, 2002:282.

Another student stated:

There should be a choice! That is the view of most of Year 12 students in Catholic schools. Many students, including myself, see it as a waste of time! It gets in the way of our difficult, more time-consuming subjects. I don't want to have to learn RE at school.

Ibid.

Flynn found in his 1972-1993 longitudinal studies that religious expectations are:

By far the lowest concern of Year 12 students. Students rank their R.E. classes amongst the lowest of their expectations of Catholic schools.

Religious realities appear less important compared with careers, exams, relationships, and peer group activities.

Flynn, 1993:181.

Flynn and Mok were even less optimistic in 2002:

Year 12 students' attitudes towards religious education when faced with the pressures of the HSC examination continue to be a matter of concern! A marked decline in students' perceptions of religious education is also evident over the period 1972, 1982, 1990 and 1998.

Flynn & Mok, 2002:287.

Angelico (1997) in her study, *Taking stock: Revisioning the church in higher education*, speaks of the disenchantment experienced by university students from Australian Catholic University, whom she surveyed, concerning the Catholic school that they attended and their religious education classes. She speaks of students being alienated by their religious education classes and having a widespread resentment to the religiosity of the school. Angelico's study sought to find the cause of this disenchantment. Her conclusions were similar to the findings of this study.

It would appear that the poor status of religious education, as a subject, in Catholic schools and the poor teaching of religious education, mutually reinforce each other and lead to senior students' poor perception of their classes. In the early part of Rossiter's major work, *An Interpretation of Normative Theory for Religious Education in Australian Schools*, he states that religious education is:

Aimed at handing on a particular religious faith tradition, that is handing on the collective religious beliefs, traditions and practices of a group which identifies itself (or is identified) as a faith sharing community

Rossiter, 1983:113.

This study builds upon the work of Flynn, Crawford and Rossiter to explain the reasons why 1st and 2nd year university students perceived their religious education classes as they do.

A non-Catholic teacher would appear to have 'hit the nail on the head', as regards Catholic schools and religious education:

I think it is important for Catholic schools to remain Catholic in nature. I see a drift away from this ideal and a desire to be all things to all people. The school must not lose sight of its Catholic character. Although a non-Catholic teacher myself, I believe it is important for religion to be valued. At times the school becomes very secular (religious education is just another class). I appreciate that religious education lessons should not be the 'be all and end all' of Christian education, but I feel religious education needs to be more important in the life of a Catholic school than it is.

Flynn, 1993a:182.

The research into religious education classes in Catholic schools indicates that all is not well. This study aims to discover why.

Catholic documents on the 'what' and 'why' of Catholic schools

The 'what' of Catholic schools.

Research into Catholic schools and religious education, raises the question: "why establish Catholic schools?" This section will investigate the question.

The Code of Canon Law (1983) states that the Catholic school is of the greatest importance since it is the principal means of assisting parents to fulfil their role in education, and that the school must work closely with parents who have entrusted their children to be educated in the Catholic system.

The Code reaffirms the right of the Church to establish and direct schools, and Catholic lay people are to do everything in their power to assist in establishing and maintaining them. The document then goes on to indicate that the Catholic school is especially for education in faith and that the church has an obligation to foster in her children a full awareness of their rebirth to a new life. It is precisely in the Gospel of Christ, taking root in the minds and lives of the faithful that the Catholic school finds its definition as it comes to terms with the central cultural conditions of the times.

Control of the Catholic school.

In view of the statements made in Vatican II documents and by the Congregation for Catholic Education it is important to establish who controls Catholic schools. The reason for this is that the 'controller' of the Catholic school is able to set out the blueprint for how the schools are conducted. The Code of Canon Law (1983) defines a Catholic school as:

One which is under the control of a competent ecclesiastical authority or of a public ecclesiastical juridical person, or one which in a written document is acknowledged as Catholic by the ecclesiastical authority.

Catholic Church, 1983:185.

Canon 804 makes it quite clear where the authority lies in establishing a Catholic school and the appointment of staff:

804: #1: The formation and education in the Catholic religion provided in any school, and through various means of social communication, is subject to the authority of the Church. It is for the Bishops' Conference to issue general norms concerning this field of activity and for the diocesan Bishop to regulate and watch over it.

804: #2: The local ordinary is to be careful that those who are appointed as teachers of religion in schools, even non-Catholic ones, are outstanding in true doctrine, in the witness of their Christian life, and in their teaching ability.

Catholic Church, 1983:185.

Canon 805 states that the Bishop, in his own diocese, has the sole right to appoint or to approve teachers of religion and if, religious or moral considerations require it, the right to remove them or to demand that they be removed. Further the Code (Canon 806) states that the local Bishop has the right to watch over and to inspect the Catholic schools situated in his diocese, even those established or directed by members of religious institutions. The Bishop also has the right to issue directives concerning the general regulation of Catholic schools. There are many questions being asked today by the Catholic hierarchy, and the church faithful, as to the role of the Catholic School. The answers to such questions will have a great bearing for the

justification of the millions of dollars spent by the Catholic Church on education, in Australia, every year.

Pope John Paul II in his address to the Bishops of England on March 26, 1993, speaks of what a Catholic school should, in fact, be achieving:

Catholic schools provide an incalculable service to the common good. The Catholic school is a witness to the truth that genuine education seeks to do more than simply impart knowledge, or train people to perform an economically productive task. All education worthy of its name seeks to bring forth as it were a full person, a person in whom moral excellence is no less developed than are theoretical or productive ability.

Pope John Paul II, 1993a:4.

Pope John Paul II makes very clear the role of a Catholic school:

It is not true that such education is always given *implicitly* or *indirectly*. The special character of the Catholic school and the underlying reason for its existence, the reason why parents should prefer it, is precisely the quality of the religious instruction integrated into the overall education of the students.

Pope John Paul II, 1979a:33.

The 'why' of Catholic schools.

The 'why' of Catholic schools should be squarely centred upon Religious education classes. The acknowledged goal of a Catholic school is the Christian education of Catholic students through its religious education classes.

In defining religious education, Ryan and Malone state:

Religious education is an expression that has only been commonly used in Catholic schools since the 1970s. Prior to this an assortment of terms was used: religious instruction, Christian Doctrine, religious knowledge or, simply, the Catechism which was the basic text used. (The term) religious education is an umbrella term that covers all aspects of student learning about religion, as well as the processes of becoming more religious. In the context of Catholic schools, it includes the formal classroom activities concerned with the subject area called religion and also other aspects of the Catholic school that provides religious experiences and a sense of belonging to a Church community.

Ryan & Malone, 1996:7/8.

Crawford and Rossiter also give a clear and concise definition of religious education:

Religious education aims at deepening young people's knowledge, understanding and affective appreciation of the Catholic faith tradition. Religious education is thus specially concerned with informing young people about religion so that they will be in a better position to assess what religion and personal faith may contribute to their lives.

Crawford & Rossiter, 1993:42.

Gravissimum Educationis.

The Council Fathers of Vatican Council II (1962-1965), aware that a post-conciliar commission would lay out the details of the 'what' and 'why' of Catholic schools issued Gravissimum Educationis (The Declaration on Christian Education). This document was designed to give only the major principles of what constitutes a Catholic school and Catholic religious education.

Post-conciliar commissions did, in fact, develop upon this document and these documents will be looked at later in this chapter. Gravissimum Educationis was promulgated on October 28th 1965. The document begins by stating that education is important to people worldwide and that there are still many people in the world who do not have adequate access to education even though they want it. The document then states that education is a special concern of the Church and that young people should be assisted in the full development of their persons: physical, moral, sexual, social and intellectual. The key to the document comes in Norm 2, when it states that all the faithful have a right to a Catholic education which advances their faith and understanding, to enable them to grow as mature and faithful people. In Norm 5, the Council Fathers state that the Catholic school is the key (to religious growth) because it provides intellectual development, ripens the ability (of the students) for moral judgements, teaches about history and culture, and prepares people for professions.

The Church aims to provide an atmosphere animated by the Gospel in which one might express faith, grow as a human, and order his or her life according to the plan

of God (Norm 8). The document then considers its role in tertiary education and the need for both Catholic and State universities to provide Departments of Theology so as to train dedicated Catholic teachers. The document ends by calling on young people everywhere to consider becoming teachers and to devote themselves generously to this great human need. The Council Fathers thank those priests, religious men and women, and laypeople who have been so devoted for so many years and asks present and future teachers in Catholic schools to carry on this tradition.

The Catholic school.

In the 1977 document, The Catholic school, the Congregation for Catholic Education tells us that the Catholic school must be a community whose values are communicated through the interpersonal and the sincere relationships of its members. It is in Jesus Christ, who is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise that a Catholic school may rightly claim to be Catholic:

The task of the Catholic school is fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life: The first is reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel; the second is the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977:33.

The document continues by stating that the church establishes her own schools because she considers them as a privileged means of promoting the formation of the whole man. The school is the centre in which a specific concept of the world, of man, and of history is developed and conveyed. It is one of the formal tasks of a Catholic school to draw out the ethical dimension of that school and to aid students to achieve complete moral freedom. The document reminds educators that behind this moral

freedom stand absolute values that alone give meaning to life. Religious education classes in a Catholic school should integrate faith and life:

The fundamental aim of teaching is the assimilation of objective values, and, when this is undertaken for an apostolic purpose, it does not stop at integration of faith and culture but leads the pupil on to a personal integration of faith and life.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977:36.

Catechesi Tradendae.

Catechesi Tradendae: Catechesis for our time was written by Pope John Paul II and promulgated on October 16th 1979. Pope John Paul II stated on the promulgation of this apostolic exhortation:

I ardently desire that this Apostolic Exhortation to the whole Church should strengthen the solidarity of the faith and Christian living, should give fresh vigour to the initiatives in hand, should stimulate creativity - with required vigilance - and should help to spread among the communities the joy of bringing the mystery of Christ to the world.

Pope John Paul II, 1979a:7.

Catechesi Tradendae deals with the area of theology known as evangelisation, or catechesis. This document is included in this literature review as catechesis should be a further development for students after they have completed their religious education classes.

In chapter one of the exhortation, Pope John Paul II reminds all educators that we have but one teacher, Jesus Christ. In Norm 11 the Pope speaks of sharing Jesus' message to all people. In chapter 3 he states:

The specific character of catechesis has the two-fold objective of maturing the initial faith (through religious education classes) and of educating the true disciple of Christ by means of a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the person and the message of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Pope John Paul II, 1979a:21.

Norm 20 of the document goes on to state that the specific aim of catechesis is to develop an initial faith, which is learnt in the home and catechesis will draw its

content from the living source of the Word of God transmitted in Tradition and the Scriptures. Infants receive the first elements of catechesis from their parents and the family surroundings and this is re-affirmed in the Sacrament of baptism. In Norm 37 the Pope sums up the role of the Parish and the Catholic school in building upon the elements of catechesis received in the home:

For the child there comes soon, at school and in church, in institutions connected with the parish or with the spiritual care of the Catholic or State school an introduction into a wider social circle. It is catechesis that gives meaning to the Sacraments. Catechesis communicates to the child the joy of being witness to Christ in ordinary life.

Pope John Paul II, 1979a:37.

The exhortation then goes on to speak of all the greatness and dangers associated with puberty and adolescence:

It is a time of discovering oneself and one's own inner world, the time of generous plans, and the time when the feeling of love awakens, with the biological impulses of sexuality. All this can provide the basis for genuine education in faith.

Pope John Paul II, 1979a:38.

How does one develop that faith which John Paul II is speaking of? One suggested methodology is through teaching students the objective revealed truths which comes from God. These revealed truths according to the magisterium should be passed on to students in their religious education classes. The assumption, of course, is that initial catechesis has taken place, for the child, in the home and the Parish.

Lay Catholic in schools.

The document from the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1982), *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witness to Faith*, was a document for its time. Religious brothers and sisters saw their numbers dwindling in Catholic schools and the places they left vacant were being taken by dedicated lay men and women. Catholic education was changing, and at a crossroad; no longer were the majority of teachers

in a Catholic school, and teaching religious education, religious Brothers and Sisters but lay teachers. To prepare lay people for their role, the Congregation for Catholic Education responded with the document, Lay Catholic in Schools. The document begins:

Lay Catholics, both men and women, who devote their lives to teaching in primary and secondary schools, have become more and more vitally important in recent years. For it is the lay teachers who will substantially determine whether or not a school realises its aims and accomplishes its objectives.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982:3.
On page 23 of the document it states that the lay Catholic who works in a Catholic school should be aware of the ideals and specific objectives which constitute the general educational philosophy of the institution. The document tells the lay teacher that his or her teaching in a Catholic School is not a profession but a vocation, a vocation from God to impart knowledge, love, compassion and forgiveness through that one true teacher, Jesus Christ.

As discussed in chapter one of this study, with the decline in the number of religious and the growth in the number of lay teachers in Catholic schools, a real problem occurred. The problem was the number of untrained and unprepared lay teachers who were teaching religious education in Catholic schools. This document addresses this crisis by stating that living out of the life of a lay Catholic, in a school, requires an appropriate formation, both on the professional plane and the religious plane. The document continues:

Teachers should therefore be trained with particular care, so that they may be enriched with both secular and religious knowledge, appropriately certified. The need for an adequate formation is often felt most acutely in religious and spiritual areas; all too frequently, lay Catholics have not had a religious formation, that is equal to their general, cultural, and, most especially, professional formation.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982:33.

This advice from the Congregation has been taken seriously with, firstly, Catholic teachers' colleges being established in Sydney and Brisbane, later to become campuses of the Australian Catholic University. In Perth the Catholic Institute of Western Australia was established in 1976 and works in close collaboration with Edith Cowan and Curtin Universities to provide religious education formation for students wishing to teach religious education in a Catholic School. In 1990, Notre Dame Australia was established in Perth to provide an opportunity for young Catholics who wish to teach in a Catholic School to complete their degree in education at that institution. It is hoped that lay teachers graduating from these institutions, which prepare them for teaching in a Catholic school and, more importantly, to teach religious education, will help change senior students' perceptions of their religious education classes. After all, this was the major thrust of the 1982 document.

The religious dimension of education in a Catholic school.

In 1988 The religious dimension of education in a Catholic school from the Congregation for Catholic Education was issued from Rome. This document is perhaps the most in-depth look at religious education in a Catholic School and is still used in teacher education classes at universities. The document is very specific about the stated goals of a Catholic school:

A Catholic school is not simply a place where lessons are taught; it is a centre that has an operative educational philosophy, attentive to the needs of today's youth and illumined by the Gospel message. Therefore, the elements to be considered in developing an organic vision of a Catholic school climate are: persons, space, time, relationships, teaching, and study. The Gospel spirit should be evident in a Christian way of thought and life which permeates all facets of the educational climate.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988:12/13.

The document continues with the statement that the religious dimension of a Catholic school is of the utmost importance and this dimension is, partially achieved through the celebration of Christian values in Word and Sacrament, in individual behaviour, in friendly and harmonious interpersonal relationships:

Through this daily witness, the students will come to appreciate the uniqueness of the environment to which their youth has been entrusted. If this is not present, then there is little left which can make the school Catholic.

The Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988:13.

Part 4 of the document concerns itself with religious education in the classroom. The document reminds us that Catholic schools are a Christian community whose educational roots are centred on Christ and his Gospel. On page 34 it makes the statement that religious education cannot but help strengthen the faith of a believing student and that religious education is knowledge-based. To framers of religious education courses the document offers some consolation when it states that:

It is not easy to develop a course syllabus for religious instruction classes that will present the Christian faith systematically and in a way suited to the young people of today.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988:37.

The quote offers teachers some consolation and a challenge for future framers of a religious education curriculum. Nevertheless, being faithful to Christ and His Gospel, the document insists that religious education classes should continue to contribute to human and Christian maturity, even in the face of the many hurdles that need to be surmounted in today's social climate. One way suggested by the Congregation to combat the outside influences that face our young people and their religious education classes is:

The discovery process which is an important pedagogical method. The person of Jesus will come alive for the students. They will see again the example of the life of Jesus, listen to his words, hear his invitation as addressed to them, "Come to me, all of you." Faith is thus based on knowing

Jesus and following him; its growth depends on each one's good will and cooperation with grace.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988:38.

The document insists that the Catholic school should be centred upon, for the student, the person of Christ:

In this vital centre (the Catholic school), the formation process is a constant interplay of action and reaction. The interplay has both a horizontal and a vertical dimension, and it is this qualification that makes the Catholic school distinctive from those other schools whose educational objectives are not inspired by the person of Christ.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998:58.

Recent observations while supervising teachers completing their Graduate Diploma of Education, two at Catholic schools and one at a State school allowed me to reflect on the above quote. Upon reflection I found myself concerned that some Catholic Schools are, in fact, not distinctive from their State school counterparts. Again the question: Are our Catholic schools being Catholic? The data collected in this study will hopefully allow me to come to a conclusion and suggest some form of action to make our schools 'distinctively Catholic'.

The Catholic school on the threshold of the third millennium.

The 1998 document, The Catholic school on the threshold of the third millennium, issued by the Congregation for Catholic Education, begins by stating that Catholic schools are facing a time of crisis and this crisis calls for a courageous renewal on the part of the Catholic school. The document speaks of the increasing numbers of instances where Catholic students are indifferent, non-practising and totally lacking in religious or moral formation. Again it challenges religious education teachers by stating that Catholic schools should, above all, impart a solid Christian formation. This is the challenge for Catholic schools as we enter the third millennium:

The Catholic school sets out to be a school for the human person and of human persons. The person of each individual human being, in his or her

material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ's teaching. This is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998:12.

It is important to increase awareness of the ecclesial identity of the Catholic school. It is from this identity that a Catholic school derives its original characteristics and its structures as a genuine instrument of the Church, a place of real and specific pastoral ministry. By reason of its identity the Catholic school is a place of ecclesial experience, which is the basis for its existence. The document concludes with a clear and concise summary of the mission of the Catholic school:

Thus it follows that the work of the school is irreplaceable and the investment of human and material resources in the school becomes a prophetic choice. On the threshold of the third millennium we perceive the full strength of the mandate which the church handed down to the Catholic school in that 'Pentecost' which was the Second Vatican Council: Since the Catholic school can be of service in developing the mission of the people of God and in promoting dialogue between the Church and the community at large, to the advantage of both, it is still of vital importance in our times.

Congregation for Catholic education, 1998:25.

The Catholic Church substantiates her teachings on contraception, marriage/divorce and Sunday Mass attendance

This review of literature will now discuss why the Catholic Church teaches as she does in three areas of theology. The theological teaching of the Church regarding contraception, marriage and divorce and the Sunday Mass obligation will be explored.

Marriage and divorce.

In looking at the Catholic Church's teaching on marriage, there is one primary source from which the Church basis its teaching, namely, the Bible (all Biblical quotes are taken from the Jerusalem Bible, 1966). From this primary source the Church then develops its rules and regulations concerning the Sacrament of Marriage in an official Church document known as The Code of Canon Law (1983). From the Code of

Canon Law, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994) explains Church teachings on marriage and divorce.

From Scripture, both the Old and New Testaments can be found the basis and reasoning behind the Church's teaching on marriage and divorce.

In Genesis, Chapter 1:27-28, we read that man was created in the image of God. Male and female he created them. This passage, it is argued, is the primary reason for God establishing marriage.

In Genesis 2:21-25 this theology is developed further:

So Yahweh God made the man to fall into a deep sleep. And while he slept, he took one of his ribs and enclosed it in flesh. Yahweh God built the rib he had taken from the man into a woman. This at last is the bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh! This is to be called woman, for this was taken from man. This is why man leaves his father and mother and joins himself to his wife, and they become one body.

Genesis, 2: 21-25.

In Leviticus, Chapter 21:13-16, the author(s) are quite clear on the selection of a wife.

Leviticus states that a man must take as his wife a woman who is still a virgin.

Leviticus continues stating that the man must not marry a woman who is widowed or divorced, or profaned by prostitution: only a virgin from his own family may he take

to be his wife. The Old Testament leaves us in no doubt that a certain type of marriage took place at the time of the writing of the book of Leviticus. But it is the

New Testament where the Church developed her teachings. When looking at the

Synoptic Gospels (Mark, 10:2-12, Matthew, 19:3-9 and Luke 16:18) we find

Marriage and divorce mentioned in all three. For the purpose of this review Mark's

Gospel will be used as the primary source teaching on marriage and divorce. In

Mark's Gospel, we read:

Some Pharisees approached him and asked, is it against the law for a man to divorce his wife? They were testing him. He answered them, what does Moses command you?' Moses allowed us, they said, to draw up a writ of

dismissal and so to divorce. Then Jesus said to them: It was because you were so unteachable that he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. This is why a man must leave his father and mother, and the two become one body. They are no longer two, therefore, but one body. So then, what God has united, man must not divide. Back in the house the disciples questioned him again about this, and he said to them: The man who divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another she is guilty of adultery too.

Mark, 10:1-12.

It is from the primary source of the Bible that the Catholic Church developed a set of laws to cover marriage and divorce. These laws are clearly stated in the Code of Canon Law. Church annulments are also covered in the Code, but annulments are not relevant to this study and will not be reviewed. Under the title: Marriage, Section VII, the Code of Canon Law states the following concerning Catholics who wish to marry:

Canon: 1055: *1. The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life, and which of its own very nature is ordered to the well being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children, has, between the baptised, been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.

Catholic Church, 1983:237.

Canons 1057-1165 then go on to outline the laws of: a) a valid sacramental marriage; b) the indissolubility of a valid sacramental marriage; c) divorce; d) annulments; e) mixed marriages and f) the form of the marriage. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reiterates the Catholic teaching on marriage and divorce using the Old Testament Book of Genesis as its starting point:

1. Sacred Scripture begins with the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God and concludes with a vision of the wedding-feast of the lamb.
2. From a valid marriage arises a bond between the spouses which by its very nature is perpetual and exclusive.
3. The love of the spouses requires, of its very nature, the unity and indissolubility of the spouses which embraces their entire life: so they are no longer two, but one flesh.
4. Today there are numerous Catholics in many countries who have recourse to civil divorce and contract new civil unions. In fidelity to

the words of Jesus Christ, whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.

Catholic Church, 1994:400/404/ 409/410/411/412.

Bishop Geoffrey Robinson in his book, Marriage, divorce and nullity, speaks of the three qualities of all sacramental marriages:

1. One man and one woman.
2. For their entire lives: Love and commitment and
3. To produce new life.

Robinson, 1991:5/8.

Robinson continues:

The Church sees marriage between two Christians as a sacrament. Marriage is both a covenant between the couple and a covenant between the two of them and God. The call to married life is, in the true sense of the word, a vocation, a calling from God. The union between the couple becomes a sacred sign, a sacrament.

Op.cit.:11.

The official teaching of the Catholic Church on marriage would appear to be quite clear-cut and one would expect that the religious education classes for senior students would adequately cover this important teaching and students would understand the Church's position.

Sunday Mass and holy days of obligation.

The second area of doctrinal teaching that this study will investigate is the Sunday Mass obligation. Taking Scripture, as the starting point, for this discussion, one can clearly see how the Catholic Church arrives at its teaching on the Sunday Mass obligation. From the Old Testament Book of Exodus, we read:

Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. For in six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that these hold, but on the seventh day he rested; that is why Yahweh has blessed the Sabbath and made it sacred.

Exodus, 20: 8-11.

In the Book of Leviticus, Chapter 19:30, we read: "You must keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary. I am Yahweh." In the Book of Numbers we read of the punishment meted out to the Jewish people for breaking the law of the Sabbath:

While the sons of Israel were in the wilderness, a man was caught gathering wood on the Sabbath. Those who caught him gathering wood brought him before Moses, Aaron and the whole community. He was kept in custody, because the penalty he should undergo had not yet been fixed. Yahweh said to Moses, This man must be put to death. The whole community must stone him outside the camp. The whole community took him outside the camp and stoned him till he was dead, as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

Numbers, 15:32-36.

The Book of Deuteronomy tells us to observe the Sabbath day:

Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as Yahweh your God has commanded you. For six days you shall labour and do your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath for Yahweh your God. You shall do no work that day, neither you nor your son nor your daughter nor your servants, men or women, nor your ox nor your donkey nor any of your animals, nor the stranger who lives with you. Thus your servant, man or woman, shall rest as you do. Remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and that Yahweh your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and outstretched arm; because of this, Yahweh your God has commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

Deuteronomy, 5:12-15.

From Scripture, the Church developed the law regarding the Sunday Mass Obligation.

Two official documents, supporting and building upon Scripture are: The Code of Canon Law and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The Code of Canon Law states:

Canon 1246, norm 1: Sunday, on which by apostolic tradition the paschal mystery is celebrated, is to be observed in the universal Church as the primary holy day of obligation.

Canon 1247: On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Mass.

Canon 1248: The obligation of participating in the Mass is satisfied by one who assists at Mass wherever it is celebrated in a Catholic rite either on the holy day itself or on the evening of the previous day.

Catholic Church, 1983:272/ 273/274.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994) then reiterates what the Code of Canon Law stated:

The precepts of the Church specify the law of the Lord more precisely: On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass.

Catholic Church, 1994:526.

The Catechism then speaks of the punishment for Catholics who deliberately miss Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation:

2181: The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin.

Catholic Church, 1994:527.

Further, the Catechism tells Catholics why Sundays and Holy days of obligation are days to be celebrated.

Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church. The faithful give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity. Together they testify to God's holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Catholic Church, 1994:527.

Again, these documents are relevant as the study will look at how 1st and 2nd year university students accept or reject this Catholic teaching (doctrine). A survey conducted by the Australian Catholic University in 1995 among Catholic university students who had left university for more than three years showed that only 2% went to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. Saker (1998) had a similar response to those obtained at the Australian Catholic University.

Contraception.

The third area of doctrine that this study will investigate is Catholic students' acceptance or rejection of the Catholic Church teaching on contraception.

Of all the doctrinal teachings of the Catholic Church since Pope Paul VI issued his encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in 1968 (a clarification of Church teaching on

contraception) this document has caused the most controversy. Some theologians would say that the issuing of this document was a turning point for the Church's absolute authority over the faithful. It was the first time in the history of Catholicism that Catholics en masse ignored a Papal teaching. Finding no immediate retribution from God and 'getting away' with ignoring this Papal statement, Catholics worldwide began to ignore other Papal and Congregation statements, for example, Sunday Mass Obligation.

The teaching on contraception appears in Scripture through texts directly and indirectly referring to The Natural Law. Beside Scripture, the Catholic Church would maintain that the other source of her authority is tradition. If a doctrine has been constant over a period of time, then the teaching becomes binding on all the faithful. The purpose of tradition is to instruct the faithful in matters of faith and morals. These teachings are passed on to the faithful through the teaching magisterium.

(Magisterium) Latin 'Office of teacher'. The office of authoritatively teaching the Gospel in the name of Jesus Christ. Those who have authority to proclaim and teach officially share in the Church's magisterium. Catholics believe that this magisterial authority belongs to the whole College of Bishops, as successors to the College of Apostolic witnesses, and to individual Bishops united with the Bishop of Rome.

O'Collins & Farrugia, 1991:131/132.

The Natural Law is a universal moral law given by God in the very act of creating human beings and is open to being known by the light of reason. Pagan literature, the Western Tradition, Scripture and other voices give witness to The Natural Law. A Scripture passage used, by the Church, to substantiate her teaching on The Natural Law comes from St Paul to the Romans:

For instance, pagans who have never heard of law but are lead by reason to do what the Lord commands, may not actually 'possess' the law, but they can be said to be the law. They can point to the substance of the law engraved on their hearts - they can call a witness, that is their own conscience.

The teaching of the Catholic Church on contraception, therefore, comes from Scripture (validating The Natural Law) and Tradition. It is from these two sources that the Church has mainly drawn upon for her teaching on contraception:

Fielder & Rabben (1998) in their book, *Rome has spoken*, trace the Catholic teaching on contraception (tradition) to the time of St Augustine in the fourth century, through to the Papal encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (1995) promulgated by Pope John Paul II.

St Augustine wrote:

Sometimes this lustful cruelty, or cruel lust, comes to this, that they even procure poisons of sterility, and, if these do not work, extinguish and destroy the fetus in some way in the womb, preferring that their offspring dies before it lives, or if it was already alive in the womb to kill it before it was born. The wife is in a fashion the harlot of her husband or he is an adulterer with his own wife.

Fielder & Rabben, 1998:149.

Pope Sixtus V in his encyclical, *Effraenatam* written in 1588 states:

Who, then, would not condemn with the utmost severe punishments the crimes of those who by poisons, potions, and maleficia induce sterility in women, or impede by cursed medicines their conceiving or bearing?

Op.cit:150.

Pope Pius XI in his encyclical, *Casti Connubii* written in 1930 states:

Since the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose sin against nature (The Natural Law) and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.

Ibid.

Pope Paul VI in his encyclical, *Humanae Vitae* (1968) states:

The church teaches that each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relation to the procreation of human life. Marriage and conjugal love are by their very nature ordained toward the begetting and education of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents. We must once again declare that the direct interruption of the generative process already begun, and, above all, directly will and procured abortion, even if for therapeutic

reasons are to be absolutely excluded as licit means of regulating birth. Equally to be excluded is direct sterilisation, whether perpetual or temporary, whether of the man or of the woman. Similarly excluded is every action which, either in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible.

Pope Paul VI, 1968:12/13.

Pope John Paul II in *Evangelium Vitae* (1995) states:

Still contraceptive practices, engaged in by couples, are rooted in a hedonistic mentality where the couples are unwilling to accept responsibility in matters of sexuality and this implies a self-centred concept of freedom, which regards procreation as an obstacle to personal fulfilment. From the moral point of view contraception and abortion are specifically different evils: the former contradicts the full truth of the sexual act as the proper expression of conjugal love, while the latter destroys the life of a human being; the former is opposed to the virtue of chastity in marriage, the latter is opposed to the virtue of justice and directly violates the divine commandment.

Fielder & Rabben, 1998:152.

The Council Fathers of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) addressed the question of contraception in the document, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*.

In questions of birth regulation the daughters and sons of the church are forbidden to use methods disapproved of by the teaching authority of the church in its interpretation of the divine law.

Op.cit:151.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church simply reaffirms traditional teachings on contraception since the time of St Augustine:

So the church teaches that each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life. This particular doctrine, expounded on numerous occasions by the magisterium, is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man, on his own initiative may not break the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act.

Catholic Church, 1994:569.

The literature review on the Catholic Church's teaching on Marriage/divorce, Sunday Mass attendance and contraception is clear, to the point, and supported by magisterial

documents, Papal statements, Scripture and Tradition. Are Catholic schools teaching this doctrine? Are students accepting such teachings, and if not, why not? This research aims to answer this question.

Perth archdiocesan religious education curriculum

The Perth Archdiocesan religious education curriculum was revised by the Catholic Education Office in 2000 and piloted in six junior secondary schools in Perth. The curriculum was introduced into all Catholic schools in Western Australia in 2001. The religious education curriculum of (2000/2001) was further developed to include a religious education curriculum for senior secondary schools (2002). On page one of the religious education curriculum it states that an evangelisation methodology is its initial focus. In the section, Teaching Process, a flow chart indicates, to teachers of religious education, the steps that they are to take in teaching religious education and, in particular, this unit of study. (This teaching process and flow chart is repeated in every unit to be taught in Catholic schools).

Step 1: Reflecting on human experiences:

The teaching process suggested here is that the student at the completion of the unit be able to recognise the inner call towards personal development.

Step 2: Understanding Catholic faith experiences:

Here, it is suggested that the student should be given the opportunity to develop the potential offered by Christian re-creation.

Step 3: Relating faith and life:

Under this teaching process the student is to investigate the unit topic. The student is then asked to identify the choices that can be made. The student is then said to be in a position to make a decision that may determine the type of person that he/she may become through that choice.

In the section of the curriculum called, description for assessment, the document lists three areas for assessment:

1. Knowledge and understanding: The ability to know what is being communicated and the ability to make some use of the content or ideas.
2. Work skills: The student's ability to work individually.
3. Effort: Reflects how the student has gone about completing the assessment task.

Op.cit:164.

The question this document raises is: "How are the teachings of the Catholic Church taught in the years 11 and 12 religious education classes?"

A sense of the sacred integrating religious education into secular subjects

In 1993 Warner, Cody, Saker and Fletcher produced a document for the Catholic Education Office in Sydney, entitled *A Sense of the Sacred*. The aim of the document was to indicate to teachers how they may integrate values central to the Gospels, to Church teachings and to the community into the Social Sciences curriculum area. The authors of this document were responding to the Congregation for Catholic Education statement:

The school is the centre in which a specific concept of the world, of the person and of history is developed and conveyed.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1992:8.

The Sense of the Sacred suggested five supporting concepts to be addressed in teaching any of the social sciences. The five concepts are:

1. The sacramentality of all creation: Respect for all creation.
2. Dignity of the human person: Sacredness of life and human rights
3. Communion: Living Tradition and community.
4. Cultural Transformation: Solidarity with the poor and the common good of all.
5. Reconciliation and hope: Empowerment, hope and ministry.

Warner, Cody, Saker & Fletcher, 1993:5.

These five concepts were then taken separately and integrated into each subject that falls within the social science teaching area. The Sense of the Sacred was an attempt to inculturate the whole Catholic school with a special charism/ethos which was/is distinctively Catholic.

Curriculum framework document

In 1998 the Curriculum Council of Western Australia issued a document for all schools, under its jurisdiction, incorporating outcomes based education. The document was supported by the, then, Director of Catholic Education in Perth, Therese Temby, who was also deputy chair of the working committee which produced the document.

The document suggests 13 overarching learning outcomes. Outcomes 11 through 13 would appear most appropriate for senior religious education classes:

11. Students value and implement practices that promote personal growth and well being.
- 12: Students are self-motivated and confident in their approach to learning and are able to work individually and collaboratively.
- 13: Students recognise that everyone has the right to feel valued and be safe, and, in this regard, understand their rights and obligations and behave responsibly.

Curriculum Council, 1998:19.

The document continues by identifying 3 key aspects of outcome based education:

1. Responding: Students responding to experiences using the process of inquiry.
2. Reflecting: Students identifying and discussing the processes of these experiences.
3. Evaluating: Students using critical reflection and cultural values (to arrive at a decision).

Op.cit:1.

Crotty and O'Grady speak of the benefits of outcomes education to the religious education classroom as:

1. Student centred.
2. Giving teachers specific guidance for programming learning activities, the content of teaching, assessment of student achievement, and evaluation of teaching and learning.
3. Giving students a clearer perception of what they are expected to do and achieve.
4. Giving parents and other members of the Catholic community a clearer understanding of the likely result of teaching and learning.
5. More likely to ensure that classroom processes, content and expectations reflect teaching practice which is possible in, and appropriate to, the classroom.
6. Using the curriculum framework operative in the Key Learning Areas and hence consolidates religious education as a subject in the curriculum.

Crotty & O'Grady, 1999:4.

Dwyer is guarded in his praise of having outcomes linked to religious education:

The outcomes model or mindset has been warmly embraced by developers of religious education materials. One can only assume that the adopting of curriculum frameworks based on this philosophy, or technology, would have been preceded by a rigorous process of discernment. In what ways does the outcomes approach need to be modified or expanded so that the particular nature and integrity of religious education might be preserved?

Dwyer, 2002:52.

This question Dwyer poses may need to be seen as a foundational question for all those who are involved in writing a religious education curriculum. Dwyer sees that by adopting the religious education curriculum to outcomes education, religious education could become a derivative subject. Dwyer concludes:

What is current is not necessarily the best or the only way. In fact, there are many ways of beings authentically educational. It may be that religious education's great contribution to the mainstream curriculum will be to model at least one alternative way.

Dwyer, 2002:54.

Summary

A range of themes have been examined in this chapter as they relate to how students may perceive their senior religious education classes. The 'why' of Catholic schools, and the 'what' of religious education was investigated through Papal encyclicals and

Congregational documents. Primary source material, on the three doctrinal areas under discussion, was reviewed to show why the Catholic Church maintains its teaching in these areas. Finally a look at the religious education guidelines for Western Australian Catholic schools, the sense of the sacred and the Curriculum Council's framework for outcomes education.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the research methods and procedures that have been used in this study. The chapter is structured into five sections. Section one centres on the research design underpinning the study and the rationale for adopting both descriptive (questionnaire) and qualitative (interview) approaches. In section two, the quantitative research method is explained while the third section looks at the qualitative method. The fourth section considers how the data will be analysed and presented, while section five discusses the limitations to the study.

Research design

In order to ascertain the answer to the question: What are the perceptions of year eleven and twelve students of their religion education classes, one turns to educational research:

Educational research may be defined as the systematic and objective analysis and recording of controlled observations that may lead to the development of generalisations, principles, or theories, resulting in prediction and possibly ultimate control of events. Research is directed toward the solution of a problem. In the field of education, we identify research with a better understanding of the individual, and a better understanding of the teaching-learning process.

Best, 1981:20.

Wiersma (2000) speaks of research as being a systematic process of collecting and logically analysing information (data) for some purpose. Candy tells us that research explains how people attribute meaning to their circumstances and how they develop and make use of rules that govern their behaviour:

Research is an ancient and ubiquitous human activity. Curiosity about others and the world in which they live has always been displayed through conversation, asking questions, working together to see what happens after different kinds of actions are performed, talking or gossiping about others to

tease out intentions and other reasons for behaviour, clarifying and understanding circumstances; all are fundamental functions to research.

Candy, 1989:1.

In commencing this study my aim was to be as objective as possible and to eliminate personal bias and any emotionally held convictions. Best briefly explains the role of the researcher, as he sees it:

The researcher attempts to eliminate personal bias. There should be no attempt on the part of the researcher to persuade or to prove an emotionally held conviction. Although absolute objectivity is as elusive as pure righteousness, the researcher tries to suppress bias and emotion in his or her analysis.

Best, 1981:19.

McMillan and Schumacher make the following observation concerning educational research:

The ideal researcher is detached from the study to avoid bias. Most research attempts to establish universal context-free generalisations. Researchers become immersed in the situation present or past and the phenomenon being studied. Research is marked by disciplined subjectivity, self-examination, criticism of the quality of the data obtained and the problems encountered.

McMillan & Schumacher, 1989:11.

It is important to note, as the researcher will be conducting interviews in this study that Candy (1989) warns that inquiry is always value laden and as such, values will inevitably influence the framing, bounding, and focussing of research problems.

It was with a determination to shed some light on the perceptions of Catholic students to their senior religious education classes, and an awareness of the inherent dangers mentioned above concerning research methods, that I began this study.

Descriptive approach

This study will use a descriptive research methodology:

Descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or answer questions concerning the current state of the subject of the study. A descriptive study determines and reports the way things are. One common

type of descriptive research involves assessing attitudes or opinions towards individuals, organisations, events, or procedures. Descriptive data are typically collected through a questionnaire survey (quantitative), an interview, or observation (qualitative).

Gay, 1981:12.

This study used both quantitative and qualitative methods of descriptive research. Krathwohl (1993) tells us that quantitative methods are characterised by describing in numbers, by using measures, by validating hypotheses, by pre-planning and structuring, whereas qualitative methods are characterised by describing in words, by exploring to find what is significant in the situation, by trying to understand and explain it. Qualitative methods of research are characterised by descriptive analysis and are fundamentally an inductive process, reasoning from an explicit situation to a general conclusion. Quantitative research, on the other hand, is characterised by deduction, reasoning from general principles to specific situations. Quantitative research places immense emphasis on outcomes and products.

Mixed method

There is a logical connection between quantitative and qualitative research. Langenbach, Vaughn and Aagaard (1994) argue that quantitative methods express the assumptions of a positivist (rationalistic) paradigm which hold that behaviour can be explained through objective facts, whereas qualitative methods express assumptions of a phenomenological (naturalistic) paradigm that there are multiple realities which are socially proclaimed. Using both methodologies to study the same questions allowed for a clearer picture to be drawn from the results of each. Burns tells us that:

Exclusive reliance on one method may bias or distort the researcher's picture of the particular slice of reality he is investigating. He needs to be confident that the data generated are not simply artefacts of one specific method of collection. Where triangulation is used in interpretative research to investigate different actor's viewpoints, the same method, for example, observation, will naturally produce different sets of data.

Burns, 1994:272/3.

Mixed method was used to further enhance the validity or truthfulness of the findings.

Quantitative research

Questionnaire

Why a questionnaire?

The most commonly used descriptive method in educational research is the questionnaire. Burns (1994) states five characteristics of a questionnaire, two of which are: (a) The questionnaire requires a sample of respondents to reply to a number of standard questions under comparable conditions, and (b) The results of the questionnaire can be generalised to the defined population.

The initial questionnaire was administered to 133 university students. This allowed me to gain a general perception of how the students perceived their religious education classes. I was to learn a little about a lot.

Questionnaire sample and design.

This research used a convenience sample comprising of 1st and 2nd year university students who had attended a Catholic school for their final two years of secondary education and had taken part in the senior religious education classes. They were currently enrolled in a Bachelor of Education at Edith Cowan University and were undertaking Catholic studies (CES or CED) units during semester 1, 2000.

The structured multiple-choice questionnaire with 75 items required a deductive approach because the items were to be predetermined and based on the preordained criteria of the researcher (See Appendix 5). The aims of the multiple choice questions were to ascertain: Students' perceptions of their religious education classes; Students' acceptance or rejection of official Catholic dogma; and the influences of the formal and informal curriculum, on the students' perceptions of their religious education classes.

The Statistical package, SPSS 10, for Windows, was used. Students' attitudes were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1) being strongly agree (A) and (5) being strongly disagree (E). The neutral point (3) being uncertain (C). There were some questions that did not 'fit' the Likert scale, for example, age, gender and number of years spent at a Catholic school.

Constructs used in this study

Stage 1. Identifying the constructs.

The six pre-determined constructs are:

1. Students' background.
2. Influences on students' religious development.
3. Students' perceptions of the Catholic School they attended.
4. Students' perceptions of their year 11 and 12 religious education classes.
5. Students' belief about their faith development.
6. Students' acceptance of the moral teachings of the Catholic Church.

Design of items to be used in the questionnaire

1. Students' background.

The age and gender of the students assisted me to understand how different groups of students perceived their religious education classes. The religion of the mother and father was also identified because of the implications this could have on a student's values and beliefs. Also included in this construct was a question on the number of years the student studied religious education in their Catholic school and the current religious practices of the students.

2. Influences on students' religious development.

Students do not live in a vacuum and so this construct investigated the example and influence of their parents, as well as the example and influence of peers and teachers in determining the student's perceptions of their religious education classes.

3. Students' perceptions of the Catholic school they attended.

The questions within this construct looked at the students' attitude toward the Catholic school they attended. Were the students happy at the school? Did the senior class think highly of the Catholic school? What were students' perceptions of the effect of the school on their religious development?

4. Students' perceptions of their Year 11 and 12 religious education classes.

To understand why students have accepted or rejected official Catholic Church teaching, the questions, within this construct, investigated the perceptions of the religious education classes attended by the students. Students were asked if they enjoyed their religious education classes and if they took their religious education classes seriously.

5. Students' beliefs about their faith development.

The faith development (the effectiveness of catechesis in religion education classes) of the students was investigated in this construct. If Flynn and Mok (2002) are correct and catechesis (faith development) is being successfully carried out in Catholic schools, this construct investigated whether this faith development was carried over into the students' post secondary life. Questions concerning students' prayer life, reading of Scripture and the frequency of receiving the sacraments were asked.

6. Students' beliefs concerning the moral teaching of the Catholic Church.

This construct investigated students' acceptance or rejection of Catholic Church doctrine/dogma. What relevance does the Pope have in/on students' lives? How do

students' view Church's teachings on marriage and divorce, the ban on contraception and the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and other moral issues?

Some of the questions used in this questionnaire are similar to those used by Flynn (1993a). With permission from Flynn this study adapted some of Flynn's questions to suit the constructs.

Formative evaluation

Before the questionnaire was given to the students a formative evaluation or quality control of the 75 items within the six constructs was undertaken:

The effectiveness of any given human intervention is a matter subject to study. Formative evaluation research is used to test out the effectiveness of specific human intervention. Furthermore evaluators want to help improve human endeavours.

Patton, 1990:156.

The purpose of the formative research, quality control, as a design instrument, was to validate the items contained in the questionnaire. Firstly, a person from the University was asked to validate the six constructs and the 75 items used in the questionnaire. This was done to ensure validity in matching the items with the constructs. Several suggestions were made and these changes were incorporated in the final questionnaire.

A small group of students (n=5) were asked to complete the questionnaire as part of the formative evaluation. During this process the students were asked to comment on any aspect of the questionnaire. This enabled the researcher to discover any further ambiguities, misinterpretations or problems and to establish the duration needed to complete the questionnaire.

Administering the questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered during selected religious studies classes during semester 1, 2000. The units that the students were studying included CES 1135,

Celebrating Christian Ritual; CED 2235, Teaching in Religious Education; and CES 3230, Interpreting the Bible. A colleague within the School of Education administered the questionnaire on my behalf. The colleague was asked to administer the questionnaire instead of me so as to reduce the risk of research contamination. A letter was prepared for the colleague (see Appendix 2) with instructions on how the questionnaire was to be administered. A letter was given to the students' (see Appendix 3) inviting them to participate in the study assuring letter them that their identity, and responses, would be confidential.

Qualitative research

To validate the quantitative research findings a series of questions to be used in the one-to-one interview stage of this study was developed. Wiersma lists the following advantages of qualitative research:

1. Once granted there is no problem with a non-response.
2. The interview provides an opportunity for in-depth probing and elaboration and clarification of terms if necessary.
3. There tends to be more success with obtaining responses to open-ended items.
4. Interviews can be used with individuals from whom data cannot be otherwise obtained.

Wiersma, 2000:185.

McMillan and Schumacher characterise qualitative research:

Qualitative research is less structured than quantitative research. In qualitative research the specific procedures are identified during the research rather than specified ahead of time. Each step is dependant on prior information. Traditional qualitative research is also distinguished by using a case study design, in which a single case is studied in depth. This could be an individual, one group of students, a school, a program, or a concept. The purpose is to understand the person(s) or phenomena.

McMillan & Schumacher, 1989:36.

Patton states that there are three basic approaches to collecting data through interviews. The methodology that this study adopted was Patton's second approach, the general interview guide:

An interview guide is a list of questions or issues that are to be explored in the course of an interview. An interview guide is prepared in order to make sure that basically the same information is obtained from a number of people by covering the same material. The questions to be asked in the open-ended interview will be developed from the results obtained from the students' answers to the general questionnaire. In this way, the study should be able to clarify any ambiguities in the initial survey.

Patton, 1990:284.

Qualitative methods permit the researcher to study selected items in depth and detail.

Patton speaks of the advantage of this type of study:

Qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases (than does quantitative research). This increases understanding of the cases and situations studied, but reduce generalizability.

Patton, 1990:14.

Inductive reasoning.

Cohen and Manion (1980) state that Francis Bacon developed the concept of inductive reasoning as a criticism of deductive reasoning which Bacon maintained built its major premise on preconceived notions which inevitably lead to bias in the researcher's findings. In its place Bacon argued for a research tool by which the study of a number of individual cases would lead to a hypothesis and eventually a generalisation.

His (Bacon's) basic premise was that if one collected enough data without any preconceived notion about their significance and orientation, thus maintaining complete objectivity, inherent relationships pertaining to the general case would emerge to be seen by an alert observer.

Cohen & Manion, 1980:12.

Patton argues that qualitative methods are particularly oriented towards exploration, discovery, and inductive logic.

An evaluation approach is inductive to the extent that the researcher attempts to make sense of the situation without imposing pre-existing expectations on the phenomenon or setting under study. Inductive analysis begins with the specific observations and builds towards general patterns.

Patton, 1990:44.

The inductive method was used to overcome a limitation of the quantitative method which relies on deductive reasoning. McMillan and Schumacher speak of the advantages of using inductive reasoning in educational research:

Inductive reasoning relates to a problem which is clearly stated after much data collection and analysis. The researcher obtains many observations of a present or past situation which form detailed descriptions of people's perceptions and social realities, and then generates from these descriptions an understanding or theory to explain the phenomenon. Inductive reasoning allows one to explore and discover with an emerging research design rather than test deductions from theories in a predetermined design.

McMillan & Schumacher, 1989:92.

Interviews

Burns (1994) sees many advantages to the interview method of research. Among others, he includes: Flexibility, the response rate of interviewees being greater than the questionnaire method because of the personalised nature of the interview, face to face interaction of the interviewer with the interviewee, probing more complete responses and observation of the respondent's non-verbal communication.

The specific observations made in this section of the study were centred on the interview. The inductive interview permitted the respondents to describe what was meaningful and salient without the respondents being pigeonholed into standardised categories. The categories used in the inductive research (determined when the questionnaire had been processed) were initially guided by the six constructs.

One-to-one interviews.

Ten Catholic students from the initial questionnaire sample were randomly selected for the interview phase of this study. The random selection was carried out by putting the names of the students who volunteered for the interview in a hat and drawing out names. The first five female and male names drawn were selected for the interviews. The interviews were based on questions that were developed from the responses to

the questionnaire. The interviews took 30 to 45 minutes to complete and were tape recorded. Interviews were transcribed and analysed with the ten students being mailed a copy of the transcript and asked if it was an accurate indication of what they had said. Students were encouraged to change any part of the interview or to add anything that they wished. All students agreed with the transcript and added nothing to their original interview.

Analysis of questionnaire data.

The questionnaire allowed for a large amount of data to be examined. The analysis of the data, after being collected centred upon descriptive measures such as: Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation. Burns (1994) states that the descriptive aspect of statistics allows the researcher to summarise large quantities of data using measurements that are easily understood to the observer. The data from the questionnaire was analysed by using *SPSS 10 for Windows*.

The inferential statistical test (t-test, see Appendix 7) was used to explore the statistical significance of key variables in the study. The t-test is used when we want to know what the differences are between the various identifiable samples of the participants.

Analysis of interview data

The source of data for the qualitative research undertaken in this study was the interviews (See Appendix 11).

If a standardised open-ended interview is used, it is fairly easy to do cross-case or cross-interview analysis for each question in the interview. With an interview guide approach answers from different people can be grouped by topics from the guide. The interview guide actually constitutes a descriptive analytical framework for analysis.

Patton, 1990:376.

Cross-case analysis was used in this study. Cross-case analysis, according to Burns, means grouping together answers from different people to common questions. This task was driven by inductive analysis.

Analytic induction and theoretical sampling are essential features of qualitative studies. These two processes enable the researcher to construct, elaborate and test propositions and hypotheses while the study is ongoing.

Burns, 1994:239.

The inductive analysis method allows for patterns, themes and categories to emerge from data. Krathwohl (1993) speaks of analytic induction as the instrument for finding commonalities in the data which then leads first to a description of, and then to an explanation for the regularity of the data emerging from the interview. By using the analytic induction method the data was grouped according to 'accept Catholic Church teaching' or 'reject Catholic Church teaching'. Students responses were given a code, such as common response (CR) and uncommon responses (UCR).

Triangulation of the data

In an attempt to improve the internal validity of the instruments a research technique called triangulation was used. Burns defines triangulation as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour.

Exclusive reliance on one method may bias or distort the researcher's picture of the particular slice of reality he is investigating. The researcher needs to be confident that the data generated are not simply artefacts of one specific method of collection. Where triangulation is used in interpretative research to investigate different actor's viewpoints, the same method, for example, observation, will naturally produce different sets of data.

Burns, 1994:272/3.

Miles and Huberman (1984) see triangulation as a state of mind because if you self-consciously set out to collect and double-check findings, using multiple sources and modes of evidence, the verification process will largely be built into the data-gathering process, and little more needs to be done than to report on one's procedures.

Limitation of the Study

The major limitation to this study is that the sample is biased. Only those students who are Catholic, have attended a Catholic school for their final two years of education and have been part of the years 11 and 12 religious education program were permitted to participate in the study. Also these students have elected to attend Edith Cowan University and are studying in the School of Education and, most, intend to teach religious education in a Catholic school. Catholic students who met the criteria but were not studying to be a teacher at Edith Cowan University or who were attending other universities in Perth were not sampled. So the selected sample is one that focuses on the academically able, teacher-orientated, Catholic student who completed years 11 and 12. The name of the Catholic school the student attended was not surveyed and because of the socio-economic implications this may have, the results could be skewed. Further the students were asked to volunteer for both the questionnaire and interview phase of the study. It was possible that only those students who are 'more Catholic orientated' or who related well to me may have volunteered to take part in the interviews. Another limitation to the study is that some Catholic schools have their senior students study a Curriculum Council course entitled *Beliefs and Values*. When surveying/interviewing students a distinction was not made between this course and religious education course as proposed by the Catholic Education office of Western Australia. Because of these limitations it will be difficult to generalise to other populations. This study's main focus was centred on senior students' perceptions of their religious development and the part their religious education classes played in this development. There are many factors impinging upon students' religious development and although these factors have been acknowledged

throughout this thesis, they have not been explored in depth. This is a limitation to this study.

Summary

It has been my concern for some years now that the religious education classes conducted in Catholic schools are not carrying out the mandate given them by the Bishop of the diocese in which the school is situated. Papal encyclicals, Council documents, statements from the Congregation for Catholic Education appeared to be saying one thing and the Catholic school doing another. Flynn's longitudinal study (1972-2000) has undertaken extensive studies looking at the faith development of students in Catholic schools and the results have shed a positive light on Catholic schools.

From my experience of teaching 1st and 2nd year teacher education students at university I have tentatively concluded that students are leaving Catholic schools with very little knowledge of their Catholic faith tradition, and in particular, why the Catholic Church holds some of the teachings that she does. The majority of students who have passed through my Catholic studies classes at university did not know official Catholic teaching in areas of morality or, if they did, they did not know the premise on which the Catholic Church bases its teaching. It was possible, I concluded (from observation of university students) that Catholic students are rejecting Catholic teaching without being aware of why the Catholic Church holds to such a doctrine/dogma. My concern was: "How can a student make such an informed decision without having all the facts?"

It is with the above in mind that I questioned (informally) the perceptions of my university students of their senior religious education classes. It was from the 'feedback' that I received during these informal discussions that I arrived at a

tentative conclusion that Catholic schools are not carrying out the very reason for their existence, that is, the Catholic education of their students (Saker, 1998). With this tentative conclusion, in mind, I began this study in the hope of verifying, one way or another, if my conclusion was valid.

The study now turns to a consideration of the data. Chapter 5 will look at the empirical data from the questionnaire component of this descriptive study.

CHAPTER 5

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE INFLUENCES UPON THEIR RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The chapter focuses on the quantitative data under the following construct headings.

1. Students' background.
2. Influence of parents, peers and teachers on students' religious development.
3. Students' perceptions of the Catholic school they attended.
4. Students' perceptions of their years 11 and 12 religious education classes.
5. Students' beliefs about their faith development.
6. Students' acceptance of the moral teachings of the Catholic Church.

One hundred and thirty-three students (120 females and 13 males) took part in the survey. Most of these students will complete a minimum of three units of Catholic Studies that will certify them to teach religious education in a Catholic school. The students who completed the questionnaire were all of the Catholic tradition, had completed their senior years (11 and 12) at a Catholic school and attended religious education classes and were currently enrolled in 1st or 2nd year Catholic Education units at Edith Cowan University.

All students who agreed to complete the questionnaire were informed that their responses would be anonymous, that they should feel free not to answer any question and they could leave the room at any time. They were also informed that, after analysing the data, the questionnaire responses would be kept in a secure place and at no time, would anyone connected with interpreting the questionnaire attempt to discover the identity of the person responding. It was explained to students, who did not fit the criteria, what the survey was attempting to ascertain and that their

exclusion was in no way an attempt to discriminate against them. This statement was needed as some students in the class had not attended Catholic schools or completed year 11 and 12 religious education.

Analysis of the data

Questionnaire responses were analysed using SPSS 10 for Windows. Frequencies, percentages and means, where appropriate, are reported for each question. As the questionnaire was given at a time and a place where all of the students were present a 100% response was ensured.

The researcher is aware that generalisations from this sample to all students who attended years 11 and 12 at a Catholic high school are not possible. The researcher also acknowledges the likelihood that this population of students, having chosen to enrol in Catholic studies units in preparation to teach in Catholic schools, are more likely to support the ethos of the Catholic school than other Catholic students enrolled in teacher education.

Construct one: Students' background

Items 1–8 of the questionnaire looked at the age and gender of the student, where the student completed his/her secondary education, and what degree (Bachelor of Education Secondary or Primary) the student was studying. The religion of both parents and how many years students spent in a Catholic primary and/or secondary school were also determined.

Gender and Age of the Students

Females outnumber males 120 to 13 (90.2% to 9.8%) in responding to the questionnaire (Table 5.1). The ratio of males to females studying for an education degree at Edith Cowan University is approximately 65% females and 35% males. Statistics from the Catholic Institute of Western Australia show an increase in the

number of male students from 9.8% to twenty percent, studying Catholic Education units in the third and fourth year Catholic Studies program (Catholic Institute Annual Report 2002). The reason for this increase is that male students tend to study for a Secondary Bachelor of Education degree and, therefore are able to wait until third year before commencing Catholic studies units.

Note: All percent data is corrected to the first decimal place. For the calculation of the mean: 1= strongly agree; 5 = strongly disagree. The standard deviation for most items in the questionnaire indicated no significant difference between male and female students and for this reason the standard deviation will only be given if and when the difference is such that it requires further comment. The results of the questionnaire using ANOVA is shown in Appendix 11.

Forty-seven point four percent of the students were under the age of twenty and only one or two years out of high school. Thirty-two point three percent of the students were aged between 20 and 23, nine percent of students were aged between 24 and 27 and 11.3% of students were over the age of 28 and considered to be mature-aged students. (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

Gender and age of students						
	Total		Males		Females	
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%
Under 20	63	47.4	4	3.0	56	42.1
20 - 23	43	32.3	3	2.5	41	30.8
24 - 27	12	9.0	5	3.7	9	6.7
Over 28	15	11.3	1	0.7	14	10.5
Total	133	100	13	9.9	120	90.1

With nearly 80% of students under 24 years of age the majority of students surveyed had fairly recent memories of their senior religious education classes.

Students' educational background

As this study sample attended the city campus of Edith Cowan University it would be expected that a large proportion of the sample (71.4%) completed their senior secondary education in the metropolitan area (Table 5.2). In addition the majority of students (58.6%) spent 7 years at a Catholic primary school and 56.4% spent 5 years at a Catholic secondary school (Table 5.2). The majority of students (86.5%) were studying for a Bachelor of Education (Primary) degree (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2

Location and number of years spent at a Catholic school and teaching degree

		N	%
Location	Metropolitan	95	71.4
	Country	38	28.6
Primary School	Years Attended		
	1-2	33	24.8
	3-4	12	9.0
	5-6	10	7.5
	7	78	58.6
Secondary School	Years Attended		
	2	41	30.8
	3	11	8.3
	4	6	4.5
	5	75	56.4
Teaching Degree	Bachelor of Education Primary	115	86.5
	Bachelor of Education Secondary	18	13.5

From Table 5.2 we see that over 50% of the students surveyed completed their primary and secondary education at a Catholic school and should be in a position to accurately assess the Catholic school that they attended and, in particular, their senior religious education classes.

Religion of Students’ Parents

The majority of students came from homes where both parents were of the Catholic tradition (66.2% mothers, 63.9% fathers) (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3

Religious tradition of mother and father				
Religion	Mother		Father	
	N	%	N	%
Catholic	88	66.2	85	63.9
Orthodox	6	4.5	4	3.0
Other Christian	32	24.1	30	22.6
Non-Christian	2	1.5	1	0.8
No-Religion	5	3.8	13	9.8

If Flynn and Mok (2002) are correct and parents are, in fact, the primary teachers of the Catholic faith, then the high percentage of students coming from a Catholic home should produce some positive findings with regards to students’ perceptions of the Catholic school that they attended and their senior religious education classes, in particular. The vast majority of students came from a background where both mothers (94.8%) and fathers (89.5%) were from a Catholic or other Christian tradition.

Summary of construct one.

The majority of students were female, under the age of 24, from metropolitan Western Australia and had spent an extended period of time at Catholic Schools. Over 60% of students had Catholic parents and over 80% of students were studying to be primary teachers.

Construct two: Influence of parents, peers, teachers, religious education classes and the school’s atmosphere on students’ religious development

In this construct, the religious influence of significant others was explored. Students were asked about the influence of parents, friends, peers and teachers on their religious development. Also included in this construct was 2 items exploring the

influence of the religious education program and the school atmosphere on students' religious development.

Influence of significant others on students' religious development

Seventy-eight point two percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that their parents influenced their religious development (Table 5.4). Forty-two point nine percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that teachers influenced their religious development and thirty-six point eight percent strongly agreed/agreed and their friends and peers influenced their religious development (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4

<u>Influence of significant others on religious development</u>			
	Parents	Teachers	Friends/ Peers
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Strongly agree	28.6	8.3	3.0
Agree	49.6	34.6	33.8
Uncertain	8.3	12.0	15.0
Disagree	11.3	33.5	38.3
Strongly disagree	2.3	9.8	9.8
Mean	2.0	3.0	3.1

Students see parents (mean 2.0) as having the most influence on their religious development with both teachers (mean 3.0) and friends and peers (mean 3.1) having less influence than parents..

The influence of the religious education program and school's atmosphere on the students' religious development

Fifty-five point six percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that their overall religious education program influenced their religious development, while 37.6% strongly agreed/agreed that the school's atmosphere influenced their religious development (Table 5.5).

The school's religious education program (mean 2.6) and the school's atmosphere (mean 2.8) appear to have a small but positive influence on students' religious development.

Table 5.5
Influence of religious education program and school atmosphere on students' religious development

	RE Program (%)	Atmosphere (%)
Strongly agree	15.0	11.3
Agree	40.6	26.3
Uncertain	15.0	33.1
Disagree	20.3	21.1
Strongly disagree	9.0	8.3
Mean	2.6	2.8

Summary of construct two.

Students believed that their parents influenced their religious development (mean 2). While the influence of teachers, friends and peers was less pronounced but still positive. Students responded that the school's religious education program influenced their religious development as did, to a slightly lesser extent, the atmosphere of the school. The mean for both items would indicate that students did see the atmosphere and the religious education program, of the school, as having some possible influence on their religious development.

Construct three: Students' perceptions of the Catholic school attended

In interpreting the data for this construct 14 items were clustered into four groupings:

1. Students' perceptions of the Catholic secondary school attended.
2. Students' experiences/feelings of the school.
3. Students' relationship with the principal of the school.
4. Students' perceptions of the discipline of the school.

Students' perceptions of the Catholic school attended

Thirty-three point one percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that senior students understood, and accepted, the religious goals of the school. Fifty-one point eight percent strongly agreed/agreed that the ethos of the school was Christian while 42.8% believed that senior students thought a lot of the school (Table 5.6).

Table 5.6

Perceptions of goals, Christian ethos and the School

	Religious goals (%)%	Christian Ethos (%)	Thought a lot of school (%)
Strongly agree	6.8	18.0	12.0
Agree	26.3	33.8	30.8
Uncertain	32.3	23.3	30.1
Disagree	21.8	12.0	18.0
Strongly disagree	12.8	12.8	9.0
Mean	3.0	2.6	2.8

Students were uncertain (mean 3.0) if the religious goals of the school were accepted and understood by senior students. Students were slightly more positive that the school had a Christian ethos (mean 2.6) and that the senior students thought a lot of the Catholic school (mean 2.8).

Over 70% of students strongly agreed/agreed that they would attend a Catholic school again and that they would send their children to a Catholic school. Fifty-four point two percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that they were better people for attending a Catholic school (Table 5.7).

Table 5.7

Outcomes of Catholic schooling

	Better person %	Attend again (%)	Send children (%)
Strongly agree	27.1	48.1	54.1
Agree	27.1	30.1	18.8
Uncertain	21.1	9.8	14.3
Disagree	12.0	0.8	2.3
Strongly disagree	12.8	11.3	10.5
Mean	2.5	1.9	1.9

There is general agreement that students would attend a Catholic school again (mean 1.9) and that they would send their children to a Catholic school (mean 1.9). Students although less certain, still believed that they were better people for attending a Catholic school (mean 2.5).

Experiences of, and feelings for, the Catholic school attended

In this cluster there are three items concerning the happiness experienced by the students at the school, whether they felt important at the school and the students' pride in attending the school. Seventy-three percent of the students strongly agreed/agreed that they were happy in the Catholic school that they attended and 72.9% indicated that they were proud to be a student at the school. Fifty-eight point seven percent strongly agreed/agreed that they saw themselves as being important at their school (Table 5.8).

Table 5.8

Students' feelings about the Catholic school they attended

	Happiness (%)	Importance (%)	Pride (%)
Strongly agree	31.6	21.1	34.6
Agree	41.4	37.6	38.3
Uncertain	10.5	15.0	12.0
Disagree	8.3	15.8	7.5
Strongly disagree	8.3	10.5	7.5
Mean	2.2	2.5	2.1

Students were clearly happy (mean of 2.2), took pride (mean 2.1), and also felt important (mean 2.5), at the Catholic school that they attended indicating evidence of a positive social/emotional climate.

The principal.

Thirty-three point one percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that the principal was approachable when needing advice and help while 48.1% of the students saw the principal as caring and understanding (Table 5.9).

Table 5.9

Students' views on the Principal		
	Approachable (%)	Caring/Understanding (%)
Strongly agree	9.8	10.5
Agree	23.3	37.6
Uncertain	19.5	18.8
Disagree	23.3	18.0
Strongly disagree	24.1	15.0
Mean	3.2	2.8

Overall, students saw the principal as being a somewhat caring and understanding person (mean 2.8) while they were slightly unsure if the principal was approachable (mean 3.2).

School discipline.

Sixty-five point four percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that the school discipline was just (mean 2.4), however, 45.1% strongly agreed/agreed that too much emphasis was placed on rules and regulations (mean 2.8). A large proportion of students (72.9%) strongly agreed/agreed that the senior students were aware of the conduct expected from them (mean 2.3). (Table 5.10).

Table 5.10

Students’ perceptions of the discipline of the school

	Just discipline (%)	Emphasis on rules (%)	Aware of conduct expected (%)
Strongly agree	15.0	16.5	18.0
Agree	50.4	28.6	54.9
Uncertain	17.3	18.8	12.8
Disagree	7.5	28.6	5.3
Strongly disagree	9.8	57.5	9.0
Mean	2.4	2.8	2.3

Summary of construct three.

The combined mean for each of the four clusters in construct three (Table 5.11) indicates that students perceived their experiences and feelings of the Catholic school that they attended as generally positive. They were less certain when asked about school discipline and their perceptions of the principal.

Table 5.11

Means for students’ perceptions of Catholic school

Cluster Item	Mean
Students’ experiences/feelings of the school	2.1
Students’ perceptions of school discipline	2.4
Students’ perceptions of the Catholic school	2.8
Students’ relationship with the principal.	3.0

The overall mean for the construct was 2.6%

Construct four: Students’ perception of their religious education classes

In interpreting the data for this construct the 15 items have been gathered into three groupings:

1. Students’ perceptions of their senior religious education classes.
2. Students’ perceptions of the benefits and the relevance of their religious education classes to their needs.
3. The knowledge component of the religious education classes/program.

Students’ perceptions of their senior religious education classes

Less than 30% of students strongly agreed/agreed that their religious education classes were a waste of time (28.5%) while 42.1% strongly agreed/agreed that their religion classes were interesting. Fifty-one point nine per cent of students strongly agreed/agreed that their religious education classes did arouse interest among the senior students and fifty-two point seven per cent of students strongly agreed/agreed that their religious education classes were well prepared and well taught (Table 5.12).

Table 5.12

Students’ perceptions of their religious education classes

	Classes well prepared and taught (%)	A waste of time (%)	R.E. classes were interesting (%)	R.E. classes of interest to senior students (%)
Strongly agree	8.3	9.0	6.0	14.3
Agree	44.4	19.5	36.1	37.6
Uncertain	15.8	12.8	21.8	24.1
Disagree	18.8	46.6	27.1	21.1
Strongly disagree	12.8	12.0	9.0	3.0
Mean	2.9	3.3	2.9	2.6

Students were somewhat ambivalent as to whether their religious education classes were well prepared and well taught and whether they found their religious education classes interesting (means 2.9). Their religious education classes did arouse some interest among senior students (mean 2.6) and 58.6% of students did not see their religious education classes as a waste of time (mean 3.3).

The next gathering of items focussed on the students’ perceived benefits of their religious education classes (Table 5.13). Forty-eight point nine percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that they enjoyed their religious education classes while 42.1% strongly agreed/agreed that the school they attended had a good religious education program. Thirty-four point six percent of the students strongly

agreed/agreed that if their religious education classes were voluntary they would attend (Table 5.13).

Students were generally uncertain about the school’s religious education program and whether they enjoyed it (mean 2.8). They expressed similar views about their voluntary attendance at religious education classes.

Table 5.13

The perceived benefits of religious education classes			
	Enjoyed RE classes	A good senior RE program	Voluntary RE classes
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Strongly agree	9.8	10.5	7.5
Agree	39.1	31.6	27.1
Uncertain	22.6	21.8	36.1
Disagree	18.0	20.3	18.8
Strongly disagree	10.5	15.8	10.5
Mean	2.8	2.8	2.9

Religious education classes related to students’ needs

The next cluster centred on the students’ religious education classes and whether these classes were related to the students’ real life situations and needs.

Forty-seven point four per cent of the students strongly agreed/agreed that their religious education classes allowed them to develop as a person and 45.8% believed that their religious education classes were related to real life and to their needs. While 52.7% of the students strongly agreed/agreed that they gained a lot from their religious education classes and 12.1% of students strongly agreed/agreed that religious education classes were taken seriously by senior students (Table 5.14).

The range of means of (2.7-2.9) indicates a degree of uncertainty among students that their religious education classes allowed them to develop as a person; that they gained a lot from their religious education classes or that their religious education classes

were related to their real life needs. Religious education classes were clearly not taken seriously by many senior students (mean 3.6).

Table 5.14

Religious education classes related to students' needs

	RE allowed me to develop as a person (%)	Gained a lot from RE classes (%)	RE classes related to real life needs (%)	Taken seriously by students (%)
Strongly agree	12.8	6.8	10.5	0.8
Agree	34.6	45.9	35.3	11.3
Uncertain	23.3	22.6	18.8	25.6
Disagree	21.8	15.8	22.6	44.4
Strongly disagree	7.5	9.0	12.8	18.0
Mean	2.7	2.7	2.9	3.6

The knowledge component of the Religious education classes/program

Students, in this cluster, were asked four questions to ascertain how they perceived the current emphasis on the knowledge component of religious education and whether they were taught the official Church teaching, on three moral issues, contraception, marriage and divorce and Sunday Mass obligation.

Thirty-five point four percent of the students strongly agreed/agreed that more emphasis should have been placed on knowledge and content during their religious education classes. To the specific questions concerning Church laws, 49.6% of students strongly agreed/agreed that they were taught the official Church teachings on contraception and 55.6% of students strongly agreed/agreed that they were taught the official Church teachings on marriage and divorce. Forty-four point four percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that they were taught the official church teaching on Sunday Mass obligation (Table 5.15).

The range of means of (2.7-2.9) reflects students' ambivalent perceptions on the whole construct.

Table 5.15

The knowledge component of the religious education classes

	More emphasis on knowledge and content (%)	Church teaching on marriage and divorce (%)	Church teaching on contraception (%)	Church teaching on Sunday Mass attendance (%)
Strongly agree	8.3	15.8	17.3	8.3
Agree	27.1	39.8	32.3	36.1
Uncertain	32.3	15.0	21.8	25.6
Disagree	25.6	15.0	14.3	21.1
Strongly disagree	6.8	14.5	14.3	9.0
Mean	2.9	2.7	2.7	2.8

Summary of construct four.

While a large proportion of students saw their religious education classes as not being a waste of time they had mixed views on the interest generated. They were uncertain as to the amount of interest shown in religious education classes by their peers and whether they were taken seriously. Students were also uncertain if the school had a good senior religious education program and if their religious education classes were well prepared and taught. As to having been taught the official Church teachings on marriage/divorce, contraception and Sunday Mass obligation students were, again, uncertain.

The means for cluster items in construct four indicates (Table 5.16) a general uncertainty by the students on all items.

Table 5.16

Means for students' perceptions of their senior religious education classes

Cluster Items	Mean
The knowledge component	2.7
Students' perceptions of the benefits classes	2.8
Students' perception	2.9

Construct five: Students' perceptions of their faith development

In construct five there were 14 items. In interpreting the data for this construct the 14 items have been clustered into four groupings:

1. Belief in Catholic dogma.
2. Perceptions of God the Father.
3. Perceptions of Christ, the Son.
4. Religious practice.

Students' belief in Catholic dogma

Seventy-nine percent of the students strongly agreed/agreed that the Immaculate Conception refers to Mary while 68.4% of students strongly agreed/agreed that Mary, the Mother of God, was assumed into heaven body and soul. Fifty-seven point nine percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that the Catholic religion helped them to answer questions about the meaning of life while 43.6% of students strongly agreed/agreed that the Catholic Church was founded by Christ (Table 5.17).

Table 5.17

Students' beliefs in Catholic dogma

	Church helps answer questions about life (%)	Church founded by Christ (%)	Immaculate conception refers to Mary (%)	Mary assumed into heaven body and soul (%)
Strongly agree	12.8	18.0	42.9	33.1
Agree	45.1	25.6	36.1	35.3
Uncertain	27.1	37.6	21.1	26.3
Disagree	11.3	15.0	0.0	3.8
Strongly disagree	3.8	3.8	0.0	1.5
Mean	2.4	2.6	1.7	2.0

The means (1.7–2.0) for the two doctrinal questions indicates a state of belief in, or understanding of, Church teaching concerning Mary, the Mother of God. The two

questions, centring on the Church, means (2.4-2.6) indicates that students were less certain.

Perceptions of God as Father.

The three items in this sub section concerned the students' relationship with God the Father, and statements, such as, 'I believe in God', 'God is loving and forgiving', were used to determine the students' relationship with God the Father. Eighty-five point eight percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that they believe in God while 78.4% saw God as a loving Father and 82.7% saw God as forgiving (Table 5.18). Students have a strong belief in God (mean 1.5) and they find God both loving (mean 1.7) and forgiving (mean 1.6).

Table 5.18

Perception of God the Father			
	Belief in God (%)	God is Loving (%)	God is forgiving (%)
Strongly agree	63.2	45.1	52.6
Agree	22.6	33.3	30.1
Uncertain	12.8	14.3	15.8
Disagree	1.5	1.5	0.8
Strongly disagree	0	0.8	0.8
Mean	1.5	1.7	1.6

Perceptions of Christ, the Son.

The two items in this sub section centred upon the person of Christ. To the question, Christ is a real person to me, 63.1% of students strongly agreed/agreed, while 52.7% strongly agreed/agreed that Christ, as God, could not sin (Table 5.19). Students saw Christ as a real person (mean 2.1) but were a little less certain as to whether Christ could sin (mean 2.4), indicating a misunderstanding of a basic tenet of Catholic theology.

Table 5.19

Perceptions of Christ the Son

	Christ a real person (%)	Christ could not sin (%)
Strongly agree	33.8	30.1
Agree	29.3	22.6
Uncertain	26.3	24.1
Disagree	8.3	18.8
Strongly disagree	2.3	4.5
Mean	2.1	2.4

Religious practice

Three items in this sub section centred on the frequency of the students' use of the Sacraments (Mass and reconciliation) and two items centred up personal prayer and reading Scripture.

Mass and Eucharist.

Twelve-point eight percent of students indicated that they attended Mass every Sunday while 12.0% receive Eucharist while attending Mass (Table 5.20). Approximately 70% of students rarely/occasionally attended Sunday Mass or received the Eucharist.

Table 5.20

Religious practice: Mass and Eucharist

	Sunday Mass (%)	Receiving Eucharist (%)
Every Sunday	12.8	12.0
Two or three Sundays a month	12.0	9.0
Once a month	5.3	6.0
A few times a year	39.8	37.6
Rarely or never	30.1	35.3
Mean	3.8	3.7

Reconciliation.

While no student goes to the sacrament of reconciliation on a weekly basis, sixteen point five percent of students go to reconciliation a few times a year, while 82% of

students rarely or never avail themselves of the sacrament of reconciliation (see table 5.21).

Table 5.21

Religious practice: Reconciliation

	Frequency of Reconciliation (%)
Once a Week	0.0
Two or three times a month	0.0
Once a month	1.5
A few times a year	16.5
Rarely or never	82.0
Mean	4.8

Prayer and Scripture.

Fifty-point four percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that they prayed daily while 7.1% indicated that they read Scripture daily (Table 5.22).

Table 5.22

Religious practice: Prayer and Scripture

	Pray Daily (%)	Read Scripture daily (%)
Strongly agree	20.3	2.3
Agree	30.1	6.8
Uncertain	9.0	3.8
Disagree	27.1	47.4
Strongly disagree	13.5	39.8
Mean	2.6	4.1

Summary of construct five.

No student (mean 4.8) is receiving the sacrament of reconciliation on a weekly or tri monthly basis. There is no doubt that, for these students, the sacrament of reconciliation is indeed 'the forgotten sacrament'. The majority of students are not reading Scripture daily (mean 4.1) or attending Mass on a weekly basis (mean 3.8) though Students would appear to be more likely to pray every day (mean 2.6).

The means for the four clusters in construct 5 indicate (Table 5.23) that students generally have a sound knowledge of the dogma of the Church and a strong belief in God the Father. Students also perceived Christ as the Son of God, yet they were less certain as to whether Christ could sin. Putting these beliefs into practice, in the institutional church is another question, as students were most unlikely to attend Mass weekly or use the sacrament of reconciliation, nor were they likely to pray or read Scripture daily (Table 5.23).

Table 5.23

Means for students' faith development	
Faith development	Mean
Perception of God, as Father	1.5
Belief in dogma	2.1
Perceptions of Christ as Son	2.2
Religious practices	3.5

**Construct six: Students' acceptance of the moral teachings
of the Catholic church**

In construct six there were 15 items. In interpreting the data for this construct the items have been clustered into six groupings:

1. Marriage/divorce.
2. Contraception.
3. Sunday Mass obligation.
4. Abortion.
5. Human sexuality.
6. The Church.

Marriage and divorce.

Three items were used in this cluster, namely, marriage as a commitment for life; marriage as a Sacrament of the Catholic Church, and the Catholic Church's teaching on marriage/divorce, and its relevance in today's world.

Seventy-five point one percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that marriage is a commitment for life, while 80.4% strongly agreed/agreed that marriage is a Sacrament of the Catholic Church. In the response to the question as to whether the Catholic Church's teaching on marriage and divorce is relevant, for society in the 21st millennium, 28.5% strongly agreed/agreed (Table 5.24).

Table 5.24

Marriage and divorce

	Marriage a commitment for life	Marriage is a Sacrament	Teaching on marriage/divorce relevant
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Strongly agree	60.1	40.6	6.0
Agree	15.0	39.8	22.5
Uncertain	7.5	12.8	24.0
Disagree	9.7	6.0	36.0
Strongly disagree	7.5	.8	11.2
Mean	2.0	1.8	3.2

Students agree that marriage is a commitment for life (mean 2.0) and that marriage is a Sacrament of the Catholic Church (mean 1.8). As to whether the Catholic Church's teaching on marriage and divorce is relevant to today's world students were uncertain (mean 3.2).

Contraception.

The three items in this cluster were: The use of a contraceptive is sinful; the sexual act must be open to the possibility of procreation, and the Dr Billing's method of family planning is accepted by the Catholic Church.

Nine-percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that any use of artificial contraception during sexual intercourse is sinful while 14.3% of students strongly agreed/agreed that each and every sexual act must be open to the possibility of procreation. That the family planning method, as proposed by Dr Billings, is acceptable to the Catholic Church was strongly agreed/agreed to by 35.4% of students (Table 5.25).

Table 5.25

Contraception			
	Use of contraceptive is sinful (%)	Sex act open to procreation (%)	Billings family planning method (%)
Strongly agree	3.0	4.5	14.3
Agree	6.0	9.8	21.1
Uncertain	13.5	21.1	56.4
Disagree	36.8	32.3	5.3
Strongly disagree	40.6	32.3	3.0
Mean	4.0	3.7	2.6

Students disagree that the use of a contraceptive is sinful (mean 4) and that every sexual act must be open to the possibility of procreation (mean 3.7) but are uncertain as to whether the Catholic Church accepts the Billings method of family planning (mean 2.6).

Sunday Mass obligation.

There were two items in this cluster, missing Mass on Sundays is a sin and do you agree with the Church’s teaching on Sunday Mass obligation? Eighteen-point one percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that missing Mass on Sundays is sinful while 20.3% strongly agreed/agreed with the Church’s teaching on the Sunday Mass obligation (Table 5.26).

Table 5.26

Sunday Mass obligation

	Missing Sunday Mass is a sin (%)	Agree with Church teaching on Sunday Mass (%)
Strongly agree	3.8	5.3
Agree	14.3	15.0
Uncertain	19.5	22.6
Disagree	43.6	37.6
Strongly disagree	18.8	19.5
Mean	3.5	3.5

Students did not agree that missing Mass on Sunday is sinful (mean 3.5), nor did they agree with the Church’s teaching on Sunday Mass (mean 3.5).

Abortion.

The three items in this cluster sought students’ views on: when life begins, abortion is the murder of an unborn child, and in the case of a girl falling pregnant after being raped, having an abortion. Sixty-nine point nine percent of the students strongly agreed/agreed that life begins when the male sperm unites with the female egg, while 60.9% of students strongly agreed/agreed that abortion is the murder of an unborn child. Sixty-two point four percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that if a woman was raped and falls pregnant she should be allowed to have an abortion (Table 5.27).

Table 5.27

Abortion and rape

	Life begins at conception (%)	Abortion is murder (%)	Allowing an abortion for rape (%)
Strongly agree	37.6	40.6	38.3
Agree	32.3	20.3	24.1
Uncertain	12.0	18.0	18.0
Disagree	13.5	10.5	11.3
Strongly disagree	4.5	10.5	8.3
Mean	2.1	2.3	2.2

The majority of students agree with the official teachings of the Catholic Church on when life begins (mean 2.1) and that the abortion of an unborn child is murder (mean 2.3) but they do not agree that if a girl is raped and falls pregnant she should be stopped from having an abortion (mean 2.2).

Human Sexuality.

The two items in this cluster dealt with heterosexual acts (outside of marriage) and homosexual acts. Students were asked whether heterosexual acts (outside of marriage) and homosexual acts were sinful. Fifty-nine point four percent of students disagreed/strongly disagreed that having a sexual relationship before marriage is sinful while 66.2% disagreed/strongly disagreed that homosexual acts are sinful (Table 5.28).

Table 5.28.

Heterosexual and homosexual acts		
	Heterosexual acts outside marriage are sinful	Homosexual acts are sinful
	(%)	(%)
Strongly agree	9.0	6.8
Agree	11.3	9.8
Uncertain	20.3	17.3
Disagree	38.3	36.1
Strongly disagree	21.1	30.1
Mean	3.5	3.7

The majority of students neither see sexual intercourse outside marriage (mean 3.5) nor homosexual acts as being sinful (mean 3.7). This is obviously counter to the Church’s moral teachings.

The Church.

The five items in this cluster concerned the governing of the Church, the moral teachings of the Church and students as practising Catholics.

That the Pope has the power to make statements on behalf of all the church was strongly agreed/agreed to by 67.7% of students while 15.8% strongly agreed/agreed that when the Pope speaks infallibly he cannot err. Seventy-six percent strongly agreed/agreed that the Church’s teachings are only a guide for Christian living while 57.2% strongly agreed/agreed that the Church’s moral teachings are out of date with modern society. Over half of the students (51.8%) considered themselves a practising Catholic (Table 5.29).

Table 5.29

The Church					
	Papal statement	Papal ex cathedra statements	Church teachings only a guide	Moral teachings out of date	Practising Catholic
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Strongly agree	24.1	6.0	34.6	27.1	12.0
Agree	43.6	9.8	41.4	30.1	39.8
Uncertain	18.0	60.2	11.3	26.3	22.6
Disagree	12.0	14.3	9.8	12.8	16.5
Strongly disagree	2.3	9.8	3.0	3.8	9.0
Mean	2.2	3.1	2.0	2.3	2.7

Students agreed that the Pope has the power to make statements on behalf of the Church (mean 2.2), yet they were uncertain as to whether, when the Pope makes ex cathedra statements, he speaks infallibly (mean 3.1). Students agree that Church teachings are only a guide for Christian living (mean 2.0) and, also believe that the Church’s moral teachings are out of date with modern society (mean 2.3). Over half the students surveyed (51.8%) consider themselves as practising Catholics (mean 2.7).

Summary of construct six.

The mean for the six cluster items in construct six (Table 30) indicates that students generally support the Church's teachings on marriage and divorce (mean 2.3),

abortion (mean 2.2) and that the Church is a 'teacher' (mean 2.4). They disagree with Church teachings on contraception (mean 3.4), Sunday Mass Obligation (mean 3.5) and pre-marital sex (mean 3.6)

Students see marriage as a commitment for life and as a Sacrament of the Catholic Church but they do not see the Church's teaching on marriage and divorce as being relevant in to-day's society.

An overwhelming number of students do not believe that the use of a contraceptive during sexual intercourse is sinful, nor do they believe that every sexual act must be open to the possibility of procreation. They were uncertain if they were taught the Billings' method of family planning while at school.

Students did not agree that missing Mass on Sundays was sinful or with the Church's teachings on Sunday Mass. This attitude is reflected in low Mass attendance on Sundays. Flynn and Mok (2002) quoting from Flynn's longitudinal study found that in 1972, 69% of senior students attended Mass on Sundays; in 1982 it was 55%; in 1990, 38% and in 1998 it had fallen to 23%. This study (quantitative) found that 12.8% of students attend Mass on Sundays. The qualitative results could be said to be 'more depressing' for those connected with the church (see Chapter 6).

There was general agreement that life begins at conception and that abortion is the murder of an unborn child, however students believed that a woman who is raped and falls pregnant should be allowed to have an abortion. The majority of students do not see heterosexual sexual intercourse, outside of marriage as sinful, nor do they see homosexual acts as being sinful.

Concerning the Pope, students strongly agreed/agreed that the Pope has the power to make statements on behalf of the whole Church but they do not agree that when the Pope speaks *ex cathedra* he is speaking infallibly. Students agree that Church teaching

is only a guide for Christian living and that Church teaching, in the area of sexual morality, is out of date with modern society. Just over half the students agree they are practising Catholics.

The means for the six cluster items in construct six (Table 5.30) indicates that students agree with the Church’s teachings on marriage and divorce, abortion and that the Church is ‘teacher’. They do not agree with Church teachings on contraception, Sunday Mass obligation and pre-marital sex.

Table 5.30

Means for acceptance of moral teachings

<u>Moral beliefs</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Abortion	2.2
Marriage	2.3
Church as teacher	2.4
Contraception	3.4
Sunday Mass	3.5
Pre marital sex	3.6

Summary of quantitative findings

Students were baptised Catholics, the majority coming from a family background which was of the Catholic tradition. All attended a Catholic school in their senior years, and studied religious education in their last two years of secondary school.

Students were influenced by their parents in their religious development while the influence of significant others, friends/peers and teachers, on students’ religious development was less prominent.

Students generally did not view the Catholic school that they attended in a very positive way. Perceptions of the principal of the school and the school rules, regulations and discipline were somewhat negative. Students were uncertain if they

were better people for attending a Catholic school, yet they would send their children to a Catholic school and would attend a Catholic school again.

Students, generally, did not view their religious education classes in a positive light. The responses to most items, in this construct, indicate a degree/level of uncertainty. They did not perceive that fellow senior students gained much from the religious education classes and did not see the knowledge component of religious education as being important (contrary to official Church documents). Concerning the three moral issues, contraception, marriage/divorce and Sunday Mass obligation, students were uncertain if they were taught the official Church teachings on these issues.

Students had a strong belief in God, as Father, and saw God as loving and forgiving. As to their relationship with Christ, the founder of Christianity, they were ambivalent. They agreed with questions concerning, Mary, the Mother of God, and the official Church teachings on the Immaculate Conception and Mary's Assumption.

Putting faith into 'practice' resulted in a negative response from students. Weekly attendance at Mass, the reception of the Eucharist, use of the sacrament of reconciliation, daily prayer and reading Scripture, on a daily basis, were rejected by the majority of students.

Students generally see marriage in a positive light yet see Church teaching on divorce as out of date with contemporary society. It is in the area of human sexuality where students are most at variance with Church teaching. In contrast, they see abortion as the murder of an unborn child, but not in the case of a pregnancy occurring because of rape or incest where they have no difficulty with the girl having an abortion.

Students do not accept Church teachings on procreation, contraception, pre-marital sexuality and homosexuality. They are not following Church teaching on the Sunday Mass obligation nor do they see missing Mass on Sunday as sinful. Students are not

receiving the sacrament of reconciliation on a regular basis, if at all, while they see Church teaching as a guide to living the Christian life, it is not a rule of life for them. Just under half of the students see themselves as practising Catholics. These findings form the backdrop for the data generated in the in-depth interviews that follow in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER SIX

INTERVIEW FINDINGS: LEARNING A LOT ABOUT A FEW

Introduction

The results of the data collected from ten students (5 females and 5 males) are presented in this chapter. Students were asked to volunteer for the one-to-one interviews. Ten males and 65 females volunteered with five males and five females randomly selected for interviews conducted in semester 2, 2000. The ten students selected for the interview were also asked to complete the survey again, as the initial questionnaire completed was anonymous. Their questionnaire responses served as a prompt for the interviews. Students were told that if they felt uncomfortable with putting their name on the survey they could withdraw from the interview without any prejudice. No student declined putting their name on the survey. The prompts for the interviews were prepared and the interviews took place over a period of one week at the Churchlands Campus of Edith Cowan University.

Before beginning the interview I developed a brief profile of each of the 10 interviewees these are presented to enable the reader to gain a pen picture of each of the interviewees. The profiles have been edited (the complete profile of each student can be found in Appendix 14).

Students' profile

Peter: The independent.

Peter is a twenty year-old male who completed his secondary education in a Catholic School in the metropolitan area. He spent five/six years at a Catholic primary school and five years at a Catholic secondary school. He is studying for a Bachelor of Education (secondary) and is in the second year of his university studies. Peter's

mother is Catholic and his father professes to having no religion. As a family they did not attend Sunday Mass regularly.

Peter appeared, in the interview, as an independent thinker and displayed the confidence of a young man beyond his years. Peter did not appear to be hostile towards the Catholic Church but in his responses to questions concerning Catholic moral teaching, he strongly disagreed and regarded the teaching as archaic. (Observation notes:1).

Paul: The youthful.

Paul is 18 years of age and completed his secondary education in a Catholic school in the metropolitan area. Paul spent all his primary and secondary education at a Catholic school. He is studying for a Bachelor of Education (primary) and he is in his first year of university studies.

Both of Paul's parents are Catholic. Paul in the interview appeared to be still in 'high school mode'. He spoke very quietly and was quite nervous at the beginning of the interview (Observation notes:2). Paul did not see the Church, or any organised religion, as playing a part in his everyday life.

Matthew: The antagonist.

Matthew is twenty-one years of age and completed his secondary education in a Catholic school in the metropolitan area. Matthew spent all his primary and secondary education at a Catholic school, an experience that he did not enjoy. He is studying for a Bachelor of Education (primary) and is in his second year of university studies.

Matthew's parents are both Catholic. Matthew is a young man who does not see himself as very religious and during the interview I sensed an antagonism towards religion in general and the Catholic Church in particular (Observation notes:3).

Matthew told me that he was studying Catholic units at Edith Cowan so that he could have the option of getting a teaching job in a Catholic school (Observation notes:3).

John: The Agnostic.

John is nineteen years of age and completed his secondary education in country Western Australia. He spent five/six years in a Catholic primary school and five years in a Catholic secondary school. He is studying for a Bachelor of Education (secondary) and is in his first year at university. His mother is of the Orthodox faith and his father is a Catholic.

John is a very friendly young man who appears to enjoy people and life. He has a happy-go-lucky attitude and believes religion has played no role in his life to this stage. He said, "I am not opposed to religion or the Catholic Church, I just do not care about it". When I suggested that he may be an agnostic, he replied, "You could say that" (Observation notes:4). Although John spent most of his primary and secondary education at a Catholic School, he said, "Neither of my parents are into religion and you could say that they are in no way religious. They do not practice the Catholic faith and that suits me fine" (Observation notes: 4). John has completed one unit in Catholic studies and he is in the process of completing another. At the completion of the interview I pointed out to John that some of his responses to the questions appeared to be at odds with the profile I had of him at the beginning of the interview. He told me that at times he was really unsure of what he believed and that religion and God confused him. John: The happy go-lucky, sometimes theist/sometimes agnostic. (Observation notes:4).

Mary: The respectful.

Mary is eighteen years of age and completed her secondary education in the metropolitan area. She spent five/six years at a Catholic primary school and five years at a Catholic secondary school. Mary is studying for a Bachelor of Education (primary) and is in her first year of university studies.

Mary's mother is of a non-Catholic Christian faith and her father is Catholic. Mary does not go to Mass every Sunday, as she does not see Mass as being relevant to her life (Observation notes:5). Nevertheless Mary has a great deal of respect for the Catholic Church especially in the area of social justice and sees the Catholic Church doing good work in assisting the poor, the needy and the marginalised in our society. Mary has great difficulty in accepting certain moral teachings of the church, in particular contraception and pre-marital sex (Observation notes:5).

Margaret: The caring.

Margaret is eighteen years of age and completed her secondary education in the metropolitan area. She spent all her primary and secondary education at Catholic schools. She is studying for a Bachelor of Education (primary) and is in her first year of university studies.

Both Margaret's parents are Catholic. Both her parents are still attending Mass weekly and she said that she goes with them when she is not too tired. She enjoyed her years at Catholic schools and has a great deal of respect for what the Church 'stands for' in society although she can understand why young people are turning their backs on the Church (Observation notes:6).

Ruth: The likeable.

Ruth is eighteen years of age and completed her secondary education in the metropolitan area. Ruth spent all of her primary and secondary education at Catholic schools. She is studying for a Bachelor of Education (primary) and is in her first year of university studies.

Ruth's parents are Catholic. Ruth is a friendly young person who is hostile to the Catholic Church. She is the youngest in a family of five siblings with two brothers and two sisters. Neither Ruth, her parents or her siblings go to Mass or practise the Catholic tradition. Ruth is aware of the Catholic Church's teaching on moral issues. Ruth's hostility towards the Catholic Church could be partly explained by the living arrangements of her older siblings, although she would deny this. (Observation notes:7).

Sarah: The spiritual.

Sarah is twenty-two years of age and completed her secondary education in the metropolitan area. Sarah spent all of her secondary education at Catholic schools, and spent one/two years at a Catholic primary school. She is studying for a Bachelor of Education (primary) and is in the second year of her university studies.

Sarah's father is Catholic and her mother is of another Christian faith. Because her mother was of another Christian tradition and her father, although Catholic, to put it in her words, "was not very Churchy," the family did not see weekly Mass attendance as important. Sarah is a person who has a deep spirituality that is not beholden to a particular religious tradition; she said that she believed in the golden rule, 'do unto others what you would have them do unto you', taught to her by her grandmother. (Observation notes:8).

Claire: The mature Orthodox.

Claire is thirty years of age and spent a number of years in the workforce before deciding on university study. Claire completed her secondary education in country Western Australia and is in the second year of her study for a Bachelor of Education (primary). Claire attended a Catholic primary and secondary school for all of her education before entering the workforce. Claire's mother is Catholic and her father is of another Christian faith. Claire has joined the High Anglican Church of Australia, as they are not as rigid on rules as is the Catholic Church. Claire does not agree with all of the Church's teachings. (Observation notes: 9).

Mark: The Pragmatist.

Mark is twenty-three years of age. He spent three years as an apprentice carpenter before deciding on teaching as a career. Mark is in the second year of his university degree and he is studying for a Bachelor of Education (primary). He completed his secondary education in the metropolitan area and spent five/six years at a Catholic primary school and all of his secondary education at a Catholic school. His mother is Catholic and his father professes to no religious affiliation. Mark would consider himself as having 'no religion' (Observation notes:10). He indicated that during his childhood religion was important to his mother but religion was not important to his father or his peers at the Catholic school he attended. As a result he came to the conclusion that "God does not exist" (Observation notes:10).

Table 6.1 is a summary, of the profiles which provide a 'snap-shot' of each of the students.

Table 6.1

A matrix of the ten interviewees

Student	Practising Catholic	Parents Catholic	Years at a Catholic School	Personal Qualities	Catholic Views
Peter	No	M: Yes F: No	P: 5/6 S: 5	Independent thinker: Confident	Problems with moral teachings
Paul	No	M: Yes F: Yes	P: 7 S: 5	Quietly spoken: Youthful	Church not relevant in his life
Matthew	No	M: Yes F: Yes	P: 7 S: 5	Independent thinker: Antagonistic Friendly,	'No time' for the Church
John	No	M: No F: Yes	P: 5/6 S: 5	Enjoys life and people: unsure	Confused unsure what to believe
Mary	No	M: No F: Yes	P: 5/6 S: 5	Helping the needy important: Respectful	Problems with moral teachings
Margaret	No	M: Yes F: Yes	P: 7 S: 5	Strong beliefs in the Church: Caring	Respects what the Church represents
Ruth	No	M: Yes F: Yes	P: 7 S: 5	Independent thinker: Likeable	Hostile to the Church
Sarah	No	M: No F: Yes	P: 7 S: 5	A strong belief in the 'golden rule': Spiritual	No relevance in her life
Claire	Yes	M: Yes F: No	P: 7 S: 5	Self-assured: Mature, orthodox	Relevance in some Church teachings
Mark	No	M: Yes F: No	P: 5/6 S: 5	Pragmatic: No God	Considers himself an atheist

Construct Two: Influences on students' religious development

Construct two was devised to give the researcher some insight into the influences on the students' religious development, as recent studies indicate parents can and do, influence their children's religious development (Fahy 1992, Flynn, 1993a, Flynn and Mok 2002). This influence, they claim, may be negative or positive depending upon the religious climate of the home. Students were interviewed to ascertain the influence of parents, friends/peers and teachers on their religious development.

Note: In this study some of the comments made by the students have been edited, some have been paraphrased and some have not been reported. The full transcript of each of the interviews is to be found in Appendix 15.

Influence of significant others on religious development

Parents.

The influence of parents on the developing faith of late adolescents is clearly decisive. At the same time, the need for students to distance themselves from parental patterns of faith in order to come to their own faith is also evident.

Flynn, 1993a:122.

Six students (Paul, Claire, Margaret, Peter, Sarah and Mark) spoke in a positive way of one or both of their parents' influence on their religious development. Paul said that his father's influence on his religious development was positive but not as strong as the influence of his mother:

Definitely true, my mother is very religious, my father probably not as much. But they have brought us (siblings) up (in) to the religious background. So, yes, they have influenced my religious beliefs.

Interview, Paul:1.

Margaret admits to being strongly influenced in her religious development by her mother: "(I) would say a lot with mum, she took me to church each weekend along with my sister" (Interview, Margaret:1). While Peter and Mark speak of their mother

as having some influence on their religious development, their fathers had little or no influence. Peter spoke of how his parents gave him different perspectives from which to view religion:

I would say that my mum has put me through a Catholic school, and my dad is (of) no religion at all, so I sort of say he has given me no religion, but a (chance) of having a look at it (religion) in a different angle. And my mum has given it (religion) from another angle as well.

Interview, Peter:1.

Mark, in a similar vein, spoke of his mother's influence :

Well, my mother, she is Catholic. She is Polish so she is devoutly Catholic. Really my father is of no real religion. So I suppose in that way my mother was the main force in my early religious beliefs but, yes, it was mainly my mother who took us to church, made us go to church and had an influence on where I went to school.

Interview, Mark:1.

Sarah and Claire emphasised that both their parents had a positive influence on their religious development but not necessarily an influence to practise the Catholic religion:

In my family we have very strong morals and they are very high as well because my dad and mum have a great influence, really they are great people and over the dinner table we would discuss moral issues but not necessarily from a Catholic point of view. Religion was not pounded into me but I just have this belief naturally, I think.

Interview, Sarah:1.

My mother was Catholic, my father is not. And we (mother and Claire) always went to church every week and it did have a big influence. They are both very Christian people. While dad does not go to church every Sunday, he was actually brought up (in the) Exclusive Brethren, and he left the church but he is one of the most Christian people I know. He treats people as you would like to be treated and he is just great. So is mum.

Interview, Claire:1.

Four students (Mary Ruth, John and Matthew) did not see their parents as having any real influence on their religious development. Mary believed her parents had little

influence on her religious development: "Well my dad doesn't have any influence because he doesn't have a real religion" (this contradicted data from her response to the questionnaire. She probably meant that her father was not an active member of the Catholic Church) "and my mum just let me do it at my own pace". (Interview, Mary:1). Although Ruth does speak in general terms about her grandfather's influence, her parents did not go to Sunday Mass: "I don't think they (my parents) have at all (influenced religious development). My grandparents did because I went to church (with them) when I was younger" (Interview, Ruth:1). John saw his parents as having very little religious influence in his life: "They would have baptised me at birth. I suppose we went to church at Easter and Christmas time; that is about it!" (Interview, John:1). Matthew saw his parents as having very little impact on his religious development:

Well, my parents aren't very religious, so they have had very little impact on me in the way of Christianity or religion, more so in the last say, five or six years than in earlier times of my life. I mean I went to a Catholic school and we were part of the church and we used to go but more so lately they have just lost faith and haven't had much to do with the church and religion, so therefore, I haven't.

Interview, Matthew:1.

Table 6.2: Summaries of parental influence on each student's religious development.

Table 6.2

Religious influence of parents	
Student	Religious Influence
Peter	Mother only
Paul	Mother only
Margaret	Mother only
Mark	Mother only
Sarah	Both parents
Claire	Both parents
Matthew	Neither parent
John	Neither parent
Mary	Neither parent
Ruth	Neither parent

Those students who saw their parents as having an influence on their religious development spoke of the varying influences of their mother and father. Sarah and Claire saw the influence of both parents as important to their religious development, while Peter, Paul, Margaret and Mark spoke more positively of their mother's influence. Matthew, John, Mary and Ruth saw their parents as having little or no influence on their religious development.

Looking at the religion of parents and the parental influence on religious development, no real pattern emerges. Whether a student, who comes from a Catholic home, where both parents are Catholic, is more likely to be influenced in their religious development than a student who comes from a home where only one of the parents is Catholic is unclear.

A pattern based on gender emerges as six students indicated that their mother had a strong influence on their religious development. Five out of the six students came from a home where the mother was of the Catholic faith. Two females saw their father as having an influence on their religious development of whom one was Catholic. Of the four students who saw their parents as having no influence on their religious development, two came from homes where both parents were Catholic and two from homes where one parent was Catholic.

Friends/peers.

Where social conditions and favourable personal relationships support young people in building a firm enough sense of identity to feel ready to commit themselves, in friendship, to commit themselves to future work roles or to loyalty to religious or other ideological visions and communities, we may expect the emergence, in young people the virtue we call fidelity.

Fowler, 1981:77.

Nine students (Paul, Mary, Claire, Sarah, John, Matthew, Peter, Mark and Margaret) indicated that their friends/peers had little or no influence on their religious

development in their senior years at school. Peter also indicated, somewhat aggressively, that he did not want any influence from his mates. Ruth was the only one unsure of the religious influence of friends/peers.

Paul indicated: "My friends at school would not be what you would call religious so they had no influence on me whatsoever" (Interview, Paul:1). Mary was of a similar view: "We never spoke about religion or anything spiritual, we were not interested in religious education classes and so they (friends/peers) had no influence on my religious development" (Interview, Mary:1). Claire agreed with Mary: "For the most part they (friends/peers) were not interested in religion so they did not influence my religious development" (Interview, Claire:1). Sarah indicated that her friends were not involved in her religious life: "I didn't go to church with them. I didn't have them in my religion classes, which weren't that good anyway, and basically they didn't talk about it (religion) and I didn't talk about it to them" (Interview, Sarah:2). John reinforced these comments, and added: "In my circle of friends most of them strongly disagreed with religion, and most of them do not believe in religion and, if anything they are negative towards religion" (Interview, John:2). Matthew, endorsed a similar view:

I don't think so at all. I don't think anyone was interested in it (religion), and (when) you are kind of brought up in that atmosphere with those relationships around you and (when) no one is really interested it kind of goes (passes) on to you, I guess.

Interview, Matthew: P:2.

Mark added: "No, not really. I suppose my peers, no, there was no real influence from my peers or friends at all in my religious development" (Interview, Mark:1). Peter adopted a more defiant position:

No! They did not. I make my own decisions, I do what I want. If a person tends to think that they can influence me, well, they can try, but they won't

be my mate for long. That is the way I look at it.

Interview, Peter:1.

Margaret said that, “my friends in secondary school had no influence on my religious beliefs or my religious development” (Interview, Margaret:1).

Ruth, while uncertain about the influence of her friends/peers on her religious development, did not think that they had an influence. However, as an afterthought, she added: "I did get into discussions with them in class and I suppose that broadened my scope a bit and I would broaden theirs" (Interview, Ruth:2).

Table 6.3 is a summary of friends/peers influence on the students' religious development.

Table 6.3

Religious influence of friends/peers	
Student	Religious influence
Peter	None
Paul	None
Matthew	None
John	None
Mary	None
Sarah	None
Claire	None
Margaret	None
Mark	No influence. Did not want any
Ruth	Uncertain - Friend helpful in class

In contrast to the influence of parents, especially mothers, friends/peers appeared to have little, if any impact on students' religious development:

Teachers.

The basic hunger for goodness makes claim on us as teachers and lures us to teach what is more than just conceptual knowledge or emotional skills, namely, how to live well. We realise that we do what we do because we feel called to do it. It is for us a source of joy. And we give thanks for it.

Durka, 2002:80.

Three students (Margaret, John and Claire) saw their teachers as having influenced their religious development:

Definitely influenced me. I formed strong friendships with a couple of the teachers and they assisted my religious development.

Interview, Margaret:1.

The teachers that I came across influenced me, yes. I had some very good teachers that influenced me (and) well informed me. I suppose at the time I have to admit, at that age, I wasn't very keen to learn, but whatever I did get was beneficial to me, particularly seeing that I didn't have a strong influence at home.

Interview, John:2.

I was actually taught by the Sisters of Mercy all the way through school, so they took us for RE. I don't think we had any lay teachers for religion. Because they (the Sisters of Mercy) have given their life to God, it is obvious that they believe it (religion) enough for them to have done it and this impressed me greatly. Yes, they were pretty good people actually.

Interview, Claire:2.

Seven students (Matthew, Paul, Ruth, Sarah, Mark, Peter and Mary) did not see that their teachers had any influence on their religious development.

Interestingly Matthew blames himself for his teachers not having any religious influence. This came about because of some unpleasant experiences with teachers at the first secondary school he attended (he left that school half way through year 11):

I went to two different secondary schools. At the first I did not get on with any of the teachers so any chance for a teacher-student interaction was out the window. At the second secondary school that I attended the teachers were better than at the first school but because of my experience at the first school I was not willing to interact freely with any of them so in a way it was my fault they did not influence me.

Interview, Matthew:1.

Paul argued that school size was a contributing factor to teachers' lack of influence:

We were in a big Catholic school like 1200 students and over 120 teachers it was like so big that you just didn't get to know the teachers outside of class so I guess that I got no chance to get to know the teachers and they me I suppose.

Interview, Paul:1.

On reflection Ruth indicated that "the teachers were friendly and helped you if you had a problem with class-work but I did not see them in any way as an example for my religious development" (Interview, Ruth:1). Sarah spoke of her teachers being unapproachable: "The teachers were sort of aloof they never spoke to you outside the classroom. I didn't like most of them; they were only there for the money not the kids" (Interview, Sarah:1). Mark in his usual forthright way said: "No, no, in no way - if anything they would turn anybody off religion for life" (Interview, Mark:2). Peter believed that his teachers had a counter-productive influence on him. "They were told they had to teach RE, not because they wanted to; this turned me off RE classes and so my teachers' influence was really, I suppose, negative" (Interview, Peter:2). Mary concurred, "No! They (the teachers) did not live up to, I believe, what was expected from them as teachers in a Catholic school. They did not set me any example as to how to live my life" (Interview, Mary:1).

Table 6.4 provides a summary of the influence of teachers on students' religious development.

Table 6.4

Religious influence of teachers	
Student	Religious influence
Margaret	Yes! Assisted
John	Yes! Very good teachers
Claire	Yes! Taught by Sisters of Mercy
Matthew	No! Blames himself because of forced change of schools
Paul	No! School too big
Ruth	No! Helped with class work not religious development
Sarah	No! Teachers unapproachable and aloof
Mark	No! Turned him off religion
Peter	No! Counter productive to religion
Mary	No! Not a good example of religious living

Two students (Margaret and Claire) saw their teachers as having an influence on their religious development as was also the case with their parents. John, who saw his teachers as a positive influence did not see his parents in the same light. While students Paul, Sarah, Peter, Mary and Mark did not see their teachers as having a religious influence, they did see one or both parents as having a religious influence. Matthew and Ruth did not see either their teachers or their parents as having any real influence on their religious development. Table 6.5 is a summary of influences on students' religious development

Table 6.5

Summary of influences on students' religious development

Student	Parents	Friends/ peers	Teachers	Overall
Margaret	Mother	None	Yes	Some Influence
Claire	Both Parents	None	Yes	Some influence
Peter	Mother	None	No	Little influence
Paul	Mother	None	No	Little influence
Mark	Mother	None	No	Little influence
Sarah	Both parents	None	No	Little influence
Matthew	Neither Parent	None	No	No Influence
John	Neither parent	None	Yes	Little Influence
Mary	Neither parent	None	No	No influence
Ruth	Neither Parent	Uncertain	No	No influence

Parents, particularly the mother, had a greater influence on students' religious development than teachers and friends. Six students saw one or both parents as having a religious influence on them, while three students said that their teachers influenced them in their religious development. For those students who were more accepting of

the Catholic faith both parents and teachers had a cumulative effect. Nine students did not see their friends or peers influencing them.

Construct Three: Students' perceptions of the Catholic school

This construct looked at students' perception of the Catholic school that they attended. Questions in this construct included: Were the students happy at the Catholic school they attended? Would the students attend a Catholic school again? Would the students send their children to a Catholic school? Was the discipline fair? Was the principal approachable?

Keane and Riley (1997) speak of the Catholic school as one where students are being cared for and are treated as individuals:

The challenge then for any Catholic school community is to meet the needs of its members so that each can say, within this school I am known. I am respected. I am cared for, I contribute and I make a difference. Therefore, I can do something as an individual and as a member of a group to promote Kingdom values and to make the world a more beautiful place.

Keane & Riley, 1997:48.

Students' happiness at school and students' perceptions of the Catholic school

All students, with the exception of Peter, said that they were happy at their Catholic school. Mary believed: "The kids were great. I enjoyed going to school to be with them" (Interview, Mary:1). Paul, Mark and Ruth saw the school's reputation as a major reason why they were happy at the school:

Well, I suppose we had a fairly good reputation so it wasn't like you could be ashamed of going to that school and I suppose that is one of the reasons why I felt happy to attend the school.

Interview, Paul:2.

I think the school has a certain, for want of a better word, prestige, would be a good name for it. It is not a bad school. The people I went to school with are great people. The times I had at the school were great fun, best years of my life. I am happy to say I went there, yes I was happy at the school.

Interview, Mark:3.

The school had a great name in the district and I was happy to be at a school with such a name.

Interview, Ruth:2.

Matthew indicated:

The school that I attended was a good school. I think a mixture of males and females helped. I know that has not got much to do with the Catholic side of it but, yes, it was a good school and there were good teachers there, so I was happy to be at the school.

Interview, Matthew:3.

John spoke glowingly of the school:

It certainly did (have a loving atmosphere). I would say that it (the Catholic school) helped me out through some very tough times in my life. A lot of the staff, students and other people that were at the school were there for me as a person and all of that. So my time at the school was a happy one, yes. But I don't think it had a loving atmosphere, maybe, towards certain other students.

Interview, John:2.

Margaret was happy at the school, "(I) liked the fact that I felt it helped with morals like the fact that (the school) taught people to be more loving and understanding (of) one another" (Interview, Margaret:2). Sarah believed that the Catholic school she attended "was a great community and I was happy to attend", yet she qualified this statement:

But the teachers didn't speak to you. I mean, in university, I feel better treated than I was at school. That's just because there were so many rules and regulations there, with earrings, hair or that sort of stuff.

Interview, Sarah:2.

Claire, when asked if she felt happy at school responded, "Well I am one of God's children, so everyone is important and I was happy at my school. Well, I didn't feel insignificant in any way, I felt as though I had something to contribute, I don't know (what) exactly. So yes I was quite happy" (Interview, Claire:2).

Peter, a lone voice, found the school hypocritical and for him it was an unhappy experience:

What they (the Catholic school) promoted I found was hypocritical and I don't like hypocrites. I don't like saying something one minute and the next minute the Heads (of departments) would go totally against what was said previously. I mean, look at all this sort of forgiving and all this sort of stuff, then they (the teachers) go on about divorce and contraception and stuff. You know it is a bit over the top and irrelevant. People think, because of what they learn at school, that God is not contemporary and this turns people away from the church. Also discipline made students think in a negative manner towards the school. So, no I was not very happy during my time at the school.

Interview, Peter:2.

Table 6.6 is a summary of the students' perceptions of the Catholic school that they attended.

Table 6.6

Perceptions of the Catholic school

Student	Happiness/Perceptions of the Catholic school
Peter	No! Found it hypocritical
Paul	Yes! Good reputation
Mark	Yes! Good reputation/prestige
Matthew	Yes! Liked it because of co-education and teachers
Ruth	Yes! Good name in the district but not much love
John	Yes! Loving atmosphere. It was there in times of need
Mary	Yes! Liked to be there to be with her friends
Margaret	Yes! Loving and understanding
Sarah	Yes! Great community
Claire	Yes! Leadership role. Felt she had something to contribute

Paul, Sarah, Mary, Ruth and Mark did not see their teachers as influencing their religious development, yet, for varying reasons, their perceptions of the Catholic school were quite favourable. Peter spoke highly of his teachers but not very highly of the school whereas Matthew, John and Margaret spoke well of both the school the teachers.

The Principal.

There is reason to believe that the school's overall effectiveness in the transmission of its Christian message depends, in large measure, on the leadership and vision of the principal.

Flynn, 1993a:51.

Two students, John and Claire, spoke highly of their school principal:

(The principal was) very friendly and always available for students to discuss things with.

Interview, John:1.

Yes, definitely, yes! She was a Nun and always walking around the school being friendly especially with the senior students.

Interview, Claire:1.

Matthew and Mary were in two minds concerning the principal's approachability, perhaps because of their changed circumstances. Matthew changed schools and Mary saw a change of principals in year 10:

As I said I went to two schools in my senior years. In the first school I found the principal not friendly nor approachable, especially in dealing with the difficulty that I had. At the second school I found the principal was very approachable but that might have been because he knew the reason why I left the first school.

Interview, Matthew:1.

Well, we had a change of principal. I was in year 10, I think, he changed everything. It was more strict and it changed the whole school. Because our principal did not walk around the school and he just stayed in his office, so he was very distant from the students.

Interview, Mary:2.

Margaret believed that she, "could approach the principal most of the time" (Interview, Margaret:2). In contrast five students (Peter, Paul, Ruth, Mark and Sarah) did not see their principal as approachable:

I can honestly say that all my time at the school I only spoke to the principal three or four times and that was in year 12 - so no, I did not find him approachable.

Interview, Peter:2.

It was just that the principal was the type of man that was very difficult to get to. I suppose, in his case, he was very busy in other ways, so it was very difficult to get to him but you could get to other teachers to get help. But to actually get to him (the principal) I actually can admit that I very seldom actually spoke to him through my whole school years.

Interview, Paul:2.

Ruth did not get to know the principal at all and believed that, in a crisis, she could not have approached the principal. She commented:

Well my only memory of ever having a one-to-one conversation with my principal was him stepping on a piece of rubbish and telling me to pick it up. So there was no way (I could have approached him), I don't think he would have known what to do if I did go to him.

Interview, Ruth:2.

Mark continued on the theme of approachability by saying, "I don't think I could go and speak to him on a personal level sort of thing, no!" (Interview, Mark:2). Sarah, also, did not think that she could just go up and just talk to the principal, she continued: "There just wasn't an open line of communication. He was kind of an authoritative figure. I just couldn't go up and speak to him" (Interview, Sarah:2).

Table 6.7

Perceptions of principal

Student	Principal approachable
Peter	No! Not approachable. No communication
Sarah	No! Authoritarian in manner
Mark	No! Not on a personal level
Ruth	No! Especially after the 'rubbish' incident
Paul	No! Not approachable - he was too busy
Mary	Yes/No! New principal unapproachable
Matthew	No/Yes! At 2 nd school - approachable
Margaret	Undecided! Perhaps most of the time
John	Yes! Approachable and friendly
Claire	Yes! Sister of Mercy

Claire was the only student who saw teachers, school and principal in a favourable light, while Matthew, John and Margaret did not see their teachers as an influence but they did speak in positive terms of their school and the principal. Peter saw the teacher's influence, the school and the principal as all having a negative influence. Mark saw the school as positive but not his teachers or his principal.

Students' perceptions of their teachers, school and principal indicate that they perceived their school in a mixed light, some seeing the school as a good influence.

Teachers and some of the principals were not perceived as being an influence on students' religious development. No student saw all three (school, teacher and principal) in a positive way.

Construct Four: Students' perceptions of the religious goals of the school and their religious education classes

From the students' perceptions of the Catholic school they attended this study now addressed students' perceptions of whether the religious goals of the school were being met and students' perceptions of their religious education classes.

Six items, in this construct, centred on the students' acceptance of the religious goals of the school, and students' perceptions of their religious education classes. Students were asked: Did you see your religious education classes as a benefit? Did you feel that you developed as a person from attending religious education classes? Did the senior students understand the goals of the school. If religious education classes were voluntary would you have attended and would you send your children to a Catholic school?

Students accepting the religious goals of the school.

What will be distinctive of a Catholic school's curriculum will be the ways Gospel values are integrated into the outcomes of all learning areas.

Catholic Education Office, 2000:20.

Students were quite divided in their views of the religious goals of the school. Mark, Claire and Ruth agreed that the goals were accepted, whereas the other seven students said that the goals were not accepted. Mark said: "Yes, they accepted them (the religious goals), yes, and understood them, yes" (Interview, Mark:3). Claire and Ruth related acceptance of the religious goals to school rules: "Well, we didn't as far as I know, do anything against what we were taught in religious education so for that reason I guess the students accepted the religious goals" (Interview, Claire:4). Ruth

said: "Well, what I mean is the students liked the school; we made many friends and we at least kept the school rules, so I guess you could say we accepted the religious goals of the school" (Interview, Ruth:3).

In contrast Peter said that the students, "didn't feel they (religious goals) were relevant to their lives; they weren't offering them (students) anything" (Interview, Peter:2).

Paul, Margaret and John saw the mixture of different religions at the school as the reason why the religious goals were not accepted:

They (the students) came from all different religions, Christian and Non-Christian, so they weren't really interested, I mean, in the religious goals.

Interview, Margaret:2.

Well a lot of the kids in the school weren't from a Catholic background so they basically went to the school for its reputation, not because of their beliefs, therefore, they, one way or another, couldn't care less about the religious goals.

Interview, Paul:2.

No, we had a lot of kids from different religions and they really weren't interested in the religious goals of the school, I can't say that I blame them if they are not Catholic.

Interview, John:2.

Matthew said that it would be a little difficult to accept the religious goals as he was uncertain what they were: "No! What are the religious goals of a Catholic school? They were never outlined to the students" (Interview, Matthew:3).

Sarah and Mary cited length of time at the school and the pressures of the TEE examination as major reasons for not accepting the religious goals of the school:

No, I don't think that they did. I think that the senior students had no real interest in religious goals to be honest. After four and a half years at school and the TEE hanging over our heads the last thing to focus on was the religious goals of the school.

Interview, Sarah:2.

I think that the senior students had no real interest in it (religious goals) to be honest. After four and a half years of it, the last year of religious education was something that was not focussed on due to the fact more were

concentrating on TEE and things like that. I think that was just a situation thing.

Interview, Mary:2.

Table 6.8 summarises the students' acceptance of religious goals'

Table 6.8

Acceptance of religious goals

Student	Reason
Paul	No! Because of different religions
John	No! Because of different religions.
Margaret	No! Because of different religions.
Peter	No! Goals did not offer students anything
Matthew	No! Never explained/understood
Mary	No! More interested in TEE
Sarah	No! TEE pressures
Ruth	Yes! Kept rules - Understood goals
Claire	Yes! Kept rules - Understood goals
Mark	Yes! Accepted and understood.

Seven students said that the goals of the school were not accepted by senior students and three students said that they were. Ruth and Claire associated the religious goals of the school with rule compliance while Mark, without specifying any of the goals, believed that they were accepted.

Students' perceptions of their religious education classes

Religious education has traditionally been seen as an essential feature of Catholic schools. Its nature and purpose were drawn from within the faith community and, as such, was an education in faith. The objectives were to increase knowledge, understanding and practice of the faith tradition with a desire to promote personal faith development.

Ryan, 2001:71.

The Catholic Bishops of Western Australia in their Mandate letter say this of religious education.

RE is the first learning area in the Catholic School Curriculum. RE is the underlying reason for the school's existence. If a Catholic school failed to offer the best RE that it could offer to its students, it would be betraying its mission.

Bishops of Western Australia, 2001:19.

Students were asked whether the individual student saw their senior religious education classes as a benefit and, secondly, whether they perceived their fellow students as having benefited from their senior religious education classes.

Claire and Margaret were alone in that they found their senior religious education classes a benefit and emphasised:

The teachers that I had in years 11 and 12 made RE interesting and so I became interested. So, yes, I think I did benefit from my RE classes. The teachers were enthusiastic about what they were talking about and then they discussed things without getting off track. It was interesting if the person teaching you is interesting then you will be interested.

Interview, Claire:3.

I loved them! I suppose I saw the main religion teacher I had as a good example, and I looked up to her, I probably had her on a bit of a pedestal. When I was 16 I considered becoming a nun, so I suppose she had a pretty strong influence on me. I valued what I learnt in the RE classes and I thought that it made me a better person for the things that I learnt. The parables and things we used to do at school, it used to teach us how to be a better person.

Interview, Margaret:3.

John did not see how his religious education classes were a benefit to him, while at school, but since studying Catholic studies units at university he has come to appreciate his senior religious education classes:

No! I don't think that they did (benefit) me. Although, after spending eleven months at university I could only appreciate it (RE class) now, when I got to university and realised, to a certain extent, that I am far in front of a lot of people that study religion, yes! But it is only now that I appreciate it, but at the time, no.

Interview, John:4.

Seven of the students displayed negative feelings towards their religious education classes. Ruth, Paul and Matthew related their negative feeling to the way religious education was taught, "Because it was basically them (the teachers) saying to do this and very rarely did they give a reason" (Interview, Ruth:3).

Paul was more forceful in the condemnation of his senior religious education classes:

I just think it was the way they were taught. The Brother initially that I had carried on so much and kind of forced us to do all these readings and Scripture, I was just like rebelling or something like that. Being forced to do it and I found it uninteresting and virtually because you had to go to them, you didn't have a choice. No, I don't think I did at all. I just basically learnt about religious ceremonies and stuff like that which had nothing to do with me really.

Interview, Paul:3.

Matthew, concerning his religious education classes said:

The class was considered pretty boring; they usually went for two periods at a time, like 80 minutes and there were not many teaching brothers at the school, a lot of the time it was taught by lay people, so it didn't interest me at all.

Interview, Matthew:2.

Peter saw the classes as "a waste of time. I was allowed a study period. It was just attitudes and all that rubbish. Nobody was there because they wanted to be there"

(Interview, Peter:2). Peter explains his reason for not finding his religious education classes a benefit:

They were sort of (RE classes) like (to do) with all those moral codes and stuff like that. I think through life you learn enough to know what is right and wrong. I mean it (RE) should have been probably more on the theoretical side of the church rather than like I said, the beatitudes and stuff like that. I mean I couldn't even tell you what they (the Beatitudes) are. I just remember the name because it was quite weird but I just thought like compared to what I am doing now (at uni), sort of like you are learning about the actual church and all that sort of stuff. I find that interesting, because it is the history to it and stuff like that. But with what was before it (RE) was just like how you live your life, how you should do this, how you should do that, it wasn't very interesting and it (RE) wasn't something I could gain something from.

Interview, Peter:3.

Mary, when asked whether her religious education classes were interesting, responded:

No because I really didn't have one. The class was going to but we kicked up a fuss about it so I didn't have one (in year 12. I wonder if the religious education co-ordinator was aware of this).

As for year 11 we were shown videos every class, so RE did not influence me one bit.

Interview, Mary:1.

Sarah saw her religious education classes as boring and of little value in allowing her to develop as a person:

I mean if the teachers came in with enthusiasm and something new, not just sticking a video in a recorder and then asking us to write a reflection after. No! I mean coming to uni and studying Catholic studies, I think I have learned more about the Catholic religion than in the whole of my school education.

Interview, Sarah:3.

In contrast Mark saw his religious education classes as a lot of fun and enjoyed a lot of arguments over topics not relevant to religion:

I remember all through Year 12, there was Cathy Freeman carrying two flags at the same time, it used to come up almost every lesson, there would be a big debate on it and that sort of stuck in my mind of my RE classes and I wondered what has this got to do with RE?

Interview, Mark:3.

Table 6.9 summaries the perceived benefits of religious education classes.

Table 6.9

Perceptions of religious education classes

Student	Reason
Claire	Yes! Teachers enthusiastic
Margaret	Yes! Teachers enthusiastic
John	Yes! Has come to appreciate his senior religious education classes after studying Catholic units at university
Ruth	No! The way religious education was taught
Paul	No! The way religious education was taught
Matthew	No! The way religious education was taught
Mary	No! The way it was taught
Sarah	No! The way it was taught
Peter	No! What was taught in religious education
Mark	No! Many discussions in religious education were fun; little relevance to the topic under discussion or religious education

Two students had a positive view of their religious education classes because of their teacher while seven students had a negative view of their religious education classes because of the way religious education was taught. On reflection John came to appreciate his senior religious education classes after further Catholic Studies at University.

Students' perceived benefits of religious education classes for senior students

The responses to the second part of the question concerning the perceived benefits other students gained from their religious education classes were similar to the individual responses. Claire reflected a generally positive view:

Well because we basically did a lot of discussion work in religion, that was all pretty much an open forum when people just talked about what they thought, and put their thoughts across. The teacher would just let them discuss it, and then would bring us into line but it would have helped a lot more if they had actually stopped and explained (guided group discussion, see chapter 8) why the Church believed some of these things, rather than this is the way it is done.

Interview, Claire:4.

Margaret and Ruth believed a good number of students benefited from their religious education classes:

Not by all students. There were always some students that weren't really interested but then you get the students that did take it seriously. So I suppose 50/50. You are going to get the ones who are and the ones who aren't.

Interview, Margaret:3.

Some would see it as just a muck-around period to write notes, others would take it seriously in the fact that they believed what was being taught and others would not take it seriously in that they didn't believe what was being taught. They were confused and wanted to know why this was happening and what was going on. Why do you teach that, why do you think you have the right to say that to us, etc?

Interview, Ruth:3/4.

Peter responded, "No! For the same reasons that I did not find my religious education classes a benefit". (Interview, Peter:3).

Paul spoke of the teacher:

Well basically, I think that the most important reason was that because the teacher wasn't very interesting and didn't stimulate us or get the interest of the class. The students didn't pay much attention, and therefore they did not learn anything at all.

Interview, Paul:3.

Matthew related the current religious practice of his peer group as an indication that they did not take their religious education classes seriously:

I only know of one person from (name of the school) that actually goes to Mass every Sunday and all the other people I know, don't. I don't think they are strong Catholics. It (religion) doesn't interest them. Just because they were sent to a Catholic school doesn't mean they were sent there for the reason to learn Christianity. It was more so, I think, that they were sent there to sort of what was a private kind of school. No, no benefit at all.

Interview, Matthew:2.

Mary made the point: "Well, because we voted not to have a RE class in year 12, I would say a big no!" (Interview, Mary:2).

When questioned as to why, in the questionnaire she said that students did not take seriously their religious education classes, Sarah replied:

Basically because the content that we were learning was kind of not relevant. I can remember most of my Year 12 classes, we were writing notes off the board and that way you don't learn anything. We should have been doing stuff like getting out of the classroom and doing drama, just something different, something to let the kids get in touch with what they believe, and not just sitting there and writing stuff down or looking at the television or doing something like that. This is completely wrong, not wrong, but irrelevant. Just doing nothing with the Catholic religion, really.

Interview, Sarah:3.

Mark spoke of tertiary entrance examination (TEE) pressures, as well as, irrelevant discussions as reasons why students did not take religious education classes seriously:

I think they had the, I know the TEE complex so most of them had the feeling that they had RE time to unwind. It was sort of a slack period and that is why they would distract the teacher with questions on Cathy Freeman and so on!

Interview, Mark:3.

When John was asked if his fellow students benefited from their religious education classes, he replied:

No, I don't think they did. Whoever was teaching RE found it tough to control the class, particularly if it was a difficult class. I think a lot of students didn't enjoy it. More or less, it was a study break or a time to really let their hair down, particularly in Year 12 with the stresses and pressures of the TEE. I think it was seen as a bit of a joke at times. But some students did get a lot out of it. I think once they left and looked back on it now, and I know I have had a lot of comments from my peers that say, it wasn't that bad when we think about it. Because they are out in the real world and realise that a class like that is beneficial to them.

Interview, John:4.

Table 6.10 is a summary of the perceptions that students had of their religious education classes on senior students.

Table 6.10

Perceptions of religious education classes on peers

Student	Individual	Student Body
Claire	Yes! Enjoyed religious education - Teacher enthusiastic	Yes/No! A lot of discussion needed explaining
Margaret	Yes! Enjoyed religious education - Teacher a good example	Yes/No! Not by all students
Peter	No! religious education a waste of time	No!
Paul	No! Did not enjoy religious education - forced to do religious education	No! Teachers not interested
Matthew	No! Boring teachers	No! Not on how they live their life today.
Sarah	No! lack of enthusiasm from teachers	No! Because of content
Mary	No! Became a study period	No! Voted not to have one
John	No! Lack of teacher control	No! A combination of reasons
Ruth	No! A muck-around period	Yes/No - no by all students
Mark	No! Open discussion which was irrelevant	No! A slack period treated as a joke

Peter, Sarah and Paul were consistently negative about their religious education classes. They did not see their principal as approachable and they believed that they did not benefit from their religious education classes. They stated that students did not

understand the goals of the school, nor did they believe their fellow senior students saw any benefit in the religious education classes. In contrast Claire was positive about her religious education classes, her teachers and her principal.

Matthew, Margaret and Mary, for a range of reasons were undecided concerning the approachability of the principal and they agreed that they did not benefit from their religious education classes. They did not see their fellow students understanding the goals of the school nor enjoying their religious education classes.

Mark and Ruth were more optimistic and while they believed that the senior students understood the goals of the school, they did not see their principal as caring. They did not did enjoy their religious education classes and they believed that the senior students did not benefit from their religious education classes. John saw the principal as approachable but disagreed on the goals and the religious education program.

Voluntary religious education classes

Four students (Ruth, Mary Mark and Peter) said that they would not attend religious education classes if they were voluntary as their time could be used to better effect:

I probably would not have attended. That's only because I would rather it as a study period and that's because by Year 12 you've got everything out of religion.

Interview, Ruth:3.

No, as I said, I would have preferred a study period than have RE classes so no, I would not attend if RE was voluntary.

Interview, Mary:2.

"I could use my time much better than discussing Cathy Freeman" (Interview, Mark:2). Peter restated his position on why he did not want to attend his religious education classes:

Because there are things I don't believe in about the church, in particular, and I think I wouldn't have attended because you had a lot of pressures and I saw it as a waste of time. It is hard to explain but I don't like stuff just thrown at me and told to accept it. You need a bit of an explanation behind it

and I found that that wasn't being offered, I don't have time for that, I would rather be doing something else.

Interview, Peter:3.

Two students (Matthew and Sarah) also said "No"! They could not see religious education as being relevant. "No, they really didn't help me much but I did make a lot of friends" (Interview, Matthew:3). "Well, if I did, there would have to be a big difference, you know, make them relevant" (Interview, Sarah:4).

Paul also indicated, "No" he hated religious education and was pushed further away from religion:

I suppose I was one of the students that hated it (RE class). If I had the choice, no, I probably would not have went. I suppose I learnt a lot of religion from my parents and I felt that I gained a lot of insight from that. Actually the RE classes pushed me the other way from religion because of the way it was taught.

Interview, Paul:3.

Margaret, John and Claire would have attended religious education classes if they had been voluntary. "Yes, it was one of my favourite classes" (Interview, Margaret:4). John replied, "knowing what I know now and what I missed out on, Yes!" (Interview, John:4) and Claire simply said, "Yes, I think so" (Interview, Claire:4).

Table 6.11 is a summary of the likelihood of students' attending voluntary religious education classes.

For Margaret religious education was one of her favourite classes and she had no hesitation in saying that she would attend even if they were voluntary. Claire was not as sure as Margaret but thought she would have attended them if they were voluntary. John did not enjoy his religious education classes while he was at school but in hindsight indicated that he would attend now if they were voluntary. Peter, Paul, Ruth, Mark, Sarah, Matthew and Mary did not enjoy their religious education classes and

would not have attended if they were voluntary. These students' comments are in stark contrast and vastly different from the questionnaire results.

Table 6.11

Voluntary attendance at religious education classes

STUDENT	REASON
Ruth	No! Would have preferred a study period - a better use of time
Mark	No! He could think of better use of his time
Peter	No! He could think of better use of his time
Mary	No! Liked study period better
Matthew	No! RE classes not relevant
Sarah	No! RE classes not relevant
Paul	No! RE classes pushed him further away from religion
Margaret	Yes! RE was one of her favourite classes
John	Yes! He said because of what he knows now
Claire	Yes!

Sending children to a Catholic school

Four students (Sarah, Mary, John and Margaret), because of the positive experience they had encountered at the Catholic school, intend to send their children to a Catholic school:

Yes, I had a really good education and I think that is why I am the person I am today really because of the people I have mixed with because it was a great community of teachers. The teachers were unreal and it does have a better and more effective discipline.

Interview, Sarah:7.

Yes, I would because of my experiences.

Interview, Mary:2.

I would believe in a good education for my children and I think that is a good enough (reason) to send them to a Catholic school. I would send them there.

Interview, John:8/9.

Definitely!

Interview, Margaret:2.

Matthew, Ruth, Paul, Peter, Claire and Mark believed that they would send their children to a Catholic school but added a proviso:

Yes, I would. I wouldn't send my kids to a single sex school, but a co-ed one I would and (name of school) definitely."

Interview, Matthew:3.

I don't know if I would send them to a private school other than a Catholic school. But I do want them to be brought up in a religion.

Interview, Ruth:3.

If I could afford the fees and my wife agreed I would want them to attend my old school.

Interview, Paul:3.

Yes, I would, but not for religion for, like, so they can get a good education.

Interview, Peter:4.

Especially at primary, yes definitely, but I am not sure about secondary, I don't know.

Interview, Claire:3.

Yes, primary school, yes, but from my personal experience, a secondary school, I doubt it.

Interview, Mark:3.

Table 6.12

Sending children to a Catholic school

Student	Reason
Sarah	Yes! Because she experienced a great community and great teachers
Mary	Yes! Because of her experiences
John	Yes! Because of the type of education
Margaret	Yes! Definitely
Matthew	Yes! If co-educational but no, if single sex
Ruth	Yes! ! But not sure if it would be a private or Catholic school.
Paul	Yes! Because of the friends he made at school but only if he could afford the fees and his wife approved
Peter	Yes! For a good education, not for religion
Claire	Yes, Because of name. Primary, yes. Not sure about secondary
Mark	Yes, Primary definitely but not sure about secondary

Ruth, Claire and Mark saw the religious goals of the school being met, understood and accepted, but they were in two minds whether to send their children to a Catholic school. Matthew did not see the goals of the school being met and put a qualification on sending his children to a Catholic school. John, Sarah, Peter, Paul, Mary and

Margaret said that while the goals of the school were neither met, understood nor accepted, they would still send their children to a Catholic school.

From most of the students' replies it would appear that their intention to send their children to a Catholic School is not based on the goals of a Catholic School as set out by the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (2002). The reasons for students sending their children to a Catholic school are not based on the religious environment of the school or their experience of their religious education classes but centred more upon the school's reputation and the personal friendships established.

Construct five: Students' beliefs about their faith development

Students' faith.

We cannot capture the beautiful reality of a person's complex relationship with his/her God. (Yet) it is possible to obtain rough approximations or estimates to the underlying reality of faith.

Fahy, 1992:212.

Faith cannot be measured by using a mathematical or scientific formula. Faith is subjective and, therefore, it is the person himself who can speak of his own degree of faith. Students, when asked about their faith, spoke of a relationship with God. They did not see 'having faith' as being connected to a particular religious tradition.

Four students (Ruth, Peter, Matthew and Mary) agreed that they had faith and the reasons they gave were founded on a belief in God:

Yes, my faith helps me to see God as a person who is loving and forgiving. My faith helps me decide what is right or wrong. My faith is an individual thing that helps me grasp the concept of God for myself. My faith is not necessarily what the Catholic Church believes.

Interview, Ruth:4.

Yes, the reason I believe is because I just think it is a logical thing. There has to be (a) sort of higher being and I am putting money on Him being sort of an alright guy, so yea, I have just looked at it (faith) like that. Again you know my faith doesn't intrude on anyone else or hurt people. It is pretty

much doing the right thing in your head and what you believe. I think that is where my faith is sort of and that's what it is all about.

Interview, Peter:4.

Yes, I believe in God and I believe in the Church's teachings, not all of them, but I do believe in things that they believe in. I know inside me what I believe and that is really all that matters. I don't have to prove it to anyone else. I pray, talk to God, I don't go to church but I don't think that makes any lesser person of me or means that my faith is less than someone who does go to church.

Interview, Matthew:4.

Yes, definitely. I believe in a higher being who created the world and everything in it.

Interview, Mary:4.

Two students (Paul, and Claire,) speak of their faith as coming from their parents:

Definitely. My parents helped my faith development. I can't say that I learnt too much from school. I just followed the way my parents believe and the way my parents have taught me and I suppose if I can live up to their standards then that is my faith.

Interview, Paul:4.

I suppose because I had a background there as I was growing up, as much as I tried to push it away, and mum was always very Christian and so was dad. Just most of the people that I know sort of have some sort of religious background and while it is not always going to church every week, there has always been that attitude of Christianity about most of the people that I know. So it was quite easy to slip back into the pattern of talking to God. I went through a stage where there was no way I was stepping foot in the church, pure stubbornness, arguing with mum, but I am glad that I had that background then when I was young, that I can fall back on it and enrich it now.

Interview, Claire:4.

Another two students (Margaret and Sarah) speak of their faith emerging from their parents and the school:

Yes I believe that I am a person of faith. I would say largely the school, some my parents, but I think the school had the biggest influence on me as a teenager"

Interview, Margaret:4.

I think I have faith. There is a large emphasis on the religious life in school, building faith and I do remember going to Mass and having all those religion

classes in primary school. And then going through a Catholic secondary school you seem to always have it in the back of your head, even though you are not always in religion class or always in Mass. But I would say the major role was my father.

Interview, Sarah:4.

John spoke of his faith becoming stronger in times of suffering (this is just one of the contradictions, made John made throughout the interview. John indicated to me before the interview that he was not a person of faith. He would see himself as an agnostic):

My beliefs and my faith development have come from several different areas. I think that my beliefs have come from the fact that I have always felt that there has always been someone else with me, in certain times of my life when I have had to struggle. I have always felt someone with me. I also had a best friend die when I was quite young; I was about 14. I think that after that my actual belief in God strengthened a lot. I think it is just a situational thing that at a certain time in everyone's life you just realise you are not alone. I think it came a lot younger for me than for a lot of other people. But I think it comes to everybody. I think that everyone at some time realises there is a reason why I am here. I think it just came to me younger. It happens to everybody.

Interview, John:5.

My faith has probably faltered I suppose, or loosened but now it's coming back, definitely coming back.

Interview, Mark:5.

Table 6.13 is a summary of students' perception of their faith.

Table 6.13

Students' perceptions of their faith

Student	Response
Ruth	Yes! A belief in God.
Peter	Yes! A belief in God.
Matthew	Yes! A belief in God
Mary	Yes! A belief in a higher being.
Paul	Yes! Faith because of his parents
Claire	Yes! Faith because of her parents.
Margaret	Yes! Faith because of her parents and the school.
Sarah	Yes! Faith because of her parents and the school.
John	Yes! His faith was strengthened by events in his life.
Mark	No/Yes! He 'lost' faith for a time and is once again 'finding' reason to believe.

Summary.

O'Collins and Farrugia (1991) define faith as:

The objective revealed truth believed in (fides quae) or the subjective, personal commitment to God. Faith is a free, reasonable and total response through which we confess the truth about divine self-disclosure definitively made in Christ.

O'Collins & Farrugia, 1991:73.

Ruth, Claire and Mark agree that they are people of faith and that they accepted the religious goals of the school while Peter, Paul, John, Matthew, Mary, Margaret and Sarah said that they were people of faith but they did not accept the religious goals of the school.

From interviewing the students it would appear that most of them are between synthetic faith and individuating-reflexive faith (Fowler, 1977). The students are beginning to internalise their beliefs. They no longer entirely rely on outside influences, parents, peers, teachers or organised religion in determining their faith.

Prayer.

Prayer, is a natural development from faith.

Prayer is communicating with God. Prayer is keeping God company. Prayer is talking with my friend God. Prayer is loving God. Prayer is a means by which we express our faith relationship with God. Prayer is our response to a living and compassionate God who is constantly calling us and who is always there for us.

Bretherton, 1995:1.

The interviewees were asked about their prayer life and the importance of prayer in their life. It would follow that if as the students' claim they are people of faith, then, ipso facto, they are people of prayer. All students said that they prayed, what differed with each student, was the frequency of prayer.

Claire saw prayer as being very important in her life and prayed (nearly) everyday:

I pray nearly everyday. It sort of puts my thoughts into perspective and I also feel as though He is with me all the time. So, why not just talk to Him because He is there and I offer everything up to Him.

Interview, Claire:2.

John also spoke of prayer being very important to him but he did not speak of the frequency of his prayer:

Very important. Like me so highly strung all the time. Absolutely, no question, talking to a higher being, call him God if you like, is very important to me.

Interview, John:2.

Paul and Peter both saw prayer as important:

Yes, I think that is the way to commune with God. So I believe, that for me, it is a lot better that I can speak to God when I have a problem or just thank Him for whatever has gone right during the day. And I feel (prayer is) more important than probably going to church.

Interview, Paul:1.

I see it as what, I mean you have to have some sort of communication, I think. Just for me, I think it can be quite relaxing, get away from things. I mean I find it important, but I don't place it too highly"

Interview, Peter:2.

Mary, Margaret, Mark, Matthew and Sarah related the importance/effectiveness of prayer to the frequency of prayer:

No! I am not a person of prayer. I am not sure that I would go that far but I do pray probably a few times a week.

Interview, Mary:1.

I probably spend a few times a week in personal prayer.

Interview, Margaret:1.

I pray once or twice a week so you could say that I feel that I am not a person of prayer"

Interview, Mark:10.

No! I don't pray frequently, not really, I mean, I pray in times of need but not at other times. I know that this is not a good attitude but that's me"

Interview, Matthew:5.

Because I only pray once every two weeks, so I don't feel it is a major influence on my life. But I still feel it necessary sometimes to make that link with God.

Interview, Sarah:2.

Ruth saw a contradiction between her saying that she had faith and her prayer life:

You know, I said just a minute ago that I was a person of faith, I wonder because I don't pray that often, only once or twice a month and for very short times.

Interview, Ruth:4.

Table 6.14 is a summary of the prayer life of the students.

Table 6.14

Prayer life of students

Students	Responses
Claire	Prayer very important - prays daily
John	Prayer very important
Paul	Prayer important
Peter	Prayer important - not seem as a high priority
Mary	Prayer not important - prays a few times a week
Margaret	Prays a few times a week.
Mark	Not a person of prayer - prays once or twice a week
Matthew	Not a person of prayer - prays once or twice a week
Sarah	Prayer not a major influence - prays every two weeks
Ruth	Questions her faith - prays once or twice a month

Claire and John saw prayer as being very important in their lives while Paul and Peter saw prayer as important but Peter added that he did not see prayer as a high priority in his life. John also spoke of praying daily and Claire spoke of praying nearly everyday. The others six students saw prayer as an important way to communicate with God but admitted that they prayed only once or twice a week and in some cases, less frequently. Ruth questioned her faith because of her infrequent use of prayer.

Scripture.

Hence, in sacred Scripture, without prejudice to God's truth and holiness, the marvellous 'condescension' of eternal wisdom is plain to be seen that we may come to know the ineffable kindness of God.

Flannery, 1980:758.

In a unit that I offer at University, Interpreting the Bible, I find that the majority of Catholic students come to the unit blissfully ignorant of God's Holy Word (Saker, 2004). Both the questionnaire results as well as the interviews substantially support the perception I had, that the majority of students at a Catholic school avoid Scripture like the plague.

Seven students (Peter, Paul, Matthew, Ruth, Sarah, Claire and Mark) said that they never read Scripture. Paul and Ruth indicated that they were 'turned off' reading any Scripture from their experience at school.

We read it at school and that was a 'turn off' like I mean a real 'turn off' - I don't think I would ever want to read Scripture again after the school experience.

Interview, Ruth:5.

I think when I was at school we were forced to read Scripture. It kind of turned me off. And that's probably the main reason why I haven't gone back to it. Because we were kind of forced to do it and it is just a reaction and I suppose I have just continued as I have got older.

Interview, Paul:1.

Matthew, Claire and Peter found Scripture 'not interesting':

To be honest I find the Bible not very interesting and if I find something not interesting, then it becomes boring and if it is boring why waste your time and energy?

Interview, Matthew:5.

I don't actually read the Bible much. I don't find it interesting reading the Bible. I don't see it (the Bible) so relevant to me on a day-to-day basis.

Interview, Claire: 2.

It's not something you can just sit down and read like a novel or anything.

Interview, Peter:2.

Mark questioned the truth of Scripture:

Have you ever tried to read the names of people in the Bible? And, secondly, I don't believe the information in it is true like creation in seven days, the flood, the snake and the apple. I am a rational person and how can I accept fairy tales as true?

Interview, Mark:9.

Sarah could not see the link between God and Scripture, "Never! No, like I said with prayer, it is not a major influence in my life and I don't think reading it helps me make a link with God" (Interview, Sarah:2).

Mary, John and Margaret occasionally or rarely read Scripture and for various reasons: "I only read it for (writing essays). But I read quite a lot when I did", responded Mary (Interview, Mary:1).

I would read Scripture quite rarely, I suppose. I always have a Bible in my room. How many times I get around to reading it, well, that's another question.

Interview, John:2.

Margaret simply replied that she use to read Scripture and added that she still occasionally reads (it).

Table 6.15 is a summary of the students' frequency of reading Scripture.

Table 6.15

Frequency of reading Scripture

Student	Response
Ruth	Never! Turned off at school
Paul	Never! Turned off at school
Matthew	Never! Did not find it interesting
Claire	Never! Did not find it interesting
Peter	Never! Not interesting like reading a novel
Mark	Never! Difficult names no reasonable person would read it
Sarah	Never! Can see no link between Scripture and God
Mary	Occasionally! Reads Scripture when preparing for written assignments
John	Rarely reads Scripture
Margaret	Read Scripture occasionally

Whereas all students would see themselves with some degree of faith and all students do pray on certain occasions, only three students occasionally read Scripture. Seven students never read Scripture. Students, with the exception of Ruth, did not associate reading Scripture and prayer with faith development.

Reconciliation.

Before Vatican II, the Sacrament of the Anointing of the sick was often referred to as 'the forgotten sacrament'. Now this dubious title could be given to the sacrament of reconciliation.

Archbishop Hickey in a letter to the people of the Archdiocese of Perth (2001) said:

The law of the Church requires that all who have reached the age of discretion confess all grave sins at least once a year. Let us not neglect this spiritual treasure. I urge all members of the Church, people and clergy alike, to reflect again on their own use of this Sacrament and to recognise its transforming effects in their lives. The Sacrament of Penance is a personal encounter with Christ who forgives, reconciles and restores us to new life.

Hickey, 2001:3.

All students strongly agreed that they rarely or never use the Sacrament of reconciliation. Five students (Peter, John, Claire, Margaret and Mary) saw asking God in personal prayer was all that was required to receive forgiveness:

I think what I do is more like my business and it isn't anyone else's to be discussing. I know that they (the church) go on that it is a representative of God's (the priest) but I don't believe that how can you say that someone could possibly take the place of God. I don't believe it. Forgiveness comes through my own sort of personal prayer and stuff like that. I would say that is the only way.

Interview, Peter:1.

In his response to reconciliation John offers another of his apparent contradictions:

I think God forgives anyway. I really do I pray to God. I would pray to God regularly for forgiveness and that is on a daily basis. I would speak to Him so I don't think He would argue with that.

Interview, John:1.

I don't actually talk to the priest, just sort of have a personal interaction with God. I don't go to a priest.

Interview, Claire:10.

Never! I feel that God forgives me outside of reconciliation. All I have to do is to ask Him for forgiveness. So why go to reconciliation?

Interview, Margaret:2.

I do not see the sacrament of reconciliation as necessary for forgiveness. If God is all-loving and all-forgiving as you keep telling us, then God will forgive me if I ask Him without going to a priest.

Interview, Mary:1.

Paul and Sarah spoke of going to reconciliation at school. Paul continued along the theme of communicating directly with God with Sarah and Mark, adding, that they could not understand the theology behind the Sacrament:

I think the main reason that I did go to reconciliation was that the school went. Now, I feel that if I have done problems or done stuff that I am not proud of, I talk to God and I believe that I don't need to go (to reconciliation). I feel that I don't need to go to a priest to say that because that is between God and me.

Interview, Paul:1.

I used to go in school when the classes went. To be honest, I shouldn't say this, as a Catholic, but I don't see how it (reconciliation) works. Like taking away your sins by telling someone else.

Interview, Sarah:1.

I don't know. But I believe just in everyday life, everyone needs forgiveness for the little things that they do. I think that this (forgiveness) can be achieved by not having to go to reconciliation. This is my personal view. I know that is not what the church teaches. I don't believe that you have to go through a priest to get forgiveness for everything that you have done. I think there is another way that I get forgiveness, not only through reconciliation.

Interview, Mark:2.

Ruth links never going to reconciliation with not going to Sunday Mass while

Matthew sees his parents as people to approach for advice:

Admittedly I would go more frequently. The only reason I don't go is that I don't really feel like I should because I don't go to Mass often enough. I don't really know if I have a right to, I guess.

Interview, Ruth:1.

Probably because I don't go to Church and I guess if I don't go to church I don't think about going to reconciliation. I have a pretty close relationship to my parents, so I would probably just talk to them about it and just openly discuss it. I wouldn't go to the church and discuss it with them (the priests), it would just be with my family"

Interview, Matthew:2.

Table 6.16 is a summary of the frequency of the students' use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Table 6.16

Frequency of reconciliation	
Student	Response
Peter	Never! Talks to God directly - can't see how a priest as represents God
John	Never! Prays directly to God
Claire	Never! Talks to God
Margaret	Never! Talks to God
Mary	Never! Goes directly to God
Paul	Never! Went at school. Talks to God directly
Sarah	Never! Went at school. Can't understand/accept the theology behind the Sacrament
Mark	Never! Can't see the role of the priest. Does not understand the theology behind the Sacrament.
Ruth	Never! Does not go to Mass so why go to reconciliation
Matthew	Never! Does not go to Mass! Talks with his parents

All students, except Mark, would see themselves as people of faith. All students pray, though the reasons for their prayer and the frequency differ greatly. Seven students never read Scripture and Mary, John and Margaret rarely read Scripture. No student avails themselves of the sacrament of reconciliation.

Catholic Church founded by Christ.

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth be loosed in heaven.

Catholic Enquiry Centre, 1991:109.

The Magisterium teaches that the Catholic Church was founded by Christ. This has been a constant teaching of the Magisterium since the 3rd century. Three students

(Peter, John and Matthew) agreed, without any reservations that the Catholic Church was founded by Christ:

Yes, I do believe that.

Interview, Peter:9.

Yes I do believe that the Catholic Church was founded by Christ.

Interview, John:5.

I do and that's why I still call myself Catholic (in name only).

Interview, Matthew:5.

Paul, Mary Sarah and Mark also agreed but spoke of the humanness of Christ, as Founder:

I have no doubt about that but, like Christ, I believe the Church should listen more to its people just as Christ did in his time.

Interview, Paul:5.

Well, yes! But I mean the Church is made up of humans and they can make mistakes can't they?

Interview, Mary:7.

Yes! But he does understand if you make a mistake.

Interview, Sarah:7.

Mark indicated that Christ did not found the Catholic Church that exists today:

No, he founded a Christian Church, a Church of love and forgiveness not a rule-bound organisation that the Catholic Church is today.

Interview, Mark:8.

Claire agreed that Christ founded a Church but whether it was the Catholic Church or not is unimportant:

Well, he founded a Church to follow him if that's the Catholic Church or not I don't know and I don't think that it's important.

Interview, Claire:5.

Ruth responded:

Yes, but he also founded other churches too!

Interview, Ruth:5.

Margaret was undecided:

I think so, I am not sure.

Interview, Margaret:4.

Table 6.17 is a summary of the students' beliefs as to whether Christ founded the Catholic Church.

Table 6.17

Christ as founder of the Catholic church

Student	Response
Peter	Yes! No reservations
John	Yes! No reservations
Matthew	Yes! No reservations
Paul	Yes! But the Church should listen to the people more
Mary	Yes! But the Church is made up of humans
Sarah	Yes! But Christ understands if you make a mistake
Mark	Yes! But not the Catholic Church as he knows it today
Ruth	Yes! But Christ founded other Churches as well
Claire	Yes! But does not see that as important
Margaret	Not sure! She thinks so

Summary.

Three students had no doubt that Christ founded the Catholic Church. Six students also agreed but spoke of the Church needing to be more 'Christlike' in its dealing with people today, they see the Church needing to consult with its people and to be more forgiving, as Christ was.

Construct six: Students' acceptance of the moral teachings of the Catholic Church

This construct aimed at discovering if students are accepting the moral (doctrinal) teachings of the Catholic Church (conceptual knowledge). It could be argued that

students are not able to gain evaluative knowledge unless they understand the conceptual knowledge the Church is teaching.

Pope making statements on behalf of all the church.

Students were asked to clarify their questionnaire response to the question: Does the Pope have the 'power' to make statements on behalf of all the Church?

Margaret, Ruth, Matthew all agreed with John:

Yes I do believe he does. He is the supreme head of the church and, therefore, he has the power to make statements over it.

Interview, John:5.

Paul and Mary agreed, but with reservations:

Yes, but he must listen to the people, for example, what are they saying about say contraception?

Interview, Paul:6.

Yes and no. I really don't have too much understanding of how the Pope does it but I usually go with what he says, it depends on what it is.

Interview, Mary:5.

Peter, Mark Sarah and Claire strongly disagreed that the Pope had power to make statements on behalf of the Church, arguing that no one should have such power:

Because I don't think anyone has the authority. I believe that people should be each to their own. People should be directed, I think, people need direction but I don't think that one person can stand up there and speak on behalf of the past and the future. I think it is just crazy.

Interview, Peter:5.

I have a problem with authority, that is a character(istic) of mine. So I find it difficult for one person to judge and tell ten million other people what is to be said or done.

Interview, Mark:5.

No I don't believe that is true. I believe that the Pope is human and for someone to have, a human power, like a God per se. I don't believe it it's possible

Interview, Sarah:7.

I suppose the Church needs a figurehead but I don't agree that he is the be-all and end-all of everything. And from doing this unit I can understand why he has made some of his declarations that he has made. I don't agree with them but that's my personal opinion.

Interview, Claire:5.

Table 6.18 is a summary of students' belief that the Pope has the power to make statements on behalf of all Church faithful.

Table 6.18

Summary of students' perceptions of papal power

Student	Response
Margaret	Yes! He does have the power
Ruth	Yes! He does have the power
Matthew	Yes! He is the head of the Church
Paul	Yes! But he must listen to people
Mary	Yes/No! In doubt but usually goes along with the Pope
John	Yes! But the decision to listen to what he says is a personal one
Peter	No! Does not believe he can make statements on behalf of all people
Mark	No! He has a problem with authority
Sarah	No! No human should have such power
Claire	No! His is not the be-all and end-all of everything

There were mixed messages from the students concerning papal power. Three students had no doubt that the Pope has this power. Two students spoke of how this power should be used. One student was in doubt and four students did not agree.

Papal infallibility.

Infallibility: The freedom from the possibility of error in matters of faith and morals, bestowed on the Pope as Peter's successor.

O'Collins & Farrugia, 1991:105.

Students were asked if the Pope, in making infallible statements, could be in error. Four students (Peter, Sarah, Claire and Mark) did not agree with the doctrine of infallibility with Peter and Sarah arguing that the Pope is not God; he is only human and is, therefore, capable of making statements that can be in error. "God is the only person who does not make mistakes - so, no, I don't believe the Pope cannot err when making infallible statements (Interview, Peter:5). "I would say my response to that

question is No! Like I said above how one man can claim this right. Does he see himself as God, I hope not" (Interview, Sarah:7). "No! I think the Pope is a sort of figure-head for the Catholic Church to guide it but to make statements that cannot be in error, oh, no!" (Interview, Claire:5). Mark speaks of his right to make decisions (free-will).

No! When the statements made by the Pope goes from, I mean, a teaching, to a teaching that cannot be in error, I can't accept that. I think I have my own reason (free will) to decide right from wrong. I don't need the Pope to force things on me.

Interview, Mark:5.

Six students (Ruth, Mary, Paul, Matthew, John and Margaret) all agreed that the Pope can speak with infallibility but each student made certain qualifications within their responses. Ruth and Mary questioned a human being never being in error:

Well, yes! But it is a bit hard to understand how one man can say something for the whole Church and not ever be in error.

Interview, Ruth:4.

Well sometimes I think how can one person make decisions for my life, but, then when it comes to making statements for the whole Church, then, yes, he cannot be in error, but with the individual, no, I don't agree.

Interview, Mary:6.

Matthew spoke of being Catholic and, therefore, accepting Catholic teaching:

Yes, they are meant for all Catholics, so if you take the Catholic faith, you take full allegiance to him (The Pope).

Interview, Matthew:5.

While John, again with an apparent contradiction, agreed:

Yes, he is representing God and Catholics on earth and as God's representative for Catholics he speaks for God and God cannot be wrong.

Interview, John:5.

Paul spoke of the Pope listening before making infallible statements, while Margaret said the decision to reject or accept the statement is up to the individual:

Yes, but as I said before he must listen to the people before making infallible statements.

Interview, Paul:4.

Yes, but it is up to the individual Catholic to accept or reject what the Pope says.

Interview, Margaret:5.

Table 6.19 is a summary of the students' responses to papal Infallibility.

Table 6.19

Papal Infallibility

Student	Response
Peter	No! The Pope is not God
Sarah	No! The Pope is not God
Claire	No! The Pope is a figure head
Mark	No! He has his own free will to make decisions
Ruth	Yes! But theology difficult to understand
Mary	Yes! For the .whole Church. No! for Individuals.
Matthew	Yes! Full allegiance to the Pope
John	Yes! Pope is representing Catholics
Paul	Yes! But listen to people before making infallible Statements
Margaret	Yes! But to accept or reject is up to the individual

Four students accepted that the Pope has the power to make statements on behalf of all the Church and also accepted the teaching of infallibility. Mary was uncertain on both questions, while Peter, Mark, Sarah and Claire did not see it as being possible for a human to be infallible.

If students do not accept that the Pope has the power to make statements on behalf of the entire Church it would be very difficult to see how they would readily accept the official Church teaching, for example, on human sexuality. This is a dilemma facing the Church in the 21st century if it wishes to remain creditable to the faithful.

Sex before the commitment of marriage (pre-marital sex).

Hence conjugal love requires in husband and wife an awareness of their mission of 'responsible parenthood', which today is, rightly, much insisted upon and which also must be exactly understood.

Pope Paul VI, 1968:9.

There were a range of views expressed concerning pre-marital sex. These views ranged from 'never' through 'maybe' to 'yes'. Sarah was the lone student who agreed that sex before marriage was a sin:

Pretty much it goes back to my family and childhood. It has always been you just don't go and have sex with anyone and up until now, I haven't and its got to do with my older sister, as well. She has just been married and she waited and that has been a good role model and stuff. And, well, basically, it's not a part of faith but it is just part of the way I live and the way I perceive myself in what I should and shouldn't do.

Interview, Sarah:5.

Sarah was then asked if somewhere down the track she was to fall in love and there is a commitment present in the relationship and later she plans to marry, would that change her opinion. Sarah responded:

Yes, I think it would. I think it is going a little bit too far for the church to say no sex before marriage, especially in this society where promiscuity is nothing, everyone is going out and having sex basically, but it doesn't change the way I feel. I mean I am strongly grounded in what I believe and I believe if the time is right and if you want to and the relationship is at the right point, then, yes, I would.

Interview, Sarah:5.

Ruth saw pre-marital sex as not always sinful:

Well in a sense I think that marriage can be (sinful) in some cases. This (marriage) is just a piece of paper. A really long time ago marriage was that two people shared between God or with God and you didn't need a piece of paper to prove that, like marriage was marriage. You were together, you were married. You started to have sexual relations. But I don't necessarily think it (sexual intercourse) has to be something after marriage.

Interview, Ruth:5.

Ruth, however, did not agree with 'one night stands', "No I am talking about two people that are in love and know they are in love and are willing to bring God into their relationship" (Interview, Ruth:5).

Eight students (Peter, Matthew, John, Mary, Paul, Margaret, Claire and Mark) did not see pre-marital sex as being sinful:

I think people can be in love and they can want to do it. (It is) totally up to the person, I think, the individual. If you are happy with doing it, and before you get married, it's up to you. I don't think anyone should have the right to say that it is wrong.

Interview, Peter:5.

When Peter was asked about 'one night stands':

I think it is up to the individual. I am not here to say a person shouldn't be able to do that, it is not like it's killing anybody, in my opinion. It might be to the Catholic Church, but in terms of procreation, again, I think it is up to the individual, if they want to, it's up to them.

Interview, Peter:5.

Matthew argued that society's view of pre marital sex has changed and, therefore, he would not see it as being sinful:

No! I just think the world is changing and I know it is against the Church's teachings, but I think it is just the way the world is going now. People experimenting, having relationships before marriage. I think it is a good thing, being able to work out what is good for you and work out what you want in a relationship and if you can test and trial that before your marriage, it is better off for the future. Because you can let each other know what partner you think is best. I think the final relationship with the marriage is going to be better off.

Interview, Matthew:5.

However Matthew, when asked if he thought 'one night stands' were sinful, responded:

Yes, because you are not having a relationship there. It's no feelings or anything like that and you can't learn anything from each other. So I think it is that sinful.

Interview, Matthew:5.

John knew the Church's teachings on pre-marital sex but was then asked if he personally believed it:

Why do I personally think no? I think that, that is a very hard comment. I suppose I have been brought up in a different world to what the Church believes, I suppose that it is very hard to find anybody that thought that it was wrong. I think that sex is not just a procreation thing, that sex is an expression of love, therefore why should love be confined to marriage?

Interview, John:6.

When, asked further about the sinfulness of 'one night stands', he replied:

That's a no, no, I do agree with that. I agree that's a completely wrong thing and I would be very disappointed in myself if I engaged in one, and I would be looking for forgiveness.

Interview, John:6.

Mary saw being in a relationship as the major factor in having pre-marital sex, not simply being married:

It depends on, I see it depending on whether you are having sex just because you want to, I don't think so, but if you are having sex with your partner and you love the partner and you know that you are going to continue the relationship, then!

Interview, Mary:4.

Mary was asked if she saw 'one night stands as sinful', responded, "Yes, without a relationship it just becomes a non-loving act" (Interview, Mary:3).

Paul was asked if he agreed that sexual intercourse before marriage was sinful:

That is a good question. I have to admit that I have, so, I would have to say no, it is not sinful. There are some Church teachings that I don't honestly believe in and this is one of them.

Interview, Paul:4.

When Paul was asked if he believed 'one night stands' were sinful, responded, "No, provided the intercourse is the result of a 'strong', 'loving' relationship.

Margaret's responded, "I hope not, I am living with my fiancée!" (Interview, Margaret:5) and gave much the same reply concerning the sinfulness of 'one night

stands', "Again, I hope not, my fiancée and I began sexual relationships just after we left school and both of us living with our parents at the time" (Interview, Margaret: 5).

Claire said no, arguing that pre-marital sex went on in Biblical times:

No I don't think so. Two consenting people, I mean it all went on in the Bible times anyway, they weren't always married.

Interview, Claire:5.

When asked about 'one night stands' Claire was ambivalent:

I will have to think about this one. I don't think it is right for people to just go for 'one night stands'. It is a real tricky one, because it is rather like what do I say, what do I do?.

Interview, Claire:5.

Mark was adamant:

Sex before marriage is a part of loving someone, if you are going to marry someone, you have to love them and I think the Church is a little bit out of date with this particular teaching. To me that (the Church) is not relevant to me in my life, no.

Interview, Mark:6.

Whether he saw 'one night stands' as sinful Mark replied, "no, they were not sinful" (Interview, Mark:6).

Peter, Paul, Matthew, Margaret and Mark did not see pre-marital sex as sinful, neither did they see 'one night stands' as sinful. John, Mary and Claire did not see pre-marital sex as being sinful but they did see one night stands as sinful. Ruth saw pre-marital sex as not always being sinful but she did see one night stands as sinful. Sarah saw both pre-marital sex and 'one night stands' as sinful, if there was no relationship involved.

Table 6.20

Sinfulness of pre-marital sex and 'one night stands'.

Student	Pre marital sex	One night stands
Sarah	Yes! Family upbringing	Yes! Except if there is a relationship.
Ruth	No! Marriage does not make it right	Yes! No relationship
Peter	No! It is up to the individuals	No! Up to the individual
Matthew	No! Accepted by society	Yes! No relationship
John	No! Not in a relationship	Yes! No relationship
Mary	No! Not in a relationship	Yes! No relationship
Paul	No! Does not accept Church teaching	No! Not with consenting adults
Margaret	No! Living with fiancée	No! Are not sinful If there is a relationship
Claire	No! Consenting adults - recorded in the Bible	Yes! But wonders what she would do if such an occasion arose
Mark	No! Not in relationship	No! Not if there is commitment

Artificial contraception.

We must once again declare that the direct interruption of the generative processes already begun, and, above all, directly willed, even if for therapeutic reasons, are to be absolutely excluded as licit means of regulating birth.

Pope Paul VI, 1968:13.

This question was intended to see if the students accepted the Church teaching on the use of artificial contraception during sexual intercourse, and was the use of any form of contraception sinful. Four students (Paul, John, Mary, and Claire) disagreed with Church teaching and all spoke of whether the child is wanted or not as the reason for their disagreeing with Church teaching:

No! I don't believe it is a sin. I know that the Church teaches it is a sin, but I don't honestly believe it is a sin, no. I think there are many reasons why. I feel that like a child's life is very important, it is not something that should be played around with and you know if you decide to bring a child into the world, it should be loved and appreciated. You should not be forced to have a child because of some sexual act and, therefore, I feel that it is (Church teaching) wrong.

Interview, Paul:5.

John, summed up his beliefs by saying:

It (sex) is a way of showing your love for another person so, therefore, I don't think that every sexual act should be open to procreation, because sometimes the sex isn't for procreation's sake. It's to fulfil a human emotion.

Interview, John:6.

Mary responded:

You have to have some control over the population otherwise it is just going to keep growing and the world can't accommodate that kind of growth. I reckon if you didn't, if everyone used unprotected sex then there would be a lot of unwanted kids in the world (and) that leads to a lot of crime

Interview, Mary:5.

Claire said, "No" and then responded with a first-hand experience to justify her position:

My mother took the pill between my older brother and me because she had two children under 2, and she was not prepared to have another one until they were ready to have another one. So, no, there are circumstances where it can be just too much for a person or a couple to have too many children. With a lot of two-income families nowadays, and all the mod cons that are 'must-haves', that it is too hard for some people to try and support the number of children that you get if you don't have (some) sort of contraception.

Interview, Claire:6.

Sarah, Matthew and Paul spoke of the dangers of unprotected sex and Sarah added the problem of unwanted babies:

Because looking in today's society, I mean for myself I would use it just so I don't have pregnancies or anything like that. I know that goes against the religion but in today's society it is everywhere and there are so many nasty diseases and just unwanted babies and terrible stuff coming out of sex without condoms and I believe it (the use of some form of contraceptive) is necessary.

Interview, Sarah:5.

Peter spoke of disease and economic reasons for using a condom:

No, I think there are too many dangers that are lurking around. Too many dangers and economically, for some people, it is just a necessity. I mean we were all watching that video (The Catholic Church in England, shown during a lecture) and (it) had that woman who had seven kids, eventually she just couldn't (have any more). I think, yes, I mean if people are doing something

and it seems unreasonable, I mean people like say, for example, using contraception, I mean it is hard to say that's an unreasonable act, given the circumstances. It's alright for the Pope to sit there and judge and say, no, this isn't right and you can't do that.

Interview, Peter:6.

Matthew spoke of disease as being a reason for using safe sex:

No, I guess there are a lot of different things in the world today, like you have diseases and things like that, so I think it (contraception) is sometimes necessary and I really think it depends on the people at the time.

Interview, Matthew:5.

Mark said that he did not see the use of artificial contraception as being sinful. When asked why, responded:

Because I know that the church's teaching that every sexual act is open to procreation but sometimes it is not the way, not the way I think. I have to disagree with the church's teachings on that.

Interview, Mark:6.

Ruth agreed that the use of artificial contraception during sexual intercourse was not sinful but gave no reason for her beliefs (Interview, Ruth:6) while Margaret knew that using artificial contraception was sinful and agreed with most of the Church teaching on contraception (Interview, Margaret:5).

Table 6.21 is a summary of the use of contraception as sinful.

Table 6.21

Contraception	
Student	Response
Paul	No! Consider the unborn child -
John	No! Sex is not only for procreation
Mary	No! Too many children leads to hunger and crime - consider the child
Sarah	No! Disease is a danger and unwanted babies are two reasons for using condoms
Peter	No! Disease and economic hardship are two reasons for using condoms
Matthew	No! Too many diseases not to use contraception
Ruth	No! Using contraception is not sinful
Mark	No! He disagrees with the Church. Not the way he thinks.
Claire	No! Uses family as an example
Margaret	Yes! Agrees using contraception, most of the times, is sinful

The Catholic Church's teaching on the use of a contraceptive is a teaching that Catholics around the world are rejecting (the interviews found that nine of the students did not see the use of contraception as being sinful and one of students said the use of a condom most of the time was sinful).

McKay (2004) in an article *Not listening to the Church* reported that from a recent survey he had conducted 75% of Catholic women were not adhering to the Church's teaching on contraception.

Marriage, commitment and divorce.

The Code of Canon Law, Canon 1055 (1983) states that:

The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life, and which of its own very nature is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children, has, between the baptised, been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.

Catholic Church, 1983:237.

All students saw marriage as a sacrament of the Church and a commitment for life. Nine students would see that there could be circumstances where the commitment for life was impossible to sustain and, in such cases, divorce should be allowed.

Six students, Matthew, Margaret, Ruth, Sarah, Claire and Mary, saw an abusive relationship as being a reason to obtain a divorce.

Matthew said: "Yes, I kind of took that as one of the sacraments of the church. Yes, I do. I think marriage is forever" (Interview, Matthew:5). When asked if there would be any exceptions, he said:

Yes, I think so, it depends if you have an abusive relationship. I think you can't say that marriage is forever. That you have to stay with someone for the rest of your life, because every relationship is different and everyone goes through different things.

Interview, Matthew:6.

Margaret agreed that marriage is a sacrament of the church and a commitment for life but added:

Except if you were being bashed or verbally abused, sexually abused, anything like that. If that was the case I don't think you should stay in the marriage, even though it is the teaching of the church to stay in the marriage forever, but under severe circumstances, I personally don't think you should have to.

Interview, Margaret:5.

"It (marriage) is a sacrament and, yes, I do actually. I think marriage is a life long commitment" (Interview, Ruth:6). When asked if she would see any exceptions:

Well, where I think an annulment comes in, if someone is abusing somebody else, obviously the marriage is void. You really can't say somebody loves for life if they doing that to them.

Interview, Ruth:6.

Sarah also saw marriage as a commitment for life but had some reservations:

I do believe that marriage is a sacrament of the Catholic Church and that it is a commitment for life. If you are being abused, or if it's just impossible for it (marriage) to work then you should be allowed to divorce and remarry.

Interview, Sarah:5.

Claire had no doubt that marriage was a sacrament of the church and a commitment for life. She was then asked, if there would be any circumstances that may change this life-long commitment:

Yes, I would see marriage as a sacrament. Yes! I would also see marriage as a life long commitment. It depends on the circumstances as to why people are divorcing. I mean abuse or one partner is not treating the other partner well, I can understand that.

Interview, Claire:5.

Mary and Paul saw their parents as an example of married life:

Yes, it is a sacrament of the church and yes it is a life-time commitment. My parents had influence over that as well, because they have been married for nearly 27 years.

Interview, Mary:3.

Mary added a proviso:

But, If you lived in an abusive relationship and it wasn't good for your health then you should be allowed to divorce and remarry, but apart from that, no!

Interview, Mary:4.

Paul saw no circumstances that would change this life long commitment.

Yes marriage is a sacrament of the Catholic Church and a life long commitment, for better or worse and I believe that there are no circumstances that would change this. I suppose my parents have used that same philosophy as well, I will also.

Interview, Paul:4.

Peter saw marriage as an important sacrament of the church and a life-long commitment. When asked about church teaching on marriage and divorce replied:

I wouldn't say that it is relevant. I mean their whole lifetime is a long time to be getting married and having the same person. To think that someone might fall out of love, get the divorce, and they are not allowed to be remarried when they might have found the real one, seems a bit dodgy to me.

Interview, Peter:5.

Mark agreed that marriage was a sacrament and he saw marriage as a commitment for life. He admitted that he had no idea of Church teaching on divorce:

Yes, before I left school I hadn't thought anything about divorce and marriage. I didn't know anything until recently about getting annulments if you wanted to remarry, I didn't know anything about that. I thought you could just remarry as you please.

Interview, Mark:6.

John said that as far as he was concerned, "It (marriage) is a sacrament and a life-long commitment. That is what I have been taught, yes!" (Interview, John:6). In John's answer, as to whether he agreed with the Church's teaching on marriage and divorce, he appeared a little confused:

Yes, why not? It's certainly seems relevant in every respect. I mean to get a divorce, you get a divorce through the state so why not get a divorce from the Church like everything else. If you are going to break it off with the state, you should break it off from the Church as well, same thing!

Interview, John:6.

Upon further questioning it appeared that John was not fully aware of the Church's teaching on marriage and divorce, "I thought the Church allowed you to divorce and remarry", he said (Interview, John:6).

Table 6.22 is a summary of the students' beliefs on marriage and divorce.

Table 6.22.

Sacramental marriage commitment

Student	Responses
Matthew	Yes! A sacrament/commitment. Exception - abusive partner
Margaret	Yes! A sacrament/commitment - Exception - abusive partner
Ruth	Yes! A sacrament/commitment. - Exception abusive partner
Sarah	Yes! A sacrament/commitment - Exception abusive partner
Claire	Yes! A sacrament/commitment - Exception abusive partner
Mary	Yes! A sacrament/commitment, parents an example. Exception abusive partner
Paul	Yes! A sacrament/commitment parents an example. No exceptions
Peter	Yes! A sacrament/commitment. But people do fall out of love, so they should divorce
Mark	Yes! A sacrament/commitment. Until recently was not aware of Church teaching
John	Yes! A sacrament/commitment. Was not aware of Church teaching

All students saw marriage as a sacrament and a commitment for life but quickly added a qualification to the statement. While six students saw an abusive relationship as a reason why the commitment could be broken it would appear that they were not aware that physical abuse is possible grounds for a Church annulment, if it can be proven that the abusive partner had a history of abuse prior to their vows being exchanged. Mary and Paul spoke of their parents as an example of married life. Mary saw abuse as a reason why the commitment may be broken while Paul spoke of no exceptions, in contrast to Peter who spoke of falling out of love as a reason for divorce.

Sunday Mass obligation.

The Church obliges the faithful to take part in the Divine Liturgy on Sundays and feast days.

Catholic Church, 1994:350.

Four students (Peter, Paul, Claire and Mary) didn't see missing Mass as a mortal sin but spoke of prayer as being important:

I think it is up to you. I think if you are doing your own personal prayer, you are in touch with God.

Interview, Peter:6.

No! I don't think so, as I say that praying to God is more important than attending Mass.

Interview, Paul:4.

I haven't been struck down yet for missing it (Mass). No! I don't think it is, talking to God in your heart is more important".

Interview, Claire:7.

No, because you are not attending Church doesn't mean that you are not sitting down and praying or you are not listening to what God is saying. It is just that you are not there to communicate with him in community.

Interview, Mary: 6.

Five students (Margaret, Matthew, John, Sarah and Mark) did not see missing Mass on Sundays as being sinful for a variety of reasons. In support of their views Margaret, Matthew and John added:

I have always believed that if you tried your hardest to be kind and loving to other people and you were considerate and think of other people and you lived your life as close as you could to God it wasn't necessary to go to Mass. I believe that there are some people in the world that are extremely loving and go out of their way to help other people but they may not go to church on the weekend. And I believe there is a place for them in heaven, when they die, even though they may not have been to church every weekend, because of the life they have led and how they have helped other people in their lives.

Interview, Margaret:6.

No, even though I know that the Church teaches it is a sin. I believe that you can be Christian without going to Mass.

Interview, Matthew:6.

No, I don't see it as a mortal son. Even though I know it is, and I don't feel guilty about it (missing Sunday Mass).

Interview, John:7.

Sarah added: "No! I believe the sins are basically the ten Commandments" (Interview, Sarah:6), (Sarah obviously did not remember the commandment to 'keep holy the Sabbath day'). While Mark suggested: "missing Mass on a Sunday, is not really sinful" (Interview, Mark:7).

Ruth was the only student who saw missing Mass as being sinful but asked:

What are the reasons that people are not going to Sunday Mass? I think it depends on why you are missing it. It is sinful, but I think it depends on the reason behind it. I think the Church has to look at Mass and ask, why aren't people going, but that's not necessarily an excuse.

Interview, Ruth:6.

Table 6.23 is a summary of students' Sunday Mass attendance.

Table 6.23

Sunday Mass	
Student	Reason
Peter	No! Personal prayer more important
Paul	No! Personal prayer more important
Claire	No! Talking to God in your heart is more important
Mary	No! You can communicate with God without being at Sunday Mass
Margaret	No! Being considerate and loving to other people is important.
Matthew	No! Can be a Christian without going to Sunday Mass
John	No! Does not feel guilty not going to Mass
Sarah	No! Following the 10 Commandments is more important
Mark	No! Not a sin
Ruth	Yes! But why are people not going to Mass? The Church should ask itself this question.

Nine of the ten students did not see missing Sunday Mass as being sinful. One student knew that missing Sunday Mass was sinful but added that it depended on the reason why a person missed Sunday Mass. It would seem that if this trend continues among our young Catholic population and the Church does not attempt to address the 'problem' then our Churches will, indeed, be empty while our schools are full. The Catechism (1994) stating that Mass is the source and summit of Christian life appears to be have little meaning to these students.

Abortion.

Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognised as having the rights of a person - among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life.

Catholic Church, 1994:574.

The Code of Canon Law (1983) states that (Canon 1398):

A person who actually procures an abortion incurs a *latae sententiae* excommunication.

Catholic Church, 1983:310.

When does life begin? Is abortion the murder of an unborn child? Would this be the case if pregnancy came about because of rape or incest?

Eight students (Paul, John, Sarah, Mark, Matthew, Claire, Margaret and Ruth) agreed that life begins at conception and that abortion is murder. When asked if they would hold the same views if a girl was raped or fell pregnant through incest, five students (Paul, John, Sarah, Matthew and Claire) said "no", giving as their reason, the rights of the girl or the rights of the unborn child:

I suppose I come from the belief that life should be there for a reason and that is why I believe in contraception. You should only bring a child forth if you are prepared to love and look after it. and if, in that case (rape or incest), I don't feel it is (loved and looked after), you know there are cases it (abortion) can be warranted. I don't think it is an easy decision and it is up to the person (involved). If the child won't have a father or mother for whatever reason, intense dislike or hate of the child, I don't believe it is right for the mother or right for the child. I think it is fair enough that it should be aborted for both people.

Interview, Paul:5.

Surely it is a life, but the way it was formed is so surrounded in sin that maybe its life is just going to be unhappy. Would anyone want that? No, I don't. I don't think so. I can't say that I think a child should be brought into the world where it is not loved. I hate to say that, but I think that every child deserves a loving, caring family. I think if someone goes out and gets pregnant, of their own accord, then it is wrong to have an abortion. But I can see when a child is going to live a happy or fulfilled life, it should be kept. Surely it is a life, but the way it was formed is so surrounded in sin that maybe its (the unborn child's) life is just going to be unhappy. Would anyone

want that? Yes, in such circumstances abortion should be allowed and not be punishable by the church.

Interview, John:7.

I do. In those extreme circumstances (rape or incest). Yes, I mean a child will not grow up in a happy life. The mother will probably resent the child and it would be a nasty circle, which keeps going, and she probably won't be able to support the child, so it is not good for her life to start with.

Interview, Sarah:6.

Yes, she (the mother) is killing a human life but I think there are certain circumstances that you could kind of overlook it in the best interests of the person who is pregnant through rape. I think there are probably plenty of people who have kept the baby after being raped, but I personally believe it is all right for that person to have an abortion.

Interview, Matthew:6.

Depends if the person who is having the abortion doesn't want to be continually reminded of that incident. It depends on the strength of the person really as to whether it is going to affect them developmentally for the rest of their lives.

Interview, Claire:6.

Mark does not believe that the offspring from a rape or incest should live:

I think you have to take each case as it comes and in that case I don't think the offspring of somebody who does this sort of thing (commits rape or incest) should be allowed to live. I agree that I am contradicting myself but in this case, in that special circumstance, yes I think abortion is fine.

Interview, Mark:7.

At a very personal level of response Margaret said if it happened to her then she would have an abortion:

I know it's not the church's teaching but I have been in a situation where a male took advantage of me and if I had fallen pregnant I wouldn't have wanted to keep the child.

Interview, Margaret:6.

Ruth said that God would judge the person:

I don't think I have the right to judge. I don't think anyone does. I don't know, I wouldn't say that it is permissible or not. I really don't think that I could say but I believe that if she did (have an abortion) God would judge her in whatever way appropriate.

Interview, Ruth:7.

Mary did not consider life beginning until after the first trimester but she did agree that abortion is the murder of an unborn child. She also agreed with Paul, John, Sarah, Matthew and Claire that in the case of rape or incest then the child has to be considered:

I don't think life takes place until the baby starts growing but not at the first trimester. I think it (abortion) is a sin. But in some cases when the girl falls pregnant through being raped or through incest, then I don't think so, because then the kid is just going to be hated for what happened and it is not a good relationship to bring your kid up in.

Interview, Mary:4.

Peter was the only student who did not see abortion as murder:

Technically it is correct. I mean you might have life there, but I mean you have life in a lot of other areas at that minute stage, and I think I don't see it as killing, it just comes down to reason. If a person is continuously having an abortion, I think you have to get your act together, but I think once it hits there, technically it is a life, but I don't necessarily agree that it's at that stage of significance.

Interview, Peter:6.

Peter would also see that when a girl is raped or falls pregnant due to incest, then the girl having an abortion would be permissible:

I would yes, I mean if she wants it, yes. As I said before, like it is at a minute stage, and there is lots of life around the place, people are killing off and then I suppose technically if you look at it, it is killing it off, but I mean who hasn't swatted a fly. I know the human is different but at that stage and point of time, it is not quite the same. I mean once it starts to become, I suppose a significant being, in my opinion, I don't see that as murder it is not a huge thing.

Interview, Peter:7.

All students except Peter and Mary agree that life begins at conception and abortion is the murder of an unborn child. Similarly students with the exception of Ruth, who would allow God to judge the actions of the person having the abortion, agree that it is not a sin for a person who falls pregnant because of rape or incest to have an abortion.

Table 6.24 is a summary of when life begins and the sinfulness of abortion.

Table 6.24

Abortion

Student	Life begins at conception	Abortion murder	Abortion in the case of rape or incest
Paul	Yes!	Yes!	Yes! Consider the rights of the girl or the child
John	Yes!	Yes!	Yes! Consider the rights of the girl or the child
Sarah	Yes!	Yes!	Yes! Consider the rights of the girl or the child
Matthew	Yes!	Yes!	Yes! Consider the rights of the girl or the child
Claire	Yes!	Yes!	Yes! Consider the rights of the girl or the mother
Mark	Yes!	Yes!	Yes! Under these circumstances child should not live
Margaret	Yes!	Yes!	Yes! If it was Margaret she would not want the child
Ruth	Yes!	Yes!	Not Sure! God would be the judge
Mary	No! First trimester	Yes!	Yes! If the child is hated
Peter	Technically	Technically,	Yes! Does not see it as murder

Practising Catholic.

Students were asked if they considered themselves to be a practising Catholic. I did not define the term 'practising Catholic' as I was also interested in seeing what the students understood the term to mean.

All students said that they did not consider themselves practicing Catholics. Seven students (Matthew, John, Mary, Ruth, Sarah, Paul, and Peter) spoke of not attending Mass or complying with Church rules as the reason:

No! I consider a practising Catholic is one who goes to Mass every Sunday and I don't. I don't follow all the church's teachings but I do consider myself a Catholic, but not just a practising one.

Interview, Matthew:7.

No! Because I don't go to Mass on Sundays so, therefore, I don't consider myself a practising Catholic.

Interview, John:8.

I don't (consider myself a practising Catholic) without going to church. I am not considered a practising Catholic. But I see myself as Catholic and I have done everything like confirmation and all that.

Interview, Mary:5.

No, I don't consider myself as a practising Catholic. I don't follow every single teaching of the church by the book, such as going to Mass on Sundays.

Interview, Ruth:8.

Practising, as in going to church every week and praying every night, and stuff like that. No, but I believe myself to be Catholic and it doesn't really matter whether people classify me as practising or not practising, I do have this faith (and) I do know what I believe in.

Interview, Sarah:7.

By the church's teaching, no! The way the church looks at it, no, I don't but I believe I live a Christian life and a Catholic life, but according to what the church believes, I don't, no!

Interview, Paul:7.

Yet Paul, when asked if he was proud to be a member of the Catholic Church responded: "Oh yes, definitely. I am proud of it. And if I am asked I tell people I am a Catholic, yes, I believe I am proud to say I am Catholic". Interestingly this is the same Paul who, in his profile, did not see Catholic Church or any organised religion playing a role in his life.

Peter and Sarah saw themselves as spiritual people but not as practising Catholics.

No! I don't consider myself a practicing Catholic but I think I am a person who has some spirituality and belief in God.

Interview, Peter:7/8.

Margaret and Mark replied with a simple, "No!" when asked about the practising of the Catholic faith. Claire said that she does not consider herself a practising Catholic as she has left the Church and joined the High Anglican community. When asked why she joined the Anglican community:

It's (The Catholic Church) too strict. I mean the church I go to is High Anglican and then there is Low Anglican. So they (the Anglicans) are more into independent thinking and less into rules that are drummed into you, thou shalt not, thou shalt.

Interview, Claire:9.

Table 6.25 is a summary of the students considering themselves to be practicing Catholics

Table 6.25.

Practising Catholic

Student	Response
Matthew	No! Because he does not go to Mass on Sunday
John	No! Because he does not go to Mass on Sunday
Mary	No! Because she does not go to Church
Ruth	No! Does not follow every teaching of the Church
Sarah	No! But she believes she has faith
Paul	No! But believes in the Christian way of life
Peter	No! But considers himself to be a spiritual person
Margaret	No!
Mark	No!
Claire	No! Left Catholic Church and joined Anglican community

Not one of the students considered themselves to be practising Catholics. Collectively they see a practising Catholic as one who follows the rules of the Catholic Church, especially Mass attendance and the moral norms.

Church teaching out of date with modern society.

It is generally agreed that the 21st century has seen the world move from a period of modernity to a period of post modernity. The question as to whether the students saw the Church as out of date with modern society was asked to gauge if the students saw the Church relevant in the 21st century.

Eight students (Peter, Claire, Sarah, Ruth, Mark, Mary, Margaret and Matthew) all agreed that the Church's teachings are out of date with contemporary society:

Yes! I think to the extent that abortion and all that stuff it is sort of irrelevant, yes, the church is out of date with modern society.

I don't think it is relevant.

Interview, Peter:7.

They (church teachings) could do with a bit of updating, in the contraception issue especially.

Interview, Claire:7.

Yes, just with a lot of things. I mean even with going to church every Sunday that is why people probably aren't going because people have very busy lives and the emphasis on life has basically shifted. I mean in the 50's you were going to church every Sunday. Today there is a massive drop-off on church attendance on Sundays and that is basically because people don't have that emphasis on the church any more.

Interview, Sarah:6.

Yes! And it will remain that way until it becomes more understanding, forgiving and may I say compassionate.

Interview, Ruth:8.

Yes! People today will not accept things mandated from the top down, I mean to say, you have to speak to people that's the way it is now.

Interview, Mark:8.

Yes! It won't listen to or relate to society

Interview, Mary:7.

Yes! The way it's at the moment.

Interview, Margaret:8.

Sad to say, yes! It is not meeting the needs of young people today.

Interview, Matthew:8.

Two students (Paul and John) said that some of the Church teachings, not all, are out of date with 21st century society:

There are some that are definitely. I think the Church is improving all the time and I suppose Vatican II is an excellent example in the way that the Church has been brought forward. I think there are still changes that they can still make that can improve and bring them up to date with modern society. At the moment, no, I think they are falling way behind.

Interview, Paul:6.

On some issues, yes, on most, no! I think that society would like to change them so it makes its own conscience feel better and I completely believe that we are all sitting around saying, let's change, make ourselves feel better.

Interview, John:8.

Table 6.26 is a summary of students' perceptions of the Church being out of date with contemporary society.

Table 6.26

Church out of date with contemporary society	
Student	Response
Peter	Yes!
Claire	Yes!
Sarah	Yes!
Ruth	Yes!
Mark	Yes!
Mary	Yes!
Margaret	Yes!
Matthew	Yes!
Paul	Yes! But not in all things.
John	Yes! But since Vatican II an improvement

Eight of the ten students considered that the Church was definitely out of date with contemporary society while adding a caveat to their response of 'yes'. These responses would indicate that the students are influenced by secular contemporary society.

Should the Church change because society changes?

Students were asked if they believed that the Church should change its teachings simply because society demanded change. Four students, (Peter, Paul, Sarah and Mark) all agreed that the Church needed to change with society:

Well let's be honest, if the church wants to keep its members, yes!
Interview, Peter:7.

Well, it has changed some of its teachings hasn't it? You know eating meat on Fridays so I can't see why it can't change further to meet (what) society demands.
Interview, Paul:6.

Yes, well there is one way you can think about it. I mean the church has its rules that's what makes faith and if people want to follow these rules, that's fine. But if the church wants people to follow these rules it has to change or mould itself around society, the church has to work with society, just to keep relevant and to keep in tune with what society is actually doing.
Interview, Sarah:7.

Yes! I think the church definitely has to change some of its teachings or become a little more in touch with today's society. I think they are doing that, but not change in every single norm. No! Things have to be taken into account.

Interview, Mark:8.

While five students (John, Mary, Margaret, Ruth, and Claire) agreed that the Church should not change with society, all added riders:

Well if, as I said before, people want change to suit their conscience, then no, but there are some rules the church should look at in regards new scientific discoveries.

Interview, John:8.

No, but the church needs to move, as well. If they want people to stay with it, and to relate to religion then the church is going to have to move with society otherwise people are just going to lose touch.

Interview, Mary:6.

Not automatically change it. They can do what you are doing and ask people questions about different things maybe do some research on it.

Interview, Margaret:7.

Not necessarily but I think when it comes to things that haven't always been around and haven't always been issues, the church should, maybe, have a look at what is going on. The church should look at why these things are happening, whether they are for the greater good or not. I mean contraception, people are only people and are just trying not to have children because it is not the right time and not the right world to bring children up in. Whereas, if someone goes and has a one night stand and has an abortion, it is their own fault. Like, they should take responsibility. Things do need to change with the times, but it is good to have that solid immovable background there so that people still realise that things like murder, and all that, are actually a sin. The best way of living is by the Ten Commandments because they cover it all.

Interview, Ruth:7.

Matthew was the only student who did not think the Church should change simply because society had changed:

No! Because they are following the teachings of Jesus, you just can't change them because someone stands up and says I think this needs to be changed or you should change your view because I want it to be changed.

Interview, Matthew:7.

Table 6.27 is a summary of students' perceptions of the Church needing to change simply because society changes.

Table 6.27

Church, change and society

Student	Response
Peter	Yes! To keep its members
Paul	Yes! Changed in the past - why not in the future?
Sarah	Yes! To be relevant
Mark	Yes! To stay relevant
John	Yes! New scientific discoveries
Mary	Yes! Otherwise lose touch with society
Margaret	Yes! Consult with people.
Ruth	Yes! Reflect society
Claire	Yes! Use the 10 Commandments as its example
Matthew	No! You can't change the teachings of Jesus

No student considered themselves to be a practising Catholic. The students perceived being a practising Catholic as attending Sunday Mass every week. Nine of the ten students said that the Church should change with the thinking of post-modern society. Only Matthew said that the Church should not change its teachings simply because society's standards change.

Why would you want to teach in a Catholic school.

To be a teacher in a Catholic school is to have great responsibility. The teacher helps to shape and give direction to the lives of other human beings. I can think of no profession more important than that of teaching
Pope John Paul II: An address to the Bishops of England, 1992.

Seven students (Peter, Matthew, Mary, Paul, Ruth, Sarah and Mark) spoke of community atmosphere and school environment as reasons why they would want to teach in a Catholic school:

I suppose because I went to a Catholic school and it had a good name in the community and the students there caused no problems mucking up or whatever. I suppose it would be easier teaching in a Catholic school than a State school.

Interview, Peter:8.

It is funny, prior to doing this unit, probably the only reason why I would want to teach in a Catholic school would be because of a better environment than a government school. I mean I always went to a Catholic school so I have been brought up in that kind of environment and for me that is all that I have ever known. I have never taken an interest in religion and have never been open to it and never wanted to learn much about it. But through this unit, it has been a good experience for me, so now I would want to teach in a Catholic school to be part of that religious community.

Interview, Matthew:7.

I just believe that there will be a better community spirit around the school.

Interview, Mary:7.

Because of the school environment and the school atmosphere. It would be easy to teach in such surroundings.

Interview, Paul:7.

I think the atmosphere is better. I think the children are there for the right reason and hopefully they want to get an education.

Interview, Ruth:8.

It has a great community spirit.

Interview, Sarah:7.

Security and community is why I would like to teach in a Catholic school. The actual 'feel' of the school and the people who are there are a lot more in tune with what they want to do. They just don't wait for their pay cheques and that sort of thing. I have always had a Catholic upbringing that has always been a natural path for me to go that way.

Interview, Mark:8.

Margaret spoke of her own experience:

Probably because I loved going to a Catholic school and I valued it.

Interview, Margaret:8.

Claire spoke of assisting her students:

It is a good way of schooling I think, because you can actually go in and help children with their development, morally and religiously. If you can have that effect on at least one child, then it makes a difference.

Interview, Claire:8.

John said that he did not necessarily want to teach in a Catholic school but:

I do Catholic Education (at university) just for my own personal reasons. The reasons why I would want to teach in a Catholic school, maybe because I went to one. I know what it is like, it would be a nice teaching job. I also

feel that teaching in a Catholic school would be a somewhat easier way out, sometimes than teaching in a public school even though that is really what I want to do. I don't really want to teach in a Catholic school. It doesn't bother me if I teach in a Catholic school.

Interview, John: 5.

Table 6.28 is a summary of students wanting to teach in a Catholic school:

Table 6.28

Teaching in a Catholic school

Student	Response
Peter	Yes! Because of a good name in the community and students no problem.
Matthew	Yes! Because of a good atmosphere and to be part of a religious community.
Mary	Yes! Because of community spirit.
Paul	Yes! Because of school atmosphere and good environment.
Ruth	Yes! Because of school atmosphere and children are at the school for the right reasons.
Sarah	Yes! Because of community spirit.
Mark	Yes! Because of community spirit and job security.
Margaret	Yes! She loved going to a Catholic school
Claire	Yes! To help children to grow developmentally and religiously.
John	No! Nice atmosphere but would prefer to teach in a State School.

Nine students spoke of their willingness to teach in a Catholic School with eight of them mentioning, in particular, the school's environment, atmosphere and spirit. John was the only student who was not fussed if he taught in a Catholic School. No students spoke of wanting to teach in a Catholic school because of its 'religious' atmosphere or because of religious education classes.

Teaching religious education.

All ten students said that they did not consider themselves as practicing Catholics but that they would teach in a Catholic school. The interview then aimed at discovering, if these students would be willing to teach religious education classes in a Catholic school. Five students Peter, Mary, Sarah, and Claire all mention helping their students as a reason why they would teach religious education:

Teaching (RE) gives the kids some idea about what God is about and, to some extent, just to get them (the kids) to understand there is probably a

higher being.

Interview, Peter:8.

I would enjoy teaching RE and I would love to do it sometime, absolutely, no question. I just want to teach religion, as well, because I enjoy teaching religion. I like learning about all the different religions, as well, so I do enjoy teaching it. Hopefully I will teach it as well. I would have more interaction with children or students and see what their views are and teach them what the Catholic views are.

Interview, Mary:7.

Yes! I want my children (students) to believe in God. I want them to believe, to have something to believe in.

Interview, Ruth:8.

Yes, I would teach religion. It would help my students come to know God and Catholic teachings.

Interview, Sarah:8.

Yes, I would because I believe in it. It makes a huge difference to a person's life to have that basis there to know that if there is no one else who you can talk to? You can always talk to God. I would be quite happy to teach the Church's beliefs whether I agree with them or not and that's the way it is. That's the way I would teach, my own personal attitudes would not come into it.

Interview, Claire:9.

I would love to do it some time, absolutely, no question. I am not doing this (unit) to teach RE, I am doing it for my own personal well being, but if it benefits me personally, then it can benefit other people personally, so yes, I would love to teach RE at a Catholic school.

Interview, John:9.

Matthew and Mark have no problem with teaching in a Catholic school but they were not overly keen on the possibility:

I guess, I want primary school teaching, so all teachers teach a bit of religion. Yes it would be fine, I would not have a problem with that.

Interview, Matthew:7.

At the end of the interview I suppose it sounds awful whether I say yes, I don't have a problem with it but, I don't have a problem with it.

Interview, Mark:8.

Paul speaks of making religious education interesting:

I would definitely know from my own experiences that to teach in Catholic education I would need to keep it interesting because I know what I felt like when I was taught and I think it was a terrible injustice. So I would definitely try and make it interesting and involve the students, but I don't think I would have any trouble teaching it (RE).

Interview, Paul: 7.

For Margaret teaching religious education is incorporated into the early childhood program:

I don't think I will ever be in a position to teach religious education in a Catholic school because I plan to work with pre-primary children. Although it would be incorporated into every day things that we do. I know I wouldn't actually be specifically teaching a religious class as I would have attended when I was at high school.

Interview, Margaret:8.

Table 6.29 is a summary of students' desire to teach religious education.

Table 6.29

Teaching religious education in a catholic school

Student	Response
Peter	Yes! To benefit the students
Mary	Yes! To benefit the students
Ruth	Yes! To benefit the students
Sarah	Yes! To benefit the students
Claire	Yes! It makes a difference to a person's life
John	Yes! It benefits a person's life
Matthew	Yes! No problem
Mark	Yes! No problem
Paul	Yes! But I would keep it interesting
Margaret	Yes! But RE is incorporated into the ECS daily curriculum

Nine of the ten students said they would teach in a Catholic School and spoke of their personal experiences at the Catholic school they attended as the reason. John's responded that he would prefer to teach in a State school but would definitely teach religious education if required of him while teaching in a Catholic school. All students said that they would teach religious education in a Catholic school even though none of them considered themselves to be a practising Catholic.

Summary of qualitative findings

Below is a summary of the major themes that have emerged from the analysis of the interview data.

Student background.

All students came from homes where at least one parent was Catholic with varying degrees of influence on their religious development and all students completed their secondary education at a Catholic School and were involved in religious education classes. Four students came from homes where both parents were Catholic and no student came from a single parent family.

Influences on parents, peers and teachers on students' religious development.

The theme emerging from the data on the religious influence of students was that mothers had the greatest religious impact. This finding is of significance, as it would suggest that mothers could be encouraged to become involved in their sons/daughter's religious formation. Students reported that their friends/peers had little or no influence on their religious development. It would seem paramount that this situation be addressed in the religious education curriculum, as well as in the classroom. Suggestions as to how this may be carried out will be discussed further in Chapter 7. Students also indicated that their teacher of religious education had minimal influence on their religious development. The cause of this could be threefold: (1) Lack of desire on the part of the teacher to teach religious education; (2) teacher training offered to teachers in the area of religious education and (3) the religious education curriculum, the 'what' and 'how' to teach religious education.

Students' perceptions of the Catholic school attended.

Students' perception of the Catholic school that they attended saw a positive response from the majority of the students but the underlying theme was that the school was a

good school because of its reputation in the community. Students did not connect the religious climate of the Catholic school, as suggested in official Church documents, as being the reason for the existence of a Catholic school.

The principal was generally not perceived as a positive influence on students with students seeing the principal as being unavailable and unapproachable. The principal of a Catholic school, as their counterpart in State Schools, is involved in many administrative roles and it is not surprising to hear students speak of the principal being unavailable in large secondary/primary schools. Yet, as the principal is the person who implements policies that set the tone and ethos of the school, some contact with students would appear imperative. I know of one leading Catholic school in Sydney where the principal insists of teaching a year 7 and a year 12 mathematics class, so as to keep in touch with what is, as he says, 'happening at the chalk face'. The student who spoke highly of her principal saw her as a person who mingled constantly among the students and was easy to speak with.

The majority of the students did not believe that the religious goals of the school were accepted. Students saw the high proportion of non-Catholics at the school as one reason and another reason was that the religious goals of the school were not understood.

Perception of religious education class.

The way religious education was taught and a lack of enthusiasm from the teacher was the major theme that emerged as to why 80% of the students did not have a positive perception of their religious education classes. Students saw a lack of relevance in their religious education class and having better ways to use their time as reasons why they would not attend religious education classes, if they were voluntary. Only one student spoke of religious education as being her favourite class.

Collectively religious education classes were seen as having little benefit, boring and a waste of precious study time.

The major themes emerging as to why students would send their children to a Catholic school were school atmosphere, and the positive perception of the school, by the wider community.

Faith development.

All but one student perceived themselves as being persons of faith. A belief in God, parents' influence and the enjoyment of school were the main reasons why students spoke of themselves as persons of faith. Students understood faith as a belief in God and not necessary a faith nurtured through the Catholic tradition.

All students said that they prayed, though the frequency of prayer varied. Communication with God and prayer in time of need were reasons given for prayer.

Students rarely read Scripture because they were 'turned off' it at school or found it uninteresting.

Students rarely or never avail themselves of the sacrament of reconciliation. The reasons why they rarely or never go to the sacrament, indicates a lack of understanding of the theology of the sacrament: "I can talk to God directly"; "I can't understand the theology behind the sacrament", "I do not accept the role of the priest in the sacrament" and "I don't go to Mass so why should I go to reconciliation"

Students, with some reservations, agreed that Christ founded the Catholic Church. Yet, having agreed that Christ is the founder of the Catholic Church, students saw the Church as being made up of humans who should listen more to its members before making decisions which affect their lives.

Moral teachings of the Catholic church.

Students were divided as to whether the Pope had the power to make statements on behalf of the universal Church. Those students who saw the Pope as having this authority qualified their 'yes' by stating that he should listen more to the members of the Church before making important decisions. The students who said 'no' the Pope does not have this power, spoke of not understanding how one man, a human, could have such control, power and authority over other humans.

The dominating theme surrounding pre-marital sex and sin was relationship. Students who responded 'yes, it is a sin' and students who responded 'no, it is not a sin' invariably spoke of relationships. The majority of students argued 'no relationship', 'no pre-marital sex', while only one student had little difficulty with 'one night stands'.

No student would agree that the use of a contraceptive device during sexual intercourse was sinful, arguing that the danger of contracting a disease through unprotected sex was a reason to use some form of protection. Students were also concerned with the growth in world population and saw the use of contraception as a means of lessening the problem. Students also expressed the view that sexual intercourse is not just 'to make babies' it is also to enjoy and express love.

Students agreed that marriage is a sacrament of the Catholic Church but they perceived difficulties with marriage being a life-long commitment. Students spoke of marriage as a life-long commitment and an ideal to which they would all aspire. They hoped that this would be the case in their marriage but they suggested that there would be circumstances that would invalidate this commitment. Alcoholism and spousal abuse along with the couple 'falling out of love' and being no longer capable of keeping that life-long commitment were seen by students as to why the couple should not be forced to live in a relationship which no longer has love as its cornerstone.

Students did not see missing Mass on Sundays as being sinful nor were they overly concerned with Church teaching on Sunday Mass. Students saw personal prayer as a means of communicating with God and if one speaks with God through personal prayer then going to Sunday Mass is not necessary. Students also spoke of Mass as not being relevant in their busy life-styles and found Sunday Mass boring. It was suggested that to attract young people back to Sunday Mass then the Church should make it more inviting and interesting.

Students agreed that life begins at conception and all but one student accepted that abortion was the murder of an unborn child. In the case of pregnancy because of rape/incest all students agreed that it was not murder in such circumstances. They believed that the mother's pain and anguish should be considered. Students spoke of the relationship between the child and mother in such circumstances and they feared that the child may not be accepted and loved by the mother if it were allowed to live as it had been conceived under the most horrific circumstances. Students were reminded that they stated that life begins at conception and, in this scenario, would the woman having an abortion be committing murder? They said that the circumstances allowed for such an action.

No student considered themselves as being a practising Catholic with not going to Sunday Mass the major reason for such a response. Students however saw themselves as persons of faith and having a deep spirituality but this faith and spirituality was not necessarily attached to any religious tradition. To the students, faith and spirituality was a personal matter and did not need to be expressed in a particular religious community.

Students do want to teach in a Catholic school, for different reasons than espoused by the Church hierarchy but they would teach religious education if required. They saw

no dichotomy between how they acted and what they believed and official Church teachings. A major theme that came out of these discussions was that they would teach religious education and official Church teachings even if they did not believe in the teachings themselves.

The responses of the students, the themes that emerged from these responses and the ramifications for the Catholic Church along with recommendations will be discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

There are many external factors militating against Catholic schools and their educators which, when combined, do affect students' attitude towards, and behaviour in, religious education classes. The home environment, peer groups and the media all play their part. In this study I looked at only one factor, in detail, the Catholic school, fully aware that this is only one of many factors influencing students' beliefs and attitudes to the faith that they were baptised into.

Hugh McKay (Weekend Australian 7/2/04:45) spoke of a post-Christian era that is emerging in Western Society. If this is so then the Catholic school takes on an even greater responsibility in leading their students to a particular faith tradition. The data from this study indicates that Catholic schools are not successfully carrying out the mandate for which they were established. Alarming, Angelico (1997) speaks of the disenchantment of university students, he interviewed, concerning their religious education classes at Catholic schools. Similar to this study, Angelico found students replying that classes were boring, teachers were not interested in religious education classes and they had no interest in the content of their religious education classes..

This chapter discusses the implications of the main findings of an investigation into the perceptions of 1st and 2nd year university students' of their senior religious education classes in Western Australian Catholic schools. The study sought to find answers to the following research questions:

- Are Catholic schools in Western Australia carrying out the mandate for their existence, that is, the Catholic education of their students?

- Did students perceive their religious education classes as aiding their religious development?
- Are students accepting or rejecting important doctrinal teachings of the Catholic Church? If so, why is this the case?
- How do students perceive their lived experience and the Catholic Church's teaching on morality?

The answers to these questions were determined by surveying and interviewing 1st and 2nd year university students on their perceptions of their final two years of religious education classes in Catholic schools.

Limitations to this study are such that it is not possible to generalise the results to all Year 11 and 12 students in Catholic schools or to 1st and 2nd year university students in teacher education programs.

The conceptual framework underpinning this study was based on the various official Church statements of what Catholic schools (ethos/identity) should be and what is expected from Catholic schools with regards religious education classes (faith/tradition). The findings of this study appear to indicate that there is a gap between the official Church statements on Catholic education and what is happening in Catholic schools (outcomes). The following discussion is framed in terms of the questions and interviews that guided the study.

In discussing the findings this chapter will: (a) Consider the current status of religious education; and (b) identify major issues from both a student and Church perspective. Chapter 8 will make recommendations on how religious education classes may become a more meaningful and beneficial experience for Catholic senior students.

This chapter is structured using the following headings:

1. Influence of parents, friends/peers and teachers on senior students' religious development.

2. Students' perceptions of the Catholic school that they attended.
3. Influence of the Catholic school on senior students' religious development.
4. Influence of the religious education classes on senior students' perceptions on their religious development.
5. Catholic schools and senior students' faith development.
6. Senior students and the moral teachings of the Catholic Church.

Overview of findings

The data from Chapters 5 and 6 indicate that all is not well in Catholic schools and the senior religious education classes undertaken. Eighty-seven percent of students do not go to Mass every Sunday, giving reasons, such as, Mass is “boring”, “don’t get anything out of it” and “you don’t need to go to Mass to pray”. Eighty-two percent of students rarely or never receive the sacrament of reconciliation, stating as a reason, among others, “you don’t need to go to confession for God to forgive you”.

The data clearly indicates that the majority of students who have spent their senior years at a Catholic school and have attended religious education classes (years 11 and 12) are leaving school with little or no intention of committing their life to the faith tradition in which they were baptised. No student interviewed, identified himself or herself as a practising Catholic and the reason they gave was their ‘non-attendance at Sunday Mass’. Given that the student population was prospective teachers, in Catholic schools, the data takes on even greater significance.

While there are of course, many reasons influencing decisions made by the students, including parents, peer groups, teachers, the media, the post modern society in which students live and the rejection by society, in general, of institutionalism and authoritarianism, the data is nevertheless compelling in its representation of religious education classes and indeed the schools that appear to be failing the Church.

It would appear that Bishops, school principals, the framers of the religious education curriculum and religious education teachers, in recent times, have adopted a 'head in the sand' mentality by not attempting to address these influences when looking at the effectiveness of Catholic schools and, in particular, the outcomes of senior students' religious education classes. From a range of perspectives the data is disturbing. Looking at Mass attendance, a fundamental tenet of the Church's teaching, only 12% of students (questionnaire) and one of the ten interviewed went to Mass every Sunday. The cry that Catholic schools are full and churches are empty appears to be very true. In the area of moral theology nine of the ten students interviewed did not believe the use of a contraceptive is sinful, while 28% of surveyed students agreed that the Catholic Church's teaching on marriage is relevant.

Flynn and Mok (2002) speak glowingly about the successful faith education program being used in a large number of Catholic secondary schools in New South Wales, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory. The data from this study regarding the frequency and the use of the Sacraments, prayer and the reading of Scripture, would indicate that this current religious education pedagogy (catechesis/faith development) in Western Australian Catholic schools is not as successful as Flynn and Mok would have us believe it is in some Eastern State Catholic secondary schools. One would be sceptical that such a difference does indeed exist.

Clearly, the 'faith' of most students does not blossom after completing their secondary education rather it appears to wither on the vine. With a scenario indicating that no student considers himself or herself a practising Catholic and only one student interviewed attends Mass each Sunday, the situation in Catholic schools would appear to have reached a crisis point. Catholic schools may take one of two roads. Either they forget the rich heritage of Catholic schools and the reasons for their foundation or

they stop and make a honest and critical appraisal of the effectiveness of the religious education program in their schools. It is my hope that this study may lead those in leadership positions in Catholic

Discussion of findings

The challenge is to discuss the findings from Chapters 5 and 6 and by using a selection of conceptual underpinnings, suggest various curriculum and pedagogical initiatives to redress the apparent crisis in senior religious education classes in Catholic schools in Western Australia.

Influences on students' religious development

Parents.

Students were asked how they perceived the influence of parents, peers and teachers on their religious development. The students' answers, although not surprising, would indicate that while parents have some impact, peers and teachers are virtually an untapped resource in fostering the religious development of young adults.

Sixty-six percent of students came from a home where the mother was of the Catholic tradition while 63% of students came from a home where the father was Catholic with 78% of students indicating that their parents influenced their religious development. This data indicates that parents are a resource for teachers to work with in their attempt to involve senior students more positively in their religious education classes. Volumes have been written on the important role of parents in the religious development of their sons and daughters. As early as 1986 it was argued:

Parents and children socialise one another, just as the child is affected by parental situations and interactions, parents regulate and change their lives to accommodate their children's changing needs.

Schneider Fuhrmann, 1986:67.

This two-way interaction of socialisation (as suggested by Schneider Fuhrmann) will be investigated as a possible means of assisting the religious development (evangelisation) of both parent and child in this section of the study.

If, as studies have shown, parents are the first and foremost teachers of their son's and daughter's religious development then encouraging parents to become more involved in their son's and daughter's religious education class could be an important tool in assisting religious development. As the majority of students, in this study, come from a home where one or both parents are Catholic, then the basis for developing a sound religious education program, using parents as the 'building block' or 'stepping-stone' is an area that would appear to need investigating by the framers of the religious education curriculum. While there can be some optimism about such an approach, commencing this in Years 11 or 12 would be very difficult. The 'building block' would need to be established much earlier. If such links exist in primary schools then strategies to maintain these links into the adolescent years will take prolonged research and development.

Pope John Paul II (1982) states that:

By reason of their dignity and mission, Christian parents have the specific responsibility of educating their children in prayer, introducing them to the gradual discovery of the mystery of God and to personal dialogue with him.

John Paul II, 1982:104.

The task will be challenging for religious educators as Flynn (1993a), in his survey of 2230 parents in Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory discovered. When parents were asked to rank 21 items in order of preference as to why they chose a Catholic education for their son/daughter. Ranked 1 and 2 was the absence of drugs and the good standard of teaching in the school. Ranked 12 and 15 was the religious nature of the school and students will come to know and love the

Catholic faith tradition. Flynn's data indicates that these parents did not fully understand or accept the purpose and reason for the establishment of Catholic schools.

Factors determining parents' influence on senior students' religious development.

As Pope John Paul II stated in his encyclical letter, *Familiaris Consortio* (1982):

Thus with love at its point of departure four general tasks for the family are:

1. Forming a community of persons.
2. Serving life.
3. Participating in the development of society.
4. Sharing in the life and mission of the Church.

John Paul II, 1982:35.

All four points made by John Paul II could be used in such a way as to tap into the influence that parents have on the religious development of their children. If parents are the first and foremost religious educators of their children (through action and word), the question that begs an answer is, how can Catholic schools (and the religious education curriculum of these schools) harness this apparent important resource to enhance the religious development of its students?

Parents, a key to students' religious development.

The primacy of parental influence and responsibility in their child's religious development could be more widely acknowledged, by the school, and effectively incorporated into an active program of parent involvement in religious education classes. The Sydney Catholic Education Office in the document, *Faithful to God: Faithful to People* (1984) suggests three ways in which the school can assist parents in the religious development of their son or daughter:

- To know, understand and be sympathetic towards the school's religious education program.
- To contribute and support the work of the school by *involvement at school level and by positive co-ordination of home and school activities.*

- To be confident in their work of encouraging their children's spiritual development at every stage.

Catholic Education Office, 1984:27.

The Catholic Education Office (1984) encourages more open and mutual communication between the school and the parents stating that this will prevent misunderstandings, and even contradictory messages, being received by the student from the home and the school. The difficulty arises when parents themselves are non-practicing Catholics. The solution would appear to lie with instigating programs which aim at the re-evangelisation of parents who are non-practicing Catholics. These programs could be either school or Parish-based. Encouraging parental involvement in their son or daughter's religious education class is a positive step forward, as the Catholic Education Office (1984) states:

Students assuredly benefit most from (religious education) programs which have parental involvement. Parents should have no doubt that the school door is always open to them.

Catholic Education Office, 1984:27.

Many factors influence the development of a student's self-awareness. Holohan (1999a) speaks of self-awareness growing in people from their earliest years. This self-awareness is developed through parental nurturing and allows the person to grow and to develop. The child through parental guidance develops mechanisms to make personal choices and more importantly to take control of his/her life, to become responsible and to become free. Usually, the first experience of socialisation is the family, while, as they grow older, students find other influences come into play. A major factor affecting students' self-awareness is their growing ability to be responsible.

Many of the students' ideas and attitudes, as individuals, are influenced by parents. Greater involvement of parents in the religious education of their children could

become a focus in preparing units for religion classes. Voluntary recruitment of parents to assist students who are having reading or learning difficulties has been successfully implemented in many primary schools in the Perth Archdiocese. Parents, usually the mother come to the school each week to assist the student having difficulties in reading, writing or mathematics. How could this parental involvement be implemented into senior religious education classes?

Flynn (1993a) reported that parents ranked 12th and 15th religious reasons for sending their son/daughter to a Catholic school. If Norman (1981) is correct, then the real challenge for Catholic schools is parental involvement in the religious development of their son or daughter. Religious development, in adolescents, results from the complex interaction of parental values and behaviour and this would mean assisting parents to become more aware of their obligation to nurture the religious development of their adolescent son or daughter. The difficulty of making parents aware of their obligation to nurture the religious development in their son or daughter is daunting. If the religious education of adolescents and parental involvement is essential for the religious development of their son or daughter then the framers of a religious education curriculum should investigate an educational pedagogy that more widely involves parents, building upon parental involvement currently being used in some primary schools in Perth.

A suggested educational pedagogy to involve parents.

Shelton (1983) views the beliefs and values system of parents as having a negative or positive effect on the adolescent's religious development:

If an adolescent's parents do not support Catholic education, then any stress given to religious education classes might possibly confuse the adolescent's own struggle for religious development because the adolescent must internally mediate loyalty to parents.

Shelton, 1983:299.

Ryan and Malone (1996) speak of families having a profound and enduring influence on the religious development of the child:

This sense of the family as foundation in the religious education of the child finds support in the official pronouncements of the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) in a document called the Declaration on Christian Education (*Gravissimum Educationis*) said that parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their offspring.

Ryan & Malone, 1996:2.

In an attempt to gain parental support for religious education classes, the Catholic school could implement a program for religious education which might include conducting these classes out of school time with parents and their adolescent sons and daughters participating. This program would have the added benefits of: (i) re-evangelising the parents because some parents would not have had formal instruction in religious instruction since they left school, and (ii) giving parents an opportunity to find out the views of their son/daughter on the topic under discussion.

This suggestion of having greater involvement of parents in the religious education of their son/daughter would build upon the data, from this study, which suggests that parents, particularly mothers (60% of those students interviewed) are having, or have had some influence on the religious development of their son/daughter.

Parents can become actively involved in religious education, and their enthusiasm and support of school efforts will add another dimension to their role as religious educators of their children.

Catholic Education Office, 1984:27.

Elias (1983) suggests that it is the responsibility of parents to see that the concept of religion is integrated into the adolescent's life and supported by the religious education curriculum of the school. Schneider Fuhrmann (1986) suggests such a religious education curriculum could benefit both parent and child in socialising one another (in their religious development). Holohan (1999a) speaks of evangelisation. I am suggesting the re-evangelisation of parents. The present curriculum for religious

education in Catholic schools in Western Australia has ignored the influence of parents.

Parents will need to be assisted in recognising their potential to influence the religious development of their adolescent son or daughter. Parents should be encouraged to provide an accepting and friendly home environment where the adolescent's religious development can be supported and encouraged. Holohan (1999a) suggests a school or parish-based evangelisation program be implemented for Catholic parents with the aim of developing a more 'Catholic understanding' for themselves and in doing so allow for the possibility of having a greater influence on their adolescent son's or daughter's religious development. The preparing and implementation of such a parish or school-based religious education program is a challenge for parish priests and school principals.

Mother's influence

The data indicated that mothers have a greater influence, than fathers, on their adolescent child's religious development. No one is in a better position to understand a child's religious development than his/her mother, as mothers are more often in the unique position to be aware of the significant experiences taking place in the life of their adolescent child. Mothers, discussing religious issues with their child, assist the child to think through and evaluate the personal meaning of the issue for themselves and so can play a key role in the process of assimilation of religious beliefs in the lives of their children. Holohan (1999a) argues that to assist in the child's religious development mothers could be encouraged to guide their child to new insights in religious belief.

Mothers as they are attempting to guide and to structure family life according to their own faith conviction will automatically be providing an

environment for the child to assimilate each new faith insight into his/her lifestyle.

Holohan, 1999a:32

In the secular climate, of the Western World in 2004, mothers need assistance in the form of school/parish based re-evangelisation programs. The challenge for the Catholic school and the Parish is to give every assistance to the mother as she attempts to assist her son or daughter to a deeper more personal relationship with God and the Church. As early as 1975 Reichert stated:

If mother, school and parish are all involved together in handing on the faith to the next generation, all three must cooperate, and each must fulfil its own role.

Reichert, 1975:81.

The students' positive perceptions of their mothers' role in their religious development, as indicated in this study, should be utilised by both school and parish, however, the increasing communication gap between mother and child as adolescence approaches, needs to be at the forefront of conceptualising a school-based re-evangelisation programs.

Peers.

Increasing autonomy in adolescence is necessarily accompanied by increasing interaction with peers who progressively assume increasing importance in influencing attitudes and behaviour. By the time a student has reached his/her senior years (11 and 12) at secondary school, the peer group has become a major socialising factor in his/her life. This socialising factor may be positive or negative. The data, from this study indicates that students do not see their peers as having much, if any, influence on their religious development. Conversely peers may be seen as negatively influencing the religious development of their fellow students.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of peers in the religious development of senior students. As Piaget (1970) suggests, for adolescents, identity acquisition often

finds support in a peer group. This group support often provides reinforcement for the personal religious questioning that the adolescent experiences. The peer group may reinforce personal doubts and questions.

Forty-eight percent of students surveyed disagreed/strongly disagreed that their peers/friends influenced their religious development while 15% of students were undecided. Eighty percent of the students interviewed said that they did not believe that their friends/peers had an influence on their religious development. Students made comments such as, "my friends at school were not very religious", "for most part my friends and peers were not interested in religion and so they had no influence on my religious development", "most of them didn't believe in religion". The data indicates that for a large number of students there is another important group of people who could influence students' religious development and who appear not to be doing so. The reasons for this are many and varied, for example, the majority of students interviewed strongly agreed/agreed that Church teaching was out of date with modern society. Can the church respond and perhaps engage in greater dialogue with adolescents?

The question that the framers of religious education units could do well to look at is, 'How can peers/friends be used in religious education classes in an attempt to (a) make religious education more relevant and (b) to assist students' religious development?' Schneider Fuhrmann (1986) has no doubt that a peer group sets standards for behaviour. Offer and Offer (1975) also emphasise the importance of the peer group as a link between childhood and adulthood:

The peer group can therefore be viewed as auxiliary to the family, a link between the emotional dependence of childhood and the emotional independence of adulthood.

Offer & Offer, 1975:187.

Factors determining the influence of peers on senior students' religious development.

Holohan (1999a) speaks of the wider community, including friends and teachers as important factors affecting/influencing students' religious development.

Also during childhood years a person moves beyond their family unit. There are friends and teachers, as well as, perhaps members of clubs and sporting teams. All of these people affect the person's ideas, hopes and behaviour. From time to time a person may be involved in a disagreement with family members. The person turns to peers and teachers to seek the views of others which may differ from that of the family.

Holohan, 1999a:23.

The findings from this study indicate that neither friends nor teachers are having much of an influence on students' religious development. How can this influential group (peers) be used in religious education classes in an attempt to enhance students' religious development and reverse the rather negative findings of the influence of peers on students' religious development?

Students and peer influence.

Students want to feel that they 'belong' to their generation and naturally look to others at the same stage in life to work out if they are developing 'normally'. Young people can be vulnerable to excessive influence from the peer group. Many may want to belong, and to meet peer expectations so desperately that they will go to great lengths to be accepted. There is little doubt that a peer group can set standards for behaviour.

Kohlberg (1971), Piaget (1932), Maslow (1971) and Flynn (1993a) all speak of 'the power of the peer group'. Schneider Furmann (1986) speaks of peer groups in late adolescence, ages 17 and over (senior students):

Adolescents begin to move out from the family into a wider social context of adulthood through friends, first individually, then in increasingly larger peer groups. Friendships in adolescence are based on social similarities and friends are vitally important to teenagers.

Schneider Furmann, 1986:101.

If Schneider Furmann is correct then another important consideration for the framers of the religious education curriculum, besides parents, for enhancing the religious development of senior students, could be to focus on the individual differences and the unique personalities of students and their relationship with their peers/friends. This is obviously not the panacea in assisting our senior students' religious development but as the literature would suggest, it may, however, contribute.

We know little about how 'pro-religious' peer groups are perceived in Catholic schools. Are 'pro-religious' peer groups seen as 'cool' or 'geeks'? Could such peer groups be supported to impact on others in their school cohort?

Using peer influence in group work.

Group work, in religious education classes, has been used for many years however this study would indicate that a lot of the group work used is of little value. How can group work be 'harnessed' to promote the Catholic tradition and the religious development of students?

Brandt (1989), Goodlad and Oakes (1988) and Taylor (1989) advocate as a teaching strategy for religious education classes, the use of group work. Killen (1998) suggests 12 advantages in using group work as a teaching strategy. Among the 12 teaching strategies are:

- Group work allows students to experience the role of being a leader and as a leader to experience a range of social contacts.
- Group work can increase the possibility that students will look at problems from several perspectives.
- Group work gives all students an opportunity to contribute ideas and to try to master the content in a non-threatening way.

Killen, 1998:64.

In this post modern era, faith is an area in the students' life that constantly needs resolution. One way of bringing some resolution to faith and religious development, as suggested by the theorists, is by group work.

The guided discovery strategy for group work.

Guided discovery group work has been an educational methodology for many years. The present religious education curriculum for Catholic schools in Western Australia does not use the guided discovery methodology in group work. Future framers of a religious education curriculum could employ such a teaching method when writing units for Catholic schools in Western Australia. Barry and King (1998) speak of the guided discovery method as playing an important part in the teaching of mathematics, science and society and environment. There appears to be no reason why the framers of a religious education curriculum could not adopt the same educational methodology in involving peers in their religious education classes.

While peer groups are an 'untapped resource' in a student's religious development they can also have a negative influence on senior students' religious development. It is at this stage of the adolescent's development that intimacy plays an important part in his/her life. Erikson (1959) would suggest that intimacy is the capacity of adolescents to attach themselves to their peers and certain causes. Guided discovery could be a means of correcting the negative or neutral influence that peers have on each other's religious development. Barry and King (1998) speak of a guided discovery strategy when the teacher uses group work as an educational pedagogy:

A guided discovery strategy is one in which the teacher sets a problem and helps the students investigate it. Students are encouraged to discover understandings and draw conclusions that are shared in whole class discussions.

Barry & King, 1998:211.

Barry and King (1998) go on to tell us that a guided discovery strategy, using group work, is more suitable for students who are capable of abstract level thinking, that is, senior students. There would appear to be no reason why this approach could not be used in senior religious education classes especially in the area of moral theology.

In attempting to enhance the religious development of senior students, via peer relationships, it would appear to be important for the teacher of religious education to consider group work.

Case studies and group work.

In an attempt for peers to have an influence on students' religious behaviour Liddy and Welbourne (2001) suggest the use of group work and case studies. The United States Catholic Youth Conference (1986) suggests that young people have many gifts to share with each other and that it is critical for religious education teachers to create opportunities through which young people can share these gifts. The Youth Conference continues to affirm the use of group work and case studies in religious education, by stating that well-balanced group work involves action, reflection and education to enable young people to develop into responsible Christians.

Although suggested as a means of teaching religious education to senior students in the United States of America, the curriculum framers, in Western Australia have yet to incorporate such a teaching methodology into the religious education curriculum of this State. This study would suggest that future framers take into consideration group work when writing the curriculum for religious education

In teaching a unit from the curriculum and attempting to make use of peer groups the teachers should be aware that the peer group has beliefs, values and ideas that are grounded in both significant others and peer group consensus. These values and ideas should be discussed and challenged, if necessary.

Peer groups should exercise a positive and critical influence on their members in senior secondary school, although the findings indicates that this is not the case with respect to accepting Catholic teachings and it may, in fact work against Catholic teachings. The teacher, being aware of the potential of the peer group on the religious

development of each other could utilise strategies using guided discovery, in teaching a unit in a religious education class. The aim of the guided discovery method would be to develop change and/or re-enforce students' perceptions of a previously held belief in faith and morals.

Piaget (1932) speaks of four aspects of adolescent development (see Chapter 2) that allows for a changing of attitudes in the adolescent (aided by his/her peer group).

1. Behavioural, conformity to rules.
2. Verbalised notions about rules.
3. More general moral attitudes and
4. The conceptions of justice.

By applying these attitudes to a religious education unit it could be possible to 'tap' into peer group support, especially aspects 3 and 4. Groome (1980) sees the religious education classroom as a place for shared dialogue and a critical reflection on the Christian story with the view of living the Christian life (see Chapter 2).

Liddy and Welbourne (2001:102) suggest a way that a guided discovery may be used:

1. Discern the significant issues.
2. Create a verbal picture.
3. Describe what the situation may be like.
4. Compare the situation with a current event.
5. Agree or disagree with key points of the situation.
6. Explain how this situation may have been handled differently.
7. Justify the reason for handling the situation described.
8. Draw a similar example from your personal experience.

These eight points have been used by Saker (2003) in religious education classes at Edith Cowan University and the feedback from the students has been positive. Saker (2003) suggests that teachers prepare their classes using the following structure. Points 1 through 4 could be seen as teacher input (content), that is, explaining official Church teaching. Points 5 through 8 would be the guided discussion on the topic using points 1 through 4 as the catalyst.

It is important to note that the teacher is the guiding hand in the unit. From his/her input and his/her comments during group feedback the teacher can put forward Church teaching without the students thinking that religion is being 'forced down their throats' and perhaps changing students' perceptions of their religious education classes through the guided (group) discovery pedagogy.

Using this pedagogy (which need not appear intrusive to the students) the teacher, is in a much better position to use the peer group as a 'tool' in making religious education classes a relevant and valuable instrument. This could assist students in their understanding of the official dogma and doctrine of the Catholic Church; achieve a more favourable perception of the religious tradition that they were baptised into and a growth in their religious development. Religious education teachers should make more use of the peer group in helping to make senior religious education classes more relevant to their students.

Group work and the media.

Although this study does not look at the media's influence on students' perceptions of their religious education classes in any depth, it could be argued that the media does play an influential role in a student's life.

When supervising a student teacher completing their Assistant Teacher Practice in June 2004, I was intrigued when the teacher showed a video on the history of Ned Kelly. Group discussion followed the video with the teacher asking students to discuss and summarise Ned Kelly as, 'the hero' and Ned Kelly as 'the villain'. In their reporting back, under the heading 'the hero' one student said, "because he shot cops". The teacher said, "yes, that is right" and moved on to the next discussion point. Here was an excellent opportunity for the teacher to speak of the value of all human life. This class was an example of the misuse of the media. Saker (2004d) introduced

a unit (Theology and Film in the Classroom) at Master's level, in an attempt to train teachers in the effective use of the media in the classroom. One student, in the interview, spoke of her religious education classes consisting of watching 'religious videos'. She was not impressed! The question to be asked is: Was the teacher using the media to effectively teach a unit or to fill in a fifty minute religious education class?

Rossiter (1996) would have few doubts as to the influence of media on students' perceptions of life. In a paper, The formative influence of film and television on young people's spirituality: Implications for religious education, Rossiter (1996) clarifies the role that the media should play in a religious education classroom:

The aim is to help them (students) become people who give some thought to the way that beliefs, values, ideologies, religion, education, images, advertising, parents, peer groups, heroes/heroines, films, TV sitcoms, etc, enter into their (the students) life structure

Rossiter, 1996:7.

Usually from their earliest years, children are attracted by the media. From the years leading into their teens students have been influenced by ideas, attitudes and trends in the media. The influence of television stars, sporting heroes and now reality television celebrities, in presenting ideas to young people is widely recognised. Media and advertising can affect people's ideas in other ways. They exercise a powerful, but subtle influence over social trends and ideas. The media's power can be manipulative and has become more subtle and pervasive in recent years. The media can also encourage society to accept particular attitudes and ideas in powerful ways which can have an impact on the students' perceptions of 'right' and 'wrong'. It can also influence tolerance towards others in ways that discourage racism or it can promote compassion for the materially poor in society. It can also educate people about the world and its natural wonders so students develop a closer affinity with the natural environment.

When using the media in religious education classes, teachers need to be careful about the extent to which they allow the media to affect the ideas of their students. This requires alertness from the teacher because media power tends to be subtle.

In opening up endless opportunities for students to benefit from, and appreciate, their religious education classes, film and television should play a key role in any religious education curriculum. Rossiter (1996) argues that it is not difficult to enhance in young people their almost natural disposition to look more carefully into the purposes and processes of film and television making. Rossiter concludes by stating:

Helping students understand something of the shaping personal influence of film and television can make up an important part of their school education. While often critical, many young people are relatively naïve as regards both the overt and subtle capacities of cultural elements like film and television to affect their thinking, imagination and feelings, and their liking for fashion and particular leisure pursuits, as well as the potential targets of their spending.

Rossiter, 1996:15.

These points, made by Rossiter, should be considered by the framers of a religious education curriculum: (i) The media can be a positive influence for students but (ii) students should be able to use the media and (iii) not have the media use them.

Using the media to support Catholic teachings in religious education classes could go some way in assisting students to perceive their classes in a more positive light.

Maslow and self-actualisation.

Maslow (1971) through his research into self-actualisation argues that senior students have the capacity to develop and reach their potential if they are provided the opportunity to surround themselves in a climate of empathy and positive regard. For senior students to be able to obtain that empathy and positive regard they have to be made to feel that they belong to a group and that group, in this instance, is their school peer group. Young people have the innate ability to strive and deepen their

spirituality towards all persons and guided group work could provide a means of assisting young people to reach their fullest potential.

Parents and peers both influence adolescent attitudes and behaviours often in a complementary fashion. Harnessing the influence of both parents and peers may lead to a more effective religious education class and a greater impact on students' religious development.

Another approach would be to encourage peers to assist in each other's religious development by encouraging individual peer members to: Search for meaning in their lives; be reasonable and fair with others and to be friendly and honest. Peers could be assisted by parents and teachers to: Listen and understand, be up-front and honest and be open to all possibilities. By using this process individual peers can be socialised into a religious way of thinking and, in being socialised, can, and will begin to influence the religious development of others within the group. By integrating Groome's praxis model for religious education with Maslow's understanding of self actualisation, the framers of a religious education curriculum have the opportunity to create an environment that will allow senior students to be more open to, and receptive of, their religious education classes.

Teachers.

Teachers had little or no influence on the students' religious development. This is rather worrying as the teacher has the potential to become a significant other in the religious life of students, especially in a Catholic school.

Cardinal George Pell, quoted in Lindsay (2003:14), in meeting with school principals said this of teachers in Catholic schools:

You can be absolutely certain that you and your teachers are now the face of the Church to many youngsters who don't regularly go to Mass – who are not fanatically devoted to the 52 Sundays-of-the year religious observance.

Their memory of Church in adult life will come mainly from their experiences of teachers who they meet in a Catholic school.

Pope John Paul II (1986) in his address on Catholic education given in Melbourne (quoted in Flynn and Mok, 2002:98) says this of a teacher:

The life of a teacher, as I know from personal experience, is very challenging and demanding but it is also satisfying. It is more than a job, for it is rooted in our deepest convictions and values. To be intimately concerned in the development of a young person, of hundreds of young people, is a highly responsible task. As teachers, you kindle in your students a thirst for truth and wisdom. You spark off in them a desire for beauty. You introduce them to their cultural heritage. You help them discover the treasures of other cultures and people. What an awesome responsibility and privilege is yours in the teaching profession!

Forty-eight percent of the students surveyed disagreed/strongly disagreed and 12% were uncertain that their teachers influenced their religious development. Seventy-percent of the students interviewed disagreed that their teachers influenced their religious development. Students spoke of their teacher being “unapproachable”; “aloof”; “not a good example of religious living”; “counter productive to religion” and one student said that his teacher “turned him off religion”. These comments indicate that some teachers of religious education in a Catholic school are not ‘fitting’ the teacher description, as suggested by Pell (cited in Lindsay, 2003) and Pope John Paul II (cited in Flynn and Mok, (2002).

For a teacher to be effective in assisting the religious development of his/her students then the old adage 'do as I do, not as I say' is an essential pre-requisite. Engebretson, Fleming and Rymarz (2002:93) state:

Most of all, students are able to recognise authentic human qualities in their teachers. They are teachers of faith, however, like Christ, they must also be teachers of what it means to be human. A teacher who has a clear vision of the Christian milieu and lives in accord with it will be able to help young people develop a similar vision, and will give them the inspiration they need to put it into practice.

Students have this wonderful ability to discern the sincerity of the teacher. If the teacher is perceived by the student to have little or no interest in religious education or is known to 'say one thing in class and do the opposite in their daily life' then the teacher becomes ineffective, and possibly a deterrent to the student in his/her religious education classes. Under these circumstances students may not be ready to listen to or accept anything said by the teacher in religious education class and this in turn, could hinder the student's religious development. The teacher(s) engenders this authenticity by responding with honesty and attentiveness to students' questions and interests. Shelton (1983:18) speaks of the authentic teacher:

Students seek teachers who can periodically speak of their own personal quest for Jesus - the struggles, hopes and doubts that teachers experience in their own lives.

The Congregation for Catholic Education's document, *Lay Catholics in schools: Witnesses to faith* (1982) clearly indicates that the teacher in a Catholic school needs to be a positive role model and an instrument in assisting in the religious development of the student:

Conduct is always much more important than speech; this fact becomes especially important in the formation of students. The more completely an educator can give concrete witness to the model of the ideal person that is being presented to the students, the more this ideal will be believed and imitated. For it will be seen as something reasonable and worthy of being lived, something concrete and realizable. It is in this context that the faith witness of the lay teacher becomes especially important.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982:19.

Flynn and Mok (2002) support the Congregation when they state that teachers in Catholic schools become of increasing importance when teaching basic Christian values.

Students today will inevitably ask teachers if they believe what they are teaching and live accordingly. Students need teachers who are available and

approachable, people with credibility who can help them to distinguish what is worth believing and living.

Flynn & Mok, 2002: 256/7.

Engebretson, Fleming and Rymarz (2002) support the findings of Flynn and Mok (2002) when they speak of the qualities of a religion teacher as being the key, the vital component, if the educational goals of the school are to be achieved:

But the effectiveness of religious instruction is closely tied to the personal witness given by the teacher. This witness is what brings the content of the lessons to life. Teachers of religious education, therefore, must be men and women endowed with many gifts, both natural and supernatural. Teachers who are also capable of giving witness to these gifts must have a thorough culture, professional, and pedagogical training, and they must be capable of genuine dialogue.

Engebretson, et al., 2002:93.

It is the emotional and spiritual growth of students that religious education teachers could be developing in their students so as to assist their students' religious development and the perceptions of their religious education classes. Firstly, religious education teachers should possess these religious traits themselves.

The majority of those students studying to be teachers are clearly not accepting the identity/ethos of the Catholic school. In response The Catholic Education Office of Western Australia has mandated compulsory accreditation for all teachers in Catholic schools to be effective from January 2005.

In an attempt to address the apparent problem the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia (2004) has issued a document entitled, Accreditation framework: For Catholic Schools in Western Australia. The document makes it quite clear that Accreditation to teach Religious Education is a mandatory professional requirement for teachers of Religious Education. The 2004 document sets out certain requirements for teachers wishing to teach Religious Education in Catholic schools:

Teachers of Religious Education as defined in the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia's Policy Statement are required to Complete:

1. Orientation – one day.
2. Faith Story and Witness – one day, that is, six hours.
3. Three approved tertiary units.
4. Eighteen hours of in-service on the pedagogy and methodology of Religious Education as developed by the Catholic Education Office within the first three years of employment.

Catholic Education Office, 2004:4.

This initiative by the Catholic Education Office may go part of the way in preparing student teachers to enter the religious education classroom as they will have a knowledge base from which to teach religious education. Students in this study, for example, have completed one or two of the approved tertiary units.

The difficulties facing religious education are made real when we look at the student teacher's actual beliefs and values. The majority of student teachers have lost or never had a living sense of the faith, they no longer consider themselves members of the Church and they live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel. The difficulty begs the question: Can teachers go into a religious education classroom with knowledge of Catholic doctrine/dogma but not believe it themselves? Durka (2002) states that a teacher cannot teach religious education, he or she must live it:

Teachers of religious education must routinely put their integrity and sense of judgement on public display. There is no escape from this. It makes claims on us. This includes being a special kind of person.

Durka, 2002: 58/59.

Our student teachers, who want to teach in a Catholic school and to teach religious education, it would appear, are not integrating, into their daily living, the dogma/doctrine that they would be expected to teach in the religious education classroom. The majority of students, in this study, do not attend Mass regularly; do not attend the sacrament of reconciliation; do not pray daily or read Scripture and are

not accepting the moral teachings of the Catholic church. Although this is an enormous issue facing all involved in the teaching of religious education there are, perhaps some possible solutions.

The Congregation for the Clergy (1998) speaks of the need for a new evangelisation program which, in part, may address the issue. This new evangelisation would appear applicable to students at university who are training to be teachers in a Catholic school and, more importantly, to teach religious education. New evangelisation is based on the Catholic belief that God's presence and influence can be discovered in every human culture. Implementing this "new evangelisation" is one of the greatest challenges facing those training teachers to teach in Catholic schools. The Congregation for the Clergy (1998) suggests two ways in which the new evangelisation program may assist student teachers. Firstly, it will assist them to discern the richness of faith and secondly, to assist them to transform that faith into modes of thought and life-styles compatible to Catholic living. The Congregation then warns that new evangelisation is a challenge and a slow journey and that there can be no short-cut in passing on the Gospel message for today's young people (student teachers). Lecturers involved in training student teachers need to: "Translate the Gospel, the message of Jesus, into young people's terms with patience, wisdom and without betrayal" (Congregation for the Clergy, 1998:185).

Faith is a gift from God which is either rejected or accepted. This study can only suggest ways in which student teachers may be led to faith though new evangelisation to make them more effective in the religious education classroom and assist their students' religious development. New evangelisation is a never-ending task for those preparing teachers to teach religious education. The Congregation for the Clergy

(1998) suggest five ways that lecturers could assist in the religious development of student teachers:

1. By enhancing their evangelisation potential.
2. By encouraging student teachers to be active in Church activities.
3. By providing adequate faith education in lectures.
4. By providing for the faith needs of student-teachers at different stages of faith development (see Fowler 1981).
5. By developing required evangelisation resources and processes.
6. By providing the best possible faith context for effective education in tertiary institutions.

Congregation for the Clergy, 1998: 258.

There is no easy solution to the problem of having a person of faith in the religious education classroom. Faith cannot be 'forced down the throat' of the student teacher, but let those preparing student-teachers for Catholic schools begin to 'till the soil' with the hope that the 'seed' planted in us at our baptism may grow.

Senior students' perceptions of the Catholic school they attended

In many of her documents the Catholic Church has clearly enunciated the ethos behind founding a Catholic School. The first and foremost reason for the Catholic school system is the Catholic Education of its students.

Students' perceptions of the Catholic school they attended and the stated aims of Catholic schools indicates that there is a dichotomy between the two. Students have a different perception of the Catholic school than do the Church hierarchy. Students saw, "good name in the community", "better teachers", "better chance of employment" and "better discipline" as some of the reasons why they had a positive perception of the Catholic school that they attended.

Yet students' perceptions of the Catholic school that they attended provided some very encouraging signs for those who control Catholic schools as the majority of students strongly agreed/agreed that the school had a Christian atmosphere and that they were a better person for attending a Catholic school. The majority of students

also strongly agreed/agreed that they were happy and felt important at the school. They also indicated that they were aware of the conduct expected from them at the school and that school discipline was just.

The majority of students also strongly agreed/agreed that they would attend a Catholic school again and that they would send their children to a Catholic school. In the above responses the Catholic ethos/identity is not necessarily paramount. Most perceptions of the students, concerning the Catholic school that they attended are positive, yet these perceptions could be generic to most secondary schools in Western Australia.

While a few of the students strongly agreed/agreed that the religious goals of the school were being met they still thought a lot of the school. A small number of students also saw the principal as an approachable, caring and understanding person while they strongly agreed/agreed that there was too much emphasis placed on rules and regulations at the school. Similarly, six students interviewed agreed that they were happy at the school they attended but they did not speak well of the principal or that the religious goals of the school were being met. When the students were asked why they were happy at the school they spoke mainly of the school having a good name in the community. Not one of the students interviewed spoke of the religious goals of the school being met or the Catholicity of the school. Have Catholic schools lost their identity/ethos?

The underlying problem facing Catholic schools would appear to be the 'Catholic identity of the school.' The findings clearly indicate that students have a different concept of Catholic school identity than does the Catholic Education Office or the Bishops of Western Australia. One would simply have to look at the Mandate Letter of Western Australian Bishops (2001) and Mission statement of the Catholic Education Office (2002) to note the dichotomy.

Keane and Riley (1997:2) have suggested four strategies that they believe will strengthen the identity/ethos of Catholic schools: (i) Find ways to popularise the distinctive purposes of the Catholic school; (ii) ensure Catholic schools are congruent and consonant with their purposes; (iii) give high priority to the personal and spiritual development of school staffs; and (iv) participate in educational debate with an advocacy for ethical, moral and transcendent values. Keane and Riley (1997:19) citing Barker state:

The contemporary Catholic secondary school is under an increasing pressure from within the Church to justify its existence. The challenge before us is to articulate clearly what it means to be Catholic in Australia today. Much of our present crisis is due to the failure to develop a new image of what it means to be a Catholic.

Flynn (1993) highlights a teacher in a Catholic school who states that it is important for Catholic schools to have a Catholic identity/ethos and that Catholic schools must not lose sight of their specific Catholic character. These findings would suggest that Catholic schools have lost their specific character and the challenge for all connected with Catholic education is to focus on the unique identity-ethos of the Catholic school as envisioned by the Church hierarchy. Can the Catholic identity/ethos survive, or be revived, in the new millennium, in Catholic secondary schools?

Students' perceptions of the Catholic school attended

It appears that the purpose for Catholic schools needs to be re-visited. Quillinan (2002b) speaks of the need for a courageous renewal of Catholic schools in the third millennium:

In Australia the challenges raised for the Catholic school can be summarised in three broad areas:

What does it mean to call a school 'Catholic' today - is there a Catholic identity/ethos?

Who should we welcome into our schools today and what are the implications for religious education and evangelisation?

What is the relationship between the mission of the local church and the mission of the school?

Quillinan, 2002:49.

Quillinan raises three challenges for a Catholic school in the third millennium: Identity/ethos; clientele; parish and school relationship. The findings make it clear that the major challenge for Catholic schools is to re-visit the Catholic identity/ethos of the school. If the identity of the Catholic school (ethos) is clear it could be argued that the other two challenges (clientele and parish-school relationships) would be satisfactorily addressed.

The responses, concerning students' perceptions of the Catholic school that they attended could probably be applied to most Independent or Government run schools. In other words, students could/did not distinguish a Catholic school identity from the identity of independent or State schools.

Identity.

The majority of students agreed that the school had a Christian atmosphere while a small number of students thought a lot of the school they attended and that the religious goals of the school were being met. When interviewing the students about their perceptions of the Catholic school they spoke of the school having a "good reputation", "a loving atmosphere" and a being "great community". There is no doubt that these are worthy attributes and contribute greatly to a school's identity/ethos but they could easily be, and are in some cases, worthy attributes of any 'good' school. For Catholic schools to have a truly Catholic identity/ethos they must firstly re-define their identity/ethos. Treston in Keane and Riley (1997:13) talks of the identity/ethos of a Catholic school being aligned with the education mission of the Church:

An exploration of some key foundational beliefs provides a framework for understanding the identity of the Catholic school. The Catholic beliefs in sacramentality, incarnation and Christology, creation, Catholic heritage and

justice all have significant influence on the special character of a Catholic school.

A re-defining of Catholic school identity was also enunciated by the Congregation for Catholic Education in the document, *The Catholic school on the threshold of the third millennium* (1998). The document calls for a courageous renewal of Catholic identity on the part of the Catholic school:

The precious heritage of the experience gained over the centuries reveals its (the Catholic school) vitality precisely in the capacity for prudent innovation. The Catholic school must be able to speak for itself effectively and convincingly.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998:6.

Engelbreton and Fleming (2002) in *Thriving as an R.E. Teacher* use the first chapter to give a history of religious education in Australia. This is the heritage (identity) that the Congregation for Catholic Education calls for in the *Catholic school on the threshold of the third millennium* (1988). Rossiter in (Ryan, 2001) speaks of the Catholic identity of the school. He then goes on to speak of the importance of identity:

The reason identity is fundamentally important for individuals and education is because its meaning emerges from efforts to answer the fundamental questions: Who am I (individually) and Who are we (Collectively).

Rossiter in Ryan, 2001:15.

In answering the question 'who are we' (collective Catholic identity), the Catholic school can play a vital role in assisting the students to ask, and answer, the question, 'who am I' (individual Catholic identity) as a baptised Catholic attending a Catholic school. The data suggests that Catholic students have lost that rich Catholic identity. They go to Mass infrequently and rarely or never go to the sacrament of reconciliation and even of more concern is that they do not consider themselves as practising Catholics.

While some students thought a lot of the Catholic school that they attended they could not relate with the religious goals (identity) of the Catholic school. Groome (1980) suggests five ways in which a school may come together for a critical reflection of its Christian (Catholic) story (identity). The school should (i) identify the present situation; (ii) be aware of the participants' (students') story and vision; (iii) be aware of the community's (Catholic Church) story and vision; (iv) integrate a dialectic hermeneutic between the story (Catholic Church) and the participants' story (students); and (v) integrate the dialectical hermeneutic between the vision (identity of the Catholic school/church) and the participants' vision.

As Maslow (1954) suggests one of the very first needs of all people is to belong to a group, to have an identity. For baptised Catholic students attending a Catholic school, this group should be the Catholic school community. It is this Catholic community, where students spend their adolescent years, that the nurturing of a Catholic identity should take place.

The majority of students did not identify with the Catholic school they attended. The 'who are we' (collective Catholic identity) component of the identification of a Catholic school appears to be the 'missing link'. For Catholic schools to once again take the identity agenda 'by the throat' and be worthy of the name Catholic they could be looking at defining, clearly, Catholic identity (the 'who are we') as distinct from other Christian and non-Christian religions.

A suggested model for a Catholic school.

In the literature review I looked at the mission/vision statement of a Catholic primary and secondary school. The statements clearly enunciated a Catholic identity (the who are we) but from the students' responses it would appear that these mission/vision statements are gathering dust in some principal's 'bottom drawer'. The first attempt at

re-invigorating the identity of a Catholic school could be to revisit the mission/vision statements and attempt to put them into practice.

Treston (1997) indicates five possible models of a Catholic school operating in Australia and calls one of these models the 'Secular Catholic school'. It is this model, it appears, that most of the students, in this study, would have encountered:

Here the external trappings and rhetoric of the Catholic school are stated but the culture is thoroughly secular and shaped by consumer values, which are antagonistic to the values of the kingdom of God. The veneer of Catholic respectability cloaks the school as a business enterprise.

Treston, 1997:17.

The difficulty for Catholic schools is how to connect its rich Catholic heritage to the identity of the school with the aim of 'who are we' becoming relevant to its students (who am I). McCarroll (1986) suggests three purposes of a Catholic school, these three purposes could form the basis for developing a Catholic identity in Catholic schools.

1. To hand on the message of our heritage.
2. To form a gospel community where children will see the 'good news' being carried out on a daily basis in the school.
3. To become the builders of a just and wholesome world.

McCarroll, 1986:15.

McLaughlin (2000) states what he sees as the primary purpose of a Catholic school :

The Catholic school should aim to generate a challenging, authentic educational environment, faithful to the Catholic tradition of offering a synthesis of faith and culture, which, while promoting integral human growth, provides a catalyst for students to take the opportunity to initiate or continue a personal relationship with Christ, that witnesses its practical expression in an active, inclusive care for others, while confronting, contemporary injustices in economic and social structures, all of which give meaning to, and enriches human existence, and contributes to a fuller human life.

McLaughlin, 2000:111.

To synthesise the identity of a Catholic school (with a suggested model of a Catholic school) it is possible to integrate McCarroll's three purposes with McLaughlin's

primary purpose. This could be done using Groome's overview of his praxis model (1992).

It may well be that in the third millennium the identity of the Catholic school will have as its dominant purpose the provision of an authentic educational environment where the value of the human person is affirmed; where knowledge is integrated for the sake of ultimate truths and where the relationship of the human person with God is modelled, as well as taught. It is this model that could go some way in changing students' perceptions of the Catholic school that they attended, whilst developing a definite 'Catholic identity' and remaining faithful to the mandate from the Bishops of Western Australia. Implementing such a model will be a challenge for the framers of a senior religious education curriculum but a challenge, as indicated by the data that needs consideration if senior students' perceptions of the Catholic school they attend are to be aligned with the mandate letter from the Bishop's of Western Australia.

Students' perceptions of their religious education classes

Barry and King (1998:473) tell us that student perceptions cannot be discounted in the teaching-learning environment of a classroom:

They (perceptions) do mediate between teaching and teachers and student achievement. The current research effort into student mediations is considerable and this indicates the significance being attached to mediation in the drive to understand more about effective teaching.

The results of the questionnaire indicated a 'mixed message' concerning senior students' religious education classes. Fifty-two percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that their religious education classes were well taught while 58% of students disagreed/strongly disagreed that their religious education classes were a waste of time. Forty-two percent of students found their religious education classes interesting and 51% of students strongly agreed/agreed that senior students found

their religious education classes of interest. Forty-two percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that the school had a good religious education program and 48% of students said that they enjoyed their religious education classes, while 34% of students would have attended religious education classes if they had been voluntary.

The 'message' from students interviewed indicated a less than positive perception of their religious education classes. Seventy percent did not have as positive a perception of their religious education classes as those surveyed. The majority of interviewees stating "the way it was taught" as the reason for their negative perceptions of the class. Thirty percent of the students interviewed said that their teacher was the reason why they perceived their religious education classes positively. The data indicate that around half the students saw their religious education classes in a positive light while the interview data was less positive. These mixed findings coupled with comments such as, "I found religious education classes uninteresting", "The classes were considered pretty boring", "religious education classes were not interesting", should alert religious education coordinators and religious education teachers that all is not well in these classes. The same could be said for some secular subjects, studied at senior school level, also but as the primary purpose of a Catholic school is the Catholic education of its students, religious education classes are the main concern of this study.

Core beliefs.

Dwyer (2000) states that that by the end of the twentieth century influential Church documents such as, *The religious dimension of education in a Catholic school* (1988) and the General Directory for Catechesis (1997) were:

Insisting that the academic demands and challenges offered by religious education be of the same order as those offered in other curriculum areas.

Dwyer, 2000:50.

The pedagogy of religious education classes could be revisited with the aim of being of greater assistance to the students' religious development. With the catechetical model of religious education it would appear that students are rejecting official Catholic teachings possibly because they are not aware of the 'why' of the teaching. The question arises, how can students reject Church teachings (as they obviously do) unless they are aware of why the Catholic Church teaches such moral imperatives? That is, why is a particular teaching held as a tenet of the Catholic faith. Catechesis is for the Sunday Mass homily (evangelisation) as religious education is for the classroom. And, yet it could be possible to develop a religious education curriculum that incorporates a catechetical approach.

Dwyer (2000) suggests three educational pedagogies that could be used in teaching religious education: (i) The like every other subject approach; (ii) the Catholic-educational philosophy-in-action approach; and (iii) the inculturation approach. Each of the approaches suggested by Dwyer has strengths and weaknesses but a common thread running through each approach is the need for religious education classes to contain core content (religious education as opposed to catechesis):

Any curriculum model that helps shape learning and teaching in a Catholic school, especially in its programs of religious education, should contain core beliefs.

Dwyer, 2000:53.

Introducing 'core beliefs' into a religious education program does not necessarily mean that students' religious development will change one way or the other but as Dwyer (2000) states it has been a tried and proven method for many generations of Catholic students. By centring religious education classes on core content I am not suggesting a return to 1950s and early 1960s when indoctrination was the educational methodology of religious education classes. Most of the secular subjects taught in secondary schools in 2004 have core content (why gravity exists on earth, why the

circular flow of income is so important to economists) so why not core religious beliefs in religious education? The present religious education curriculum for Western Australian Catholic schools does contain, in some of its units, core content, the difficulty with the curriculum is that the core content is 'buried' in a 'sea of catechesis.' Catechesis is the focal point of the present curriculum and this study would question its effectiveness.

Church education or religious education?

Durka (2002) raises an interesting point when she suggests that the Church has not used the term religious education correctly. She argues that a distinction could be made between church education (core Catholic teaching) and religious education (catechesis).

Church education has as its chief purpose to educate a person for membership in a particular Church. Religious education attempts to educate a person to a religious view of life. Church education usually presents a view of only one religion while religious education presents various views and also may present the non-religious view of life.

Durka, 2004:13.

Durka's distinction between church education and religious education is quite clear. The framers of a religious (church) education curriculum should be looking at writing units where core Catholic dogma is taught. Core teaching (input) followed by guided discussion would allow students to be guided to a clearer understanding of why a particular tenet of Catholic teaching is taught. The distinction that Durka makes is a valid one and the framers of a religious education curriculum should be aware of the distinction when writing the various units to be taught in religious education classes in Catholic schools in Western Australia.

By adopting a core value methodology for teaching religious education, teachers would also benefit as they would be in a much better position to know what was to be taught. Again, this would not ensure that students or teachers would accept particular

Church teachings but they would be in a much better position to understand why they are rejecting or accepting a particular doctrine/dogma.

Factors determining senior students' perceptions of their religious education classes.

The Teaching of religious education

The findings suggest that the religious education teacher has an ambivalent role in determining students' perceptions of their religious education classes. Around 50% of students surveyed and 70% of students interviewed did not speak highly of their religious education teacher: "teacher unapproachable and aloof", "turned him off religion", "counter productive to religion" and "not a good example of religious living". One could arguably suggest that one of the reasons why some students did not find their religious education classes a benefit to their religious development would be the way religious education was taught.

The Congregation for Catholic Education (1998), in its document *The Catholic school on the threshold of the third millennium*, speaks of the importance of the teacher/student relationship in creating a unique Christian school climate:

The personal relations between the teacher and the students, therefore, assume enormous importance and are not limited simply to giving and taking.

Moreover, we must remember that teachers and educators fulfil a specific Christian vocation.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998:32.

Barry and King (1998) tell us that the role of the teacher is to: "Nurture students and to manage information in such a way that each student achieves maximum intellectual, social, physical, emotional and spiritual growth" (Barry & King, 1988:6). Religious education classes should be based on beliefs, events, rites and codes of morality. The challenge for religious education teachers in 2004 is in the presentation of religious truths and even more importantly, religious educators should attempt to

match the experience of the students to the religious truths as taught by the Catholic Church. Clearly this is not happening. In an attempt to remedy this anomaly between Church teaching and religious education classes, this study suggests three areas for teachers to consider when planning their religious education unit(s): (i) Past traditions; (ii) core content, taught with strong conviction and (iii) the developmental age of students in the class. Religious education teachers need to respect and to teach past traditions (the who we are) which assists in forming religious beliefs:

These traditions should not be regarded by the teacher as an albatross preventing further development. The tradition being taught does not present set answers, but the living faith of the community and it often possesses varying interpretations.

Durka, 2002:15.

Religious education can be taught with both objectivity and strong conviction on the part of the teacher. There is no reason why the religious education teacher should not be a person of passionate commitment, total involvement and be deeply human. Teaching religious education is concerned with ultimate meaning of what it means to be fully human. Religious education teachers should be prophetic in addressing themselves to everything that concerns the human community and a successful teacher of religious education is concerned with the totality of the human experience. A teacher of religious education should have an adult character or mentality because the goal of religious education is to bring about a mature adult faith in students. One of the reasons for students' negative perception of their religious education classes is their teacher, so there is a need for a re-thinking of the present training of teachers for teaching religious education.

Teacher training.

University lecturers have become aware of certain short-comings in teacher education programs for trainee teachers of religious education and these short-comings have

been partially identified through students' perceptions of their religious education class. Consistent with Flynn's and Mok's (2002) longitudinal study, students' perceptions were not encouraging:

Students' attitudes to formal religious education classes in year 12 were very negative. Some 50% of students agreed that religious education does not arouse a great deal of interest on the part of students and only 40% of year 12 considered that religious education classes were interesting and that they enjoyed them.

Flynn & Mok, 2002: 281.

In the present study only 12% of students found their religious education classes related to their needs while seventy-per cent of the students stated that they could see no benefit in their religious education classes. With 60% of the students interviewed identifying "the way religious education was taught" as one of the reasons for their negative attitudes towards their religious education classes, then teacher training could be an area that would need to be addressed in an attempt to improve students' perceptions of these classes.

Leavey, Hetheron, Britt and O'Neill (1992) speak of the challenge for those preparing student teachers to teach religious education in Catholic schools. Tertiary institutes should aim to produce:

A lay Catholic educator who exercises a specific mission, within the Church, by living, in faith, a secular vocation in the communitarian structure of the school. The lay person, as a member of this community is entrusted the school's educational endeavour. Lay teachers must be profoundly convinced that they share in the sanctifying, and therefore educational mission of the Church.

Leavey, Britt & O'Neill, 1992:73.

The Catholic education community in Australia has the opportunity to work cooperatively with the tertiary institutions to assist student-teachers in their personal and professional growth and their re-evangelisation. This would require all parties to

honour the desire of the Council Fathers of Vatican Council II (1962-1965), that Catholic education be socially oriented for the common good.

The religious education curriculum of a Catholic school

While teachers of religious education are an important part of the tapestry that could be looked at in an attempt to improve senior students' perceptions of their religious education classes another area that could be re-visited is the religious education curriculum. Religious education classes in Catholic schools are not perceived in a positive light by most senior students. Not only did the majority of students generally express a dissatisfaction with their teachers of religious education they also found the content “boring” and “of little interest to them”. This negative perception of religious education classes from the majority of students interviewed and surveyed (who were at university and studying to become teachers in a Catholic school) should cause concern to the framers of religious education curriculum. Concern because, for the senior students most of whom who do not wish to become teachers, this would most probably be their last opportunity to obtain any formal religious education.

Australian religious education curriculum meeting.

In November 2001 the directors of religious education in all Australian States and Territories met in Melbourne to discuss the possibility of having a common (core) religious education curriculum. At the meeting all directors agreed, in principle, to investigate the possibility of a (core) common curriculum in religious education, except Western Australia. As a result of this meeting, a document entitled, *The curriculum in the Catholic school* (2002) was designed by the Catholic Education Office, Sydney. The document suggested eight aspects of learning that should be addressed in writing a religious education curriculum:

1. The learning situation must be relevant to the learner.
2. Learning must be experientially based but the experience coming from a knowledge based (content) context.
3. Learning is person centred and respectful of the individual.
4. Learning is designed to help students make sense of their lives.
5. Pre-cast solutions are to be avoided.
6. Learning involves a search for truth.
7. Learning needs to liberate people for greater community involvement and service.
8. Peace and justice rather than violence and exploitation and generosity rather than greed are valued.

Catholic Education Office, 2002:1.8.

These eight aspects of learning, consistent with much of the preamble of the Western Australian Curriculum Framework document (Curriculum Council, 1998) could form the basis for a religious education curriculum in Catholic schools in Western Australia. The religious education curriculum in Catholic schools should aspire to reflect a proper synthesis of religion and culture, with faith and life. Clearly a vision of faith should permeate the whole of school life and all aspects of the religious education curriculum. The question to be asked is: How can the framers of a religious education curriculum arrive at a senior religious education course that benefits and meets the needs of senior students in a Catholic school and also meets the criteria of what makes a Catholic school, Catholic? The challenge is daunting but nonetheless curriculum framers of religious education units need to face it, if students' perceptions of their religious education classes are to be more positive.

In suggesting a model for the development of a religious education curriculum this study will use four criteria that Saker (2004a) uses in teaching Catholic units at a tertiary level. The four criteria are based on the Curriculum in a Catholic school document.

1. Intention.
2. Content.

3. Method.

4. Teacher-student relationship.

Saker (2004a) found that in teaching Catholic studies units at a tertiary level that the intention of the unit should lead into the content of the unit. The content of the unit leads into the method to be used in teaching the unit and the method of how the unit is taught leads into teacher-student relationships. This tapestry is one through which all who design a religious education curriculum could consider implementing.

Shared Praxis in teaching religious education

Thomas Groom.

Linking Groome (1980) to guided discussion groups could offer senior students an opportunity to verbalise some of their present difficulties with religion in general, and the Catholic Church in particular. Groome suggests that senior students be given an opportunity to name some dimension of their present attitude towards the Christian story (opposition to the Church's teaching in certain areas of sexual morality); to reflect critically on that attitude (reasons for the attitude); to own the attitude and, finally, to share their reflection in group dialogue. By using such a method Groom suggests:

In keeping with 'present dialectical hermeneutics' and dialectical the dialectical unity between *theoria* and *praxis*, there should be an opportunity from students to personally appropriate the Story (Who are we) and its vision to their own lives (who am I) and choose what may be a fitting lived response.

Groom, 1980:207.

In teaching a unit, in religious education, Groom suggests that teachers focus their lesson on a five-step shared praxis. I have modified Groome's five steps to better suit senior students. For example, (1) Students are invited to name their concerns about the area under discussion, for example, contraception (present action); (2) students are

then asked to reflect on why they have these concerns and what are the likely consequences of not resolving these concerns (critical reflection); (3) teachers explain to students the Church story (reasons why the church teaches as she does), concerning the topic under discussion, for example contraception (Story and its vision); (4) students are now asked to appropriate the church story (teaching) to their lives in a dialectic with their own stories (dialectic between Church story and students' stories) and (5) teachers now give students an opportunity to make a personal faith response (guided group discussion) for the future direction of their lives (dialectic between group vision and individual vision).

Each shared praxis unit must have a particular focus that is some dimension of church teaching to which students will attend. Groom states that in using such a methodology the teacher is usually the one who establishes the focus of attention in the group.

The movements can be put into operation by a variety of teaching methods and many different pedagogical techniques can be used within each movement.

Groom, 1980:208.

Applying developmental theorists to religious education

The conceptual framework which this study outlined the research of the some of the leading developmental psychologists. In Chapters 5 and 6 the data from the students' responses was analysed. The data did not indicate a positive perception of religious education classes from senior students. Building upon the developmental psychologist's findings, this study will suggest a way of framing a religious education curriculum. The aim of which is to make religious education classes more beneficial, relevant and enjoyable for senior students.

The implications of the developmental theorists on the religious education classroom.

Erikson states that religion:

Elaborates on what one believes to be profoundly true even though it is not demonstrable, it translates into significant words, images, and codes the exceeding darkness which surrounds man's existence, and the light which pervades it.

Erikson, 1950:20.

Erikson's definition of religion is helpful in understanding the place of religion in the development of the individual and he has some useful insights for religious educators.

Erikson's position that all human experiences may be given a religious interpretation can aid religious educators in linking students' present day experiences to a particular teaching of the Church. For example, the global conflicts (human experience of students in 2004) could be linked to Aquinas' theological expose on what constitutes a 'just war' (religious interpretation of that experience). Erikson delineated three elements present in modern youth, the need for devotion, the need for ideology and the need for some worldview. The young person needs a cause with which to associate.

When it comes to writing religious education units for senior students the framers of the religious education curriculum could explore ways in which religious education classes may touch the lives (human experiences) of senior students who, in a lot of cases, are facing what they see as crucial decisions in their life.

The framers of the religious education curriculum could link Erikson's 'human experiences' with the developmental work of Piaget. At an older age Piaget suggests that students make crucial decisions from the position of intention. For example, Piaget studied the moral perceptions of children by asking children their reactions to

stories involving their attitudes toward lies. Piaget found that for older children, intention became important. An undetected lie was just as wrong as a detected one.

In applying Erikson's concept of human experience and Piaget's concept of intent, a religious education unit could be developed in, for example, the emotive topic of abortion.

The majority of students had no doubt that that life begins at the moment of conception and the vast majority of students also believed that from this moment of conception human life is formed and that human life is sacred. Similarly, the majority of students had no doubt that abortion is the murder of an unborn child. Students' beliefs on when life begins and abortion is the murder of an unborn child are 'in line' with official magisterial teaching. Students were then asked if they believed a girl who is raped and falls pregnant should have the 'right' to an abortion. With the majority of students strongly agreeing/agreeing that the girl should be allowed to have an abortion, under such circumstances.

The beliefs of the students concerning rape, pregnancy and abortion are clearly at odds with the official teaching of Church magisterium. The findings also show that the majority of students use two different levels of developmental reasoning. For example, Piaget's early concrete operation stage (the beginning of conformity to mutually agreed upon rules) is shown clearly in the students' acceptance of when life begins and abortion is murder. The well-developed formal operations stage (beginning to understand motivation) that is, the intent of the action is shown in the majority of students' replies concerning rape, pregnancy and abortion.

Looking at Erikson's developmental theories, again the majority of students appear to be using two different levels of reasoning. Life begins at conception and abortion is murder would place the majority of students in Erikson's middle childhood stage and

students' response to the question concerning rape, pregnancy, abortion would see students at Erikson's early adulthood stage

Being aware of the two different levels of reasoning being used by senior students, at their stage of development, the framers of a unit on abortion could re-enforce students' reasoning on when life begins and that abortion is the murder of an unborn child and then challenge students (intent) to explain how they could arrive at their position on rape, pregnancy and abortion from their previously stated belief on when life begins. Adelson (1971) argues that the framers of the religious education curriculum could consider content, for example, Church teaching on abortion and then develop upon Adelson's 'well-rounded' human developmental theory in order for students to arrive at an informed decision.

Rogers (1969), like Maslow (1971), developed the concept of self actualisation which he believed is a principal tendency in all people. It is through this tendency that the individual attempts to satisfy his various needs. Rogers and Maslow contend that all of man's behaviour has a purpose which he freely chooses. According to both Rogers and Maslow it is only if teachers and students communicate with one another about their deep religious concerns in a non-threatening atmosphere, that anything like an empathic understanding of religious education can become a possibility. Most students do not see their religious education teacher (significant other) as one they feel free to communicate with.

Goldman's life centred approach to religious education.

Goldman (1965) notes that religious thinking usually develops later than ordinary thinking. Goldman advocates a life-centred religious education curriculum and considers the personal or individual aims of religious education as primary and the social aims as secondary. For Goldman (1965) the primary purpose for teaching

religion must be because it is true; because it meets deep human needs and because without it man's life is indeed impoverished. Students have need for love, belonging, trust, acceptance, identity, freedom, positive self concept, relations to others, understanding relationship with the divine, and a sense of stability. It is these needs that could form the basis for a religious education curriculum.

Incorporating the developmental theory of Goldman in the religious education curriculum would mean that students should become aware not only of what the Church teaches, in the area of sexual morality, but why the Church teaches such a morality.

Ryan (2001) states that it is at senior school level when young people need religious education most:

This is when they (senior students) make crucial decisions, when they arrive at some sense of relationships. If persons are not influenced in these decisions by their religious faith, religion may appear useless to them for the rest of their lives. This is a real danger.

Ryan,2001:43.

A danger that is becoming a reality in 2004 is that no student interviewed considered themselves to be a practising Catholic.

Students' faith development

O'Collins and Farrugia (1991) tell us that:

(Faith is) made possible through the help of the Holy Spirit. Faith is a free, reasonable and total response through which we confess the truth about the divine self-disclosure definitively made in Christ (in which we) obediently (give) ourselves and entrust the future to God.

O'Collins & Farrugia, 1991:75.

Faith is our personal commitment to God whereby we completely submit ourselves and our will to God. Faith is a gift of God and is a free act. No one can force faith upon another person. Saker (2004) says this of faith and religious education:

Our primary job with our students is to till the soil. That is we plant the seed that will grow in the student which hopefully will grow into adult faith, a faith in God and in His Church. Religious educators have the task to give students the opportunity to meet God for themselves. The aim of religious education is to help students discern, respond to, and to be transformed by the presence of God in their lives, that is, grow in faith.

Saker, 2004:9.

According to the literature (Fahy, 1992, Holohan 1999a, Flynn & Mok, 2002). the strong point of Catholic education is the faith development of students (catechesis). This generalisation is only partially supported by the findings from this study. Students believed that when they left their Catholic secondary school they left with a strong 'faith'. Eighty-five percent of the students said that they believe in a God, who is loving (78%) and forgiving (82%). Sixty-three percent of students see Christ as a real person in their lives. These positive responses could form the 'core' from which to write a religious education curriculum that builds upon these beliefs with units on prayer, scripture and Christology, incorporating the Nicene Creed. Sixty percent of students interviewed said that prayer was not important in their life and 70% of the students said that they never read Scripture. Here there is a dichotomy between what students are saying and the practice of this faith. Prayer, as defined earlier, is developing a relationship with God and reading Scripture is listening to the Word of God. Clearly most students do not/could not see the relationship between prayer, Scripture and faith. Yet, without daily prayer (a relationship with God) it could be argued that senior students have a very tenuous grasp on the faith that they profess.

O'Sullivan (1995) tells us that prayer is an essential part of Christian living:

Prayer is not a duty rather it is a part of the reality of what it is to be a Christian. The only way we can express to ourselves that someone is important, that someone is real to us, is to spend time with that person. For faith to grow in our lives we have to be able to take time with God.

O'Sullivan, 1995:19.

Saker (2004b) suggests that the criterion for prayer is the pattern of life that it produces. Saker continues by stating that if our prayer is effective our relationship with God will grow stronger and the results will be a:

1. Greater trust in God.
2. Greater trust in ourselves.
3. Greater trust in others.
4. Gentle forgiving attitude.
5. Focus on God's concern for the poor, the hungry and the persecuted.
6. More universal love, that is, a love for all human kind.
7. Loss of fear. The unknown is left in the hands of God.
8. Freedom to be our true selves, loving, forgiving and caring.

Saker, 2004b:16.

When it comes to actual belief in /acceptance of Catholic teachings most students do not believe nor accept this deposit of faith.

The majority of students' responses did not suggest that Catholic schools were instilling the deposit of faith (revealed truth). The majority of students did not attend Mass regularly nor did they make frequent use of the Sacraments. Most students did not believe that the Pope was infallible. They believed that the Church is out of date with modern society and that the Church's teachings are only a guide for Christian living. Nearly all students, who intended to teach in a Catholic school, agreed that they were not practising Catholics.

For Catholics, faith should include a personal relationship with the living God. The God Catholics believe in, is the God of life. Faith in God should be a life-giving experience. For Catholics the truths and dogmas of their faith, for example the Nicene Creed, is an attempt to systematise and put into words different aspects of this life-giving relationship with God (deposit of faith).

While students stated that they believe in God, putting that belief into practice is not evident. Clearly one may question not only the faith of senior students but one may also question the students' deposit of faith which is what religious education classes in

Catholic schools should be attempting to develop. Fowler (1981) could possibly offer a solution to this dilemma.

Applying James Fowler

When speaking of adolescent faith development, Fowler suggests that the adolescent must make the transition from narratising faith (stage 3 Synthetic-Conventional faith) to synthetic and individuative faith (stage four Individuative-Reflective Faith).

When speaking of narratising faith Fowler states:

He or she needs the eyes and ears of a few trusted others in which to see the image of personality emerging and to get a hearing for the new feelings, insights, anxieties and commitments that are forming and seeking expression.

Fowler, 1981:151.

When speaking of individuative faith Fowler says:

The two essential features of the emergence of Stage 4 then are the critical distancing from one's previous assumptive values system and the emergence of an executive ego. When and as these occur a person is forming a new identity, which he or she expresses and actualises by the choice of personal and group affiliations and the shaping of a lifestyle. For a genuine move to Stage 4 to occur there must be an interruption of reliance on external sources of authority.

Fowler, 1981:179.

The data from this study would suggest that the majority of student teachers who wish to teach in a Catholic school and to teach religious education have a tenuous grip on faith. In applying Fowler's stages, schools and teacher education institutions must attempt to nurture the faith of the students and student teachers so that it may grow into a mature faith. In the unit Christian Foundations (Saker 2004) challenges his students to move from a faith dependent upon others to a more personal faith, a faith that comes from the inner core of the person and is reflected in the life and actions of the individual.

Fowler provides a model of mature faith in his description of the pilgrimage in faith of Malcolm X. Malcolm X arrives at a mature faith through resolution of highly emotional conflicts, of which one aspect is growth of intelligence. This example of faith development challenges religious educators to present to young people stories of faith that can shed light on their own experiences. Through reading and listening to faith stories, young people will gain a perspective as to their own development of faith. The lives of saints and the history surrounding the founding of many religious orders of priests, brothers and sisters, in the Catholic Church, provided this insight and inspiration for past generations (Saker 2004a calls this revelation). In applying Fowler to a religious education unit, the religious education teacher could also speak of the lives of contemporaries, people students could relate with on their journey of faith. These people could be the example, the guide for students in their pilgrimage through life.

Fowler has provided a valuable model for understanding the nature of faith and its developmental stages. He has provided goals for religious education. Fowler also indicates some of the general means that might be used in education for faith development. The faith of our senior students and student teachers could be challenged by the examples of the lives of Mother Teresa, Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Fred Hollows and John Paul II. By looking at the lives of these people the teacher can lead the students into looking at the various crises of faith they experience.

In applying the work of Fowler to faith development, the starting point could be enabling the student an opportunity to experience God's self-revelation, through prayer and Scripture. Once students have experienced God's self-revelation then students are in a position to accept or reject the gift of faith and, in turn, the deposit of

faith. By experiencing this gift of faith students are in a position to be open to Catholic Church teaching (theology). Saker (2004a) argues that faith develops through revelation (a religious experience). This revelation leads to faith and faith then leads to further enquiry which is theology.

Teachers need to realise that faith is a gift which the student has to unconditionally accept or reject for himself or herself. The teacher is simply a means by which the student may have his faith facilitated.

Students' moral development

The final construct under investigation concerned Catholic moral teaching. It is in the area of the moral teachings of the Catholic Church (moral theology) that those connected in any way with Catholic senior students should have grave concern. The majority of young Catholics are not attending the sacraments, this is happening because they do not see themselves as 'good' Catholics because of the apparent (to them) unbending nature of the Catholic Church in her moral teachings.

Marriage.

The vision of marriage, rooted both in the mystery of creation and in Christ's covenant of love and fidelity with his Church, is today increasingly becoming counter-cultural. Instead of experiencing the Christian story that love means staying in relationship, children are learning the contemporary secular story of conditional attachment and the primacy of self-concern over the common good. This cultural milieu is making it increasingly difficult for young couples at an immature level of Christian faith to make a genuine commitment to unity and fidelity in marriage.

Bohr, 1990:242.

Eighty percent of students interviewed saw marriage as a sacrament of the Catholic Church and 75% saw marriage as a commitment for life, a positive response from the students. However, only twenty percent of students would agree that Catholic teaching on marriage and divorce is relevant in today's society.

All students interviewed said that marriage is a sacrament and seven out of ten said that marriage is a life commitment. Six students said that in the case of an abusive partner they would see the commitment as being broken. That is, the commitment made at the time of the exchanging of the marriage vows is no longer valid because of physical and/or sexual abuse. To these students commitment may be for ten years, twenty years or for life depending on the circumstances that occur during the marriage that would (in the student's view) make the initial commitment no longer valid.

The key to a better understanding of Catholic Church teaching on marriage/divorce would appear to centre upon the students' understanding of commitment. Fowler (1981) would argue that most people are not capable of making, or understanding, a commitment until they are at least 18 years of age. If this is true then Church teaching on commitment and marriage could be left until as late as possible in Year 12. A religious education class looking at various commitments made by people, for example, commitment to priestly and religious life could assist students in realising that a commitment should not be made without realising what the person is committing to.

In writing a religious education unit on marriage the curriculum framers could begin the unit by developing this quote from Bohr:

It is the Church's task to bear witness to and proclaim evermore clearly the deep significance of our life in Christ. Stanley Hauerwas therefore submits that 'the prohibition against divorce, and other negative 'absolutes' can only be sustained and justified by showing how they are crucial as an aid to help us live more faithful to the story that forms the Christian community'.

Bohr, 1990:242.

Sunday Mass.

Of the students, 81% said that missing Mass on Sundays was not sinful and 79% said that they did not agree with the Church's teaching on Sunday Mass. All but one of the students interviewed did not see missing Mass on Sunday as being sinful. If, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994) states, the Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life then students need to be given reasons why this is so.

Developing a unit concerning Sunday Mass obligation, the curriculum framers could begin with Pell's (1993) article, 'Why do I have to go to Mass'? In the article Pell poses six theoretical questions, for example question four asks, "What is needed to understand and to participate usefully in Sunday Mass?" Pell suggests a religious education unit focusing upon the myths, symbols and rituals associated with Mass.

Senior students, it appears, have little or no understanding of the theological reasoning behind the Sunday Mass obligation. The theological underpinnings for the Sunday Mass obligation could be the framework for the writing of a unit on Sunday Mass. This would include Biblical references, Church tradition and doctrinal beliefs (the doctrine of transubstantiation).

Contraception.

A dualistic understanding of the human person and of human sexuality is at the heart of the defense of contraception. This anthropology regards the body as an instrument of the person, a good for the person insofar as it is a necessary condition for goods and values intrinsic to the person.

May, 2000:125.

Ninety-one percent of the students surveyed said that the use of a contraceptive was not sinful and 85% of students said that the sexual act should not always be open to the possibility of children. All but one student interviewed said that the use of a contraceptive was not sinful.

The majority of students clearly reject the Catholic moral teaching in the area of contraception. Students are mirroring society's views on contraception. In looking at a methodology for teaching a unit on contraception the framers of the unit could centre the unit around what May (2000) refers to as the theology of the human person.

Those defining contraception (should) consider the biological fertility of human persons and the biological processes involved in the generation of a new human life as physical or biological givens. Human fertility, in other words, is part of the world of subhuman or subpersonal nature over which persons have been given dominion.

May, 2000:126.

Bohr (1990) supports May's concept of the human person:

The vision of human sexuality is anchored in an integral Christian anthropology which is rooted in the fundamental belief that man and woman are created in the image and likeness of God. For God, life and love are not separated and thus, for us, as images of God, life and love should not be separated, i.e., conjugal love and life should always be united.

Bohr, 1990: 247.

The human person is a creation of God and God created man and woman in his own image. God gave man and woman many gifts, one of which is the gift to co-create.

In our society today childhood experiences and the current rate of marriage breakdown sees some young people reluctant, even frightened to marry. A smaller number also claim that they do not want to bring children into today's world. Pell (1997) speaks of questions that need to be asked concerning the human person, contraception and being Christian:

Important public questions are essential background for some of the equally important personal decisions young adults have to make as they consider marrying and having children of their own. How many children should responsible parents have today in Australia? What means should be used to achieve their goals? Are these goals reasonable and are these goals appropriate for believing Christians?

Pell, 1997:117.

May (2000) sums up the position of the Catholic Church with regards contraception and the human person. Here we have the genesis for a unit on contraception.

The anthropology supporting the practice of periodic continence as the way to harmonise the requirements of conjugal love with respect for the good of procreation is holistic; i.e., it regards the human person as a unity of body and soul. The person is, in the unity of body and soul, the subject of moral actions. On this anthropology, the body and bodily life are integral to the person, goods of the person, not merely for the person.

May, 2000:132.

Discussion on the human person and the questions raised by Pell (1997) and May (2000) could be the starting point for a unit on contraception. It is interesting to note that in my 4th year unit at Edith Cowan University, Justice and Morality in Contemporary Life, after the lecture on contraception many students will come up and say to me, 'thank you, we now know why the Church teaches the way she does on contraception.' They still may not accept the teaching but, at least, they are coming from a theologically informed position.

In preparing a unit on contraception, curriculum framers and classroom teachers would need to look at: Biblical texts (Genesis), Church tradition, The Natural Law and recent Papal Encyclicals. This study proposes that the unit be developed using the guided group discussion methodology.

Bohr (1990) makes a powerful statement on Catholic teaching of the human person and contraception. Statements such as, "to harmonise the requirements of conjugal love", "The human person is a unity of body and soul" and "the body and bodily life are integral to the person." These statements, from Bohr, could be used, in a senior religious education class, to begin the guided (discovery) group discussions. Saker (2004) has found this methodology successful in his work with university students.

Contraception renders the act of marital union anti-procreative, and not merely non-procreative. The sexual act should be the total physical surrender of spouses to one another in all their potentialities. Only in this way does it become a sign of the divine Trinitarian Love in which it is anchored. The

denial of either significance, the unitive or procreative, constitutes a falsification of the act.

Bohr, 1990:248.

The concluding sessions on contraception should include material on natural family planning. Pell (1997:124) defines natural family planning as acts that “require periodic abstinence from sexual intercourse and self-discipline by the man as well as the woman.” This study’s findings indicated that very few students were taught about the natural family planning method of regulating births in their senior classes.

Catholic schools have no option but to teach the official Catholic position on contraception (as with all official Catholic moral theology). This study would argue that an approach to the unit using the human person as the centrepiece could assist senior students gain a clearer and, perhaps, a better understanding in the theological discipline of contraception. Clearly the present method of teaching a unit on contraception is not being heard, or if it is, it is being rejected by senior students. Framers of the religious education curriculum could look not only at the teaching but also why the Church teaches as she does.

Abortion.

For the framers of the religious education unit on abortion, the findings would indicate a need to look at, and clarify, two apparent areas of confusion for senior students, namely: When life begins and all human life is sacred and, if abortion is the murder of an unborn child and life begins at conception, how can the majority of students justify an abortion in such circumstances?

The debate on when life begins has been ‘raging’ for many years but the Catholic Church’s teaching has been constant over hundreds of years: Life begins at conception.

The word ‘embryo’ refers to human offspring in the first eight weeks of conception. ‘Foetus’ refers to an unborn child more than eight weeks old.

The human characteristics of an embryo and foetus are crucial to explaining the pro-life case against abortion. The Catholic Church teaches that from the moment of conception, the egg fertilised by the sperm must be treated as a human being and accorded the respect due to a person. Advances in genetic knowledge over the last 50 to 100 years have strengthened this conviction.

Pell, 1997:108/109.

The majority of students have no difficulty with this moral imperative, and accept that life does begin at conception. So the unit on abortion could begin with a re-affirmation of this tenet of Catholic faith. The majority of students also agreed that direct abortion is the murder of an unborn child.

Abortion is the intentional killing of an innocent human person. The intentional killing of an innocent human person is an intrinsically evil act insofar as it is utterly opposed to love of the person made in the image and likeness of God. But the intentional killing of unborn human children and of infants has a unique kind of gravity.

May, 2000:170.

Discussion concerning the quote from May (2000) could focus further discussion on the topic of abortion as the majority of students do not have any problem agreeing that abortion is the murder of an unborn child.

The difficulty students have with Catholic moral teaching occurs when, under certain circumstances, pregnancy occurs because of rape or incest; some deformity has been detected in the unborn child; the sex of the child is not the sex that the parent's were hoping for, in these cases the majority of students would argue that the Catholic Church should allow an abortion. This belief is at odds with official Catholic moral teaching.

A discussion in logic could assist the students to see the 'flaw' in their argument. A lesson covering fallacies, such as, begging the question, false dilemmas and ad hominem argument would help clarify students' apparent inconsistencies in their argument. Helpful in that it could assist students re-evaluate (or affirm) their present belief.

Because rape and incest are such abominable crimes against women there is a danger that the question of abortion, in these cases, could become very emotional (as has happened in my moral theology unit). Archbishop Hickey (1996) speaks of 'hard cases' when he refers to Catholic teaching on abortion and this also could be discussed (guided by the teacher) in class:

The difficult cases that are put forward as reasons for abortion pose very serious questions and demand an equally serious response. Because God is the author of life, every conception is an expression of the nature of God, the Creator. The miracle of conception means that every new person is made in the image of God. Rape, incest and the discovery of genetic diseases cause deep anguish and strong emotional distress but do not negate that it is God who creates and who does so with a purpose. Let us be clear that in all cases abortion is not and cannot be the answer. Every woman and every family that is facing such a situation has a right to the closest support and affirmation from medical personnel, social workers, counsellors, family and friends, and other members of the community. All of us must be sensitive to the needs of women faced with such a grave challenge and be at their side to help them through their crisis and be committed to walking the future journey with them.

Hickey, 1996:1.

The findings indicate that the official Church teaching and students' opinions/beliefs are in conflict. Religious educators should be aware of this point and be prepared to meet these challenges.

Teaching a unit on abortion.

In preparing a unit on abortion the following headings could be used, by the teachers, as a planning guide.

1. Scripture: What does the Bible say? (You shall not kill).
2. Tradition: What has been the tradition of the Church since biblical times?
3. The Natural Law: What is The Natural Law? Why does the Catholic Church rely almost exclusively on The Natural Law for her moral teachings? Ulpian (primary ends) and Thomas Aquinas (secondary ends) of The Natural Law should be discussed.

4. Thomas Aquinas' principle of double effect, that allows for indirect abortions, could be explained and discussed.
5. Because theologians are moving towards a proportionalist's view of moral theology, the Catholic teaching of situation ethics and the non-Catholic teaching of proportionalism could be discussed at length.
6. Sin: A re-affirmation of the Church's teaching on sin both venial and mortal. Including what are the three conditions necessary for committing a mortal sin.
7. Conscience: What is a fully informed conscience and how does one fully inform one's conscience and, finally, what is an erroneous conscience (it should be stressed that in the case of a direct abortion informed conscience does not enter the deliberation).
8. The class could now be put into groups. The teacher could use the guided discovery method. Two or three case studies could be given to the students who would be asked to discuss the cases in an attempt to reach a decision as to how they would act in the given scenario. Case studies could include a girl falling pregnant after being raped, or through incest. After the guided group discussion the teacher could summarise students' findings.
9. The teacher could conclude the unit with an overview of why the Catholic Church teaches, as it does, on abortion. After the unit has been completed students should be in a better position to make an informed decision on their acceptance or rejection of official Church teaching.

Pre-marital sexual intercourse and homosexual acts.

The ultimate act of love that can be shown by a couple is when two bodies become one in the act of sexual intercourse. The Catholic Church has always taught that this total act of love, of self-giving, of commitment only makes (moral) sense within the

bonds of matrimony. Many senior students do not agree with this particular moral teaching. Fifty-nine percent of students disagreed/strongly disagreed that heterosexual acts outside of marriage are sinful and nine out of ten students interviewed also disagreed with the statement.

In The Book of Genesis we see God's intention that man leaves his mother and father and joins with a woman and the two become one flesh. God then told them to go forth and multiply. The Catholic Church has always taught that homosexual acts are against The Natural Law and are intrinsically evil. Sixty-six percent of students disagreed/strongly disagreed with the Church on the sinfulness of homosexual acts.

The Catholic teaching on both pre-marital sex and homosexual acts would need to be included in the lesson(s) on the human person and integral intersubjectivity.

The church and post modernity

That young people are generally rejecting the Church's moral teaching can, to some extent, be explained through their responses to two questions: "the Church's teachings are only a guide for Christian living?" and "the moral teachings of the Catholic Church are out of date with modern society." Seventy-six percent of students strongly agreed/agreed that Church teachings are only a guide to Christian living and 67% of students strongly agreed/agreed that the moral teachings of the Church are out of date with modern society. When asked if the Church should change her moral teachings because society has changed its moral stance, seven of the ten students interviewed said, "yes!"

Here, we see the dilemma that most senior students are confronted with. Catholic Church moral teachings versus society's morality. In 1975, The Federal Government of Australia introduced no fault divorce. In February 2002 the State Government of Western Australia lowered the age of consent for homosexual acts to 16 years. In

2004, in San Francisco, the Mayor, and in Boston, the Supreme Court, allowed marriage of same-sex couples. The list is endless, weakening of laws on abortion, in vitro fertilisation, cloning and stem cell research, to name a few would contribute to the confusion many senior students face in 2004.

In an attempt to redress this apparent conflict facing most senior students it would appear that one approach is to go back to the basics. By back to the basics, I am not suggesting a return to the 1950s' pedagogical method of teaching religious education (indoctrination). What is being suggested is a revisiting of the Catholic myth. Harris (1992) speaks of the myths, the rituals and the symbolism of a particular group (identity) in assisting people to come to own, as their own, the identity of the group.

Myth is part of society's communication code for transmitting messages to one another about matters of ultimate concern and about those entities believed to have enunciated, clarified and mediated a culture's bonding axioms to its present members.

Harris, 1992:5.

Durka (2002:53) speaks of tradition, which is part of the myth (the who we are – Catholic identity):

We have learned something about basic decency, about human rights and vice and virtue over several thousand years of civilisation. This knowledge is preserved in our religious inheritance: the teachings, traditions and lives of the people who share our common story.

Most of the developmental theorists suggest that people need to feel part of a community. Maslow, for example, would see this as essential if there is to be any progress towards self actualisation.

If, as the findings suggest, senior students are not seeing the connection of myth, ritual and symbol (Church out of date with modern society) with the Church in which they were baptised, it would appear obvious that a return to the basics, that is, the 'why' of the myth could be developed in a religious education curriculum to assist

this process. A good starting point would be a book published by the Catholic Enquiry Centre (1991) *The Catholic Religion* and, in particular Chapter 7 (The Church) and Chapter 8 (Peter and the eleven). It is in these two chapters that the myth (the story) of the founding of the Church is traced, for example:

Christ is the head of the Church. Christ appointed St Peter to be his vicar (Pope) to act for him as head of the Church on earth.

St Peter is told by Christ that he is the Rock in place of Christ and because of Peter, the powers of death will not overcome the Church, that is, it will not die.

Finally, Christ promises to give Peter the power to 'bind and loose.' This meant that Peter had the power to make laws, that is, to have authority.

Catholic Enquiry Centre, 1991:108/109/110.

A religious education curriculum centred on 'our story' (myth) could assist students in looking at the possibility that it is society that may be out of step with the Christian tradition.

Durka (2002) speaks of the hunger in our students and the response necessary from teachers if our Catholic schools are to be effective in the 21st century:

We understand that deep inside of every student is some sense of the wonder of life and a longing to give thanks for it. The basic hunger for goodness makes claims on us as teachers and lures us to teach what is more than conceptual knowledge or emotional skills, namely how to live well. We realise that we do what we do because we feel called to do it. It is for us a source of joy. And we give thanks for it.

Durka, 2002: 80.

Summary.

No study can offer indisputable solutions to the findings of the research undertaken.

The findings of this study found that year 11 and 12 students, at Catholic schools, and having completed religious education classes are leaving these schools with little understanding and acceptance of official Catholic teachings. Most students are rejecting Catholic moral teachings and are not attending Sunday Mass on a regular basis. They have a very tenuous grasp on/of 'faith' that most of them would profess.

Students' prayer life; the use of the sacraments and the reading of scripture being a clear indication of this tenuous grasp of 'faith'.

The situation, the data suggests is serious. For too long, people connected with Catholic education have ignored the warnings that all is not as it should be in Catholic schools.

I would hope that the findings of this study are investigated by leaders in Catholic Education and appropriate action be undertaken.

Chapter 8 will make some recommendation and conclusions based on the rather pessimistic view presented of Catholic schools in Western Australia.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In light of what has been learnt through the responses of student teachers who are in the first or the second year of their university studies and who spent the last two years of their secondary education in a Catholic school (and took part in the religious education program) it is possible to present a number of recommendations which can improve the quality of religious education classes in Western Australian Catholic schools. These may aid the students' religious development and their perceptions of the identity of the Catholic school that they attended. The recommendations will be made under these headings: Research questions; teaching religious education; the Catholic school and significant others (parents and teachers). These four areas are central to the study and need to be addressed by all involved in Catholic education in Western Australia if students' perceptions are to change.

There are both positive and negative signs concerning the ethos/identity of Catholic schools in Western Australia. It is hoped that this study will encourage those in positions of leadership in Catholic education to look at both the positives and negatives and, then, using the positives, work at addressing the negatives so that it can be said that Catholic schools are truly Catholic and that they are carrying out the mandate of the Bishops of Western Australia.

The study's recommendations are an endeavour to address the negative perceptions of senior students' to their religious education classes, the Catholic school that they attended, from a religious perspective, and Catholic Church teachings.

Research questions

The major research question which guided this study was: What are the perceptions of 1st and 2nd year university students of their senior religious education classes in Catholic schools in Western Australia? This research question was guided by four sub-questions:

1. Are Catholic schools in Western Australia carrying out the mandate for their existence, that is, the Catholic education of their students?

Catholic schools are not carrying out the mandate given them by the Bishops of Western Australia. This is exemplified by: Students claiming that they are not practising Catholics and students rejection of Catholic teaching(s).

2. Did students perceive their religious education classes as aiding their religious development?

Many students did not see: that they gained anything from their religious education classes nor did religious education classes appear to assist them in their religious development.

3. Are students accepting or rejecting important doctrinal teachings of the Catholic Church?

Students are: Rejecting most of the doctrinal teaching(s) of the Catholic Church, for example, Sunday Mass Attendance, contraception and divorce and re-marriage.

4. How do students perceive their lived experience and the Catholic Church's teaching on morality?

Students' saw: Their lived experiences as being opposed to the Catholic Church's teaching on morality; that the Church was out of date with modern society and the Church no longer has much impact on their lives.

Chapter 7 of this study looked at the findings, obtained from the data (Chapters 5 and 6) pertaining to the research questions.

A summary of key findings is presented below:

- The findings clearly indicate that the majority of senior students are rejecting Catholic Church teachings but they appear unaware of why they are rejecting such teachings. If Catholic identity/ethos is to be understood and accepted by senior students in Catholic schools there is a need for a more content based religious education curriculum in senior religious education classes.
- Parents, friends/peers and teachers, although having some influence on students' religious development, are an untapped resource and could be used more productively in their religious education classes.
- Catholic schools have a good name, students are generally quite happy to attend but nevertheless Catholic schools are not necessarily carrying out the mandate of the Bishops under whose control the schools function.
- Principals and teachers need to address the issue of staff-student relationships.
- The religious education classes are not effective and the majority of students were not happy with their religion class. Many students did not see their classes relevant to their needs and subsequently they saw their religious education class as a waste of time.
- Students would, generally, see themselves as people of faith. Students are referring not to 'deposit of faith' but to 'faith', as in a belief in a higher power. This belief in a higher power is not being put into practice by the students.
- Students rejected Catholic moral teaching as being out of date; not relevant to their lives and far too restrictive on their 'freedom'. They did not see themselves as practising Catholics nor were they concerned about 'heaven' and 'hell'. They saw

Catholic teachings as a guide to moral living but the decision(s) of the lifestyle that they lead is up to them and not the Church.

There can be little argument from the data presented in this study that there is a crisis in Catholic schools in Western Australia. The crisis centres on the reason for Catholic schools, the effectiveness of Catholic schools and the Catholic school's religious education programs. Bishops, principals, teachers, parents and students, as well as the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia need to confront this crisis as we embrace the 3rd millennium. If there is no confrontation Catholic schools will continue to be full of baptised pagans and our pews empty.

Teaching religious education

Teacher centred approach.

This study is suggesting an approach to teaching religious education by blending official Catholic Church teaching with the integral intersubjectivity (person-centred) approach: What sort of person would do that? Does that action make me a better person? Am I developing to my full potential? By approaching religious education in this way religious education teachers would give their students an opportunity to be in a position to understand, accept or reject the teachings of the Catholic Church. There is no reason why: (1) Religious knowledge. The official theological teachings of the Catholic Church and (2) Love, compassion, understanding and forgiveness cannot be incorporated into a religious education curriculum and the lesson plans of the classroom teacher. This study recommended four key aspects of learning be used in such a plan:

1. **Clarification:** Through this process students clarify to what extent they are committed to a particular Catholic teaching and how this teaching influences their lives.

2. Analysis: Students explore the beliefs held by significant others, parents, peers, teachers and the church and make some comparison with their own beliefs.
3. Acquisition. Students adopt new values building upon those that they already hold.
4. Judgement. Students choose between competing values and make decisions about possible courses of action.

The Catholic school

The tension for the Catholic school is bridging the gap between students' perceptions of the school and the official Church perceptions of what a Catholic school should be. This study has shown that there is an urgent need for Catholic schools to look at the ongoing mission and purpose of the Catholic school in contemporary society. Treston (1997) suggests five models of Catholic schools currently operating in Australia. By combining two of Treston's models: (1) The traditional Catholic school and (2) The evangelising Catholic school, a new identity/ethos for the school could be achieved. This new identity/ethos would satisfy those involved in leadership roles in the Church and, hopefully, senior students. The rituals, sacraments and doctrine (model 1) would be clear to all those involved in the education of the students and the school would aim to incorporate the Church's mission to proclaim Christ's love for all mankind (model 2). Such a model of a Catholic school, for future generations of Catholic students, would allow them to see the links between the Church (model 1) and contemporary society (model 2). This model would assist parents and students who have little or no affiliation with the institutional Church to become aware of the school's ethos/ identity.

Significant others

Parents

Anderson (1999) speaks of the urgent need for parents to play their role as leaders in the 'domestic church' to assist their adolescent's religious development. A greater support for parents, especially mothers, from the Catholic school and the local parish, would assist parents to play a bigger role in assisting their adolescent's religious development. Encouraging family prayer through school based programs could also enhance students' faith development. The family coming together for the celebration of Sunday Mass with the Catholic community could also assist students' religious development.

Teachers

The Congregation for Catholic Education (1998) tells us that the teacher in a Catholic school has the responsibility to articulate the vision of the Catholic school and the place of religious education in that school. The results of this study indicate that this is not happening in Catholic schools. To assist teachers in Catholic schools, especially religious education teachers, programs should be planned by schools to allow for the ongoing faith development of teachers.

Once the identity/ethos of the Catholic school is articulated and proclaimed then I would argue that the other problems, indicated in this study, can be addressed in an attempt to make a Catholic school, truly Catholic.

An optimistic look to the future

Sending children to a Catholic school.

The findings, nevertheless, indicate that there is a 'glimmer of hope'. Catholic schools can make a difference to the lives of young people. With the general negativity concerning religious education classes and the moral teachings of the Catholic

Church, the majority of students (72%) indicated that they would still send their children to a Catholic school. Seventy-eight percent of students said that they would attend a Catholic school again. Of the interviewees nine of the ten students indicated that they would teach in a Catholic school and all students (interviewed) said that if they taught in a Catholic school they would (be willing to) teach religious education.

The aim of this study was an attempt to shed some light on the present status of Catholic schools and Catholic education classes in Western Australia. The study endeavoured to discover whether Catholic schools are carrying out the mandate given them by the Bishops of Western Australia. The reason why, for over 150 years, the Catholic parents of Australia have heroically built and fought for a Catholic education system for their children.

This study has found that the goodwill of the senior students, who participated, was obvious but their doubt concerning many aspects of Catholic dogma/doctrine of Catholic teaching was alarming.

The framers of the religious education curriculum, the Bishops of the dioceses, the principals, subject teachers and teachers of religious education, by working together and addressing the challenges facing Catholic schools, as indicated in this study, will be able to say, "Catholic schools do make a Catholic difference!"

The Congregation for Catholic Education (1988) states that:

There has never been a shortage of families and students who choose a Catholic school because they appreciate the value of an education where instruction is enhanced by a religious dimension. Educators will know the best way to respond to their expectations.

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988:60/61.

My desire is that educators can say, 'Yes, we are responding!'

Recommendation for further studies

The study looked at the perceptions of 1st and 2nd year university students who had completed their senior studies at a Catholic school and had attended religious education classes during that time. No study of this sort has been completed in Western Australia, although Flynn and Mok (2002) have completed similar studies in New South Wales, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory.

There are limitations to this study (see chapter 4). It is from these limitations that further study could be undertaken in an attempt to enhance religious education classes in Catholic schools in Western Australia. Some suggested recommendations for further study are:

- A further replication of Flynn's work could be undertaken in Western Australian Catholic schools, using this study as a starting point. This study could focus on three aspects of the Catholic school in the 21st century. (1) The identity/ethos of the Catholic school; (2) a description of the religious education programs in Catholic schools and (3) The effectiveness of these programs in supporting/producing a focus on the operational dimension of religious education classes.
- A comparison study could be undertaken at the Catholic University of Western Australia (Notre Dame Australia) to ascertain if the data from this study is similar to that obtained from Notre Dame Australia.
- A study into the faith development of Catholic student teachers beginning their teacher training at university, two or three years after they have completed their secondary education.
- A study into the faith development of teachers currently employed in Catholic schools.

Conclusion

There are many challenges ahead for the successful teaching of religious education in Catholic schools. The good faith of the people, in educational leadership roles, in the Catholic Education Office, schools and universities has been obvious to me during my eleven years in Western Australia. All need to look at the findings of this study, the recommendations and conclusions arrived at so as to ensure that our Catholic schools are institutions where Christ is the centre of students' lives and the basis for the school's existence. The challenge is to work together to ensure that the 2000 year tradition of the Catholic Church continues in generations to come. This can be assured if our Catholic Schools are citadels of the Catholic Faith, the Faith of our Fathers.

The findings from this study, for the most part, are disappointing but not surprising. It is now up to us to take up that challenge to make our religious education classes places where the Catholic faith is not only taught but cherished by all who pass through the hallowed halls of a Catholic school.

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APPENDIX 1

ETHICS CLEARANCE FORM

8th February 2000

Human Research Ethics Committee

Brother Leslie Saker
Marist Brothers
PO Box 1415
Osborne Park 6916

Dear Brother Saker

Code: 00-05

Title of Project: A study of 1st and 2nd year Catholic university students'
perceptions of their senior religious education classes in Catholic
schools in Western Australia.This project was reviewed by the Committee for the Conduct of Ethical Research at its meeting on 4th
February 2000.I am pleased to advise that the project complies with the provisions contained in the University's policy
for the conduct of ethical research, and has been cleared for implementation.Please note that your research proposal must be approved by the Research Students and Scholarship
Committee before you commence any data collection. The Graduate School will inform you in writing
as soon as your research proposal has been approved.Period of approval: **From:** 7th February 2000 **To** 31st December 2000

With best wishes for success in your work.

Yours sincerely

ROD CROTHERS
Executive Officer

ATTACHMENT; Reporting requirements

cc.

A/Professor A Taggart, Supervisor

Ms P. Prideaux, Administrative Officer, CSE & SS

Mrs K Leckie, Executive Officer, Graduate School.

APPENDIX 2

INFORMATION FOR ADMINISTERING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Letter to colleague administering the questionnaire

Dear Colleague,

Thank you very much for agreeing to administer the survey to 1st and 2nd year university students at Edith Cowan University.

Five students have completed this survey (formative evaluation) and reported back to me concerning:

1. Any survey questions that they found to be difficult to understand or not clear.
2. The length of time that it has taken the students to complete the survey.
3. Any suggestions that may assist in improving the survey.

I have also had a specialist at university, in constructing surveys using the Likert scale look at the survey and I asked him to make any alterations or suggestions that he deemed necessary

Both the students and the specialist recommended only minor changes to the survey questions.

Having made the suggested minor changes below you will find the instructions for administering the survey to the students.

Students eligible to complete the survey.

Only baptised Catholics will be asked to respond to the questionnaire.

Only those Catholics who have completed years 11 and 12 at a Catholic school will be asked to respond to the questionnaire.

Only those Catholic students who studied religious education in years 11 and 12 will be asked to respond to the questionnaire.

Administering the survey.

- Give out the letter that I have prepared for the students in the class.
- Read out the criteria (above) required for students to complete the survey.
- Ask for volunteers to complete the survey.
- Ask those students who volunteer for the survey (and meet the criteria) to stay in the room. Ask all other students to take a forty minutes break.
- Ask students to sign and return consent form.
-
- Distribute the survey to the students.

Explaining the survey to the students.

- Give out the student-letter that I have prepared and allow five minutes for them to read it.
- Ask students if they have any questions concerning the survey.

The survey.

- Please read out the following information.
- Students are asked to attempt a response to all questions but please feel free to decline to answer any question that you do not feel comfortable with.
- The questionnaire is completely confidential. No attempt will be made on the part of the researcher to identify those taking part in the questionnaire.
- Once the computer has analysed your responses the questionnaire will be destroyed.
- You may leave the room at any time.
- You will be given 30 minutes to complete the survey.

Once again thank you for assisting, by administering the survey

Yours sincerely,

Br Luke Saker fms.

APPENDIX 3:

LETTER TO UNIVERSITY STUDENT INVITING PARTICIPATION

Letter to students completing the questionnaire

Dear University student,

I invite you to participate in a survey concerning your senior religious education classes. The survey attempts to discover what you, as university students, thought of certain issues arising from your senior religious education classes and also to explore your experiences of the Catholic school that you attended and the influence that the school has had on your lives.

In making this invitation for you to participate in this survey I am looking at a particular group within your religious studies class to volunteer. I ask:

That only those students who are Baptised Catholic;

Have attended a Catholic school in years 11 and 12 and

During that time attended senior religious education classes, volunteer for the questionnaire.

I would like to thank those of you who do not meet these criteria for considering to volunteer for the questionnaire and I appreciate your offer very much.

For those students who complete the questionnaire I wish to emphasise to you that:

1. The replies that you make are confidential.
2. No attempt will be made at any stage, by any person or myself involved in interpreting the data from the survey, to identify individual students.
3. Please do not sign your name anywhere on the survey.
4. After you have completed the survey, the answer sheets will be sealed in envelopes and returned to me.
5. After I have recorded the data from the questionnaire the questionnaire will be shredded.
6. You will now be given a consent form. This form simply states that you gave your approval to undertake the survey. Please sign the consent form now and return it to the person administering the survey.

I can be contacted on the Mount Lawley Campus of Edith Cowan University in Building 3, room 224 or by phoning 9370 6611 (direct line) or my mobile [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Once again I take this opportunity to thank you for volunteering to complete the survey and I wish you well in your studies in Education at university.

Thanking you for your co-operation,

Br Luke Saker fms

APPENDIX 4

STUDENT CONSENT FORM

Consent form, signed by the student, who participated in the survey

I am willing to participate in this study.

I understand that I have been assured of the confidentiality of the information gathered in the questionnaire (survey) and that after the relevant information has been statistically collated my replies will be shredded and that my identity will remain anonymous.

Name: (Please Print). _____

Signature: _____

Date: / /2000.

APPENDIX 5

QUESTIONNAIRE

In selecting the 75 items for the questionnaire the six constructs were considered and the questions were selected around these constructs.

The 75 items used in the survey

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SURVEY:

Instructions for answering the multiple choice questions.

- Complete your answer in pencil
- Select the alternative that best reflects your answer. Place a tick in the response square.

Sample 1: Calculate $2 + 4$ =

(A) 2. (b) 6. (c) 8 (D) 9 (E) 11

- A
B
C
D
E.

If you think you have made a mistake rub out the incorrect answer and tick the new answer in the square on your answer sheet.

Please answer all questions in Sections 1 to 6 on this answer sheet.

Apart from questions 1 to 8 all questions will be answered by ticking one of the following on the answer sheet:

- A **Strongly Agree**
B **Agree**
C **Uncertain**
D **Disagree**
E **Strongly Disagree**

SECTION 1: STUDENTS' BACKGROUND

Please indicate by placing a tick in the box for your most appropriate response to the questions below:

1. Are you:

- A Male
- B Female

2. What is your age at the time of answering this survey:

- A. Under 20
- B. 20-23
- C. 24-27
- D. Over 28

3. I completed my senior studies at a Catholic School in:

- A The metropolitan area of Perth
- B The country region of Western Australia

4. How many years did you spend at a Catholic primary school:

- A. 1-2
- B. 3-4
- C. 5-6
- D. 7

5. How many years did you spend at a Catholic secondary school:

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5

6. I am studying at Edith Cowan University in the School of Education for a Bachelor of Education in:

- A. Primary Education
- B. Secondary Education

7. What is your mother's religion:
- A. Catholic
 - B. Orthodox
 - C. Other Christian faith
 - D. Non-Christian religion
 - E. No religion

8. What is your father's religion:
- A. Catholic
 - B. Orthodox
 - C. Other Christian faith
 - D. Non-Christian religion
 - E. No religion

SECTION 2: INFLUENCES ON STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

The following statements refer to various influences on your religious development over the years. How important have been the following influences on you?

Respond on the answer sheet by ticking on of the following:

- A. Strongly Agree.
- B. Agree.
- C. Uncertain.
- D. Disagree.
- E. Strongly Disagree.

- 9. The example and lives of your parents over the years has influenced your religious development.
- 10. The influence of your friends and peers while you were at school has influenced your religious development.
- 11. The example and lives of your teachers while you were at school has influenced your religious development.
- 12. The religious education program provided at your school has influenced your religious development.
- 13. The atmosphere of your Catholic school has influenced your religious development.

SECTION THREE: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL THEY ATTENDED

The following statements refer to your perceptions of the Catholic school you attended in years 11 and 12. Please read each statement carefully and mark the answer which best describes your perceptions of the Catholic school you attended.

14. The senior students understood and accepted the religious goals of the school.
15. You could tell by the atmosphere of the school that it was a Christian school.
16. Students thought a lot of the Catholic School that I attended.
17. I am a better person from attending a Catholic School.
18. If I had to repeat my senior secondary education. I would go to a Catholic school.
19. I would send my children to a Catholic School.
20. I was happy at the Catholic School that I attended.
21. I felt important at the Catholic School that I attended.
22. I was proud to be a student at the Catholic School I attended.
23. I could always approach the Principal for advice and help.
24. The principal was a caring and understanding person.
25. The discipline at the school that I attended was just.
26. The Catholic School that I attended placed too much emphasis on rules and regulations.
27. Students at the Catholic School that I attended knew the standard of conduct expected of them.

**SECTION 4: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR
YEARS 11 AND 12
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSES.**

This section refers to your perceptions of your of religious education classes. For each statement please indicate how strongly you agree, or disagree.

- 28. My religious education classes were a waste of time.
- 29. Religious education classes were interesting.
- 30. Religious education classes did not arouse much interest on the part of senior students.
- 31. Religious education classes were taken seriously by students.
- 32. My religious education classes allowed me to develop as a person.
- 33. I enjoyed my religious education classes in senior school.
- 34. If my religious education classes were voluntary, I would still have attended them.
- 35. I gained a lot from my religious education classes.
- 36. My religious education classes were related to real life and to my needs.
- 37. The school that I attended has a good religious education program in years II and 12.
- 38. My religious education classes were well prepared and well taught.
- 39. More emphasis should be placed on knowledge and content in religious education classes.
- 40. During my senior religious education classes I was taught the Church's teaching on marriage and divorce.
- 41. During my senior religious education classes I was taught the Church's teaching on contraception.
- 42. During my senior religious education classes I was taught the Church's teaching on Sunday Mass attendance.

SECTION 5: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR FAITH DEVELOPMENT

This section refers to certain beliefs and values that people hold. Please consider each statement carefully before responding.

43. The Catholic religion helps me answer questions about the meaning of life.

44. The Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ.

45. The Immaculate Conception refers to Mary.

46. Mary, the Mother of Christ was assumed into heaven body and soul.

47. I believe in God.

48. God is a loving father who loves me very much.

49. I believe that God always forgives me.

50. Christ is a real person to me in my daily life

51. Christ, as God, could not sin.

52. I normally attend Mass:

- A. Each Sunday at least
- B. Two or three Sundays a month
- C. Once a month
- D. A few times a year
- E. Rarely or never

53. I normally receive the Eucharist (Holy Communion):

- A. Each Sunday at least
- B. Two or three Sundays a month
- C. Once a month
- D. A few times a year
- E. Rarely or never

54. I normally receive the Sacrament of reconciliation (confession):

- A. Once a week
- B. Two or three times a month
- C. Once a month
- D. A few times a year
- E. Rarely or never.

55. I normally spend time every day in personal prayer to God.

56. I try to read some part of the Scriptures (Bible) each day.

SECTION 6: STUDENTS' ACCEPTANCE OF THE MORAL TEACHING OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

This section refers to your acceptance of the moral teachings of the Catholic Church. For each statement please indicate how strongly you agree, or disagree.

57. Marriage is a commitment for life.

58. Marriage is a sacrament of the Catholic Church.

59. The current Catholic Church's teaching on marriage/divorce is relevant to today's world.

60. Any use of artificial contraception during sexual intercourse is a sin.

61. Having a sexual relationship before marriage is always a sin.

62. Each and every sexual act must be open to the procreation of children.

63. The family planning method as proposed by Dr Billings is acceptable to the Church.

64. Missing Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of obligation is sinful.

65. I agree with the Catholic Church's teaching on Sunday Mass obligation.

66. When the male sperm unites with the female egg you have a human life.

67. Abortion is the murder of an unborn child.

68. A girl who is raped and falls pregnant should be allowed to have an abortion.

69. Heterosexual intercourse outside of marriage is sinful.

70. Homosexual acts are sinful.

71. The Pope has the power to make statements on behalf of the whole Church.

72. The Pope is infallible and cannot err when he speaks ex cathedra.

73. The Catholic Church's teachings are only a guide for Christian living. I am free to make up my own mind as to if I follow the teachings or not.
74. The moral teachings of the church are out of date with 'modern' society.
75. I consider myself to be a practising Catholic.

Thank you for your co-operation.

APPENDIX 6

QUESTIONNAIRE DATA: FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES

The frequency of responses..

The valid and cumulative percentages are given below.

Q.1. Are you male or female?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Male	13	9.8	9.8	9.8
	2 = Female	120	90.2	90.2	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.2. What was your age at the time of your answering the survey?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Under 20	63	47.4	47.4	47.4
	2 = 20 - 23	43	32.3	32.3	79.7
	3 = 24 - 27	12	9.0	9.0	88.7
	4 = Over 28	15	11.3	11.3	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.3. I completed my senior studies at a Catholic School in:					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = metropolitan	95	71.4	71.4	71.4
	2 = country	38	28.6	28.6	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.4. How many years did you spend at a Catholic primary school?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = 1-2	33	24.8	24.8	24.8
	2 = 3-4	12	9.0	9.0	33.8
	3 = 5=6	10	7.5	7.5	41.4
	4 = 7	78	58.6	58.6	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.5. How many years did you spend at a Catholic secondary school?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = 1 -2 years	41	30.8	30.8	30.8
	2 = 3 years	11	8.3	8.3	39.1
	3 = 4 years	6	4.5	4.5	43.6
	4 = 5 years	75	56.4	56.4	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.6. I am studying at Edith Cowan University in the School of Education for a Bachelor of Education in:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = primary education	115	86.5	86.5	86.5
	2 = secondary education	18	13.5	13.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.7. What is your mother's religion?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Catholic	88	66.2	66.2	66.2
	2 = Orthodox	6	4.5	4.5	70.7
	3 = Other Christian Faith	32	24.1	24.1	94.7
	4 = Non - Christian Religion	2	1.5	1.5	96.2
	5 = No religion	5	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.8. What is your father's religion?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Catholic	85	63.9	63.9	63.9
	2 = Orthodox	4	3.0	3.0	66.9
	3 = Other Christian Faith	30	22.6	22.6	89.5
	4 = Non Christian faith	1	.8	.8	90.2
	5 = No religion	13	9.8	9.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.9. The example and lives of your parents over the years has influenced your religious development.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	38	28.6	28.6	28.6
	2 = Agree	66	49.6	49.6	78.2
	3 = Uncertain	11	8.3	8.3	86.5
	4 = Disagree	15	11.3	11.3	97.7
	5 = Strongly disagree	3	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.10. The influence of your friends and peers while you were at school has influenced your religious development.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	4	3.0	3.0	3.0
	2 = Agree	45	33.8	33.8	36.8
	3 = Uncertain	20	15.0	15.0	51.9
	4 = Disagree	51	38.3	38.3	90.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	13	9.8	9.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.11. The example and lives of your teachers while you were at school has influenced your religious development.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	11	8.3	8.3	8.3
	2 = Agree	46	34.6	34.6	42.9
	3 = Uncertain	16	12.0	12.0	54.9
	4 = Disagree	47	35.3	35.3	90.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	13	9.8	9.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

O.12. The religious education program provided at your school has influenced your religious development.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	20	15.0	15.0	15.0
	2 = Agree	54	40.6	40.6	55.6
	3 = Uncertain	20	15.0	15.0	70.7
	4 = Disagree	27	20.3	20.3	91.0
	5 = Strongly disagree	12	9.0	9.0	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.13. The atmosphere of your Catholic School has influenced you religious development.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	15	11.3	11.3	11.3
	2 = Agree	35	26.3	26.3	37.6
	3 = Uncertain	44	33.1	33.1	70.7
	4 = Disagree	28	21.1	21.1	91.7
	5 = Strongly disagree	11	8.3	8.3	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.14. The senior students understood and accepted the religious goals of the school.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	9	6.8	6.8	6.8
	2 = Agree	35	26.3	26.3	33.1
	3 = Uncertain	43	32.3	32.3	65.4
	4 = Disagree	29	21.8	21.8	87.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	17	12.8	12.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.15. You could tell by the atmosphere of the school that it was a Christian School.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	24	18.0	18.0	18.0
	2 = Agree	45	33.8	33.8	51.9
	3 = Uncertain	31	23.3	23.3	75.2
	4 = Disagree	16	12.0	12.0	87.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	17	12.8	12.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.16. Students thought a lot of the Catholic School that I attended.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	16	12.0	12.0	12.0
	2 = Agree	41	30.8	30.8	42.9
	3 = Uncertain	40	30.1	30.1	72.9
	4 = Disagree	24	18.0	18.0	91.0
	5 = Strongly disagree	12	9.0	9.0	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.17. I am a better person for attending a Catholic School.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	36	27.1	27.1	27.1
	2 = Agree	36	27.1	27.1	54.1
	3 = Uncertain	28	21.1	21.1	75.2
	4 = Disagree	16	12.0	12.0	87.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	17	12.8	12.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.18. If I had to repeat my senior secondary education, I would go to a Catholic School.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	62	46.6	46.6	46.6
	2 = Agree	40	30.1	30.1	76.7
	3 = Uncertain	13	9.8	9.8	86.5
	4 = Disagree	1	.8	.8	87.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	15	11.3	11.3	98.5
	11.00	2	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.19. I would send my children to a Catholic School.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	72	54.1	54.1	54.1
	2 = Agree	25	18.8	18.8	72.9
	3 = Uncertain	19	14.3	14.3	87.2
	4 = Disagree	3	2.3	2.3	89.5
	5 = Strongly disagree	14	10.5	10.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.20. I was happy at the Catholic School that I attended.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	42	31.6	31.6	31.6
	2 = Agree	55	41.4	41.4	72.9
	3 = Uncertain	14	10.5	10.5	83.5
	4 = Disagree	11	8.3	8.3	91.7
	5 = Strongly disagree	11	8.3	8.3	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.21. I felt important at the Catholic School that I attended.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	28	21.1	21.1	21.1
	2 = Agree	50	37.6	37.6	58.6
	3 = Uncertain	20	15.0	15.0	73.7
	4 = Disagree	21	15.8	15.8	89.5
	5 = Strongly disagree	14	10.5	10.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.22. I was proud to be a student at the Catholic School I attended.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	46	34.6	34.6	34.6
	2 = Agree	51	38.3	38.3	72.9
	3 = Uncertain	16	12.0	12.0	85.0
	4 = Disagree	10	7.5	7.5	92.5
	5 = Strongly disagree	10	7.5	7.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.23. I could always approach the Principal for advice and help.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	13	9.8	9.8	9.8
	2 = Agree	31	23.3	23.3	33.1
	3 = Uncertain	26	19.5	19.5	52.6
	4 = Disagree	31	23.3	23.3	75.9
	5 = Strongly disagree	32	24.1	24.1	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.24. The Principal was a caring and understanding person.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	14	10.5	10.5	10.5
	2 = Agree	50	37.6	37.6	48.1
	3 = Uncertain	25	18.8	18.8	66.9
	4 = Disagree	24	18.0	18.0	85.0
	5 = Strongly disagree	20	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.25. The discipline at the school that I attended was just.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	20	15.0	15.0	15.0
	2 = Agree	67	50.4	50.4	65.4
	3 = Uncertain	23	17.3	17.3	82.7
	4 = Disagree	10	7.5	7.5	90.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	13	9.8	9.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.26. The Catholic School that I attended placed too much emphasis on rules and regulations.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	22	16.5	16.5	16.5
	2 = Agree	38	28.6	28.6	45.1
	3 = Uncertain	25	18.8	18.8	63.9
	4 = Disagree	38	28.6	28.6	92.5
	5 = Strongly disagree	10	7.5	7.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.27. Students at the Catholic School that I attended knew the standard of conduct expected of them.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	24	18.0	18.0	18.0
	2 = Agree	73	54.9	54.9	72.9
	3 = Uncertain	17	12.8	12.8	85.7
	4 = Disagree	7	5.3	5.3	91.0
	5 = Strongly disagree	12	9.0	9.0	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.28. My religious education classes were a waste of time.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	12	9.0	9.0	9.0
	2 = Agree	26	19.5	19.5	28.6
	3 = Uncertain	17	12.8	12.8	41.4
	4 = Disagree	62	46.6	46.6	88.0
	5 = Strongly disagree	16	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.29. Religious education classes were interesting.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	8	6.0	6.0	6.0
	2 = Agree	48	36.1	36.1	42.1
	3 = Uncertain	29	21.8	21.8	63.9
	4 = Disagree	36	27.1	27.1	91.0
	5 = Strongly disagree	12	9.0	9.0	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.30. Religious education classes did not arouse much interest on the part of students.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	19	14.3	14.3	14.3
	2 = Agree	50	37.6	37.6	51.9
	3 = Uncertain	32	24.1	24.1	75.9
	4 = Disagree	28	21.1	21.1	97.0
	5 = Strongly disagree	4	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.31. Religious education classes were taken seriously by students.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	1	.8	.8	.8
	2 = Agree	15	11.3	11.3	12.0
	3 = Uncertain	34	25.6	25.6	37.6
	4 = Disagree	59	44.4	44.4	82.0
	5 = Strongly disagree	24	18.0	18.0	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.32. My religious education classes allowed me to develop as a person.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	17	12.8	12.8	12.8
	2 = Agree	46	34.6	34.6	47.4
	3 = Uncertain	31	23.3	23.3	70.7
	4 = Disagree	29	21.8	21.8	92.5
	5 = Strongly disagree	10	7.5	7.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.33 I enjoyed my religious education classes in senior school.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	13	9.8	9.8	9.8
	2 = Agree	52	39.1	39.1	48.9
	3 = Uncertain	30	22.6	22.6	71.4
	4 = Disagree	24	18.0	18.0	89.5
	5 = Strongly disagree	14	10.5	10.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.34 If my religious education classes were voluntary, I would still have attended them.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	10	7.5	7.5	7.5
	2 = Agree	36	27.1	27.1	34.6
	3 = Uncertain	48	36.1	36.1	70.7
	4 = Disagree	25	18.8	18.8	89.5
	5 = Strongly disagree	14	10.5	10.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q. 35. I gained a lot from my religious education classes.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	9	6.8	6.8	6.8
	2 = Agree	61	45.9	45.9	52.6
	3 = Uncertain	30	22.6	22.6	75.2
	4 = Disagree	21	15.8	15.8	91.0
	5 = Strongly disagree	12	9.0	9.0	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.36. My religious education classes were related to real life and to my needs.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	14	10.5	10.5	10.5
	2 = Agree	47	35.3	35.3	45.9
	3 = Uncertain	25	18.8	18.8	64.7
	4 = Disagree	30	22.6	22.6	87.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	17	12.8	12.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.37. The school that I attended had a good religious education program in years 11 and 12.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	14	10.5	10.5	10.5
	2 = Agree	42	31.6	31.6	42.1
	3 = Uncertain	29	21.8	21.8	63.9
	4 = Disagree	27	20.3	20.3	84.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	21	15.8	15.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.38. My religious education classes were well prepared and well taught.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	11	8.3	8.3	8.3
	2 = Agree	59	44.4	44.4	52.6
	3 = Uncertain	21	15.8	15.8	68.4
	4 = Disagree	25	18.8	18.8	87.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	17	12.8	12.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.39. More emphasis should be placed on knowledge and content in religious education classes.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	11	8.3	8.3	8.3
	2 = Agree	36	27.1	27.1	35.3
	3 = Uncertain	43	32.3	32.3	67.7
	4 = Disagree	34	25.6	25.6	93.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	9	6.8	6.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.40. During my senior religious education classes I was taught the Church's teaching on marriage and divorce.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = strongly agree	21	15.8	15.8	15.8
	2 = Agree	53	39.8	39.8	55.6
	3 = Uncertain	20	15.0	15.0	70.7
	4 = Disagree	20	15.0	15.0	85.7
	5 = Strongly disagree	19	14.3	14.3	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.41. During my senior religious education classes I was taught the Church's teaching on contraception.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	23	17.3	17.3	17.3
	2 = Agree	43	32.3	32.3	49.6
	3 = Uncertain	29	21.8	21.8	71.4
	4 = Disagree	19	14.3	14.3	85.7
	5 = Strongly disagree	19	14.3	14.3	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.42. During my senior religious education classes I was taught the Church's teaching on Sunday Mass attendance.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	11	8.3	8.3	8.3
	2 = Agree	48	36.1	36.1	44.4
	3 = Uncertain	34	25.6	25.6	69.9
	4 = Disagree	28	21.1	21.1	91.0
	5 = Strongly disagree	12	9.0	9.0	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q. 43. The Catholic religion helps me answer questions about the meaning of life.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	17	12.8	12.8	12.8
	2 = Agree	60	45.1	45.1	57.9
	3 = Uncertain	36	27.1	27.1	85.0
	4 = Disagree	15	11.3	11.3	96.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	5	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q. 44. The Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	24	18.0	18.0	18.0
	2 = Agree	34	25.6	25.6	43.6
	3 = Uncertain	50	37.6	37.6	81.2
	4 = Disagree	20	15.0	15.0	96.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	5	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.45. The Immaculate Conception refers to Mary.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	57	42.9	42.9	42.9
	2 = Agree	48	36.1	36.1	78.9
	3 = Uncertain	28	21.1	21.1	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.46. Mary, Mother of Christ, was assumed into heaven body and soul.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	44	33.1	33.1	33.1
	2 = Agree	47	35.3	35.3	68.4
	3 = Uncertain	35	26.3	26.3	94.7
	4 = Disagree	5	3.8	3.8	98.5
	5 = Strongly disagree	2	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.47. I believe in God.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	84	63.2	63.2	63.2
	2 = Agree	30	22.6	22.6	85.7
	3 = Uncertain	17	12.8	12.8	98.5
	4 = Disagree	2	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.48. God is a loving father, who loves me very much.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	60	45.1	45.1	45.1
	2 = Agree	51	38.3	38.3	83.5
	3 = Uncertain	19	14.3	14.3	97.7
	4 = Disagree	2	1.5	1.5	99.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	1	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.49. I believe that God always forgives me.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	70	52.6	52.6	52.6
	2 = Agree	40	30.1	30.1	82.7
	3 = Uncertain	21	15.8	15.8	98.5
	4 = Disagree	1	.8	.8	99.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	1	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.50. Christ is a real person to me in my daily life.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	45	33.8	33.8	33.8
	2 = Agree	39	29.3	29.3	63.2
	3 = Uncertain	35	26.3	26.3	89.5
	4 = Disagree	11	8.3	8.3	97.7
	5 = Strongly disagree	3	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.51. Christ, as God, could not sin.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	40	30.1	30.1	30.1
	2 = Agree	30	22.6	22.6	52.6
	3 = Uncertain	32	24.1	24.1	76.7
	4 = Disagree	25	18.8	18.8	95.5
	5 = Strongly disagree	6	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.52. I normally attend Mass

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Each Sunday	17	12.8	12.8	12.8
	2 = Two or three Sundays a month	16	12.0	12.0	24.8
	3 = Once a month	7	5.3	5.3	30.1
	4 = A few times a year	53	39.8	39.8	69.9
	5 = Rarely or never	40	30.1	30.1	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.53. I normally receive Eucharist (Holy Communion).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Each Sunday	16	12.0	12.0	12.0
	2 = Two or three Sundays a month	12	9.0	9.0	21.1
	3 = Once a month	8	6.0	6.0	27.1
	4 = A few times a year	50	37.6	37.6	64.7
	5 = Rarely or never	47	35.3	35.3	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.54. I normally receive the Sacrament of reconciliation (confession).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3 = Once a month	2	1.5	1.5	1.5
	4 = A few times a year	22	16.5	16.5	18.0
	5 = Rarely or never	109	82.0	82.0	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.55. I normally spend some time every day in personal prayer to God.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	27	20.3	20.3	20.3
	2 = Agree	40	30.1	30.1	50.4
	3 = Uncertain	12	9.0	9.0	59.4
	4 = Disagree	36	27.1	27.1	86.5
	5 = Strongly disagree	18	13.5	13.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.56. I try to read some part of the Scriptures (Bible) each day.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	3	2.3	2.3	2.3
	2 = Agree	9	6.8	6.8	9.0
	3 = Uncertain	5	3.8	3.8	12.8
	4 = Disagree	63	47.4	47.4	60.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	53	39.8	39.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.57. Marriage is a commitment for life.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	52	39.1	39.1	39.1
	2 = Agree	41	30.8	30.8	69.9
	3 = uncertain	22	16.5	16.5	86.5
	4 = Disagree	12	9.0	9.0	95.5
	5 = Strongly disagree	6	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.58. Marriage is a Sacrament of the Catholic Church.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	52	39.1	39.1	39.1
	2 = Agree	53	39.8	39.8	78.9
	3 = Uncertain	19	14.3	14.3	93.2
	4 = Disagree	8	6.0	6.0	99.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	1	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.59. The current Catholic Church's teaching on marriage/divorce is relevant to today's world.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	10	7.5	7.5	7.5
	2 = Agree	28	21.1	21.1	28.6
	3 = Uncertain	31	23.3	23.3	51.9
	4 = Disagree	49	36.8	36.8	88.7
	5 = Strongly disagree	15	11.3	11.3	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.60. Any use of artificial contraception during sexual intercourse is a sin.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	4	3.0	3.0	3.0
	2 = Agree	8	6.0	6.0	9.0
	3 = Uncertain	18	13.5	13.5	22.6
	4 = Disagree	49	36.8	36.8	59.4
	5 = Strongly disagree	54	40.6	40.6	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.61. Having a sexual relationship before marriage is always a sin.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	8	6.0	6.0	6.0
	2 = Agree	20	15.0	15.0	21.1
	3 = Uncertain	18	13.5	13.5	34.6
	4 = Disagree	48	36.1	36.1	70.7
	5 = Strongly disagree	39	29.3	29.3	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.62. Each and every sexual act must be open to the procreation of children.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1 = Strongly agree	6	4.5	4.5	4.5
	2 = Agree	13	9.8	9.8	14.3
	3 = Uncertain	28	21.1	21.1	35.3
	4 = Disagree	43	32.3	32.3	67.7
	5 = Strongly disagree	43	32.3	32.3	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.63. The family planning method, as proposed by Dr Billings, is acceptable to the Church.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	19	14.3	14.3	14.3
	2 = Agree	28	21.1	21.1	35.3
	3 = Uncertain	75	56.4	56.4	91.7
	4 = Disagree	7	5.3	5.3	97.0
	5 = Strongly disagree	4	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.64. Missing mass on Sundays is sinful.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	5	3.8	3.8	3.8
	2 = agree	19	14.3	14.3	18.0
	3 = Uncertain	26	19.5	19.5	37.6
	4 = Disagree	58	43.6	43.6	81.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	25	18.8	18.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.65. I agree with the Catholic Church's teaching on Sunday Mass obligation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	7	5.3	5.3	5.3
	2 = Agree	20	15.0	15.0	20.3
	3 = Uncertain	30	22.6	22.6	42.9
	4 = Disagree	50	37.6	37.6	80.5
	5 = Strongly disagree	26	19.5	19.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.66. When the male sperm unites with the female egg you have a human life.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	50	37.6	37.6	37.6
	2 = Agree	43	32.3	32.3	69.9
	3 = Uncertain	16	12.0	12.0	82.0
	4 = Disagree	18	13.5	13.5	95.5
	5 = Strongly disagree	6	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.67. Abortion is the murder of an unborn child.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	54	40.6	40.6	40.6
	2 = Agree	27	20.3	20.3	60.9
	3 = Uncertain	24	18.0	18.0	78.9
	4 = Disagree	14	10.5	10.5	89.5
	5 = Strongly disagree	14	10.5	10.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.68. A girl who is raped and falls pregnant should be allowed to have an abortion.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	51	38.3	38.3	38.3
	2 = Agree	32	24.1	24.1	62.4
	3 = Uncertain	24	18.0	18.0	80.5
	4 = Disagree	15	11.3	11.3	91.7
	5 = Strongly disagree	11	8.3	8.3	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.69. Heterosexual intercourse outside marriage is sinful.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	12	9.0	9.0	9.0
	2 = Agree	15	11.3	11.3	20.3
	3 = Uncertain	27	20.3	20.3	40.6
	4 = Disagree	51	38.3	38.3	78.9
	5 = Strongly disagree	28	21.1	21.1	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.70. Homosexual acts are sinful.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	9	6.8	6.8	6.8
	2 = Agree	13	9.8	9.8	16.5
	3 = Uncertain	23	17.3	17.3	33.8
	4 = Disagree	48	36.1	36.1	69.9
	5 = Strongly disagree	40	30.1	30.1	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.71. The Pope has the power to make statements on behalf of the whole Church.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	32	24.1	24.1	24.1
	2 = Agree	58	43.6	43.6	67.7
	3 = Uncertain	24	18.0	18.0	85.7
	4 = Disagree	16	12.0	12.0	97.7
	5 = Strongly disagree	3	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.72. The Pope is infallible and cannot err when he speaks ex cathedra.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	8	6.0	6.0	6.0
	2 = Agree	13	9.8	9.8	15.8
	3 = Uncertain	80	60.2	60.2	75.9
	4 = Disagree	19	14.3	14.3	90.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	13	9.8	9.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.73. The Catholic Church's teachings are only a guide for Christian living. I am free to make up my own mind as to if I follow the teachings or not.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	46	34.6	34.6	34.6
	2 = Agree	55	41.4	41.4	75.9
	3 = Uncertain	15	11.3	11.3	87.2
	4 = Disagree	13	9.8	9.8	97.0
	5 = Strongly disagree	4	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.74. The moral teachings of the Church are out of date with 'modern' society.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	36	27.1	27.1	27.1
	2 = Agree	40	30.1	30.1	57.1
	3 = Uncertain	35	26.3	26.3	83.5
	4 = Disagree	17	12.8	12.8	96.2
	5 = Strongly disagree	5	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Q.75. I consider myself to be a practising Catholic.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 = Strongly agree	16	12.0	12.0	12.0
	2 = Agree	53	39.8	39.8	51.9
	3 = Uncertain	30	22.6	22.6	74.4
	4 = Disagree	22	16.5	16.5	91.0
	5 = Strongly disagree	12	9.0	9.0	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

APPENDIX 7

T-TEST: MALE/FEMALE DIFFERENCES IN ANSWERING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

A one-sample 'T' test (male/female) was applied to every question.

The differences, as indicated below do not show a great variation.

One-Sample Test						
Test Value = 0						
Descriptor	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Are you male or female?	73.594	132	.000	1.9023	1.8511	1.9534
What was your age at the time of your answering the survey?	21.270	132	.000	1.84	1.67	2.01
I completed my senior studies at a Catholic School in: city/country.	32.699	132	.000	1.2857	1.2079	1.3635
How many years did you spend at a Catholic primary school?	26.678	132	.000	3.0000	2.7776	3.2224
How many years did you spend at a Catholic secondary school?	24.124	132	.000	2.8647	2.6298	3.0996
I am studying at Edith Cowan University in the School of Education for a Bachelor of Education in:	38.131	132	.000	1.1353	1.0764	1.1942
What is your mother's religion?	17.885	132	.000	1.7218	1.5314	1.9122
What is your father's religion?	16.393	132	.000	1.8947	1.6661	2.1234

The example and lives of your parents over the years has influenced your religious development.	23.844	132	.000	2.0902	1.9168	2.2636
The influence of your friends and peers while you were at school has influenced your religious development.	33.350	132	.000	3.1805	2.9918	3.3691
The example and lives of your teachers while you were at school has influenced your religious development.	29.291	132	.000	3.0376	2.8325	3.2427
The religious education program provided at your school has influenced your religious development.	25.391	132	.000	2.6767	2.4682	2.8852
The atmosphere of your Catholic School has influenced you religious development.	29.754	132	.000	2.8872	2.6953	3.0792
The senior students understood and accepted the religious goals of the school.	31.507	132	.000	3.0752	2.8821	3.2683
You could tell by the atmosphere of the school that it was a Christian School.	24.410	132	.000	2.6767	2.4598	2.8936

Students thought a lot of the Catholic School that I attended.	28.385	132	.000	2.8120	2.6161	3.0080
I am a better person for attending a Catholic School.	21.988	132	.000	2.5639	2.3333	2.7946
If I had to repeat my senior secondary education, I would go to a Catholic School.	14.525	132	.000	2.1203	1.8316	2.4090
I would send my children to a Catholic School.	17.189	132	.000	1.9624	1.7366	2.1882
I was happy at the Catholic School that I attended.	20.983	132	.000	2.2030	1.9953	2.4107
I felt important at the Catholic School that I attended.	23.260	132	.000	2.5714	2.3527	2.7901
I was proud to be a student at the Catholic School I attended.	20.725	132	.000	2.1504	1.9451	2.3556
I could always approach the Principal for advice and help.	28.635	132	.000	3.2857	3.0587	3.5127
The Principal was a caring and understanding person.	26.561	132	.000	2.8947	2.6792	3.1103
The discipline at the school that I attended was just.	24.981	132	.000	2.4662	2.2709	2.6614
The Catholic School that I attended placed too much emphasis on rules and regulations.	26.439	132	.000	2.8195	2.6086	3.0305

Students at the Catholic School that I attended knew the standard of conduct expected of them.	24.104	132	.000	2.3233	2.1326	2.5140
My religious education classes were a waste of time.	32.409	132	.000	3.3308	3.1275	3.5341
Religious education classes were interesting.	30.739	132	.000	2.9699	2.7788	3.1610
Religious education classes did not arouse much interest on the part of students.	28.257	132	.000	2.6090	2.4264	2.7917
Religious education classes were taken seriously by students.	45.808	132	.000	3.6767	3.5179	3.8355
My religious education classes allowed me to develop as a person.	27.652	132	.000	2.7669	2.5690	2.9648
I enjoyed my religious education classes in senior school.	27.781	132	.000	2.8045	2.6048	3.0042
If my religious education classes were voluntary, I would still have attended them.	31.492	132	.000	2.9774	2.7904	3.1645
I gained a lot from my religious education classes.	28.992	132	.000	2.7444	2.5571	2.9316
My religious education classes were related to real life and to my needs.	27.326	132	.000	2.9173	2.7061	3.1285

The school that I attended had a good religious education program in years 11 and 12.	27.427	132	.000	2.9925	2.7767	3.2083
My religious education classes were well prepared and well taught.	27.080	132	.000	2.8346	2.6275	3.0416
More emphasis should be placed on knowledge and content in religious education classes.	31.996	132	.000	2.9549	2.7722	3.1376
During my senior religious education classes I was taught the Church's teaching on marriage and divorce.	24.166	132	.000	2.7218	2.4990	2.9446
During my senior religious education classes I was taught the Church's teaching on contraception.	24.522	132	.000	2.7594	2.5368	2.9820
During my senior religious education classes I was taught the Church's teaching on Sunday Mass attendance.	29.499	132	.000	2.8647	2.6726	3.0568
The Catholic religion helps me answer questions about the meaning of life.	29.149	132	.000	2.4812	2.3128	2.6496
The Catholic Church was founded by Christ.	28.257	132	.000	2.6090	2.4264	2.7917
The Immaculate Conception refers to Mary.	26.619	132	.000	1.7820	1.6495	1.9144

Mary, Mother of Christ, was assumed into heaven body and soul.	25.183	132	.000	2.0526	1.8914	2.2139
I believe in God.	22.731	132	.000	1.5263	1.3935	1.6591
God is a loving father, who loves me very much.	24.736	132	.000	1.7444	1.6049	1.8839
I believe that God always forgives me.	23.385	132	.000	1.6692	1.5280	1.8104
Christ is a real person to me in my daily life.	23.528	132	.000	2.1579	1.9765	2.3393
Christ, as God, could not sin.	23.026	132	.000	2.4511	2.2406	2.6617
I normally attend Mass	30.665	132	.000	3.6241	3.3903	3.8578
I normally receive Eucharist (Holy Communion).	32.169	132	.000	3.7519	3.5212	3.9826
I normally receive the Sacrament of reconciliation (confession).	127.530	132	.000	4.8045	4.7300	4.8790
I normally spend some time every day in personal prayer to God.	23.642	132	.000	2.8346	2.5974	3.0717
I try to read some part of the Scriptures (Bible) each day.	50.784	132	.000	4.1579	3.9959	4.3198
Marriage is a commitment for life.	20.941	132	.000	2.0902	1.8928	2.2877
Marriage is a Sacrament of the Catholic Church.	23.880	132	.000	1.8947	1.7378	2.0517
The current Catholic Church's teaching on marriage/divorce is relevant to today's world.	32.877	132	.000	3.2331	3.0386	3.4276

Any use of artificial contraception during sexual intercourse is a sin.	45.545	132	.000	4.0602	3.8838	4.2365
Having a sexual relationship before marriage is always a sin.	34.877	132	.000	3.6767	3.4682	3.8852
Each and every sexual act must be open to the procreation of children.	38.357	132	.000	3.7820	3.5869	3.9770
The family planning method, as proposed by Dr Billings, is acceptable to the Church.	33.446	132	.000	2.6165	2.4618	2.7713
Missing mass on Sundays is sinful.	38.872	132	.000	3.5940	3.4111	3.7769
I agree with the Catholic Church's teaching on Sunday Mass obligation.	35.976	132	.000	3.5113	3.3182	3.7043
When the male sperm unites with the female egg you have a human life.	20.725	132	.000	2.1504	1.9451	2.3556
Abortion is the murder of an unborn child.	19.359	132	.000	2.3008	2.0657	2.5358
A girl who is raped and falls pregnant should be allowed to have an abortion.	20.091	132	.000	2.2707	2.0471	2.4942
Heterosexual intercourse outside marriage is sinful.	33.643	132	.000	3.5113	3.3048	3.7177
Homosexual acts are sinful.	36.207	132	.000	3.7293	3.5256	3.9331

The Pope has the power to make statements on behalf of the whole Church.	25.282	132	.000	2.2481	2.0722	2.4240
The Pope is infallible and cannot err when he speaks ex cathedra.	38.709	132	.000	3.1203	2.9608	3.2798
The Catholic Church's teachings are only a guide for Christian living. I am free to make up my own mind as to if I follow the teachings or not.	22.308	132	.000	2.0526	1.8706	2.2346
The moral teachings of the Church are out of date with 'modern' society.	24.230	132	.000	2.3609	2.1682	2.5536
I consider myself to be a practising Catholic.	27.067	132	.000	2.7068	2.5090	2.9046

APPENDIX 8

LETTER REQUESTING INTERVIEW

Letter to students requesting their consent for the interview.

Dear University Student.

I invite you to participate in a one-to-one interview with the aim of validating the results of the questionnaire that you completed earlier in the semester.

As you have already completed the questionnaire (survey) you have met the criteria to volunteer to participate in the interview section of this study.

For those students who will be selected to take part in the one-to-one interviews I wish to draw to your notice the following:

- Your willingness to participate is not associated with your university course or the religious education units that you are studying and your decision to participate will have no effect on your assessment for this unit.
- The information that I am seeking concerns your senior religious education classes at a Catholic school, no judgements will be made about your personal beliefs, and practices.
- The interview will be tape-recorded.
- I will be the only person who knows your identity.
- At the interview you will be given another name and I will use this name during the interview.
- It is this name which will appear in the reporting of this study.
- The person transcribing your interviews will only know you by the name that I gave you at the beginning of the interview.
- Your replies will be confidential to me.
- The interview will take between forty five minutes and a hour.
- You are free to discontinue the interview at any time.
- After your interview has been transcribed and the relevant data reported the tape recording will be erased.

If you are willing to participate in this interview I would ask you to sign the consent form below.

I can be contacted on Mount Lawley Campus of Edith Cowan University in Building 17 room 126 or by phoning [REDACTED] (direct line) or [REDACTED] (mobile).

Thanks you for your co-operation! Good wishes and God bless during this year and in your future life.

Br Luke Saker fms

APPENDIX 9

STUDENT CONSENT FORM - INTERVIEWS

Consent form signed by the students when agreeing to an interview

I am willing to participate in this interview part of this study.

I understand that I have been assured of confidentiality of information and that my identity will remain anonymous and that after the data from the interview has been transcribed and recorded my taped interview will be destroyed.

Name: (Please Print). _____

Signature: _____

Date: / /2000.

APPENDIX 10

PRE INTERVIEW OBSERVATION NOTES.

Observation notes, on each of the students, made before the interview commenced.

Before the interviews began I spoke with the students in an attempt to have them feel at ease with the tape recorder, the microphone and myself. It was during this time that I made some observations of the 10 students.

These observations made by me are printed below:

Observation notes 1

Student 1 - Peter.

Confident

Thinks for himself - gives indicates of having fixed ideas

Observation notes 2

Student 2 - Paul

Quietly spoken and very nervous

Gives impression that he is still in the 'high school mode' of teacher/student relationship

Observation notes 3

Student 3 - Matthew

Quite a complex young man

Body language and tone of voice at beginning of interview quite aggressive

Indicated not a religious person - blamed teachers and school for his attitude

A lot of blame could be placed on Matthew himself

Observation notes 4

Student 4 - John

Friendly young man

Enjoys talking with people has a very relaxed attitude towards life - age could play its part here

Admits to being agnostic

Not anti religion just not 'into it'

John's responses to the interview questions appeared at odds with what he told me at the beginning of the interview. I questioned him concerning this apparent contradiction. He told me that religion confused him. The loss of his best friend when he was 14 years of age caused him to turn to God and

then get angry with God and turn away from God. Could he be searching for a spirituality but not a religious tradition?

Observation notes 5

Student 5 - Mary

Mass not relevant in her busy life

Concern for social justice issues sees the Church doing great work in these areas

Moral teachings of the Church an area of concern for her

Observation notes 6

Student 6 - Margaret

Goes to Mass with parents when not 'too tired'

Enjoyed time at Catholic school

Respects what the Catholic Church stands for

Understands why young people are 'turned off' the Church

Observation notes 7

Student 8 - Ruth

Very friendly

Hostile to the Church

Youngest of five children

Siblings in varying degrees of relationships - no doubt opinion is persuaded by this

No judgemental

Observation notes 8

Student 9 - Sarah

Not 'churchy'

Appears spiritual but not adhering to a particular tradition

Great love and respect for grandmother

Observation 9

Student 9 - Claire

Older more mature

Self-assured

Is quite clear on the goals she has set for her life

Appears conservative - orthodox in her beliefs

Catholic Church important in her life - family husband 2 children go to Mass weekly

Observation notes 10

Student 10 - Mark

Older than most other students

No religious affiliation

Religion not important in formative years of his life

Would consider himself an atheist

APPENDIX 11

SAMPLE TRANSCRIPTS OF STUDENT INTERVIEWS

Sample transcripts of the interviews with the students.

A sample of the first page of each student's interviews is reported below:

In some cases the reporting of the interviews in chapter 6 have been edited or not included.

Pseudonym - Peter

Student No. 1.

Interview conducted 6th November 2000.

In the response to the survey I normally attend Mass, you state that you rarely or never go to Mass on Sundays, how you feel about that?

I feel fine. I think that it is irrelevant. I find that when comes to your own spirituality, I suppose with the Catholic way they regard as important but personally I don't. I find if you are doing something, your own thing and you believe in God, and you believe that is the right way, that is enough.

Similarly with the question on receiving the sacrament of reconciliation, again rarely or never. How would you explain that?

I think what I do is probably more like my business, and it isn't anyone else's to be discussing. I know that they go on that it is a representative of God but I don't believe that, how you can say that someone could possibly take the place of God. I don't believe it.

So how would you see yourself if necessary obtaining forgiveness from God?

Through my own sort of personal prayer and stuff like that, I would say that is the only way.

The example and lives of your parents has influenced your religious development over the years, your response to that and you would agree. How would you say that you have influenced your spiritual and religious development?

I would say that my mum has put me through a Catholic school, and my dad is no religion at all, so I sort of say he has given me no religion, but a chance of having a look at it religion in a different angle. And my mum has given it from another angle as well.

You have also say the influence of your friends and peers while you were at school have very little influence on your religious development. Why do you think that is so?

No! They did not. I make my own decisions; I do what I want. If a person tends to think that they can influence me, well, they can try, but they won't be my mate for long. That is the way I look at it.

Pseudonym - Paul

Student No 2.

Interview conducted 6th November 2000.

You say in your survey response that your attendance at Mass is a few times a year, why would it not be more regular?

I felt that a few times a year was closest approximation for my category. I didn't feel that I attended at least once a month. The reason why is a good question. I suppose I don't know, I suppose I just find that I seem to have other things which I find more important, I don't know about more important, I just tend to put it off and I find I tend to go only probably once a month.

You say that you rarely or never receive the sacrament of reconciliation, why would this be so?

I think the main reason that I did go to reconciliation was that the school went. Now I feel that if I have done problems or stuff that I am not proud of I talk to God and I believe that I don't need to go. I feel that I don't need to go to a priest to say that because this is between God and me.

The example that the lives of your parents has influenced your religious development, do you say this is true, and if so why?

Definitely true, my mother is very religious, my father probably not as much, but they have brought us up to the religious background, and definitely that I like everyone, kind of look up to our parents. So, yes they have influenced my religious beliefs.

You say in your response to I normally spend time every day in personal prayer, that you strongly agree. Do you feel the need for prayer every day and why?

Yes, I think that is the way I commune to God. So I believe that for me that it is a lot better that I can speak to God when I have a problem or just to thank Him for whatever has gone right during the day. And I feel that's more important than probably going to church.

The question I try to read some part of Scripture every day, you strongly disagree with. Why is it that you don't refer to Scripture as often as you may?

I think that when I was at school we were forced to read Scripture, it kind of turned me off it. And that's probably the main reason why I haven't gone back to it. Because we were kind of forced to do it and it is just like a reaction and I suppose I have just continued as I have got older.

You agree that you were proud to be a student at the catholic school you attended, what was some of the reasons that made you proud.

Student No. 3.

Interview conducted 7th November 2002.

How would you see the example and lives of your parents over the years having influenced your religious development?

Well my parents aren't very religious, so they have had very little impact on me in the way of Christianity or religion. More so in the last say 5 or 6 years than in the earlier times of my life, I mean I went to a Catholic school and we were part of the church and we used to go but more so a lot recently they have just lost faith and haven't had much to do with church and religion, so therefore I haven't.

How would you say the catholic school you attended affected your religious development?

I went to a couple of catholic schools, two high schools, I went to Trinity College from year 4 to 10, then left there and I went to Newman College for year 11 and 12, during my time at Trinity I think they of kind of worked as a whole religious catholic theme thing, they were not very nice the teachers, they were pretty ruthless but coming to Newman college it was a better atmosphere, better environment to learn. The teachers were nicer and I guess you could kind of get involved into the community and the religious community more so than at my other school. I wasn't there long enough to really get involved in it as much as I could have if I had been there a little big longer.

You say in your survey that attending mass on Sundays you rarely or never go, is there a reason for that?

Not really. I just don't find it particularly interesting, but I guess my parents never really pushed me. I can't use them as an excuse, I guess if you are brought up going to church every weekend, or every Sunday, you are more inclined to go as the years go on. But no that isn't a really, never went themselves, so I never went so that is I guess a reason.

Would anything change that opinion or change your actions in going every week?

Prior to doing this course, this unit at Uni no, but doing this unit has been a really good thing for me. It has changed the way I think about the church and everything to do with it in Christianity, it has been a good thing so maybe in the future I might. Prior to doing the unit I would not have had the same views as I have always had.

I notice also in your replies that reconciliation is rarely or never used by you, is there a reason for that?

Pseudonym - John.

Student No. 4.

Interview conducted 8th November 2000.

What influence would you say that your parents had on your religious development?

Very little. They would have baptised me at birth. I suppose we went to church at Easter and Christmas time that is about it!

You say in your response to question no. 10, that you normally attend Mass only a few times a year, why is this?

I suppose it is just a personal thing. I don't believe that God would punish me heavily for the fact that I did not go to Mass every Sunday.

You also say you only go to the sacrament of reconciliation a few times a year. Why is this?

I think God forgives anyway. I really do I pray to God I would pray to God regularly for forgiveness and that is on a daily basis. I would speak to Him so I don't think He would argue with that.

So you wouldn't see it necessary to go to a Priest to have your sins forgiven. You do this directly with God.

No, not absolutely. I think for certain sins for mortal things like that, then perhaps it is more appropriate to see a Priest or see someone else. But for every day living, it's not necessary.

You said that when you were asked concerning the influence of friends and peers when you were at school and how they influenced your religious development, you strongly disagreed with that statement. Why is that?

In my circle of friends most of them strongly disagreed with religion and most of them do not believe in religion and if anything they are negative towards religion.

You also strongly agree that the teachers you were in contact with at the school influenced your religious development. Why would that be?

The teachers that I came across influenced me, yes. I had some very good teachers that influenced me and well informed me. I suppose at the time I have to admit, at that age, I wasn't very keen to learn, but whatever I did get was beneficial to me, particularly seeing that I didn't have a strong influence at home.

Student No. 6.

Interview conducted 8th November 2000.

What effect would you say lives of your parents and the examples of your parents had on your religious development?

I would say a lot with my mum, she took me to church each weekend along with my sister.

What influence would you say that your friends and peers had on your religious development when you were at school?

My friends in secondary school had no influence on my religious beliefs or my religious development.

Would you see the examples of your teachers when you were at school as having an influence on your religious development?

Definitely, I formed strong friendships with a couple of the teachers and they assisted my religious development.

Would you see the Catholic school that you went to of having a loving atmosphere?

Yes, I would.

Do you consider yourself a person of prayer?

I am not sure that I would go that far but I do pray I probably spend a few times a week in personal prayer.

Do you often read Scripture?

I used to.

You don't any longer?

I occasionally do.

Were you proud to be a student at the Catholic school you attended?

Totally.

Pseudonym - Ruth

Student No. 7.

Interview conducted 7th November 2000

Would you say that your religious education classes had much influence on your religious development?

Yes I would because I believe in God. I got taught more things about what the Catholic Church taught, belief wise. Some of it was not necessarily good influence, if you know what I mean

You say in your response that you normally attend Mass a few times a year, would there be any reasons why you don't go every Sunday?

I don't think they have at all. My grandparents did because I went to church with them when I was younger.

Could you see any way that the church could make Mass more relevant for young people?

A lot of it is the way they say it. What they say is still hard to understand and young people don't know what they are talking about. I don't know if it is possible to modernise the Mass and make it more relevant for today.

You also say as far as reconciliation goes you might a few times a year. Is there any reason why you don't go more frequently?

Admittedly I would like to go more frequently. The only reason I don't is that I don't really feel like I should because I don't go to Mass often enough. I don't really know if I have a right to, I guess.

You see the sacrament of reconciliation as a forgiving sacrament?

Yes, definitely.

You speak about your parents, the example and lives of your parents. Do you think they have influenced you over your years in religious development?

I don't think they have at all. My grand parents did, because I went to church when I was younger.

What about the influence of your friends and peers while you were at school. Did they have an influence on your religious development?

I did get into discussions with them in class and I suppose that broadened my scope a bit and I would broaden theirs.

Pseudonym - Sarah

Student No. 8.

Interview conducted 6th November 2000

You say in your responses that your mother's religion was of another Christian faith, did that affect your Catholic upbringing?

No, not at all. She really didn't have much to do with my Catholic faith because dad used to have the major role. He used to go to church and basically pounded it into us.

You rarely, or only a few times a year you, go to Mass, why is it that you don't go more often?

It's, I don't want to offend you but it is basically not relevant to me the church. I used to go every Sunday up until about year 12, with my dad, and that's basically because he made me as well. But basically when my brothers and sisters stopped going, I didn't go much either, I just haven't been since. I still go at Easter and Christmas but that is about it.

How could you see the church becoming more relevant?

That's a hard one, maybe stop having so many rules and regulations that really don't match society's beliefs, like on contraception and stuff. But also for younger kids getting them into it making the religion class interesting and Mass interesting, to get them involved and because most kids don't know much about it.

You rarely or never go to the sacrament of reconciliation. Why is that?

I used to go in school when classes went. To be honest I shouldn't say this as a Catholic but I don't see how it works. Like taking your sins away by just telling someone else.

You say that the examples and lives of your parents over the years strongly influenced your religious development, how would that have been?

In my family, we have very strong morals and they are very high as well because my dad and my mum have a great influence, really they are great people and over the dinner table we would discuss moral issues but not necessarily for a Catholic point of view. Religion was not pounded into me. I just have this belief naturally, I think.

You say that the influence of friends and peers, when you were at school, didn't have much effect on your religious development. Why do you think that is?

I didn't go to church with them. I didn't have them in my religion classes, which weren't that good anyway, and basically they didn't talk about it and I didn't talk about it to them.

Pseudonym - Claire

Student No. 9.

Interview conducted 6th November 2000

You say in your survey return form that you normally attend Mass 2 or 3 Sundays month, why is it that you go to Mass weekly?

I like going along for the social side of it, every now and again, and talking to God. I do talk to God almost constantly during the week anyway. But I like to go along and join with other people and have coffee afterwards and discuss things. See where they are at and see what is happening.

You also say that receiving the sacrament of reconciliation you receive that fairly often. What do you get from the sacrament of reconciliation?

I don't actually talk to the priest, just sort of have a personal interaction with God. I don't go to a priest.

Do you find that easier than going to a priest?

Yes, I used to do it I was young. It always put you on the spot and you are thinking what have I done wrong. I find it easier to speak directly with God, just to generalise it.

Would you see that God forgives you by going the way you go to confession and not the way the Catholic Church suggests?

There is no right or wrong to it. God knows what we do and he knows if we are truly sorry. He knows.

In the survey question, the example and lives of your parents, over the years, has influenced your religious development, you say you strongly agree. Could you just expand a little on that?

My mother was Catholic, my father is not. And we always went to church every week and it did have a big influence. They are both very Christian people. While dad does not go to church every Sunday, he was actually brought up Exclusive Brethren, and he left the church but he is one of the most Christian people I know. He treats people as you would like to be treated and he is just great. So is mum.

Does your mother still go to the Catholic Church?

Yes, she is very devoted to the Catholic Church. She is quite well known actually in big circles.

Pseudonym - Mark

Student No. 10.

Interview conducted 7th November 2000.

Tell me what was the influence of your parents on your religious development?

Well, my mother, she is Catholic. She is Polish so she is devoutly Catholic. Really my father is of no real religion. So I suppose in that way my mother was the main force in my early religious beliefs but, yes, it was mainly my mother who took us to church, made us go to church and had an influence on where I went to school.

What about your peers at school, did they have any influence on your religious development?

No, not really. I suppose my peers, no; there was no real influence from my peers or friends at all in my religious development.

What about your teachers at school, did they have any influence on your religious development?

No, no, in no way - if anything they would turn anybody off religion for life.

You say in your response to the survey that you normally attend Mass a few times a year. Is there any reason that you do not go more often?

Not really, no reason. It is just probably that I have lost a lot of faith. I had one of my best friends die recently and that took away a lot of my belief in God and my faith. My mum stopped going to church and she hasn't been since the death of my closest friend and she blames it on God. I suppose there is no real reason but in the last year or two, that is the main reason why I have completely blocked religion out. Before that it was probably once a month, twice a month.

Do you feel any guilt because you don't go to Mass every Sundays?

A little bit, a little bit yes, little bit definitely. It is probably something that I have just done slowly turn back on religion that sort of thing.

You also say in answer to survey question, no. 12. I normally receive the sacrament of reconciliation a few times a year, why not more frequently?

I suppose time, knowing when to go, where to go, no real reason, probably just laziness, that is about it. Time and laziness.

APPENDIX 12

LETTER TO THE STUDENT PARTICIPATING IN INTERVIEW.

Letter thanking students for their participation in the interview

Enclosed in the letter was the transcript of each student's interview. Students were asked to read the transcript and make any adjustments that they believed necessary.

Dear

Thank you again for volunteering to take part in the interviews for my PhD thesis I greatly appreciate your generosity.

I now have one final chore that I hope you will complete for me.

Attached to this letter is the transcript of the interview that you gave me in November 2000. Would you be so kind as to read through the transcript and add to, delete or correct the transcript in any way you believe appropriate.

After you have completed any corrections, deletions or additions could you please sign the form (attached) and return it to me.

Br L. G. Saker
Edith Cowan University
2 Bradford Street
Mount Lawley. 6050.

I wish you well for the final year of your degree and your Assistant Teaching Practise.

Thanks in anticipation,

Luke Saker fms.

APPENDIX 13

STUDENT RESPONSE TO TRANSCRIPT: AUDIT

Reply form from the student.

Students were requested to indicate any corrections, additions that they wished to make to their transcript.

Dear Luke,

I have read the transcript of my interview and I have (cross out those areas not applicable):

1. Added to the transcript
2. Deleted a section of the transcript
3. Corrected part of the transcript.
4. Left the transcript as it is - as a true indication of what I said in the interview.

Name (please print).....

Signed:.....

Date:.....