

HOW YOUNG CATHOLICS
COME TO FAITH;
WHY THEY CONTINUE TO
PRACTISE THEIR FAITH AND
HOW THEY UNDERSTAND
THEIR IDENTITY AS CATHOLICS

Submitted by

Diana Wendy McKinley B.Bus. (Acc), B.Theol.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate how young Catholics came to faith and why they continued to practise their Catholic faith, despite falling Mass attendance generally.

The study used a qualitative methodology to examine the faith development of twenty-three young Catholic adults aged twenty-one to forty years from six dioceses in Australia.

The research found there were seven main factors that influenced the faith development of these young Catholics;

- a. faith based family,
- b. well run retreats and events like World Youth Day,
- c. welcoming and faithful parishes,
- d. regular prayer,
- e. spiritual music,
- f. faith education, and
- g. spiritual mentors.

The principal factor in this process of faith development was the influence of highly committed and practising Catholic parents, both of whom gave the same religious message to their children. Parents who provided a stable home for their children AND socialised their children into the Catholic faith had faith-filled children in this cohort. Socialising children into the faith involved family prayer, talking to children regularly about matters of faith, being involved themselves in the life of the parish, and taking their children to Mass and reconciliation. Well run retreats and events like World Youth Day were extremely important for faith development because they met like minded Catholics, enjoyed good music, and received good catechesis relevant to their lives. All of which had occurred in an enjoyable environment. Faith filled communities where the young person attended Mass and received the Eucharist provided a spiritual base where they felt welcome and comfortable. Regular prayer was shown to be important for both the development and maintenance of faith. These young adults revealed an eclectic choice of prayer as did their spiritual music preferences. Listening to spiritual music lifted their spirit toward contemplation. Formal faith education assisted in the development of faith and helped young people to accept and personalise what they had been taught as children. Participants in the study who had experienced the influence of a spiritual mentor found that the spiritual mentor had helped them to discover new and relevant ways of being a practising Christian and approaching life. The research also discovered that being Catholic was intrinsic to the identity of these young adults.

DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the Australia Catholic University Human Ethics Research Committee.

.....

Diana W. McKinley

18th April, 2011.

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GLOSSARY

Anointing of the Sick: is a Sacrament. The priest anoints and prays for the sick and the dying for their health and salvation ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.1499).

Baptism: Is the first of the Sacraments of Initiation. At Baptism the individual is freed from sin and becomes a child of God and a member of the Christian community ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.1213).

Catechesis is an *education in the faith* of children, young people, and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life" ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.5).

Church: Refers to the Catholic Church.

Confirmation: Is one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. At Confirmation the Bishop or his priest lays hands upon the candidate and prays for an in-filling of the Holy Spirit to strengthen one's faith ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.1312). Confirmation is usually administered after an individual reaches the Age of Reason, which is approximately seven years old.

Eucharist: The Eucharist is thanksgiving and praise to the Father; the sacrificial memorial of Christ and His Body; and the presence of Christ by the power of His Word and of his Holy Spirit ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.1358).

Examen: is a form of prayer prayed once a day or several times a day. One reflects on one's prayers, actions thoughts and words since the last examen, gives thanks for what was good and resolves to do better where one has failed (Ivens, 1998, pp. 33-36).

Holy Orders: is a sacrament. there are three degrees of the Sacrament of Holy Orders; bishops, priests and deacon ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994n. 1554).

Lectio Divina is a way of praying with [Scripture](#) that calls one to study, ponder, listen and, finally, pray and even sing and rejoice from God's Word, within the soul (Wikipedia).

Liturgy of the Eucharist: is part of the celebration of the Mass when the bread and wine have been made Eucharist. They become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.1327).

Liturgy of the Word: is the reading of the Word of God at Mass. The Word of God is the Holy Scriptures ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.1154).

Mass: is the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Matrimony: is the Sacrament of Marriage.

Parish: is the local Catholic community where Catholics connect with the Church ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.2179).

Penance: is the opportunity to make amends for sin ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.1459).

Personal Relationship: A personal relationship with Jesus was the manner in which participants described their connection with Jesus. They regard him as a very special friend on whom they can depend and to whom they can talk to about everything that is important to them.

Prayer of the Church: The Prayer of the Church is also known as the Liturgy of the Hours, the Office or Divine Office. It must be prayed by the clergy, but lay people also may pray it ("The Code of Canon Law," 1983 n.1173-1175).

Precepts of the Church: "The precepts of the Church concern the moral and Christian life united with the liturgy and nourished by it" ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.2048). Precepts are expectations laid upon Catholics; they must attend Mass on Sundays, confess their sins at least once a year, receive the Eucharist at least once a year, keep holy the holy days of obligation, observe the prescribed days of fast and abstinence and materially support the Church according to one's abilities ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.2041-2043).

Reconciliation: is the more common name for the Sacrament of Penance.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA): is a program specifically designed for adults to introduce them to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Rosary: The Rosary is a form of prayer using Rosary beads to count the prayers. To pray the Rosary means to pray 5 decades. A decade consists of one Our Father, ten Hail Marys, and one Glory Be to the Father. While saying the Rosary one meditates upon an aspect of the life of Jesus or Mary, his mother. These meditations are the Joyful Mysteries, The Sorrowful Mysteries, the Glorious Mysteries, and the Mysteries of Light.

Sacraments: Sacraments are the actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.1116). There are seven sacraments in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders,, and Matrimony ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.1113).

Sacraments of Christian Initiation The Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation, together constitute the Sacraments of Christian Initiation ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.1212).

Vatican II: was a council of the Pope and Cardinals of the Catholic Church who met in Rome, between 1963-1965. They met to discuss future directions of the Catholic Church.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to gain a contemporary understanding of what it means to be a young committed Catholic between the ages of 21 and 41 years in Australia today and to ascertain why these young people practise their faith and what were the factors which brought them to faith.

One reason for choosing the 21 to 40 year old age bracket was; this age group was found to have the lowest level of Mass attendance, in a large study of Catholic parish attendance (Dixon, Bond, Engebretson, Rymarz, Cussen & Wright, 2007). This study is interested in why this cohort of young people still attends Mass when so many of their contemporaries choose not to do so. Another reason for studying this age group is because this is the time in life when people are “making the major decisions in life; faith, careers, marriage, children “(Wuthnow, 2007, p. 118). For this study twenty three members of Generations X and Y, in six Catholic dioceses (Canberra-Goulburn, Lismore, Melbourne, Sale, Sandhurst, and Wagga Wagga) in Australia were interviewed, all of whom were baptised and practising the Catholic faith in varying degrees.

Twentieth Century generations and beyond have been categorised and characterised according to when they were born. The actual dates are rather fluid, however, this research will employ the ABS dates used by Mason, Webber, Singleton and Hughes in their recent study *Spirit of Generation Y* (Mason, Webber, Singleton, & Hughes, 2006). Generation X was born between 1961 and 1975 (Mason, et al., 2006). British sociologists have found that many Generation X'ers grew up somewhat dislocated as they suffered from the results of the Baby Boomers' experimentation with the counter culture; the sexual revolution, rising divorce rates among their parents, latch key children, an AIDS epidemic, an economic recession, and huge advances in information and communications technology (Savage, Collins-Mayo, Mayo, & Cray, 2006). Generation Y were born between 1976 and 1990 (Mason, et al., 2006). Generation Y have grown up in a globalized society who take computers, technology, the internet, emailing, mobile phones and instant knowledge of world events as normal (Savage, et al., 2006). Generation Y, who are one of the foci of this research

has been said to be spiritual, but not religious (Mason, Singleton, & Webber, 2007). A definition of the Baby Boomers is included here because many of them were the parents of Generations X and Y. Generally speaking the Baby Boomers were born between 1946 and 1960 (Mason, et al., 2006); so named because of the increase in their numbers after World War II (Savage, et al., 2006).

Since the end of World War II there has been a decline in attendance at church services (Hughes, 1991; Sterland, Powell, & Castle, 2006). The Australian Bureau of Statistics states that the proportion of Australians claiming affiliation with any religion remained relatively stable at slightly less than 90% between 1933 and 1971. It then declined to 80% in 1976 and it further declined to 73% in 2001. For those affiliated with Christianity in 2001 the statistics were even lower; 62% of young adult women aged 18-24 years and 59% of young men aged 18-24 claimed affiliation with a Christian denomination (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004). Hans Mol was the first sociologist to study religion in Australia (Mason, et al., 2007). He undertook extensive sociological research on religious practices, in Australia in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's. He provides the following statistics on church attendance in Australia (Mol, 1985, p. 56).

Table 1.1 Church attendances for the major Australian denominations according to various Morgan Gallup polls.

	1947a	1954b	1962c	1970c	1976c	1981c
Anglican	19	19	13	11	9	12
Catholic	63	75	55	51	42	37
Methodist	34	33	33	21	16	5
Presbyterian	31	21	19	20	11	8
Uniting	-	-	-	-	-	34

- a) Percentage of respondents who say they attended a religious service on at least one of the two preceding Sundays
- b) Percentage attending weekly. The question was "how many times did you go to church in the last year?" To make figures comparable the figures were divided by 52.
- c) Percentage of respondents saying they had attended church in the last seven days.

Table 1.1 indicates that in 1981, Uniting Church attendance was 34%. No prior statistics appear for the Uniting Church before this date because the Uniting Church is a new church formed in 1977 from the unification of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches (Mol, 1985).

In 1954 Mass attendance for Catholics was recorded at 75%. It dropped by 20% over the next eight years and a further 18%, in 1981, to 37% of Catholics who attended Mass. This decline has escalated in the last decade (Dixon, Kuncinunas, & Reid, 2008). The National Church Life Survey conducted in May 2006 reveals the percentage of Catholics in Australia attending Sunday Mass to be 13.8% of the total Catholic population, (Dixon, et al., 2008) compared with 15.3% in 2001 (Dixon, 2005). That percentage equates to an average of 708,618 weekly Mass attendees out of a total of 5,126,884 Australian Catholics. On average fewer males attend than females and the 25-29 year old age bracket attend the least (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004).

Table 1.2. Mass attendance for 20 to 39 years of age cohort in 2006 (Dixon, et al., 2008).

Age cohort	* Number	% of total
	Attendees	Attendees
20-24	18,003	2.5
25-29	16,905	2.4
30-34	21,410	3.0
35-39	32,728	4.6

Between 2001 and 2006 there was a drop in the total number of Catholics attending Mass from 763,726 to 708,618 (Dixon, et al., 2008, p. 1). This decrease occurs despite the fact that the total Catholic population rose from 4,798,950 in 1996 to 5,126,880 in 2006 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Declining church

attendance is a phenomenon of the Western World in both Catholic and Protestant churches. Switzerland and Germany also record a decrease in church attendance by older teenagers and people in their twenties (Schweitzer, 2004). Church attendance has been declining in Britain for at least the last forty years. All children born of Christian parents in the UK in the 1930's were baptised; today the figure would be around 40% of children in the UK who are baptised (Crockett & Voas, 2006).

In 2006, according to the NCLS Survey Mass attendance rates were all under 10% for the 15 to 39 year old cohort (Dixon, et al., 2008)¹. The 21 to 41 year old participants in this study would have fallen within these age brackets in 2008 which is the year interviews for this research was conducted. There is no evidence that Catholics leaving the Catholic Church join another denomination to any great degree (Sterland, et al., 2006).

NCLS Research produced an Occasional Paper of the *Inflow and Outflow Between Denominations* in March 2006 which shows that between 1996 and 2001 there was an overall loss of 7% participation in all Australian Churches (Sterland, et al., 2006). Between 1996 and 2001 it was estimated that there was a negative outflow of Mass attendees of 13% in the Catholic Church. The Pentecostal Churches were the most successful in increasing the size of their regular congregations. There was a positive net inflow in the Pentecostal Churches of 10% between 1991 and 1996 and between 1996 and 2001 a further net positive inflow of 18%. Another successful denomination was the Assemblies of God who increased weekly attendance by 9% between 1991 and 1996 and by an additional 20% between 1996 and 2001. The Baptists also bucked the negative trend with a positive increase of 1% between 1991 and 1996, and a further 8% in the next five year period (Sterland, et al., 2006).

This research project has been conducted to try to understand why some young Catholics flow against the general tide of their peers and continue to attend Mass. The 23 participants in this research attend Mass on most Sundays of the year. The

¹ Dixon et. al used NCLS data in conjunction with data from other sources to calculate these rates.

Code of Canon Law (1983) states that Christ's faithful are those who are incorporated into Christ through baptism (Canon 204). All of Christ's faithful are equal and contribute according to their ability to the building up of the Body of Christ (Canon 208). They are bound to preserve their communion with the Church at all times, even in their external actions (Canon 209). They must make a wholehearted effort to lead a holy life, and to promote the growth of the Church and its continual sanctification (Canon 210). They have an obligation to spread the message of salvation (Canon 211). They are to obey the teachings on faith of their Pastors (Canon 212). This will be the basis for the classification of the 23 Catholics into various types; *Highly Religious Type*, *Strongly Religious Type*, *Moderately Religious Type* and *Half-heartedly Religious Type*.

Many young people look for the answers to questions that concern them about life, to sites and sources outside structures (Mason, et al., 2007). Their search for meaning is eclectic and may include alternatives spiritualities as well as psychological sources (Webber, 2002). Accordingly many researchers see that the practise of religion is giving way to a search for meaning which may include other spiritualities (Bouma, 2006; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Marler & Hadaway, 2002; Savage, et al., 2006). Bouma (2006) grapples with the intrinsic differences between 'Religion' and 'Spirituality'. He says the words 'Spirituality' and 'Religion' are not synonymous, even though both words move beyond the temporal and physical and tangible aspects of human life. He continues that since the 1990s, spirituality or to be spiritual is socially acceptable, whereas religion or to be religious evokes negative connotations, because of its association with formal organisations (Bouma, 2006, p. 10). Most Australians would accept that "religion is about socially organised and structured ways of being spiritual", with officials who formalize ways to act and conform within the particular group (Bouma, 2006, p. 15). Once spirituality and religion had the same connotations but spirituality today means much more than just attending religious services and subscribing to the theology of that particular church (Wuthnow, 2007). Spirituality today refers to an individual's relationship with God which at a deeper level involves a person's self-identity (Wuthnow, 2007). Mason (2002) views spirituality and religion as two sides of the one coin. There has been some discussion that spirituality is eclipsing religion (Christianity) in a greater revolution

than the Protestant Reformation versus the argument that spirituality is a fleeting phenomenon that will soon disappear (Heelas & Woodhead, 2005).

Spirituality refers to a wide range of experiences outside the material world (Mason, et al., 2007). Spirituality, the research reveals, deals with the beyond and the inner self (Mason, et al., 2007). In Mason, Singleton and Webber's (2007) study, 'Spirituality' was described by some young people as 'a passion or flame deep inside', 'something which gives meaning and purpose to my life', 'something that enlightens, that is at the heart of my beliefs and values', the source of my strength and peace', 'my source of guidance and fulfilment', and 'my link with God' (Mason, et al., 2007, p. 35). Engebretson (2004) in her studies of the spirituality of teenage boys defines spirituality in the following lengthy definition.

Spirituality is the experience of the other which is: accompanied by feelings of wonder, joy, love, trust and hope. Spirituality enhances connectedness: within the self, with others and with the world. Spirituality: illuminates lived experience. Spirituality may be expressed: in relationships, prayer, personal and communal rituals, symbols, values, service, action for justice, connection with the earth. Spirituality may be named in new and re-defined ways, or through the beliefs, rituals, symbols, values stories of religious traditions (Engebretson, 2004, p. 18).

The sources of spirituality are wide. They draw on ideals, membership of a community of faith, group membership, cultural plurality, social, political, and environmental concerns and fears about living in the current climate of terrorism (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006; de Souza, 2003; Hodder, 2007; Ryan, 2004; Webber, Singleton, Dorissa, & Joyce, 2007; Willits & Crider, 1989). There has been considerable research undertaken in Australia recently on youth spirituality (De Souza, 2003; Engebretson, 2007; Hodder, 2007; Mason et al., 2007; Ryan, 2004; Rymarz & Graham, 2006; Webber, Singleton, Dorissa, & Joyce, 2007; Willits & Crider, 1989). Research has also been done in the UK, (Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Savage, et al., 2006), Germany (Schweitzer, 2004), Canada (Bibby, 2007a, 2007b, 2009) and USA (Smith, 2005; Smith & Snell, 2009).

Workable definitions of spirituality and religion need to be established for use in this thesis. The definition of spirituality which will be used in this paper is that used by

Mason et. al., (2007) in a 3-year longitudinal study on the spirituality of Generation Y. Spirituality is “a conscious way of life based on a transcendent referent” (Mason et. al., 2007, p.39). Religion will be defined as “offering established patterns of ways of approaching the beyond, the numinous and the powers of life, the gods or god” (Bouma, 2006, p. 15). It will be accepted that religion is organized and spirituality is “free-form and flexible” (Bouma, 2006, p. 15). While acknowledging the interest in spirituality, it is acknowledged that many Australians are secular and have little interest in either religion or spirituality (Mason, et al., 2007). The study of secular young people is beyond the scope of this study.

Catholicism falls under the definition of religion with an extensive list of precepts. Many young Catholics ignore the precepts of the Church but still regard themselves as spiritual, as well as Catholic. What does it mean to ignore the precepts of the Church? It is a precept of the Catholic Church that Catholics attend Mass on Sundays, confess their sins at least once a year, receive the Eucharist at least once a year, keep holy the holy days of obligation, observe the prescribed days of fast and abstinence and materially support the Church according to one's abilities ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.2042-2043). These precepts are set in Canon Law. The precepts are “meant to guarantee to the faithful the indispensable minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbour” ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.2041).

There has been grave concern by Catholic leaders about why Generations X and Y is the lowest cohort of Mass attendees. Church laity and clergy have a great desire to understand the reasons behind this disenchantment with religion and to understand more clearly why many young people who claim to be Catholics have such a low level of attendance and acceptance of the basic tenets of Catholic teaching. Accordingly, a considerable amount of research has been undertaken into why Catholics do not attend Mass (Dixon et al., 2007; Lawton & Bures, 2001; Markstrom, 1999; Rymarz & Graham, 2006; Schweitzer, 2004; Smith, 2003, 2005; Smith, Denton, Faris, & Regnerus, 2002). However, while the focus of attention has been on why young Catholics do not attend, little has been done on the reasons why young people do attend Mass. The focus of this study is to bridge this gap in a small way.

STUDY AIMS/PURPOSES

Within a cohort of Catholics aged 21 to 41 years, this study examines:-

- the influences and factors that led these young adults to practise the Catholic faith,
- the factors which influence those involved in regular church attendance as an adult and,
- how these young people understand their identity as Catholics.

THE RESEARCH QUESTION

This research addresses the question:

- Why do young committed Catholics still regularly attend Mass?
- What have been the major influences upon the lives of the participants that resulted in them choosing to continue to practise their Catholic Faith?
- How do these young people understand their Catholic identity?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In the light of a major study about Catholics who have stopped going to Mass (Dixon, et al., 2007) this study explores Catholics who do go to Mass and therefore is significant in providing another view of Catholics in contemporary Australia. The findings of this study will be of significant assistance to parents who according to *Divini Illius Magistri* 35,36 are the first faith educators of their children ("*Divini Illius Magistri*. Encyclical on Christian Education," 1939), teachers, youth leaders, priests and members of the wider ecclesial community, who are likely to influence the level of faith practise amongst future adults.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited by virtue of it's being an in-depth study of 23 young adults in six mostly rural dioceses. These characteristics of these young people are not typical among young practising Catholics as six of the 23 participants came from families of more than five children, four participants had belonged to Covenant communities, three had spent several years in religious life, and twelve had undertaken religious retreats post-school, including three who had made a 30 day retreat. Another limiting factor for understanding the faith development of young people may be the classification of the participants aged 21 to 41 years as 'young people'. The Australian Bureau of Statistics, World Youth Day and Mason, Singleton and Webber draw the cut off line at 35 years of age.

Every individual's faith journey is unique, so while conclusions have been drawn about reasons why twenty-two of these twenty-three young people continue to practise the Catholic faith on a regular basis it is difficult to generalise about the remainder of the 12.5% of young Australian Catholics who also attend Mass. The sample may also be biased by the fact that these twenty-three participants were actually willing to be interviewed and they were generally well educated.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The last chapter looked at the declining attendance rates at Mass and the requirements of the Catholic Church for all baptised Catholics. It also looked at the differences between 'religion' and 'spirituality'. In view of the decline in Mass attendance this study proposes to shed a little light on the reasons why some young adult Catholics still choose to attend Mass on most Sundays. The Literature Review will cover research undertaken on the spirituality of young people in Australia and overseas, the decline in attendance at Mass by Australian Catholics and the reasons why some young people continue to attend despite current trends. In regard to the latter an examination of the literature on the effect of family upbringing, Catholic schools, education, faith communities, friends, retreats, World Youth Day, vocation, music, birth, and death will be examined. Literature on the religious identity of Catholics is also studied under the classifications; Religious Identity, Spiritual Identity, Cultural/Social Identity, and Institutional Identity.

The persons in this study, aged between 21 and 41 are referred to as 'young people'. To define a person as 'young' does not necessarily refer to their biological age. The following observations by Dom Olivera (2003) may help to clarify this point.

Youth is characterised by four easily distinguishable aspects within an overall process. ... the definition of one's own identity as a person, the assimilation of values and the rejection of non-values, the experience of friendship and love as a couple or in a community, and the orientation of one's vocation and the concrete decisions to act on it (Olivera, 2003, p. 38).

Major decisions about life such as marriage, careers, friends, children are made later than in previous times and so more young people come of age at forty (Wuthnow, 2007). Thus it may be understood that 'young people' does not actually refer to age so much as a period in life when the individual is forming their identity and making life decisions. The next section examines the spirituality of young people both overseas and in Australia.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND SPIRITUALITY

Research indicates there has been a worldwide decline in attendance at religious services in the Western World. Reginald Bibby (2007a, 2007b, 2009) who has conducted studies in Canada for forty years on the faith practices of Catholics found there had been a decrease from 60% to 30% in Canada over that period and that large numbers of youth are ceasing to participate at all.

In an important 3 year, longitudinal Australian study, between 2003 and 2006, *The Spirit of Generation Y*,² explored the spirituality of young people (Mason, et al., 2007). It was found in the study that belief in God by Australians between the ages of 13 and 24 (see Table 2.1), was 51% (Mason, et al., 2007).

Table 2.1 All Faiths (aged 13-59), Belief in God by age group (Mason, et al., 2007, p. 84). *(Figures quoted in percentage of age group).*

Believe in God?	Age groups	within	Gen Y	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Ages	13-15	16-18	19-24	13-24	25-39	40-59
No	16	18	16	17	25	18
Unsure	34	35	29	32	28	26
Yes	50	47	54	51	47	56
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

² Participants in the Spirit of Generation Y study were members of Generation Y; aged between 13 and 29 years at the time of the study. The research method was a qualitative study which conducted 91 purposive, strategic in-depth interviews and a random sample of 1,619 national telephone interviews (Mason, et al., 2006). In addition a control group of 347 persons from the 30 to 59 years age bracket (members of both Generation X and Baby Boomers) were selected for comparison with the Generation Y participants (Mason, et al., 2006).

The Spirit of Generation Y project would present an accurate picture of the spirituality of Australians because the study focused exclusively on young people in Australia and its questions would therefore be geared towards the uniqueness of the Australian scene (Mason, et al., 2007). The following table which sets out 'Belief in God by denomination' (Table 2.2) is taken from *The Spirit of Generation Y* study (Mason, et al., 2007).

Table 2.2 Generation Y (aged 13-24): Belief in God by denomination
(results shown in percent of denomination).

Believe in God	DENOMINATION					Gen Y
	Anglican	Catholic	Other Christian	Other Religion	No Religious ID	
No					35	17
Unsure	28	23	11	30	44	32
Yes	72	77	89	68	21	51
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

The table shows the findings of Mason et al (2007) that 77% of Catholics aged 13-24 years believed in God, leaving 23% who were unsure (p.83). Young Catholics have the lowest attendance rates at Mass in Australia. Approximately twelve and a half percent of all those who attend Mass on Sundays in 2006 are in the 20 to 39 year old age group³. Between 1996 and 2001 there was an estimated decrease in Mass attendees of; 13,000 in the 13 to 25 year old cohort, 18,000 in the 25-34 year old cohort and 11,000 in the 35-44 year old cohort (Dixon, et al., 2007, p. 3). The

³ Statistics of young Catholics attending Mass in 2006 are: 18,003 were aged 20-24 years, 16,905 were aged 25-39 years, and 21,410 were aged 35-39 years. This totals 89,046 Catholics aged 20-39 years who attended Mass. This comprises 12.566% of the total of 708,618 Catholics attending Mass.(Dixon, et al., 2008, p. 2).

decreasing involvement of young people in the churches is creating a great deal of concern for the hierarchy of many churches (Castle, 2007; Hoge, Johnson, & Luidens, 1993; Huntley, 2006), as is the question of how to pass on the beliefs and values of Christianity to younger generations (Rossiter, 2007; Rymarz & Graham, 2006).

A characteristic ascribed to the Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y is 'Individualism' (Mason, et al., 2007). In the 1950's Catholics accepted the role of the clergy without question (Campion, 1988), but with the rise of individualism this is no longer the case (Mason, et al., 2007). According to Donovan (1997), who is stating the ideal, "Christianity has nothing to do with individualism" because Christianity "stresses the role of community" (pp.17-18). However, Australian Catholics are "marching to different drums, only one of which is being beaten by bishops and even Roman authorities" (Ireland & Rule, 1991, p. 21). One of the principal aims of *The Spirit of Generation Y* study was to ascertain whether individualism is a generalization which can be ascribed to Australian youth (Mason, et al., 2007). Individualism has been claimed to be responsible for many young people's decision to leave their church; "I grew up and started making decisions on my own" was a common reason in a survey of church leavers (Richter & Francis, 1998). Church membership requires conformity which for those who want to be individualistic is quite problematic. Many Catholics today ignore the precepts of the Church but still regard themselves as Catholic (Dixon, et al., 2007; Mason, et al., 2007; Schweitzer, 2004). The next section examines the extensive literature and research on what factors lead young people to faith.

WHAT FACTORS LED THEM TO PRACTISING CATHOLICISM?

There is nothing new about this type of study, it has been studied for at least two hundred years (Schweitzer, 2004). Christian Smith and Patricia Snell (2009) have undertaken extensive research, on the religious practices of teenagers who are emerging into adulthood; i.e. the 18-23 year old age bracket. This has led them to conclude there are six possible paths to becoming religious adults (see Table 2.3). Path 1 is a combination of high parental religious service, attendance and importance

of faith plus high importance of faith for the individual, many personal religious experiences and frequent prayer and scripture reading. The second path is the same except, many personal religious experiences for the individual is substituted for the individual having no doubts about their faith. Path three is a combination of high parental religious service, attendance and importance of faith plus high importance of faith for the individual, no doubts about religious beliefs and many personal religious experiences. Path 4 has a variant on Path 3 in that high importance of faith for the individual is substituted for having many adults in the religious congregation to turn to for help and support. Up to this point strong parental religious influences have been of paramount importance, the focus now changes somewhat. Path five has low parental input but many adults in the congregation to turn to for religious help and support plus no doubts about religious beliefs and frequent prayer and scripture reading. The final path, Path 6 differs completely. It comprises high importance of religious faith, many personal religious experiences, no doubts about religious beliefs and frequent prayer and scripture reading. (Smith & Snell, 2009, p. 226)

Table 2.3 Six Possible Paths to becoming religious adults

Paths	1	2	3	4	5	6
High/ Low parental religious service, attendance and importance of faith	High	High	High	High	Low	n/a
High importance of faith for the individual	yes	yes	yes	n/a	n/a	yes
Individual has many personal religious experiences	yes	n/a	yes	yes	n/a	yes
Individual prays frequently and reads scripture	yes	yes	n/a	n/a	yes	yes
Individual has no doubts about their faith	n/a	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Individual has many adults in the religious congregation to turn to for help and support.	n/a	n/a	n/a	yes	yes	n/a

Four of the six paths to being religious in adulthood, emphasise the important role of the family in this process.

FAMILY OF ORIGIN

It has long been understood that parents play a vital role in the religious formation of their children. Schweitzer (2004) quotes a German philosopher of education, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and the German theologian and religious educator, Friedrich Schleiermacher who both lived about two hundred years ago; they introduced the idea that there is a psychological basis for religious education in childhood.

Pestalozzi assumed that building a relationship with God, relies on how earlier relationships with the child's mother and father have been formed. Schleiermacher said "love for the Mother" is the "first seed of religion" (Schweitzer, 2004, p. 26). Even Freud who was a critic of religion was "convinced that the religious experiences of childhood are decisive for later life" (Schweitzer, 2004, p. 27). Schweitzer (2004) also quotes Erikson who maintained that "the trustworthy relationship between mother and father is the origin of religious longing and hope" (p.27).

In numerous papal documents the Catholic Church spells out the role of the family in bringing up their children. In *Christifideles Laici 40*, the role of the family is described as "the basic cell of society" and "the cradle of life and love", the place in which the individual is "born" and "grows". It goes on to say the family is "the *primary place of 'humanization'* for the person and society" (CL40). The parent's role in the education of their children is elucidated in *Gravissimum Educationis* 3. "In the Christian family children should be taught from their early years to have knowledge of God according to the faith received in Baptism, to worship him, and to love their neighbour". *Lumen Gentium 41* states Catholic parents are called upon to "embue their offspring, lovingly welcomed as God's gift, with Christian Doctrine and the evangelical virtues"(Abbott, 1965).

If children are to internalise and identify with parental beliefs, values, and attitudes, parental support and values are critical (Gecas, 2000, p. 2857). This has been

reported by a considerable amount of research which reinforces the role of the family as being of prime importance in nurturing religious faith in young people (Bellamy, Mou, & Castle, 2004; Bouma & Mason, 1995; Crockett & Voas, 2006; Hadaway & Marler, 1993; Myers, 1996; Regnerus, 2003; Schottenbauer, Sperrnak, & Hellstrom, 2007; Smith, 2005; Smith & Snell, 2009; Still, 2005; Tilley, 2003). The influence of parents and to lesser extent siblings greatly influences children right through adolescence and into adulthood (Luftey & Mortimer, 2003). Christian Smith in his research has confirmed his personal belief in the importance of parents “For better or worse, most parents in fact still do profoundly influence their adolescents – often more than do their peers – their children’s apparent resistance and lack of appreciation notwithstanding” (Smith, 2005, p. 56). Research shows that children are more likely to inherit faith from their parents when the children see their parents attending church and living out that faith in everyday life (Bellamy, et al., 2004). Smith and Snell (2009), researchers in the US, have discovered that 68% of youth who follow the first path of the six paths to faith, as described earlier (see Table 2.4), were more likely to become religious adults. To recap, the first path is young people who firstly had parents who were highly religious, secondly their own religious faith was very important to them, third they had had many religious experiences in their lives and finally they prayed and read scripture. Parents who share the same beliefs as each other are best able to pass on the faith to their children because they do not give the children mixed messages (Myers, 1996). Myers (1996) also found in his study of religious inheritance that religiosity of the offspring is higher if the father is the main decision maker in the family and is well-educated and the mother is less involved in the workforce. He also discovered that moderate levels of parental strictness are important in transmitting faith from parents to children (Myers, 1996).

Socialisation plays an important role in the development of an individual’s approach to life. “Socialization is the process by which individuals acquire social competence by learning the norms, values, beliefs, attitudes, language characteristics, and roles appropriate to their social groups” (Luftey & Mortimer, 2003, p. 183). It is also an important factor in how society reproduces itself (Luftey & Mortimer, 2003). Therefore it could be said socialisation has assisted in the perpetuation of Christianity. “Religious socialisation”, which acts similarly to gender, ethnic and social class socialisation, has largely been attributed by sociologists for explaining

the enormous religious influence parents have on their children (Regnerus, 2003; Smith & Snell, 2009). Religious socialisation means that the “seriously religious parents” have trained their children “to think, feel, believe and act as serious religious believers” (Smith & Snell, 2009, p. 232). The parents transmit to the children certain religious ways of believing and behaving. The second social causation attributed to children acquiring their parent’s religious views works negatively; it is the avoidance of relationship breakdown. The relationship between the parents and the child is so important that either side will avoid any behaviour which may damage the relationship. Children continue faith practise because they are not prepared to rock the boat and cause a disruption in the relationship with their parents (Smith & Snell, 2009). The effectiveness of families and their ability to outpace the influence of peers, and the media is also an important issue in passing on faith. These social pressures and peer influence which affect religious commitment can be overcome through the social influence of parents where there are strong emotional ties (Ozorak, 1989). Ozorak (1989) claims this is the most powerful predictor of religiousness.

Hadaway and Roof (1988) provide a variation of Smith and Snell’s (2009) six paths to producing religious adults. Their studies have identified three characteristics for children to maintain the same religious identity as their parents; religious socialisation in childhood, homogenous affiliation patterns within families, and contact with extended family (Hadaway & Roof, 1988). Hence religious congruence in the family, strong socialisation between the family and their religious denomination, and parents who practise the tenets of their faith and spend time socialising with relatives are most likely to succeed in producing children who practise the same faith as themselves. Strong family ties have been identified as being extremely important in maintaining the same faith connections between generations (Hadaway & Marler, 1993; Sandomirsky & Wilson, 1990). All researchers agree that stable, healthy, happy homes have been proven to be the most likely to produce children who follow the same beliefs as their parents (Hadaway & Roof, 1988; Smith, 2005). Myers (1966) agrees with Smith & Snell (2009) that children are more likely to absorb their parent’s faith when there is little or no conflict in the family.

Alternately the research indicates that parents with different levels of religious beliefs may have more difficulty conveying their religious beliefs to their children (Myers, 1996). It is even more difficult when the parent's religious views are not homogenous. Religious disaffiliation is more likely among children from these families (Hadaway & Marler, 1993; Sandomirsky & Wilson, 1990). A significant study on "Parents' Religious Heterogamy and Children's Well-Being" found that parent's heterogamy has both direct and indirect negative effects on children's well being (Petts & Knoester, 2007). There is more likelihood of marital conflict and negativity associated with religious participation. Also children of religiously heterogamous parents are more likely to become involved in drug use and under-age drinking (Petts & Knoester, 2007). It follows that children of religiously homogenous parents are less likely to be involved in drugs and under-age drinking. The Catholic Church warns about religious disunity in paragraph 1634 of the Catholic Catechism.

The spouses (of different confessions) risk experiencing the tragedy of Christian disunity even in the heart of their own home. Disparity of cult can further aggravate these difficulties. Differences about faith and the very notion of marriage, but also different religious mentalities, can become sources of tension in marriage, especially as regards the education of children. The temptation to religious indifference can then arise (p.408).

The Catholic Church prescribes marital endogamy, childbearing and rules regarding child rearing methods. While differences in confession and disparity of cult are not insurmountable obstacles for marriage, the Catholic Church advises this may create difficulties for the couple through disunity and tensions, particularly in the rearing of children (Petts & Knoester, 2007). Regarding childbearing, the Catholic Church teaches that "each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life." ("*Humanae Vitae*," 1968) . Catholic parents are obliged to undertake the moral education and spiritual formation of their children ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.2221) . Therefore the Church and the Catholic family "stand in complementary relationship" which reinforce each other (Sandomirsky & Wilson, 1990, p. 1214). Another factor which may affect attendance at religious services is the changing social attitudes towards marriage. Marriage rates have been decreasing since the 1950's (Bouma, 2006). The median age for men to marry is 31.6 years and 29.3 years for women (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). "This has resulted in a continued fall in fertility rates and a rise in infertile coupling"

(Bouma, 2006, p. 123). These factors impact upon church attendance and the passing on of faith from one generation to another. Studies in America found that married people with children are more likely to attend religious services than single people without children (Wuthnow, 2007).

The results in the UK have not been as positive as the US studies. In 2005 the University of Manchester undertook a British Household Survey, which confirmed that "parents are the most significant influence on their children's attitude to religion": non religious parents being highly successful at passing on a lack of faith, whereas religious parents have only a 50% chance of success (Savage, et al., 2006, pp. 140-141). The results of studies in Australia are closer to the UK studies than those of the US. Parents were reported to have a significant influence on faith development for 55% of Anglican and Protestant youth aged 15 years or more in a major Australian study conducted in 2004, by the National Church Life Survey ⁴ (Bellamy, et al., 2004). The influence of mothers was reported at 50% and fathers at 33% (Bellamy, et al., 2004, p. 18). The study found that the major impact of parents occurred in two ways; their faith in God had a 68% impact on their children's faith development and the manner in which they lived out their faith had a 53% impact on children's faith formation (Bellamy, et al., 2004). The report (Bellamy, et al., 2004) bases much of its research on when the respondent became a Christian. The situation is different in the Catholic Church because a person becomes a Catholic Christian when baptized. So while the paper is important for this study it will not meet all the requirements for understanding the Catholic situation.

Catholic baptisms generally occur not long after birth unless converted to the Catholic faith at a later age. There is really no point at which a Catholic, who has been baptised not long after birth, 'decides' to become a Christian because they are considered to be Christians when baptised ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.1213). The Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation, together

⁴ The results of the National Church Life Survey were based on responses received from a random sample of 4,162 Australian Anglican and Protestant church attendees aged 15 years or more.

constitute the Sacraments of Christian Initiation ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.1275). The sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of sacramental grace and may be received when the child has "reached the age of discretion" ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.1307). Catholics are considered to grow in maturity in their faith in the sacraments under the guidance of the Holy Spirit when they receive all three of the sacraments of Christian initiation ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.1285). Catholic parents generally ensure their children receive all three of the sacraments of Christian initiation which normally happens in infancy.

Many Catholics while desiring to hand the Catholic faith onto their children do not always agree with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Schweitzer (2004) suggests that Baby Boomer parents have successfully handed on their own personal religious affiliations to their children even though this differs enormously with traditional church expectations. Thus "what is seen as a decline of religion from the perspective of the Church, at the same time can mean success for the families"(Schweitzer, 2004, p. 74). Many of the parents of the generations X and Y were the Baby Boomer generation who began to question the obedience demanded of them by the traditional Church (Schweitzer, 2004) especially with regard to the size of their family. There was greater sexual freedom available to women with the introduction of the contraceptive pill (BBC News, 1999) which initially (in 1961) was only available to married women, but between 1962 and 1969 the number of users rose from 50,000 to one million (BBC News, 1999). The women who used the Pill now had much greater sexual freedom (BBC News, 1999). The sexual revolution of the 1960's (Ireland, 2002) was responded to by the Vatican with a Papal Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in 1968. This encyclical prohibited Catholics from using artificial contraception to prevent pregnancy (HV14). A high percentage of Australian Catholics who were now moving into middle class, refused to accept the Church's direction on how they were to lead their sexual lives. In Melbourne, 100 lay Catholic intellectuals who signed a petition criticising the document were chastised for "incitement to rebellion against the Pope and the Church" (Campion, 1988, p. 221). A survey in Brisbane in 1978 revealed that only 24% of under 40 year old Catholics accepted the teaching of *Humane Vitae* (Campion, 1988). Another problematic area for Catholics is divorce.

DIVORCE & MAJOR DISRUPTION

Divorce rates in Australia are rising among the total population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). This creates problems for parents who wish their children to be still practising Catholics when they are adults because research indicates that children from divorced families are more likely than children from stable families to abandon their religion. (Hadaway & Roof, 1988; Lawton & Bures, 2001). “.... divorce in childhood weakens religious ties through its disruption of both family and community” (Lawton & Bures, 2001, p. 104). Catholics whose parents divorced, whether they were adults or children, are more likely to switch to Protestant churches or abandon their faith entirely (Lawton & Bures, 2001). In more recent times increasing divorce rates among Catholics has decreased Catholic stability in line with the general population (Hadaway & Marler, 1993). This is causing enormous social change in Australia (Bouma, 2006). In studying the effect of religiosity on young people coping with their parent’s divorce Short & Worthington (1994) discovered that religious individuals often attribute negative events to God and believed the divorce of their parent’s was a punishment upon themselves for some misdemeanour and as a result often turned away from religion (Shortz & Worthington, 1994). Whereas children who understood the divorce as part of God’s plan coped better (Shortz & Worthington, 1994). Despite divorce or the many problems which beset parents, generally it is still their desire to educate their children in the religious faith to which they adhere.

CATHOLIC SYSTEMS AND SUBSYSTEMS

The heading Catholic systems and sub-systems covers Catholic schools, faith communities, and spiritual mentors and Catholic friends.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Catholic parents often send their children to Catholic schools so that their children are taught about the Catholic faith. Thus the work of the Catholic school is to build on the faith instilled in children by their parents because the Catholic Church regards parents as the prime educators of their children. However, the only experience of Church many students have, is at their Catholic school, because their parents are no longer connected to the Church (D’Orsa, 1999). *Gravissimum Educationis* 3 states

that “Since parents have given their children life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators”. Therefore the effectiveness of a Catholic education builds on how well the student has been socialised into the Catholic faith by their parents. Mason et al. (2007) refer to the ‘multiplier effect’ noted by Greely and Rossi:

Catholic schooling appeared to make a significant difference to the religious practise of students who come from strongly religious families; but in the case of those from non-religious families, attendance at a Catholic school made no significant difference to religious behaviour (Mason, et al., 2007, p. 159).

The best preparation children can have to assist their continued faith development is known as “priming”. “Priming” occurs when past events prepare children to make transitions to new situations (Corsaro & Fingerson, 2003). This is in line with the dynamic systems theory of Thelen & Smith (1998) which stresses the influence of past developmental processes on the individual’s ability to organise future events (Thelen & Smith, 1998).

An important point to acknowledge here at the beginning of this section, on the influence of Catholic schools on the faith development of their students, is the role of Catholic schools. The role of the school is to teach religion, to help young people to understand religion. It is the role of parents to instruct their children about how to become religious. Thus the aim of teaching religion is “to understand” (Moran, 1991). Moran (1991) suggests that from “perhaps the ages of 5 or 6 to 18 or 21 – understanding religion is likely to take precedence over ‘being religious’”. Religious education “is teaching people religion with all the breadth and depth of intellectual excitement” of which the teacher is capable (Moran, 1991, p. 252). This may be the reason that research shows that Catholic schools have only a small impact. A Catholic school is distinctive because of:-

Its religious dimension, and that this is to be found in *a)* the educational climate, *b)* the personal development of each student, *c)* the relationship established between culture and the Gospel, *d)* the illumination of all knowledge with the light of faith (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1990, pp. 7-8).

Studies of the effectiveness of Christian schools do not find Mass attendance an automatic result of a Catholic education (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006; Moylon, 2001). Three years or more attendance at a Catholic secondary school has been shown, in research involving 849 American adults who were raised Catholic, to increase the likelihood of Catholics retaining their Catholic identity, although this does not necessarily translate to attendance at Mass (Perl & Gray, 2007). Retaining their Catholic identity occurs because the many years involved attending Catholic schools have enmeshed young people in a Catholic network. This network, however, is outside of parish because the parish was not the primary locus for the formation of those important networks (Perl & Gray, 2007). Today's educators would appear to be expected to bear the brunt of criticism and blame for the low Mass attendance of young people but the faith can no longer be passed on by rote learning of the Catechism. Also the makeup of the staff in Catholic schools has altered dramatically in recent years; lay teachers have almost entirely replaced the sisters, brothers and priests (Campion, 1988; D'Orsa, 1999). Still Catholic schools continue to flourish and a Catholic education is often preferred to a State school education by Catholic parents. Fifty two percent of both primary and secondary age Catholic students attend Catholic schools (Dixon, 2005). The inability for a Catholic education to translate into regular Mass attendance by students has created some tensions with some Catholic parents who believe that it is the role of the Catholic school to educate their children in the Catholic faith (Moylon, 2001).

Smith (2005b) says it would be unjust to place the total burden of Catholic education on lay staff who although highly academically trained are mostly not religiously trained and may not themselves be Catholic. Field attributes the problem as originating in teacher training (Field, 2001). Catholic teachers are often trained in the same universities as secular teachers and receive no religious education training at all. Therefore they are not equipped for the task placed before them. Saker in his survey of 133 graduates of Catholic schools in Perth, who were training to teach in Catholic schools found that "students were more representative of the culture than they were of the Church" (Fleming, 2007, p. 114). Only 12.8% of those surveyed attended regular Sunday Mass. The students found Church teaching "irrelevant in today's world" ; 47.2% accepted in divorce, 77.4% contraception, 69.9% abortion, 59.4% agreed with sex outside marriage and same sex partners, and 67.8% did not

agree with papal infallibility (Fleming, 2007, p. 114). Disenchantment with Catholic moral teaching is also evident from statistics taken from the Australian Values Study conducted in 1983; 77.2% of Catholics accepted divorce, 52% of Catholics agreed with abortion, 46.7% believed it was acceptable to have an extra-marital affair, and 58.2% were in favour of homosexuality (Ireland & Rule, 1991, pp. 20-21). Saker concluded from his study that while students found the Christian message important, the family was more important. Furthermore, while religious education was achieving its aim of teaching Jesus' message this did not necessarily translate to agreeing with or belonging to the Catholic Church (Fleming, 2007). These were Catholic students training to teach religion in Catholic schools, many other teachers in Catholic schools do not have this training.

Educators in the third millennium face huge challenges because of the changing socio-political and multi-cultural context. Students are faced with a plethora of images in the media of the good life; "The world is your oyster", "just do it". Rarely is there an indication that life needs altruism, values, commitments, fidelity, and sacrifice (Crawford & Rossiter, 2003). The media extols the crisis of changing values; subjectivism, relativism and nihilism which undermine community identity. Rapid change, new technical innovations and the globalisation of the economy have widened the gap between rich and poor and brought massive migration from underdeveloped to highly developed countries (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1999). Critically aware of the social, cultural, and political climate in which they work Catholic schools strive to do the very best for their students and to educate their students in a meaningful way. Catholic schools seek to assist students to be better...

... informed, and learn how to think critically about the contemporary socio political situation and about spiritual and moral issues. It can help them discern the shaping influence of culture on beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. It can help them learn how to be critical interpreters and evaluators of culture. It cannot automatically make them wise, but it can point them in the direction of wisdom (Crawford & Rossiter, 2003, p. 7).

Educating for personal change is completely different from educating for knowledge and skills because there are many influences outside the classroom which bring about change (Crawford & Rossiter, 2003). The change will most likely come about

at some future date so educators need to endeavour to educate students in a way “that might dispose them towards change” (Crawford & Rossiter, 2003, p. 2). A major problem teachers face in teaching religious education to students is that religion does not hold the same status as other subjects because students perceive it as having no tangible or future employment-related output (Crawford & Rossiter, 2003).

Another aspect of education which concerns the current research is education levels. It is not a recent phenomenon that better educated Catholics are more likely to attend Mass: figures for 1966 indicate this trend (Mol, 1985, p. 92). Hans Mol (1985) who was one of the first sociologists to undertake research on religious trends in Australia comments that those who are better educated helps to explain the dichotomy of why some Catholics stay connected to the church and some leave. “As a group (educated people) seem to be simultaneously more liberal and more conservative. They are more tolerant of people of different backgrounds and opinion, and are better able to cope with diversity of any kind” (Mol, 1985, p. 97). Research has shown that those who undertake tertiary studies are more likely than those who do not undertake post secondary studies to maintain faith practise (Uecker, Regnerus, & Vaaler, 2007). Despite the differing social context between Australia and the US it is valuable for the purposes of this study to refer to the American scene for the similarities found between both nations. Ozorak (1989) found that higher education predicts greater religious participation. An extensive American study conducted between 1994 and 2002 showed that religious decline in attendance is greatest among young adults who do not attend college (Uecker, et al., 2007). Those with at least a bachelor’s degree are least likely to curb their attendance and to report a decrease in religious importance (Uecker, et al., 2007). The relevance of Catholic schools, education and the importance of families has been discussed in relation to passing on the faith to future generations. The role of faith communities will now be examined.

FAITH COMMUNITIES

The ideal basis of society is community. Without a large measure of community human society ... cannot function (Lonergan, 1972, p. 360). In both anthropology and sociology there is recognition that children both affect and are affected by society and culture (Corsaro & Fingerson, 2003). It is the role of the local parish to “teach people to be religious in a Catholic way” (Moran, 1991, p. 251). This is achieved through socialising young people into the Catholic faith (Crawford & Rossiter, 2003). The parish provides a liturgical life for its members and moral engagement with the non-church world (Moran, 1991, p. 251). It is through:-

...participation in the weekly Eucharist, in baptisms and weddings and funerals, in celebrations of reconciliation and of the anointing of the sick, and in exposure to the regular rhythm of the liturgical year – that most Catholics are socialised into the community of faith. Here Catholic values and attitudes are spoken about and celebrated and experienced in symbolic and ritual forms (Donovan, 1997, p. 102).

It is impossible for a person to develop as a person in isolation.....“man’s specific humanity and his sociality are inextricably entwined. *Homo sapiens* is always, and in the same measure, *homo socius* ” (Berger & Luckmann, 1972). Catholics need community and for this they need their parish. Parishes are small communities where people are brought together by shared beliefs and understandings which gives them the sense they are not alone (Rymarz, 2009). This sharing makes it easier to believe (Rymarz, 2009). The parish is where most people attend Mass. Catholics place great importance on attendance at Mass (Ozorak, 1989).. “In the liturgy Christ is in the midst of the community, the individual members of which are united with one another and with him through the Holy Spirit” (Donovan, 1997, p. 27). *History and Purpose: The Pontifical Council for the Laity* emphasises the importance of parish; here “lay people come together to share the Bread of the Word and Eucharist for their growth in holiness and communion”. Indeed the life of the parish is sustained by liturgical and sacramental life. The document continues, participation in the life of the local Christian communities calls for a “deep sense of belonging to the Church and for recognition ... of the diversity and complementarities of vocations, ministries and charisms, states of life and concrete tasks” (“History and Purpose: The Pontifical Council for the Laity ”, 1997). Various ecclesiologists since Vatican II have said that “local communities are centres of ministerial energy that are essential to the church’s

identity and the effective pursuit of its mission” (Clark, 2009, p. 194). The following is an example of the importance parishioners placed in their parishes. In the diocese of Boston one fifth of the parishes were closed as a result of the sex abuse scandal because the diocese had to pay vast sums in compensation. Devastated parishioners protested in many strong ways including several parishes holding 24/7 sit-ins that have lasted for over four years. These parishioners have demonstrated to the whole Church the importance and vitality of parish (Clark, 2009).

The most important aspect of parish for Catholics is the Mass. Here Catholics receive their spiritual nourishment. *Sacrosanctum concilium 10* explains the purpose of the Mass:-

The liturgy is the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows. For the goal of apostolic works is that all who are made sons (and daughters) of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in her sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper.

The second important aspect of the Mass is the proclamation of the Word. The homily which should be based on the Holy Scriptures is to be “highly esteemed”(“*Sacrosanctum concilium: Constitution on the sacred liturgy*,” 1963 n.52). However, if the homily is boring and does not relate to the everyday life of young people they tend to “tune out” (Ghosn, p. 3).

Parishes are cross-generational, consisting of babies, children, teenagers, young adults, parents, middle-aged through to the elderly (Smith, 2003). This potentially provides a unique network for young people to access important flows of information, resources and opportunities (Smith, 2003). One of the findings of the study “Social Influences on Faith Development” was that Church services are the single most significant activity for faith development (Bellamy, et al., 2004). Research has shown that participants in religious services are more likely to help those in need than those who do not attend religious services (Wuthnow, 2007). In the US research involving 2004 teens, aged 11 to 18 revealed that involvement in religious activities reduced the probability of young people being involved in risk behaviours such as sexual activity, truancy, smoking, alcohol, interpersonal violence, marijuana use, feelings of depression, suicide ideation, or carrying weapons (Sinha, Cnaan, & Gelles, 2007)..

Prior to the mid 1950's there were Catholic tennis, bushwalking, football and debating clubs, parish dances and balls, Catholic Boy Scout troops and similar extra parochial activities which kept Catholics together (Campion, 1988). In 1925 a Jesuit, Eustace Boylan wrote about these activities saying "they were powerful aids to the health of parish life, promoted esprit-de-corps and a sense of solidarity among parishioners, provided an outlet for restless youth, distanced the likelihood of religiously mixed marriages and 'they also contribute to parish funds'..... being a Catholic was rather like being a member of a large family" (Campion, 1988). Today secular activities have replaced these extra parochial activities.

Catholic schools and extra parochial activities are part of the exosystem, or outside community, society and culture, in Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory (Paquette & Ryan, 2001) which help to create a cohesive network which in turn would have assisted Catholics at that time to remain connected to and practicing members of the Catholic Church (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). A person does better in all sorts of ways if their systems are connected, e.g. Church, school, family. Smith & Denton (2005), American sociologists who have done very extensive research on the spirituality of young people have discovered the importance of networks. If young people are established in consistent networks they are more likely to stay connected to their church. Catholics who have a strong group identity are more likely to retain their Catholic faith than those without such identity (Ozorak, 1989). Social integration "does not imply that every society achieves universal consensushowever, considerable consensus must exist if a society is to withstand diversity and cleavage without breaking down" (Glock & Stark, 1965, p. 170) .

Catholic Schools and Catholic parishes are spheres of influence which can be further explained by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory. His theory explains the development of the individual within the system of relationships that form the individual's environment. It could also explain how individuals identify themselves; religiously, spiritually, socially and culturally and finally institutionally. These aspects of identity will be examined in detail later in the thesis. Complex layers of environment affect personal development (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). The child is the Microsystem within the middle of the diagram below (Figure 2.1) whose development is affected by

his/her own biological, emotional and cognitive makeup. A microsystem is the complex of interrelationships between the people he/she interacts with on a face-to-face basis, the nature of these links, and their indirect influence on the developing person through their effect on those who deal with her/him at first hand (Glock & Stark, 1965, p. 170). As found by research the individual's spirituality is then affected by his/her family structure, and its practises (Smith & Denton, 2005).. The individual is also affected by the Mesosystem; church, parish and schools which they attend and by wider friendship groups and family. Friends, peers, mentors or significant others with whom we interact would usually form part of the mesosystem.

A mesosystem comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as, for a child, the relations among home, school, and neighbourhood peer group; for an adult, among family, work, and social life.) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25).

This Mesosystem is affected by the Community, Society and Culture in which it exists. This is the Exosystem.

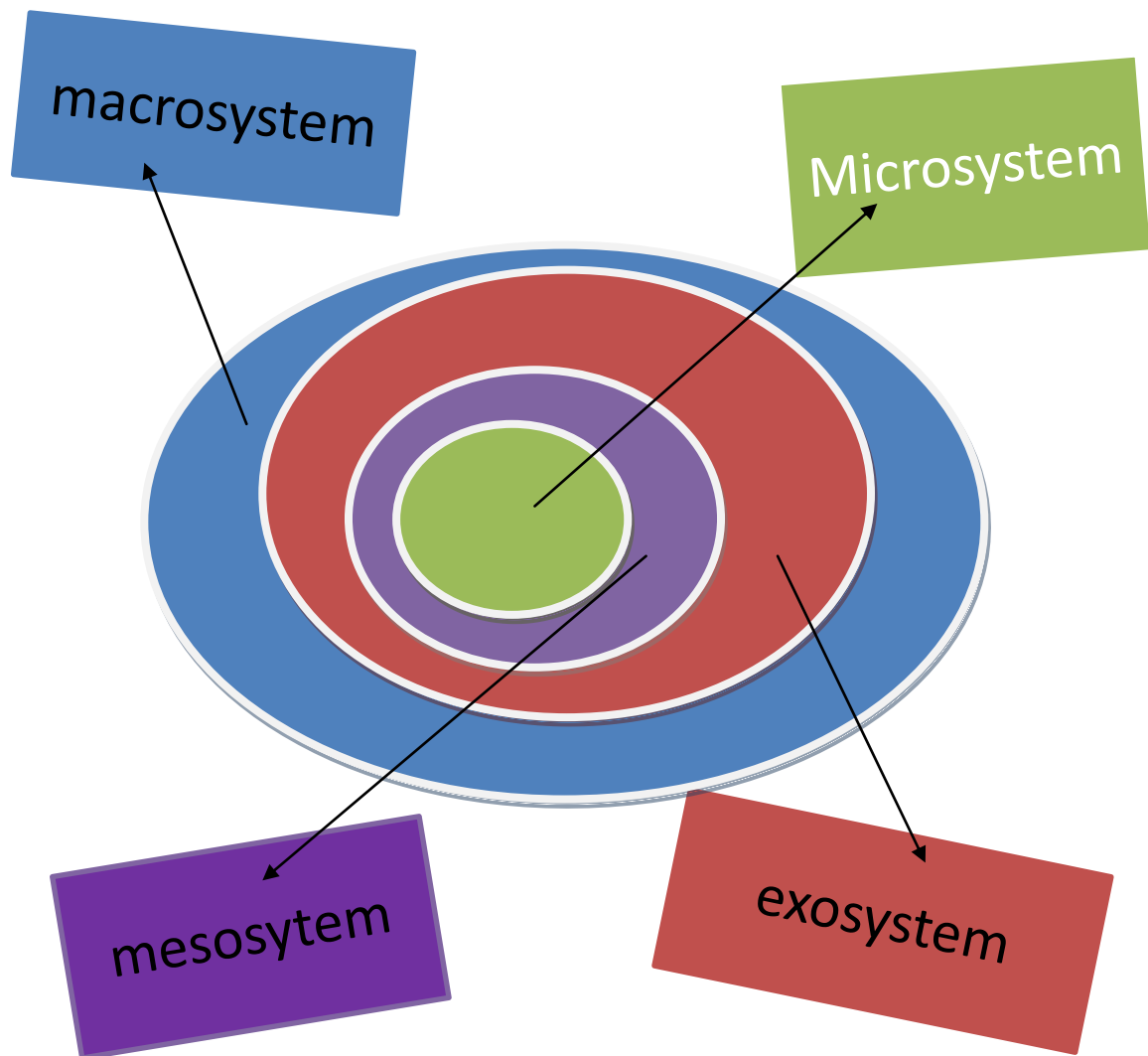
An exosystem refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25).

Papal announcements which affect the individual but over which the individual has no control could be regarded as part of the exosystem. The exosystem is in turn affected by the macrosystem.

The macrosystem refers to consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideologies underlying such consistencies (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26).

The macrosystem in this situation is the common beliefs of all Christians, Catholic, or Protestant; that Jesus Christ died for our sins. The microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem are drawn in diagrammatic form in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory



Macrosystem – exists at level of sub-culture

Exosystem – Community, Society, Culture

Mesosystem – Family, School, Religion

Microsystem – Emotional, Cognitive

SPIRITUAL MENTORS AND CATHOLIC FRIENDS

Research in the US indicates that for young Catholics, 50% of their friends are religious (Smith & Snell, 2009). Very few young people attend religious services or read spiritual books or newspapers so it is most likely their religious opinions are being influenced by their friends rather than religious organisations. Generally this is done by example because very few young people deliberately try to proselytise their friends (Wuthnow, 2007). Bellamy's research was conducted in Australia. It is therefore more relevant for the purposes of this study. It found that friends were reported as being responsible for the faith development of only 19% of church attendees (Bellamy, et al., 2004). This is confirmed by the research project *With Their Own Voices*. It also reported that 19% of young Australians talk about the meaning of life with their friends at least monthly (Roehlkepartain, Benson, Scale, Kimball, & King, 2008) ⁵. The process of socialisation which was referred to earlier continues into adolescence. Eder & Nenga (2003) define adolescent socialisation as an "active collective process in which adolescents interact with each other and adults to produce their own worlds and peer cultures, and eventually come to reproduce, to extend, and to join the adult world (p.157). Those who do convert as a result of their friend's witness are more likely to be seriously religious. "...they go a little more, give a little more, and pray a little more" (Hadaway & Marler, 1993). Social and friendship groups are very important for young people and often provide a psychological 'home base' for adolescents that has a major influence on their thinking and behaviour (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006).. Peers and religious mentors come under the heading of friends.

Mentors teach others how to live out a strong level of religious commitment. They help ease the transition from parental influence to an adult faith. People who do not have a mentor are left to their own resources (Rymarz, 2009). The National Church Life Study on Australian Youth found young people reported local church workers as having a sixty percent influence on faith development (Bellamy, et al., 2004). For many young Catholics the role of spiritual mentors is often performed by priests,

⁵ It needs to be noted however, that the research *With their own voices* was conducted with young people aged between 12 and 19 years.

brothers and nuns, however, this role may also be performed by an older sister or brother or a Catholic friend or teacher. Relationships with priests, brothers and nuns have been shown to help maintain relationships with the Church (Perl & Gray, 2007). Spiritual mentors often help the individual to discern their vocation in life. When an individual experiences vocation the charism touches something deep inside and continues to touch them right throughout their life (Olivera, 2003). This is manifested in an intimate, personal motivation (Olivera, 2003). When an individual is trying to discern their vocation to a religious, single or married life they often attend a retreat so they can speak with a spiritual director and have some quiet time for reflection and prayer.

RELIGIOUS EVENTS

Religious events includes retreats, camps, events such as World Youth Day, reading scripture and other spiritual experiences.

RETREATS, CAMPS

Religious organisations provide connections to events at a regional, state, national and international level (Smith, 2003).. Consequently for those young people involved in their church they are able to plug into an endless array of retreats, summer schools, missions, pilgrimages or an event such as World Youth Day. These events in turn will strengthen the faith of the young people who attend (Smith, 2003).

Christian Smith goes further he says

These sorts of experiences open up an adolescent's imaginable aspirations and horizons encourage developmental maturity, and increase knowledge, confidence and competencies. And this should, in turn, tend to reduce unhealthy and antisocial attitudes, choices, and behaviours among these youth (Smith, 2003, p. 249).

WORLD YOUTH DAY

World Youth Day which was held in Sydney in 2008 held great appeal for young people. They enjoyed meeting, living and being with other Catholics, the spirituality, and the eclectic music arrangements (Mason, Singleton, & Webber, 2009).

Australians do not have many opportunities to express their religious identity (Rymarz, 2007). If identity is to remain strong it must be associated with behaviours that define group affiliation (Strommen & Hardel, 2000). World Youth Day enabled Australian Catholics to express their identity as Catholics (Rymarz, 2007). Retreats, summer camps, and events like World Youth Day have religious music which appeals to those who attend.

SCRIPTURE AND SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

Bible reading and having a meaningful experience of the Holy Spirit have been found to establish a strong congruence between faith and retention of practice (Hadaway & Marler, 1993). Catholics had been discouraged from reading the scriptures for several centuries. It was left for priests to interpret the scriptures (Dixon, 2005). *Dei Verbum* 25 which was promulgated in 1965 overturned this in its statement, "The sacred synod .. earnestly and especially urges all the Christian faithful,..., to learn by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures the "excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:8, NRSV). "For ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ" (*Dei Verbum* 25).

Catholics today are becoming more familiar with the sacred scriptures. To be "born again" is not generally a Catholic experience. The only Catholics who would consider themselves to be "born again" would be those who have experienced the "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (Glock & Bellah, 1976). This often leads to developing a "personal relationship"⁶ with Jesus. An

⁶ A personal relationship with Jesus was the manner in which participants described their connection with Jesus. They regard Him as a very special friend on whom they can depend and to whom they can talk to about everything that is important to them..

important religious experience is committing one's life to Christ which has been established by research to be an important indicator of religiosity in later life (Smith & Snell, 2009).

OTHER FACTORS

Other factors include music, vocation, miracles and the experience of birth and death.

MUSIC

In 1841 Joseph Bartlett gave an address, "*Music as an auxiliary of religion*, at Dartmouth College, enthusiastically praising the virtues of music.

Music has a language wonderful in its power, wide in its extent. There are few in whom she does not find an answering chord. Minds the most savage and uncultivated, no less than the civilized and refined acknowledge her sway (Bartlett, April 1841).

In his address Bartlett extolled the great church compositions of several classical composers; Handel, Bach, Liszt, Beethoven, and Mozart. Bartlett said that music was a language of devotion with two objects; to kindle the flame of devotion in the hearts of people and to worship God. In 2006 Clark said music is a highly commercial medium that exposes people to new and exciting religious experiences. The book *Sacred song in America: religion, music and public culture* by Marini (2003) discusses many genres of religious music; American Indian, Hispanic, African-American Gospel, Jewish Revival music, Mormon, Folk Gospel and Catholic Charismatic music. This list is far from exhaustive; music has been used by almost every religion in history to express people's faith.

Music is an important medium that helps young people to establish their identity and aid their faith development. "Listening to music affects teenagers emotions, and in turn, adolescents use these emotions to imagine identities they might adopt" (Eder & Nenga, 2003, p. 174). According to Wuthnow's (2007) research although young people are highly exposed to music it does not mean they will find God in music anymore than older adults are likely to find God in music. Wuthnow (2007)

discovered in his research that 38% of young people in the 21 to 45 year old age group felt close to God singing or listening to music away from church services. However, only 12% of young people in their twenties (22% of those in their forties) would like to have a religious service featuring contemporary music (Wuthnow, 2007). Australian research by the National Church Life Survey disputes this finding by stating that Generations X and Y value contemporary music in religious services (Powell & Jacka, 2008). Good music attracts young people (Clark, 2006; Patterson, 2003) as Hillsong⁷ has proven in recent years (Huntley, 2006). Christian music is the fastest growing genre of music in the Australian music industry (McIntyre, 2007). At Hillsong, God is experienced through music (McIntyre, 2007). Quite apart from being enjoyable singing can help to build faith. St Augustine is reputed to have said, "He who sings prays twice" ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.1156).

VOCATION

To discover one's vocation is to give one's life direction and meaning. All members of the Catholic Church "whatever their condition or state – though each in his own way – are called by the Lord to that perfection of sanctity by which the Father himself is perfect" ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.825). Christians can strive to "be imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love" (Eph 5:1-2, NRSV) by letting "the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5, NRSV). All are called in to union with Christ and to the eternal kingdom ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.542-543).

MIRACLES

The Catholic Church canonises saints by solemnly proclaiming that they practiced heroic virtue and lived in fidelity to God's grace ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.828). To proclaim an individual a saint several miracles must have taken

⁷ Hillsong is a music genre which comes from the Hillsong Church in Sydney (Dixon, et al., 2008, p. 2).

place that are attributed to the saint. (*"Divinus Perfectionis Magister,"* 1983). This is the task of the "Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints". Miracles are an effect or extraordinary event in the physical world that surpasses all known human or natural powers and is ascribed to a supernatural cause ("Dictionary.com,"). Jesus was regarded as a miracle worker when he fed the 5,000 (Mk 6:30-44, NRSV), walked on the water (Mk 6:45-52, NRSV), raised Lazarus from the dead (Jn 11:1-44, NRSV) and performed many other miracles during his time on earth. The Catholic Church has always attributed miracles to the workings of God.

BIRTH & DEATH

The Australian Young Christian Workers undertook a project in 2006 called "Touching the sacred, a spiritual inquiry" (Australian Young Christian Workers, 2006). Respondents claimed that spirituality was experienced most often at critical moments in life, particularly birth and death experiences. These events can strengthen one's spirituality provided two factors exist; personal reflection and a supportive environment (Australian Young Christian Workers, 2006). In this document four areas were identified where the 500 respondents had identified times they had experienced spirituality in their lives; first, at critical times in life, second, in supportive environments, third, with significant groups, and fourth, at particular moments (Australian Young Christian Workers, 2006). These findings are confirmed by other researchers (Bond, 2000; Mason, et al., 2007; Smith & Denton, 2005). Many people witness to experiences such as birth, death, nature, prayer, a sacred space, or sermons as being life changing experiences (Bond, 2000; Mason, et al., 2007; Smith, 2005) which help to form the beliefs and values people formulate, and upon which they base their lives (Smith, 2005).

IDENTITY

Identity has been defined as 'self in context' (Arbuckle, 2007, p. 12). Another definition is a "process in which the individual draws on both internal and external

cultural resources for self understanding and self expression” (Crawford & Rossiter, 2003).. Giddens (1991) understands identity as a narrative constructed by the individual that is constantly being reconstructed as the individual reflects and reacts to his/her life experiences.

According to Donovan (1997) and Fox (2009) the laity today have an increased consciousness of their Catholic identity because they live in an increasingly secular and multiethnic society (Donovan, 1997; Fox, 2009). Surely this is a reason for a decreased consciousness of their Catholic identity. For Catholics the Eucharist is central to their identity. “Both subjectively and objectively the liturgy is at the heart of Catholic identity”, subjectively through participation in the liturgy and objectively through the communal celebration of the liturgy (Donovan, 1997, p. 102). Although Arbuckle (2007) says the ‘Catholic Identity’ is becoming a blurred concept in the health sector in Australia today. He defines ‘Catholic Identity’ for health care services as the “ongoing process of the healing mission of Jesus Christ-engaging-with-the internal and external contexts of each healthcare facility, according to the Roman Catholic tradition” (Arbuckle, 2007, p. 12). This definition will be developed to provide a definition for individual Catholic identity.

“Catholic tradition” needs to be clarified. The uniqueness of Catholic tradition is explained by Richard McBrien, a Catholic theologian who says the unique configuration of characteristics within the Catholic Church which set it apart from other Christian denominations are: systematic theology; the body of doctrines; the liturgical life, especially the Eucharist; the variety of spiritualities; religious congregations and lay apostolates; official teachings on justice, peace, and human rights; the exercise of collegiality, and the Petrine doctrine (Arbuckle, 2007) ⁸. This is the Catholic tradition followed by those who identify as Catholic. *Lumen Gentium* 31 explains the role of baptism in establishing Catholic identity; the “faithful are by baptism made one with the body of Christ”. *Pontificium Consillium pro laicis* 5 says a

⁸ The Petrine doctrine is the belief that the Pope as the chief shepherd and supreme authority in Church is the successor of St Peter (Hillsong, 2009).

Catholic identity is established at Baptism when the individual becomes a “new creation” and is incorporated into Christ through the grace of baptism, called to grow in holiness.... and sharers ... in the threefold office of priestly (worship), prophetic (witness and proclamation) and kingly (Mastery of oneself and of the world at the service of the kingdom of God) . *Sacrocsanctum Concilium* 6 explains the effects of Baptism.

By Baptism men and women are plunged into the paschal mystery of Christ; they die with him, are buried with him, and rise with him. They receive the spirit of adoption as sons and daughters ‘in which we cry, Abba, Father’ (Rm 8:115, NRSV)

The Code of Canon Law explains the importance of baptism in establishing a Catholic identity :-

(Canon 204) Christ’s faithful are those who, since they are incorporated into Christ through baptism, are constituted the people of God. For this reason they participate in their own way in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ (p.34).

(Canon 205) Those baptised are in full communion with the Catholic Church here on earth who are joined with Christ in His visible body, through the bonds of profession of faith, the sacraments and ecclesial governance (p.34).

Redemptor hominis 20 explains that to identify oneself as Catholic is to place the “ineffable Sacrament”, the “Sacrament of Love” at the centre of one’s life For the committed Catholic the Eucharist is the centre and summit of the whole sacramental life . *Christifideles Laici* 3 says Catholics “through faith and the sacraments of Christian initiation [are] made like to Jesus Christ, have an active part in [the Church’s] mission of salvation. *Christifideles Laici* 10 teaches that one becomes a child of God through Baptism, and with the anointing of the Holy Spirit the individual becomes a Temple of the Holy Spirit. *Christifideles Laici* 37 states Catholic identity endorses the sacredness of every human person from the moment of conception to death . Catholic identity embraces the whole of the history of the Catholic Church from the moment of the Annunciation to the present day (Donovan, 1997).. It also acknowledges the unique 40,000 year old spiritual history of our indigenous people and the history of the Catholic Church in Australia (Henson, 1994). So given all of the above it is suggested that a suitable definition of a person’s ‘Catholic Identity’ for

the purposes of this study is:- *Catholic identity may be defined as a baptised Catholic living one's life as a follower of Jesus Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit according to the Catholic tradition.*

Establishing identity is integral for young people (Bond, 2000). . Identity was reported as one of three major issues of concern for young people in a consultation with Australian youth (Bishops' Committee for Justice and Peace, 1998). Young people need to develop an authentic sense of self i.e. their identity. Gaining an authentic sense of self is essential for the moral and spiritual wellbeing of the individual (Rossiter, 2001). Olivera (2003) goes further when he states that young people's identity needs to be "recognised, valued and affirmed". In his paper *Maturity and Generation: The Spiritual Formation of Our Young People* he states "Affirming one's own "I" and finding one's place in life are of primary concern to all young people" (Olivera, 2003). Contrary to belief it does not usually involve massive transformation, generally people continue to be the same person they were in the past (Smith & Snell, 2009). Establishing spiritual identity has good outcomes for the individual. Studies have revealed that:

....highly religious teenagers appear to be doing better than less religious teenagers ... religious faith and practise themselves exert significant positive, and direct influences on the life of teenagers, helping to foster healthier, more engaged adolescents who live more constructive and promising lives (Smith & Denton, 2005).

Four aspects of Catholic identity have been identified, Religious Identity, Spiritual Identity, Social/Cultural Identity and Institutional Identity.

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

Catholic Religious Identity refers to the organized aspect of religion; it offers established patterns of approaching God (Bouma, 2006, p. 15). As discussed in Chapter 1, religion is organised and has structured ways of being spiritual, with officials who formalize ways to act and conform within the particular group (Bouma, 2006). There is also an element of compulsion or duty in Catholic religious identity

because Catholicism has an extensive list of precepts⁹. Although many individuals claim a religious affiliation with the Catholic Church they do not necessarily believe the teachings of the Catholic Church as enunciated in the Apostle's Creed¹⁰ nor do they follow Catholic Church teaching regarding the precepts. For example in the *Spirit of Generation Y* study, 77% of young people stated they definitely believe in God, 57% state they definitely believe in Jesus and 69 % believe in life after death (Mason, et al., 2006, p. 96)¹¹. However, if asked about to which religion they belong, they would state "Catholic".

The following section expounds the meaning of Spiritual Identity. Religious and spiritual identities are closely linked to one another.

SPIRITUAL IDENTITY

Catholic Spiritual Identity deals with the 'beyond' and the inner self (Mason, et al., 2007). In Chapter One 'Spirituality' was described by some young people as 'a passion or flame deep inside', 'something which gives meaning and purpose to my life', 'something that enlightens, that is at the heart of my beliefs and values', the source of my strength and peace', 'my source of guidance and fulfilment', 'my link with God' (Mason, et al., 2007). *Catholic Spiritual Identity* is about one's relationship with God through the sacraments and prayer, the Eucharist. Spiritual identity can be expressed powerfully in the self perception of the individual (Douglas, 1982). Spiritual identity is about one's relationship with God (Wuthnow, 2007, p. 112). It is both personal and psychological (Crawford & Rossiter, 2003). Spiritual Identity explains for the individual who they are and where they belong; it is intrinsic to their

⁹ . "The precepts of the Church concern the moral and Christian life united with the liturgy and nourished by it" (Arbuckle, 2007, p. 25). The majority of Catholics would not keep these precepts but still identify as Catholics. The researcher is stating the ideal.

¹⁰ The Apostle's Creed is a Catholic statement of belief ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.2041-2043).

¹¹ These statistics are a combination of Table 2.3 (p.83) and Table 3.21 (p.96) in (Mason, et al., 2006) .

self perception (Rymarz & Graham, 2006). Religious beliefs define, confirm and establish spiritual identity. If an individual has a great love of God and lives by this love one becomes known to oneself and others as a spiritual person (Wuthnow, 2007).

CULTURAL/SOCIAL IDENTITY

Catholic Cultural Identity is familial; they are Catholic because their family is Catholic (Rymarz & Graham, 2006). Establishing one's identity within the family is important for all people but particularly so for ethnic people. They place themselves within their ethnic group because that is their familial, (religious, nationality, language, food and historical) understanding of their identity. Religion can therefore assume great importance in defining identity for ethnic people (Ghosn). Over 1,000 young people aged 15 to 35 years attend the 7.00pm youth Mass at the Maronite Catholic Church in Western Sydney because it provides cultural identity and group empowerment (Ghosn).

In a multicultural society where there are so many 'other' people and 'strange' ways of living and believing, coming to a place where young adults of the same belief gather, appeared to provide a source of strength and comfort, consolidating one's values, lifestyle and beliefs (Ghosn, p. 3).

This Mass is also a point of social contact for young Maronite Catholics. Establishing one's identity becomes difficult for people who are uprooted from their country of origin (Bond, 2000). They struggle to establish identity in Australia. So ethnic persons who belong to a minority in Australia need to locate themselves on two levels to establish their identity; firstly their parent culture, religion and language and secondly with Anglo-Australians, who are the ethnic majority (Bond, 2000). It is essential that they establish support networks and friends because their appearance and behaviour differs from the norm, and therefore draws attention to them (Bond, 2000). This shared identity acts as a bulwark against discrimination and racism (Bond, 2000). The Australian Catholic Church in the 1950's was for all intents and purposes an Irish Church, but after the war, one million non-English speaking Catholics arrived from Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Germany, Croatia, Hungary and many other European countries (Dixon, 2005). Ethnic groups refer to collectives of

people who meaningfully interact with one another because they share a particular language, dialect, national ancestry, or physical appearance (McKay & Lewins, 1991). Ethnographers have discovered that migrants frequently turn to religion as a source of identity (Wuthnow, 2007). Research has shown that ethnicity can positively affect faith practice (Olivera, 2003; Regnerus, 2003; Roehlkepartain & Benson, 1993; Roof, 1999; Rostosky, Danner, & Riggle, 2007; Smith, et al., 2002). Religious cultural identity can also affect other behaviours, for example studies of young Vietnamese found that regular church attendance was the second strongest influence in attending Vietnamese after-school classes (Bankston & Zhou, 1996).

Community focus on identity is often sociological (Crawford & Rossiter, 2003). The young person may belong and even attend the Catholic Church every week out of habit; for example the family ritual may be to attend Mass every Sunday, and so the children attend with their parents. The young person accepts this as is one of the things one does on Sunday. They have never examined whether the reason and beliefs behind going to Mass on Sunday and all that implies is part of their own belief system. Berger and Luckmann (1972) have given the title *habitualization* to this phenomenon which when repeated frequently become cast into the individual's pattern for daily existence.

Habitualized actions, of course, retain their meaningful character for the individual although the meanings involved become embedded as routines in his general stock of knowledge, taken for granted by him and at hand for his projects in to the future (Berger & Luckmann, 1972) .

Attendance at Mass becomes a part of their social milieu. It is what is done on Sundays; there they meet their family and friends. Their entire social network may be circumscribed within that particular Catholic community. If, however, the person moves away from the Catholic community where their family and friends have always attended the habit may require examination and they may cease regular Mass attendance. Another aspect of *habitualization* is that the stock of knowledge built up through repeated activity relieves accumulated tensions that result from undirected drives . *Habitualization* narrows one's choices (Berger & Luckmann, 1972). It frees the individual to concentrate on their career, or raising their family or even their football team. They don't have to worry about possible alternate answers to the big

questions. If disaster strikes; for example, a close friend is killed in a motor car accident they have a psychological framework to support them in tragic events (Berger & Luckmann, 1972).

INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY

Identification of self as belonging to the Body of Christ is indicative of Institutional Identity (Bouma, 1992). The Body of Christ (Eph 4:4-16, NRSV) is an analogy that was coined for Christians by St Paul. Baptised in the name of Jesus and having received the Holy Spirit Christians are now clothed with his life and live in him. The Holy Spirit which has been poured out on them binds them together and makes them one body. When the concept of the Body of Christ is united to the Eucharist it contains an even greater depth (Donovan, 1997). Donovan (1997) states:-

At least part of the reason for the Church's existence is that it might celebrate the Eucharist; a chief purpose of the Eucharist on the other hand is to build up the Church so that it might become the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ that is the Eucharist and the Body of Christ that is the Church is inseparable (p.104).

In 1 Cor. 10:17, NRSV, Paul says "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

Institutional identity is typified by beliefs which establish clear boundaries between Catholics and non Catholics, such as the unbroken succession of the Pope from St Peter. Further indicators are the level of importance the individual places upon belonging to the Catholic community and attending Mass. This is a very strong indicator of personal belief and affiliation (Rymarz & Graham, 2006). Included in the understanding of Institutional Identity is the Catholic understanding that life is sacred at every stage and therefore abortion and euthanasia are inconsistent with this belief (Rymarz & Graham, 2006). Institutional Identity involves high levels of satisfaction with the Church (Stark & Finke, 2000). *Lumen Gentium* 31 places the work of the laity in the secular world. Since Vatican II there has been a growing involvement of

the laity in the Church as men and women become conscious of their responsibility for the work of the Church; they are conscious of *being church* (Fox, 2009, p. 198).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed a considerable amount of literature on the factors which bring young people to Catholic faith and why they continue to remain practising Catholics by attending Mass on most Sundays. It has also attempted to define Catholic identity and what it means to be Catholic today. It should be noted, however, that while a considerable amount of the research referred to in this thesis is sourced from the United States, the American Catholic Church and social settings vary considerably from the Australian scene. Hence US research, apart from theories such as Smith & Snell's (2009) "six paths" and Hadaway and Roof's (1988) "three characteristics, must be viewed cautiously. It can only act as a possible guideline for Australian research.

There is overwhelming evidence that parents are the primary influence in nurturing faith in their offspring. Some aspects of parenting appear to have a greater influence on socialising the children into the faith of parents than others. Both parents need to share the same beliefs so that they do not give their children mixed messages. The parents need to be active in teaching and modelling faith to their children. The home should be harmonious, a place where prayer is the norm. Children may then seemingly 'catch' the faith from their parents, but this transmission of values and religious faith cannot be assured even with ideal parenting. The faith nurtured by parents may be built upon by sending children to Catholic schools, however, research shows this is a fruitless exercise if the parents themselves do not have a strong faith and have taught their children to think, believe, and act as serious religious believers (Regnerus, 2003). Other factors, such as parish, spiritual mentors, retreats and spiritual experiences also play a role in faith development. None of these factors at in isolation, rather they work in tandem with other factors.

Understanding what is meant by **Catholic identity** has been identified as being an important aspect of a young person's understanding of themselves. Establishing a Catholic identity helps young people to understand themselves in relation to God, the

Church and the wider world. A Catholic identity for the purposes of this study is defined as follows. *Catholic identity may be defined as a baptised Catholic living one's life as a follower of Jesus Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit according to the Catholic tradition.* Establishing one's identity as a Catholic is strong motivation for attending and continuing to attend Mass on Sundays. Four types of identity were examined in the literature: religious identity, spiritual identity, cultural/social identity and institutional identity.

The next chapter examines the research design and methodology chosen for this research.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The last chapter examined the literature on some of the factors which led young Catholic adults to practise their faith under the headings; family of origin, Catholic systems and other subsystems, religious events, and religious and life experiences. The literature review also examined how a Catholic identity could empower young adult Catholics to continue to attend Mass. This chapter examines the research design and methodology used in this thesis. The study employs a Qualitative Research Method.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative Research was considered to be a more suitable method than quantitative research to obtain the data for this research. Qualitative Research involves “the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or data” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). A quantitative method would not have provided the desired outcome for this study because it “emphasises measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 8). The desired outcome was to discover the faith development or process of coming to faith of some young Catholics who practised the Catholic faith when so many of their peers had ceased to do so. A qualitative method is the most suitable for this research to gather data because of its fruitfulness and ability to obtain greater in-depth understanding of the faith story of these young Catholics (Berg, 2009). One of the strengths of qualitative research is to gain new insights into the field of study being investigated because it is based on the importance of people’s experiences and how they interpret the complexity of their world (Burns, 2000). Individual faith journeys are unique to that individual therefore surveys and questionnaires which are some of the tools of quantitative research would not have been suitable. Furthermore, questionnaires neglect the individual’s relationship between action and attitude (May, 1997). Therefore a qualitative research method was the most suitable

type of research for this study. Once the decision was made to employ qualitative research a suitable research design needed to be constructed.

RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to develop a research design it is necessary to determine what epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and method will be used and how the choice is justified. The purpose of this is to ensure the research is sound and that the outcomes are convincing (Crotty, 1998).

Table 3.1: Summary of Research Design

Epistemology	Theoretical	Methodology	Qualitative
	Perspective		Method
Constructionism	Symbolic	Narrative	Face to face
	Interactionism	Analysis	Interviews

The table is described in more detail in the following sections.

Constructionism is the epistemology chosen for this research. Epistemology deals with the “nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope and general basis” (Hamlyn, 1995, p. 242). Constructionism involves knowledge and is a way of understanding “how do we know what we do know” (Patton, 2002, p. 134). Constructionism claims there is no meaning without a mind because it is the mind which constructs meaning. Meaning is therefore constructed, not discovered. The meaning of the same phenomenon may be constructed differently by different people which can happen from one culture to another or from one era to another (Crotty, 1998). Constructionism is the view that “all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of

interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Things may be pregnant with meaning but the meaning is not revealed until the conscious mind engages with it. Epistemology is the theoretical knowledge behind the theoretical perspective (Crotty, 1998).

Symbolic Interactionism is deemed the most suitable theoretical perspective for this study. Theoretical perspective embodies a certain way of understanding what is and what it means to know. Symbolic Interactionism is the most suitable way to study the faith journey of these young adult Catholics because it deals with issues of language, communications, interrelationships and community (Crotty, 1998). It is about basic social interactions that enter into perceptions, values and attitudes of a community, in this case the Catholic community. Symbolic interactionism is a way of looking at the world and making sense of it. A number of assumptions are inherent in the methodology. An elaboration of these assumptions is the task of the theoretical perspective. Symbolic interactionism grounds these assumptions very clearly. Herbert Blumer was a student of George Herbert Mead, from whose thought the concept of constructionism comes (Crotty, 1998). Crotty (1998) quotes Blumer who clearly explains these interactionist assumptions:-

That human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them;

That the meaning of such things is derived from, and arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows;

That these meanings are handled in and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters (p.72).

This will be ideal for this study because it will be necessary to obtain a complete picture of how the faith of these young people developed and why they have remained faithful to the practise of their Catholic faith when many of their peers have fallen away from practise (Crotty, 1998). The study aims at discovering the meaning Catholicism has for them and how they understand themselves in today’s world. It is also interested in the social interactions with family, friends, and significant others that have occurred in the lives of these young adults that have brought them to faith

and have caused them to continue to practise that faith. The ideal way to obtain this information is through Narrative analysis i.e. listening to the stories of these young adults.

NARRATIVE

Narratology or Narrative has been chosen as the methodology for this study. Methodology is the specific way in which the data collected from the interview is examined (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 18). Narratology is a methodology which enables the characterisation of the phenomena of human experience. Its principal attraction is its ability to explain life experiences, both social and personal, in relevant and meaningful ways (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Narratology has been considered to be the most suitable methodology because it is essentially storytelling which aims at authenticity. Stories have the power to evoke the vividness of lived experience (Berger & Quinney, 2004). This study employs the storying experience to provide narrative frameworks for conveying the personal experiences of the participants during their lives for what is relevant and why their lives developed the way they did develop (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998). Narratives are able to produce plausible accounts, that ring true for the reader (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). “Stories themselves are instrumental in creating and sustaining the very meanings through which an experience is interpreted and understood” (Singleton, 2001, p. 181). “Stories describe events in the past” and they “imply causality, reasons why and how events came to pass” (Singleton, 2001, p. 180). “Narrative assumes that people construct their reality through narrating their stories” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 117). Storytelling brings together “the activities of the individual and the meanings of self” in a way which eludes the narrator in a day-to-day context (Moore, 1994, p. 110). It is the stories of these people that will bring to life how they came to faith practice.

The purpose of this study is to transform the human experience of faith development into meaning (Berger & Quinney, 2004). While storytelling makes sense of the past and helps to organise the person’s memories it also communicates those events to others and promotes a common-sense way of understanding the world (Singleton,

2001). Narrative turns the chronology of history into plot, so that it points the way from what has gone before to what might reasonably come next (Berger & Quinney, 2004). People “lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives”, while “narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narrative of experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998, p. 155). The stories of the participants, through the telling of their faith journeys, explains not only their stories but helps to construct how they understand themselves as persons and in the world. This is an important aspect of this research (Berger & Quinney, 2004). Narrative analysis will allow for the uniqueness of each individual’s story to be heard. The “author *in* the text must be isomorphic with the author *of* the text” in order to accurately portray the participant’s stories (Moore, 1994, p. 122). Narrative honours people’s stories as data that can stand on its own. The main concept of narrative “is that the stories and narratives offer especially translucent windows into cultural and social meanings” (Patton, 2002, p. 116). The method to be used in collecting these stories is through face-to-face interviews.

INTERVIEWS

In-depth, open-ended interviews, which are one of many qualitative research methods, have been chosen to collect data for this research. The in-depth knowledge obtained from this type of interviews adds strength to the findings (Patton, 2002). Interviews “yield direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge” (Patton, 2002, p. 4). The assumption is that “the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable and able to be made explicit” (Patton, 2002, p. 341). Interviewing allows the researcher to enter into the other person’s perspective. The researcher needs to employ active listening skills and empathetic responsiveness while interviewing participants (Smythe & Murray, 2001). A wealth of detailed information can be collected using this method even though only a relatively small population is interviewed (Patton, 2002). The researcher needs to discover how, as people attending Mass in their local parish, the participants make sense of their Catholic faith in their everyday lives through the symbols, rituals, social structures and social roles of the Catholic Church (Berg, 2009). The best method of doing this is through in-depth face-to-face interviews, which is a feature of qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Also the researcher needs to obtain thick

description that demonstrates a relationship to the context of the faith story of these young adults (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). “Thick, rich description provides the foundation for qualitative research and reporting” (Patton, 2002, p. 437). It adds greater depth to the findings. Another important point which is possible with this type of data collection is that the data is not manipulated because each individual’s faith story is unique to them. It is therefore very important when analysing data to fully comprehend the interviewee’s answers. This is possible when using a qualitative method because most of the data is verbatim (Berg, 2009). Therefore a qualitative research method using face-to-face interviews is deemed to be the most suitable. Once all the interviews are completed the data analysis begins in earnest.

The role of the researcher is to make sense of the data and to seek, describe and discover the underlying meaning behind responses. “Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings” (Patton, 2002, p. 432). The researcher is aiming to identify and describe the subjective experiences of each of the twenty-three participants (Patton, 2002). All data must be placed in the context in which it was received.

The software tool, NVivo is to be used for data analysis. NVivo helps to analyse, manage and shape qualitative data (Creswell, 2007).. It provides security by storing the database and files together in a single file which enables the researcher to easily handle the data and conduct searches (Creswell, 2007). Once the research design has been chosen the next step is to obtain a sample of the population under study.

DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of data actually began when the stories were being transcribed as common threads between the participant’s stories arose and themes began to emerge. Memos only were used at this stage. Once all twenty-three of the interviews were complete NVivo was employed. Each individual’s story was examined for key phrases, terms and themes. As the participant’s stories were explored a thematic analysis began to take shape. The phrases, words and terms were then grouped

according to common themes again using the software tool NVivo. Data analysis resulted in a conceptual model that took account of the young adult's spiritual experiences and the reasons they continue to attend Mass. It also allowed the researcher to begin some theory development in the anticipation of finding theoretical explanations for their continued faith journey. This classification facilitated the summarising of data so as to identify themes and to pinpoint emerging patterns (Punch, 1998). At all times the researcher was trying to make sense of the data and to seek, describe and discover the underlying meaning behind responses.

SAMPLE POPULATION

Purposive criterion and Snowball sampling was used to obtain participants for this study. This enabled the researcher to maximize discovery of heterogeneous patterns that occurred and to identify common themes (Erlandson, et al., 1993) through grouping together common themes under appropriate headings. The criterion was that participants would be baptised Catholics who attended Mass on most Sundays. It was also opportunistic by making use of new leads to obtain people for interview. New leads discovered during fieldwork, enabled the researcher to take advantage of the unexpected by being flexible (Erlandson, et al., 1993).

In order to obtain participants for the study, discussions were held with the researcher's Parish Priest. He was very supportive and gave written permission to speak to his parishioners and to ask if they would like to join the study. He suggested numerous parishioners between the ages of 21 and 40 and twelve of these parishioners were interviewed. Then he was transferred to another parish several hundred kilometres away. In the meantime the researcher was in the Lismore diocese. The curate and parish worker of a parish in that diocese were approached and they agreed to assist. They invited parishioners by letter to participate and five more interviews were conducted in that parish. After the researcher spoke about the research at a diocesan retreat the process began to snowball and the remaining participants were obtained from diverse areas. Originally it was planned to interview 15 people, 23 were finally interviewed. Saturation point

was reached when it became difficult to obtain further clients to participate in the study.

The final sample was more varied than it would have been had the original plan been able to be followed. All except three of the interviews were conducted in the interviewee's homes. One interview was conducted at a restaurant; this proved a difficult interview as the restaurant was very noisy. The other two interviews were conducted in a private room at the participants' place of work.

Upon receipt of the recommendations a letter of invitation was sent (Appendix B). A telephone call was made to explain the nature of the study and once the participant agreed to be interviewed; a time, date and suitable location for the interview was established. At interview the Consent Form (Appendix C) was signed. As all interviewees were 21 years and over there was no requirement to obtain parental consent.

Thirteen of the participants were from Sandhurst diocese, five from Lismore diocese, two from Canberra Goulburn and one each from Melbourne, Sale and Wagga Wagga. Thirteen participants were female and ten were male; this equates to 56.5% of the participants which is lower than the national demographic for practising Catholics of 61% of Catholics (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, 2008). Eight females and five males were born between 1961 and 1975 and therefore categorised as Generation X. Five of the remaining ten participants were Generation Y males and the remaining five were female. Five married couples, an ex-religious sister and one Catholic priest were also part of the study. Seven of the remainder were married and four single. Seventeen of the twenty three participants (74%) had completed tertiary studies which is considerably higher than the national demographic characteristic of 28% (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, 2008). Five participants (22%) were born overseas which is considerably lower than the national demographic of 36% (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, 2008). They were born in Ireland, Jamaica, Malta, or Mexico. All spoke excellent English. Two participants were Australian born, one from Croatian parents and the other from

Maltese parents. It was excellent that these seven people agreed to participate in the study because the Australian Catholic Church has been greatly influenced by migration from overseas (Campion, 1988). Their inclusion in the study makes the study more representative of the whole population. These statistics are represented in Table 3.2. It is acknowledged that these participants may not be representative of “baptised Catholics who attend Mass on most Sundays”, however, when finding participants the researcher needed to work with the leads as they arose. Considering that participants were advised interviews could take up to an hour, the researcher needed to be prepared to accept those people who were willing to provide this opportunity to be interviewed.

Table 3.2 Details of Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Gen.	Sex	Marital Status	Diocese	Ethnicity
Moses	21	Y	Male	Single	Sandhurst	Australian
Eliza	35	X	Female	Married	Sandhurst	Australian
Clare	37	X	Female	Married	Lismore	Australian
Jeremiah	31	Y	Male	Married	Lismore	Australian
Kate	37	X	Female	Single	Lismore	Australian
Elouise	21	Y	Female	Single	Sandhurst	Australian
Rose	28	Y	Female	Single	Melbourne	Australian
Joshua	23	Y	Male	Single	Sale	Australian
Genevieve	37	X	Female	Married	Sandhurst	Australian
Ben	37	X	Male	Married	Sandhurst	Australian
Tonnie	40	X	Female	Married	Sandhurst	Australian
Johanna	40	X	Female	Married	Sandhurst	Australian
Miriam	34	Y	Female	Married	Wagga	Australian
Solomon	40	X	Male	Married	Sandhurst	Australian
Hugh	40	X	Male	Married	Sandhurst	Australian
James	30	Y	Male	Single	Sandhurst	Australian
Chiara	29	Y	Female	Married	Canberra	Croatian*
Fred	38	X	Male	Married	Sandhurst	Irish
Adele	41	X	Female	Married	Lismore	Jamaican
Marie	38	X	Female	Married	Lismore	Maltese
Elijah	28	Y	Male	Married	Canberra	Maltese*
Samuel	37	X	Male	Married	Sandhurst	Mexican
Grace	32	Y	Female	Married	Sandhurst	Mexican

* First generation Croatian and first generation Maltese.

QUESTIONNAIRE

As noted in the Literature Review most young Catholics do not practice their faith. The questionnaire was developed to target clientele who do practice their Catholic faith. It was semi-structured. Often participant's answers led to further questions regarding faith and practice. The interview questionnaire began with general questions about the participant, then moved on to ask questions about major influences in their lives, what it meant for them to be Catholic, what factors sustained their active Catholic commitment, the significance for them of being Catholic, and how their Catholic faith found expression in their current lifestyle. The questions then moved on to their personal Catholic history, what nurtured them as Catholics and in their formation as Catholics. Sometimes these questions led to responses relating to Mass attendance, reception of other sacraments, Reconciliation, prayer, music, World Youth Day, or scripture. When this occurred, probing follow-up questions were asked as happened in the case of music, where there were follow-up questions about the genre. Comments by participants about prayer were extensive and diverse and included issues like types of prayer, use of prayer and how and why they prayed. Accordingly follow-up questions were then asked. The religious practice questions were followed by a question about the link between their education and their faith development; "If you attended Catholic schools, was this an important factor in continuing your commitment beyond school?" The interviews were free flowing and questions sometimes varied according to response to previous questions.

INTERVIEWS

The research was overt and done through in-depth face-to-face interviews. I was comfortable with this type of data collection as I trained as a Marriage Counsellor with Centrecare and my occupation before retirement was a Business Auditor with the Australian Taxation Office which involved extensive face-to-face interviews with clients. The interviews were semi structured using the suggested interview schedule as a guideline only. Sometimes only some of the questions were asked depending upon the length of answers and the course the interview took. The questions were open-ended because this was able to draw out a variety of responses and enabled informants to interpret each question in individual ways (O'Reilly, 2005). They were

also used to encourage stories and narratives. Open-ended questions represent the most elementary form of obtaining qualitative data (Patton, 2002). It was very important for the interviewer to convey to the participant the importance of their views (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Interviewers should have 'superb listening skills and be skilful at personal interaction, question framing, and gentle probing for elaboration' (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 102) because the aim of the research is to draw out each participant's faith story. Each interview lasted between 30 and sixty minutes. All of the interviews were taped with the permission of the interviewee. Participants were offered a choice of venues, their Parish Centre, a neutral location or their own home for the interview. The reason for choice of venue was privacy and so the participant was comfortable and would not feel threatened. Each interview was taped and then the stories were transcribed verbatim onto the computer.

THE RESEARCHER AND NARRATIVE

When using narrative the researcher must stand aside to allow the story to be told (Moore, 1994). The researcher must attempt to be objective and to acknowledge personal biases and her own cultural influences. The final report is written in the third person in a dispassionate voice, reporting as objectively as possible on the information learned from the participants. All researchers come with their own assumptions and biases so while objectivity can be the aim, it is more difficult to realise. The researcher remains in the background reporting the facts as discovered, uncontaminated by personal bias or judgement. The flipside is the telling of a story "always involves a mediated selection and privileging of meanings about the matter being reported" . (Singleton, 2001, p. 181). The participant sometimes is more prepared to share events that they believe the interviewer shares with them. The participant's views are presented through closely edited quotations and the researcher has the final word on how the culture is to be interpreted and presented (Creswell, 2007) In the field the researcher must maintain respect and sensitivity for the participants at all times, in particular when obtaining access to data. Narrative "involves a great deal of openness and trust between the participant and the researcher" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The researcher must listen intensely and actively and allow the participant full voice (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). She/he must bring sensitivity towards reciprocity regarding ownership of the data. At all

times the researcher must act in an ethical manner and maintain confidentiality in his/her presentation and in the study.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ETHICS

Before commencing the interviews, an application was made for ethics clearance from the Australia Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee. This clearance was obtained (see Appendix A). Participants were assured that they remain anonymous, nothing they said was to be linked back to them and their personal disclosures would not be relayed back to clergy or other persons in authority and that the information given would not be used against them in any way. A pseudonym was assigned to each participant in all research material to protect their privacy. The participants remained free and willing agents in the whole process. They were able to choose not to answer questions if they so desired or to terminate the interview at any time. They also agreed to the interview being taped. I am a practising Catholic. Glesne & Peshkin (1992) note the need for access to participants to be ethical and wise (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). No attempt was made by me to tailor participants who would provide a particular point of view. The only requirement was that the participants would be practising Catholics.

CONCLUSION

The research design and methodology considered most suitable for this study is the qualitative research method known as Narrative Analysis using Symbolic Interactionism as the theoretical perspective. The epistemology is Constructionism. In-depth face-to-face interviews were used to gather the faith stories of twenty-three young Catholic adults. The data was analysed using NVivo.

The next three chapters in this thesis examine the types of Catholics in the study, what were the factors which brought them to faith and how their identity as Catholics causes them to continue to attend Mass on most Sundays of the year.

CHAPTER 4: TYPES OF CATHOLICS

Prior to this chapter the thesis examined the reasons for undertaking this study of the faith practices of some young adult Catholics. Also studied was the literature on faith practices and Catholic identity. Then the last chapter looked at a suitable research design and methodology for this work. This chapter examines the types of Catholics involved in this study and develops a typology of the faith types for these practising Catholic adults.

TYPES OF CATHOLICS

To determine the faith types of the twenty-three young Catholic adults who participated in this study their religious life was categorised. A table was developed by the researcher after analysing the participant's responses at interview. Initially this was just a series of questions but a table was ultimately developed as being the most comprehensive method of displaying the information. Further analyses of transcripts revealed that in order to make sense of their faith it was necessary to organise faith into themes. Once this was undertaken it became clear that these themes could be categorized into five dimensions. Each of the dimensions provided a way of assessing a participant's religious intensity. The five dimensions were divided into two categories, namely religious beliefs and religious practices. The religious belief category included: belief in the faith and moral teachings of the Catholic Church. The religious practice category included: Church related religious practices, private religious practices or family religious practices. The five dimensions are described in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: The Five Dimensions of Religious Life

Dimension	Characteristics
Church related religious practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending Mass at least once a week and receiving the Eucharist. • Active participant at Mass e.g. lector, Eucharistic minister, or a member of the music ministry: or • Member of the Liturgy Committee, writing the Prayers of the Faithful, facilitating children's liturgy or taking communion to the sick and elderly. • Other Church involvement in Lenten Groups, visiting new parishioners or the sick and elderly, Prayer Groups or cleaning the altar or church. • Other Church related practises; e.g. evangelical activities such as teaching in Catholic schools, sponsoring a catechumen in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, or facilitating a home group in the sacramental program. • Regular reconciliation.
Private religious practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A commitment to God, made as an adult, with the intention of devoting one's life to doing His will (a personal relationship with Jesus). • Regular reading of scripture as an expression of this commitment. • Daily prayer (formal and informal). Formal prayer may be praying the Prayer of the Church, the <i>Lectio Divina</i>, with the scriptures, and/ or the Examen. Informal prayer usually includes praying about important life decisions. • Participant has usually undertaken some form of structured biblical study.
Home (family) religious practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The encouragement of religious practice at home. • Participation in family prayer. • Family religious discussion. • Parents who ensure their children receive the Sacraments of Initiation; Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.
Practise & Belief in the teachings of the Church. Moral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to Catholic social justice issues. • Participant would obey the Church's moral teachings - therefore against abortion, euthanasia, artificial methods of birth control and In Vitro Fertilisation. • Permanency of marriage. • Opposition to the practice of homosexual relationships. • No pre-marital sex.
Belief in the teachings of the Church. Faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core teachings - Trinity, Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man, Jesus Christ is fully present in the Eucharist, Mary, the forgiveness of sins, the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus, the Saints, God is love, the authority of the Pope, and the Sacraments.

Each participant may be high, medium or low on any one of these five dimensions, depending upon how participants practised their faith or believed in the teachings of the Catholic Church on faith and morals.

Table 4.2: Classification of the Five Dimensions of Religious Life into High, Medium and Low

Dimension	Rating	Characteristics
Church religious practices	High	Attendance at weekly or daily Mass and taking a participatory role at Mass, other Church related groups or other evangelical related role. Attend Reconciliation regularly.
	Medium	Attendance at Mass on all or most Sundays No other role at Mass, or other activities. Reconciliation - do not avail themselves of the opportunity.
	Low	Rarely attends Mass and no other roles. Reconciliation is considered as unimportant.
Private religious practice	High	A commitment to God, made as an adult, with the intention of devoting one's life to him (a personal relationship with Jesus). Obeying the will of God is their primary motivation for action. Participate in personal prayer every day and read their bible regularly.
	Medium	Jesus is their friend. Obeying the will of God is not the primary motive for their actions. Pray regularly by talking to God or sometimes more formally with the Rosary or Novenas. Rarely read their Bibles.
	Low	Generally have a less intense relationship with Jesus. Pray occasionally. Bible is a mystery.
Home (family) religious practice	High	Participate in family prayer and religious practice at home. Ensure their children receive the Sacraments of Initiation; Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation. Instigate talk and actively educate their children about faith. Take their children to Mass every week. Christian music is played regularly in their home. Grace before meals and prayer in the car, especially on long trips are features of their family life.
	Medium	Take their children to Mass most, but not every Sunday. They usually say Grace before meals. May occasionally play Christian music. Educate children in the sacraments. Matters of faith are discussed occasionally.
	Low	Little or no religious practice at home.
Belief in the teachings of the Church – Morals	High	Fully embraces and practises the moral teachings of the Church.
	Medium	Disagree with church teaching on morals in one or two areas.
	Low	Serious misgivings over Church teachings on moral issues in three or more areas.
Belief in the teachings of the Church Faith	High	Church teachings were fully embraced.
	Medium	Expressed doubt over some church teachings on faith
	Low	Serious misgivings over some teachings on faith.

TYPOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

In order to make sense of these responses some ideal types were developed. They are a useful guide when trying to understand where each of the participants stood. While these are not definitive they do provide a useful way of gaining an understanding of the religious intensity of each participant.

The participants fell into one of four types; Highly religious, Strongly religious, Moderately religious and Half-heartedly religious according to their religious beliefs and practices. While there will be a lot of cross-over and participants may not be pure types, it is a useful way of categorising them.

HIGHLY RELIGIOUS

Those that are high on all of the 5 Dimensions of Religious Life are classified as being in the *Highly Religious* group. They would attend Mass regularly, at least weekly, sometimes daily and take a participatory role at Mass, other Church related groups or other evangelical related role. They maintain a strong sacramental life of regular Eucharist and Reconciliation for their spiritual well being. Within their worshipping community they would have a commitment to parish goals and activities. The participants in this category have made an adult commitment to God and are regarded for the purposes of this study to have a personal relationship with Jesus. At the heart of St Paul's teaching was the challenge and call to personal conversion and commitment to Christ. He explained how Christ loved them and died for them and was now calling them into a personal relationship with him (Donovan, 1997, pp. 15-16). This commitment determines most actions in their lives as they desire to obey God's will in all matters. They have regular daily prayer, usually both formal and informal. Participants in this category are familiar with scripture and have often undertaken some form of structured biblical study. Members of this group would typically perform family religious activities at home such as grace before meals; family prayer time and instigating faith discussion with their family. They take an active role in educating their children in matters of faith. They would also demonstrate a strong commitment to the practise and teachings of the Church on both morals and faith.

STRONGLY RELIGIOUS

Those who are high on three or four of the five Dimensions of Religious Life and medium on one or two of the five dimensions are classified as belonging to the *“Strongly Religious” group*. The Catholics in this category are classified as having a strong participation in the life of the church. They attend Mass on most Sundays and may play a role in the liturgy such as singing, reading or Eucharistic Ministers; and could also be involved in other areas of parish life, such as Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Children’s Liturgy, children’s school or some other service role. All participants in the survey regard the role of the church community as being of great importance for the maintenance of a fully Christian life. These Catholics participate less frequently in the sacraments than those in the *“Highly Religious”* category, and some never attend the Rite of Reconciliation. Each one of them would have a prayer life in some form usually talking to God and asking him for their needs; many would say grace before meals. Most of those in the *“Strongly Religious”* group consider Jesus as their friend. Obeying the will of God is important but not a primary mover in their everyday decision making. Nearly all of the *“Strongly Religious”* group would follow Church teachings on faith issues but may struggle with some moral issues particularly birth control and IVF.

MODERATELY RELIGIOUS

Those who are classified as medium on three or more of the 5 Dimensions of Religious Life and high or medium on the other one or two dimensions are part of the *“Moderately Religious” group*. *Moderately Religious Types* are not as motivated as the previous two groups to practise their faith as intensely. They generally attend Mass less regularly than those in the *Highly Religious or Strongly Religious* groups and are unlikely to ever attend reconciliation. They have little involvement in Church related groups except occasionally a group that benefits themselves, such as a marriage support group. Each one of them would have a prayer life in some form usually talking to God and asking him for their needs; some would say grace before meals. Generally they consider Jesus as their friend. Obeying the will of God is a very vague concept for them. They do not read the Bible. Most would follow Church teachings on faith issues but may struggle with some moral issues, particularly birth control, sex before marriage, homosexuality and IVF.

HALF-HEARTEDLY RELIGIOUS

A participant who rated low in any category, particularly attendance at Mass has been classified as being a member of the *“Half-heartedly Religious”*. A half hearted participant would rarely participate in the sacraments. They would play no role in any church based organisations or be part of the Church community. They were probably educated in Catholic schools. They may pray occasionally. Church teachings on faith are accepted in a general way, although there are probably many questions regarding belief and practice of moral teachings.

In Table 4.3: each of the participants have been categorised according to the five dimensions.

Table 4.3: Participants categorised according to the 5 dimensions.

Participant	Religious Practices (Church)	Religious Practices (Private)	Religious Practices (Home)	Church Teachings MORAL	Church Teachings FAITH
Highly	Religious	type			
Samuel	High	High	High	High	High
Grace	High	High	High	High	High
Miriam	High	High	High	High	High
Solomon	High	High	High	High	High
Hugh	High	High	High	High	High
Elijah	High	High	High	High	High
Chiara	High	High	High	High	High
James	High	High	High	High	High
Kate	High	High	High	High	High
Joshua	High	High	High	High	High
Genevieve	High	High	High	High	High
Rose	High	High	High	High	High
Strongly	Religious	Type			
Eliza	High	Medium	High	High	High
Clare	High	Medium	High	High	High
Marie	High	Medium	High	Medium	High
Adele	High	High	Medium	High	High
Tonnie	Medium	High	High	High	High
Johanna	High	Medium	High	High	High
Ben	High	Medium	High	Medium	High
Moderately	Religious	Type			
Moses	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	High
Jeremiah	Medium	Medium	Medium		Medium
Fred	High	Medium	High	Medium	Medium
Half -	heartedly	Religious	Type		
Elouise	Low	Medium	n/a	Low	Medium

In respect to where a participant fits in the typology, most are in the top two groups which is to be expected given that the invitation to participate in the study called for those who were committed to the church.

- Twelve of the twenty-three participants in this survey fall into the *Highly Religious* type. Five of these twelve participants were Generation X and the remaining eight were Generation Y. Six of the twelve were female and seven were male. Four of these twelve participants came from an ethnic background.
- Seven of the twenty-three participants in this survey fall into the *Strongly Religious* type. All seven were Generation X. Six of the participants were female and one was male. Three of these seven participants came from an ethnic background.
- Three of the twenty-three participants in the survey fall into the *Moderately Religious* type. One of the three was Generation X, the other two were Generation Y. All three of these participants were male. One of these three participants came from an ethnic background.
- The other participant has been placed in a group labelled as *Half-heartedly Religious* type. She was female and belonged to Generation Y.

Four case studies follow; one for each of the four types. Case Study number one is Miriam who was classified as *Highly Religious*; Case Study number two is Ben who was classified as *Strongly Religious*; Case Study number three is Moses who was classified as *Moderately Religious* and Case study four is Elouise who was classified as *Half-heartedly Religious*. These four participants were chosen because the researcher believed each was the one most typical of their type.

CASE STUDY 1: MIRIAM

Miriam has been classified as "*Highly Religious*" because she rated high on all five dimensions of religious life. Miriam is 34 years old and is therefore part of Generation Y. She is married with 4 children. Miriam was raised in a large Catholic family of 12 children. Her father is a farmer. The children attended the local State school in primary years and then attended a Catholic secondary school. Miriam

attends Mass with her husband and children every Sunday and often on weekdays. "I love the Mass; the Mass is so powerful for me". Miriam is very involved in her Parish. Currently she assists with Children's Liturgy.

I have always been highly involved in the parishes I have been in and I have always helped out with youth things or been on Parish Councils. At the moment I help with children's liturgies and I also work at St Vincent de Paul.

After leaving school Miriam joined NET. NET is an acronym for National Evangelisation Team which is a ministry of the Emmanuel Covenant Community, a Catholic Community in Brisbane. NET teams go into schools giving retreats and workshops. Miriam has been inspired by other Catholics living out their faith, particularly her parents and special friends. She has not always agreed with things that have happened in the Catholic Church but has been able to seek out people to answer her questions. Miriam finds the Catholic Church a place of hope. "It is a place that offers hope and it is a place that offers a way of life that I feel enriches me as a person and will provide something for my children that provides meaning for your life". Miriam has a personal relationship with Jesus and has experienced the power of God at Mass.

I think I couldn't have maintained my faith if I didn't have that personal relationship (with Jesus). I think it was always there throughout my life because faith was always such a strong part of our family. But I think it only became personal, when I started going to youth group and I started hearing other people talk about Jesus. I couldn't live without that relationship.

Miriam spends time everyday in prayer. Various types of prayer are an important part of Miriam's lifestyle. She loves to read scripture which is a great source of strength to her.

I also enjoy when the kids are all out of the house; turning on the music and just having a praise time at home. But I also like to just sit and have reflective times when I can get it after the kids are in bed. It all depends. Sometimes I pray washing the dishes. So it seems to be whenever there is a spare moment. I pray a lot. I have a prayer book that has readings from the Bible and I find that nurtures me..... music has a massive role in the Church because it takes us to another level when we are praying. It unites us. I don't know it allows us to express the words that we feel but may not be able to say.

It allows us to express them when we sing them in song. I have had wonderful experiences with lots of different types of spiritual music. One time it has been very powerful was when I went to Taize and just hearing the repetitive chant. It just takes you to a level of prayer that just makes you want to cry; like you just feel such a power of the spirit. But then I feel like I learned a new form of prayer when I joined NET and was exposed to charismatic prayer and praise, to me that opened up a very life giving form of prayer.

Instructing the children in the Catholic Faith is of the utmost importance to Miriam and her husband. They pray with their children, especially when one of the children is experiencing health problems or relational difficulties with other children at school.

..., we pray as a family each night at the dinner table. I also pray when the kids are having a hard time at school, we sometimes gather together before they go to the bus stop and have a little prayer about what is going on at school. We sometimes pray with the kids before they are going to bed if they just, yeah sometimes (daughter) asks for it, if they are really struggling in terms of (son) when he is sick. We just sit by his bed and pray with him.

Miriam and her husband hold the morals of the Catholic Church in high regard. As recorded by other participants, sex before marriage and contraception are two big issues of Catholic Church teaching with which young people struggle. Contrary to this attitude are those who like Miriam have been classified as being *“Highly Religious”*. Miriam and her husband followed Catholic Church teaching on pre-marital sex and continue to observe its teaching regarding contraception. “Catholic teaching has had a huge impact on our (lives), we waited until we were married to have a sexual relationship. We were open to children whenever we felt that the Lord wanted to bless us with children”. Miriam has an unbounded faith in the Catholic Church and its teachings. She was the principal organiser for overseas pilgrims to be billeted in her parish for the 2008 World Youth Day. All prepared, the prospective hosts waited for hours in the parish hall for the 20 pilgrims from Ghana to arrive. A bureaucratic bungle at diocesan level meant the pilgrims did not come. It was a bitter disappointment to the whole parish. There was never any apology or explanation from the diocesan organisers. When I asked her how she was handling this disappointment her reply was quite telling. She replied that her love for the Mass is greater than the weakness of many people within the Church. She remains a faithful adherent even when church structures failed her.

I don't think anything could estrange me from the Church because something in my heart believes that this is where God wants me to be and even though other humans within the Church might do things that mar that. This is where God wants me to be and I suppose at times I have thought of leaving the Church but I love the Mass; the Mass is so powerful for me, particularly when my son was sick.

Miriam's faith was nurtured by her family and grew through significant mentors, friends, music, prayer, spiritual and religious events during adolescence and young adulthood which has caused her to make faith filled decisions in for her life.

CASE STUDY 2: BEN

Ben has been placed in the *"Strongly Religious"* Category because he rated high on three of the five Dimensions of Religious Life and medium on two of the beliefs and practices; Private religious practice and Church Moral Teachings. For the purposes of this research Ben would not be regarded as having a personal relationship with Jesus. He is a 37 year old scientist and an avid sports fan. He is married with five children. Ben is classified as being a member of Generation X for the purposes of this study.

Jesus is important to him, however, his replies did not provide evidence of a close relationship, nor was there any indication of daily personal prayer. He likes to reflect on Jesus but this is largely reserved for times when he is attending Mass.

I would say he is important to a degree, but I probably don't think about him enough each day, but I like to set aside some time, obviously if you can. Going to Mass is one of those times that you set aside to reflect and that's probably a good ritual that we have.

Ben takes his family to Mass every week and is involved in several groups around the parish The Catholic faith is important to Ben.

We make a commitment every week to go and obviously involve ourselves with some other activities around the Church. I am not afraid to say that I am Catholic; some people are, in the general community, especially at our age. I think it is fairly significant for our life.

Ben said his parents were very influential in his Catholic upbringing. They took their children to Mass every week despite the demands of dairy farming. They always said the Rosary when they were in the car. He also attended a Catholic secondary school which he said was important in his faith development. Ben gives the impression that being Catholic is intrinsic to his very being. It is his identity and “Obviously the parental upbringing and the constant going to Church, like I said we went to Church every weekend religiously, even though we were busy farmers”.

Ben desires to pass the faith he received from his parents onto his children and to instil Catholic values into their lives. This is reinforced by taking all the children to Mass each week. Regarding acceptance and practise of the Moral teachings of the Catholic Church he has trouble accepting some Church teachings. Ben and his wife have five children and he is adamant that there will be no more.

I think the hardest part for me attending is the Catholic Faith falls behind the times basically. I think they have got to keep up with the 21st century; they are obviously a bit antiquated. That obviously has to come down from the top. I think some of their rituals could be updated. Some of their practises like birth control could be one that I think they need to look at. It's probably the biggest factor from my point of view. Sometimes you don't tend to agree with everything on that sort of thing.

Regarding the faith teachings of the Catholic Church Ben says he has no problems. Although from remarks on the creation of the world it appears that Ben has never tried to reconcile his scientific understanding, with the two accounts of creation in Genesis 1:1 - 2:3, NRSV, and Gen 2:4 – 2:25, NRSV. This was true of several participants and is also interesting considering his level of education.

CASE STUDY 3: MOSES

Moses was classified as *Moderately Religious* because he rated ‘medium’ on three of the five dimensions of Religious Beliefs and Practices. He was rated ‘high’ on private religious practices and belief on Church teachings on matters of faith. Moses is 21 and is therefore considered to be Generation Y for the purposes of this study. At the time of interview Moses wore a pair of black rosary beads around his neck. His nose and eyebrow were pierced and his nails had black chipped nail polish. He has been

wearing the rosary beads around his neck for at least the last twelve months; it appears to be a statement he is making to the world. Ben attends Mass regularly but not every week.

Three years ago Moses was involved in an horrific car accident. His 26year old girlfriend was seriously injured and later died in hospital. Moses broke his back. He is still in constant pain and is on heavy medication. His girlfriend was on life support which was turned off about the same time he sensed she was sitting beside him in the hospital and they were talking. She told him that she was OK and to concentrate on getting better himself. They were in different hospitals so it was impossible for her to have visited him. Moses believes this was a miracle. He was in hospital for several months recuperating. When he was discharged and was living back home with his parents he was surfing the net when he discovered that the saint he had taken for his confirmation name, St Stanislaw Kosta, was the patron saint of ..

.. last sacraments and I kind of connected that with my girlfriend's death and surprise, surprise broken bones. I had never broken a bone in my whole life and then I break the major bone and then after that yeah I thought it's not just coincidence, it's there, yep. Since then I totally embraced Catholicism again. So something good came out of something bad. Probably the worst thing in my life but also the best thing.

Moses is still unable to work because of his injuries so he spends a lot of time reading spiritual books and praying. He lights a candle and talks to God. He prays the Rosary and does a lot of journaling often using photographs. Moses places his trust in God.

God is not a money box, like I can't say 'I need money' and then pooff you get money. It's really like saying, 'not my will' but His will so if something is not meant to be it is not going to happen type of thing and I find that works pretty good. Not a lot of things have been going right lately so I guess obviously God has some reason. What it is I don't know.

Moses experienced a great deal of bullying at the local Catholic secondary school when he was growing up because word got about that he was homosexual. His parents who are very strong practising Catholics loved and supported him through

this period. He said the Catholic school was also supportive and helpful. Moses seemed to have had a crisis about his sexuality because later he told his parents he was bi-sexual. His secondary education was seriously disrupted as he dropped out of one school after another. He took up smoking drugs and drinking alcohol and moved out of home at 16. He still drinks although not as heavily as he once did and he no longer uses recreational drugs.

Moses said his brothers who do not practise the Catholic faith give him a tough time. They do not understand after all that has happened that he could believe in God. He says “We are living in a Godless culture” because there are not many young people around with whom he can share his faith. For Moses the future is uncertain; he has considered the priesthood but said he has a lot more to do in straightening out his life. He said the priesthood is not something you rush into and he would have to be sure it was right for him.

CASE STUDY 4: ELOUISE

Elouise has been classified as *Half-heartedly Religious* because she has been classified as low on one of the five dimensions. She was not rated on Home (Family) religious practice because this category does not apply to her life situation. She does not live at home, is not married and has no children of her own. Elouise was raised Catholic until her Father had a serious injury and was no longer able to work. It appears from that point all formal structures in her family life collapsed, including faith practice. She continued to attend Mass on her own and was even a parish youth leader for several years. Elouise is 21 years old and is a member of Generation Y. At the time of interview Elouise rarely attended Mass and is not involved in any church activities. Elouise does not really see a need to attend Mass.

I don't know whether I need to attend a service to feel that I am contributing to a Catholic life, like I feel I can still have a connection by reading to myself and practising and praying. I will read the Bible and stuff like that if I am really down. Like I will still read the Church newsletters and stuff like that. I still feel connected but I don't have to physically attend church regularly.

Elouise said she had a personal relationship with Jesus but her responses indicate she has no real understanding of what this means. “I would consider him my friend, but other than praying I am not sure how much I interact with him on a personal level”. As already indicated by the penultimate quote she does pray but mostly when she is feeling down. Church teaching on morals are not practised by Elouise as she is currently living with her boyfriend. She does not seem to understand who Jesus is. She sees Jesus as a “glowing blob” or a “concept”. She does not believe that Jesus rose from the dead and is fully present in the bread and wine at Mass.

I think it's (Jesus) just like a blob for me, like a glowing blob kind of thing that. I can talk to you, and I can ask for help and whether or not you give it to me I am going to be able to figure this out because I can talk to you. Like I don't expect him to be this figure who is going to give you all the answers and stuff. I see him as someone who is going to guide me to find my own way. So I don't identify him as a particular person, it is just a concept.

CONCLUSION

All of the participants were assessed according to how they responded to each of the 5 Dimensions of Religious Life. Some were high on all 5 Dimensions. Others recorded various scores across the dimensions. The following chapter will examine what factors led these young adults to faith.

CHAPTER 5: What Factors Led Them To Practicing Catholicism?

This chapter examines the influences which brought the young Catholics in this study to become and remain practising Catholics. In the last chapter the twenty three participants were classified into four types; *Highly Religious*, *Strongly Religious*, *Moderately Religious* and *Half-heartedly Religious*. All participants except one who is *Half-heartedly Religious*, could be regarded as being practising Catholics. They attend Mass every Sunday or almost every Sunday. The literature indicates that the family plays a key role in children's spiritual and faith development (Smith & Denton, 2005). However, not every adolescent who has a religious family adopts and endorses parents' religious views. Other factors also influence the continued adherence to a religious tradition. Four key but overlapping areas have been identified from the data which have led these participants to practise their Catholic faith; 1, Family, 2, Catholic Systems and Sub-systems, 3, Religious Events, and 4, Religious and Life Experiences.

FAMILY OF ORIGIN

The first sphere of influence is the role of the family in the faith formation of these twenty-three young people. This is confirmed by other researchers (Bellamy, et al., 2004; Bouma & Mason, 1995; Crockett & Voas, 2006; Hadaway & Marler, 1993; Myers, 1996; Regnerus, 2003; Schottenbauer, et al., 2007; Smith, 2005; Smith & Snell, 2009; Still, 2005; Tilley, 2003). Families were central in introducing these young people to the Catholic faith and starting them on their faith journey. Smith and Snell (2009) explain the importance of family in the six paths to faith. In their view the role of the family is central to faith development. Faith was passed on from older generations to younger generations through parents and also by the extended family being a close knit unit who practise faith together at home, socially and at church. These families practise their beliefs at home, at work and at play, a process which integrated family and religious life into a complete package which was accepted as a total way of life. When both parents gave a consistent view of religious practice, faith

seemed more firmly entrenched in their children. In other research this referred to as socialisation, it "is the process by which individuals acquire social competence by learning the norms, values, beliefs, attitudes, language characteristics, and roles appropriate to their social groups" (Luftey & Mortimer, 2003, p. 183). In families where there was disruption such as divorce or serious illness the evidence suggests that the tenets of faith were not as strongly embraced by the children. For some the influence of family diminished as they became young adults and other factors become increasingly influential. Some of them supported the parent's faith position, others did not.

Engaging in religious practice as a family seemed to be an essential factor in passing on the tradition of religious practice from one generation to another. The three characteristics developed by Hadaway and Roof (1988) in their research also reveal the important role of families. The three characteristics are religious congruence in the family, strong socialisation between the family and their religious denomination, and parents who practise the tenets of their faith and spend time socialising with relatives are most likely to succeed in producing children who practise the same faith as themselves. Strong family ties have been identified as being extremely important in maintaining the same faith connections between generations (Hadaway & Marler, 1993; Sandomirsky & Wilson, 1990). Approximately half of the 23 participants come from large close knit families where extended family; grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins all practised the same Catholic beliefs and mores during their upbringing. Involvement by parents in a faith filled community is another vital factor in the evangelisation of young people which occurred in seventeen of the participant's families. Eliza is typical of the young people who had highly religiously involved families. Most of her eight siblings are regular in their Mass attendance. They attended Mass from babyhood and as long as they lived in the parent's home they were expected to attend Mass. Mum has always been involved in church activities. As a farmer, Dad was unable to be as involved, yet it was Dad who insisted on the family saying the Rosary every night, sometimes the whole 15 decades¹². Eliza

¹² 15 decades is three Rosaries; the Joyful Mysteries, The Sorrowful Mysteries and the Glorious Mysteries. Each mystery comprises five decades meditating upon an aspect of the

married a man who also comes from a large family who practise the Catholic faith which has helped the religious tradition to continue.

We were taken to Church every week ... we were sent to [Catholic] schools Mum has always been at home with us and she was always doing prayer groups and whatever else when we were little and you sort of just grew up with that around you (*Strongly Religious Type*).

Faith instruction and an expectation from the parents that children would continue the religious tradition was another essential element in the young people's later commitment. Imparting faith is a long, complex and multi faceted process because the children needed to experience faith for themselves. In time, as a result of the participants' parents regularly taking them to Mass and the sacraments, these religious practices became a reified way of behaving and they rarely questioned the appropriateness of the practise. Religious discussion in the home, particularly about the Sunday homily or what the children were learning in school occurred in several of the participants' families. For example, Chiara's father took a great interest in theology and he instructed his children in the Catholic faith. In her family the Catholic faith has been handed down from one generation to another through strict observance of Mass attendance and instruction in the faith. In this home there was a moderate level of strictness. Chiara's parents and their children attended Mass every Sunday. It was the most important event of the week; one had to be extremely ill not to attend Mass.

You had to be really, really, really sick to not go to Mass on a Sunday. That's how strongly it was passed down. ... the way they told us about God and taught us about faith just in, Dad loves his theology; so sometimes just share reflections on that as we were growing up, just on different things, like maybe the sermon on Sunday or encouraging us in different areas of faith. (*Highly religious type*)

Today all of Chiara's siblings are practising Catholics. So it would seem that for this family, the parents were highly successful in passing on their Catholic faith to their

life of Jesus or His Mother. A decade consists of one Our Father, ten Hail Marys, and one Glory Be to the Father.

children. Their lived and living faith turned 'on' rather than turned 'off' their children. Chiara's experience is represented by other highly committed Catholics in this study.

Participants' parents not only practised their religion in the home they also tried to live by the tenets of the faith in a way that role modelled the expected behaviour of a Catholic to their children. For example Genevieve and Miriam are sisters. Ten of the twelve children in their family practise their Catholic faith today. There was no discrepancy between belief and practise by their parents in their faith practice. Their home was harmonious and there was no conflict in beliefs or the level of faith between the parents. Their parents are "still very strong and connected with their faith."

I come from a big family that is just fantastic and have made me what I am and being Catholic has been a part of that and Mum and Dad are still very strong and connected with their faith and it is just empowering to see that and it gives me strength to see that there is something out there that is bigger than us.

(Highly Religious Type)

Genevieve uses the expression "empowering" to express her parent's witness. Perhaps this constancy in the practise of their faith is part of the key for Genevieve and Miriam's strong faith today. The experience of Genevieve and Miriam is replicated in the other participants' family religious experience. It was not a Sunday only thing but part of their whole life experience that participants witnessed from their parents.

Parents who lived out the teachings of the Catholic Church and are committed to faith in every aspect of their lives were a great witness to their children. Again the example of Miriam and Genevieve's family is used. In this family there are strong attachments to the beliefs as well as observing the practices of the Church within the church community and in the home. Apart from attending Mass every Sunday, the family would pray the Rosary together every Sunday night. They also said grace at mealtimes. At a time in the life of the Catholic Church when birth control was a controversial issue they apparently followed the teachings of the Church on the issue of birth control as they have twelve children. On this issue numerous participants in

this study came from large families; one of the participants came from a family of fifteen children. Four, five, six, seven and nine children were also featured in the families of participants. Elijah came from a family with seven children, all of whom are still practising their faith today. He said his parent's gave them a living example of how to practise their faith.

It was the living example that Mum and Dad gave us. Mass always took priority. ... I grew up with that as much as it was a ritual it said something of the importance of this is what we do, this is what we identify as. So I've always had a belief in God (*Highly Religious Type*).

Elijah says 'I've always had a belief in God; it was never hard for me to believe in God. God was always there'. Faith was so imbedded in this family's everyday life that Elijah saw it as a natural progression to his own acceptance of the Catholic faith. Elijah had no difficulty in believing because it had never occurred to him not to do so. Furthermore, Elijah's father experienced a renewal in his faith which had an additional impact on the way this family practised their faith. Mass was not just a Sunday event. They went to Mass as a family on other days as well. So Elijah's family lived out their Catholic faith in their everyday life.

The data showed that love and learning to care for each member of the family were vital ingredients for many of the participants to accept the faith their parents were trying to instil into their children. Another important factor for Miriam, who was mentioned earlier, was the refuge and safety she experienced in a hard and unforgiving world. Because there were twelve children in their family money was tight and they did not wear the latest fashion in clothing. There were no brand labels in their gear. Also the family vehicle needed to accommodate a large family. These things were viewed unkindly by their peers who caused Miriam to seek refuge and friendship within the safe boundaries of her family.

I found that my family was where my friendships were. So therefore the faith part of that really bound me in there to a place that was really safe and ... I could be me and not feel persecuted just because of what you believed or because of what you looked like or what you were wearing. It was a safe place, (*Highly Religious Type*)

In addition to having a large extended family most participants describe their family life as being warm, supporting, nurturing and safe.

The Catholic Church teaches that parents are the prime educators of their children (Donovan, 1997, pp. 15-16). Grace was taught the tenets of the Catholic faith by her parents. Her mother also prepared her for her sacraments. (Grace) “They always try to give us this type of education well at home. So Mum... was the one who taught me, who prepared me for my first Eucharist and Reconciliation” (*Highly Religious Type*).

While all these factors are very important, if the family is not an integrated unit, faith formation of children often falls on deaf ears. The data indicated that there was a relationship between accepting the parent’s beliefs and values and the degree to which participants perceived they were loved. Participants were more open to taking on board their parent’s lifestyle when they felt comfortable and safe within the family environment and when the parent-child relationship had been close. Twenty-one of the twenty-three participants described their family life in positive terms and indicated that they felt loved, comfortable, and safe. In one instance a participant was attracted to the Catholic Church partly through his friend’s warm, loving family who have a strong Catholic faith. This would suggest that a genuinely functional, religious family has the potential to attract children’s friends to their faith. Families who practised their family faith always shared regular prayer times together.

PRAYER

Family prayer was an important key in the faith formation of these young people. Every participant in this study who came from a large family, engaged in shared family prayer at least once a week, or even daily. Most of these parents were also dedicated to saying the Rosary together as a family. Sometimes participants found the family religious practices ‘heavy’ and the children would try to disengage themselves; for example getting as far away from Dad as possible when saying the Rosary. However, upon reflection in later life some of the children realised that even though they disliked saying the Rosary, the benefits of this practice created family unity.

We used to say the Rosary eeeeevery Sunday night Dad would say, you know the family that prays together stays together and you know it is proven because we all ... get along and there is a couple that don't go (*Highly religious type*).

Miriam also reflected that these religious observances were often rigid and unpleasant. However, she says she believes it bound them together in some way. Other participants made similar remarks. Prayer is very important in most ethnic families.

ETHNICITY

The research indicates that family influence plus ethnicity is a strong link to religiosity in the lives of six of these participants. Seven of the participants were from ethnic backgrounds Malta, Croatia, Jamaica, Ireland, and Mexico. All these countries are strongly Catholic. In all seven of these families prayer was of prime importance. Cultural background kept these families identifying with the Catholic faith. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary was a common denominator in Catholic countries. Marie's paternal grandparents were quite rigid in their prayer life. When they lived in Malta all members of the family who were at their Grandfather's house were expected to participate in the Rosary and Litany no matter what they were doing.

Prayer was a big part of our lives because we used to recite the Rosary. ... Grandad used to make us say the Angelus whenever we were at his place. Prayer has always had such a big focus in our lives as young kids... every occasion that we went to and even my schooling, prayer was before every lesson, you said a prayer. It was a really big part (*Strongly Religious Type*).

The ritual of prayer is very important in many Catholic countries. In Marie's family prayer took precedence over everything and was reinforced at every level. They prayed at home, at their grandparents and at school. The attitude to faith seemed to be deeply affected by ethnicity particularly if they came from a deeply religious country like Malta or Croatia and the parents took faith seriously, prayed together regularly and lived out the teachings of the Church in everyday life. The role of her extended family was also important in Marie's faith formation.

EXTENDED FAMILY

Extended family, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins played a vital role in nurturing young people's faith. It reinforced their beliefs and gave them a warm, safe place in which to practise faith. For example, the faith practice of Kate's extended family was a great witness to her. She is typical of many of the young people who grew up in country towns with lots of aunts, uncles and cousins who were all Catholic and attended the same church and Catholic schools. In Kate's family the Catholic faith was successfully passed down from one generation to the next, particularly by her grandmother to her six sons. It could be said that all of Kate's extended family 'dance' to the same religious song.

You grow up in a Catholic Family that is practicing.... quite a large family; four brothers and one sister ... (and) ... a large extended family; lots of aunts, uncles and cousins all living in the same town. So ...family was... sort of the back bone... My grandparents were quite religious. My grandmother brought her six sons up to love God, to honour God, to practise their faith. ... Whenever I come home ... and go to Mass ... I will see one of my uncles there and their wives... grandmother.. was very successful. All of her children have practised their faith, all along. (*Highly religious type*)

It was a great witness for Kate's faith and also very reassuring and confirming to see her relatives attending Mass every week. Kate is aware that the faith had been handed down from one generation to another. This gave Kate a firm foundation on which to base her own faith. To be part of a family whose grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins all go to Mass is to belong to an important family tradition; one of the hallmarks which define this family is its Catholicism. Other participants described the same feeling of belonging when they saw their extended family attending Mass each week.

The importance of grandparents in the life of the participants and their role in the transference of faith and religious tradition should not be underestimated. Eliza has very fond memories of her grandmother who by her witness shared her faith with her thirty-five grandchildren. Eliza described the great bond of love and unity between all her cousins at the funeral of their beloved, faith filled grandmother.

.. my Grandma died last year and she was ninety-five when she died ... it was really sad, but you could see that at ninety-five she was ready and happy. She wasn't worried about it she had a really strong faith. ... She had thirty-five grandchildren and they were all there for the funeral (*Strongly religious type*).

Grandparents by their loving support, affirmation and witness played an important role in the faith formation of their grandchildren. Grandparents are often an extension of the warm family life children experience at home. They were also the connection between generations.

DIVORCE & MAJOR DISRUPTION

While in most of these families there was minimal disruption such as separation, divorce, death or stepfamilies, there was a couple of exceptions. Two of the twenty three participants came from families who had divorced. As a child Jeremiah's family life was very dysfunctional and his mother was zealous to the extreme. His parents were divorced when he was four years old. For many years his mother would lock herself away in her room while she wrote religious tomes. During this time she literally ignored her children and left Jeremiah's stepfather to feed and care for them. As a small child Jeremiah attended Mass every day on his own. Today, Jeremiah connects with the Catholic Church only because of his attendance at a marriage enrichment program "Celebrate Love". "Celebrate Love" taught Jeremiah to love his wife in a truly Christian way. So while it has strengthened his marriage it has not assisted his relationship to God. The divorce of his parents combined with his mother totally ignoring her children apparently created a great need to belong for Jeremiah. Today his connection with the Catholic Church is his need to belong somewhere rather than his desire to belong to the Catholic Church per se. Divorce and other major disruptions to family life impede faith development as the research of Hadaway & Roof (1988), Short & Worthington (1994), and Lawton & Bures (2001) has demonstrated. Children from these families are more likely to abandon faith entirely (Hadaway & Roof, 1988, Lawton & Bures, 2001.)

When there is a major disruption in family life, faith can be seriously affected. It may break the pattern of faith formation which was developing. All researchers agree that

stable, healthy, loving homes have been demonstrated to be the most likely to produce children who follow the same beliefs as their parents (Hadaway & Roof, 1988; Smith, 2005). Myers (1966) agrees with Smith & Snell (2009) that children are more likely to absorb their parent's faith when there is little or no conflict in the family. The faith development of Elouise, who was classified as *Half-heartedly Religious* and whom we met earlier in this research, was severely disrupted when she was about eleven years old. Her father was seriously injured at work and was no longer able to work and support his family. At that point the family stopped attending Mass and sharing family prayer. Elouise continued to attend Mass on her own until she left her home town to attend university in another state. She attends Mass occasionally now and still has a preference for the poor which she said she learnt at her Catholic school.

The research indicates the example of faith, parents provided their children, was of paramount importance in leading young people to faith. These parents taught their children "to think, feel, believe and act as serious religious believers" (Smith & Snell, 2009, p.232). The parents of twenty-one of the twenty-three participants, as the prime educators of their children, gave their children faith instruction at home and then sent them to Catholic schools to reinforce this education.

ROLE OF CATHOLIC SYSTEMS AND OTHER SUBSYSTEMS

The second sphere of influence is the role of Catholic systems and other subsystems in the evangelisation process of these young people. Under this heading we will discuss the role of Catholic schools, parish, faith communities, peers and spiritual mentors and the effect they had on participants.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The first major Catholic system to be discussed is Catholic schools and how they influenced the faith development of the young people in this study. It was revealed in the data the culture of Catholic schools supported those parents who are

endeavouring to instil the Catholic faith into their children. This can be explained by the “multiplier effect” (Mason, et al., 2007, p. 159), “priming” (Corsaro & Fingerson, 2003), and the dynamic systems theory of Thelen & Smith (2003). The basic tenet of these theories is that the past builds on the future, so when children have been socialised into faith at home by their parents they are more open to learning further about their faith at school. Catholic schools provide an environment where young Catholics can network with other young Catholics. However, this research also indicates that Catholic schools made only a small impact on the faith education of young Catholics. This may be because the research indicated that Catholic schools do not always employ teachers who by their religious convictions and consistent lifestyle are able to convincingly instruct students in the Catholic faith. The role of the Catholic school in the faith development of young people is very complex and requires much deeper research than this paper reveals. Hence the following information available from this data is far from exhaustive.

Ten of the twenty-three participants had good religious experiences at a Catholic school; nine were unimpressed by this experience. Chiara’s parents were very strict in the religious upbringing of their children. They sent their six children to Catholic schools which helped to instil faith into their children and reinforce what they were teaching their children at home. (Chiara) “We all went to Catholic schooling and pretty much had that instilled in us from a young age” (*Highly Religious Type*).

Eliza spoke positively about her Catholic education and the sacrifice her parents made to ensure their nine children received a Catholic schooling. Eliza attended Catholic schools from primary through to University and then taught in Catholic schools. So by choosing to teach in the Catholic system and sending her own children to Catholic schools Eliza confirmed her belief in the value of Catholic education in helping her faith development. (Eliza) “Mum and Dad have always been full on about Catholic Education. So I have always had the Catholic Education part of it pretty strong right through” (*Strongly Religious Type*).

Some participants as children were taken to Mass with their school and for some, but not all this reinforced in them the value of the Mass which their parents wanted them to experience. Hugh's primary school took the children to Mass every Friday. "I went to a Catholic Primary School, ... every Friday we would head up for Mass. So it started from the time I went to school" (*Highly Religious Type*).

Several of the participants referred to the benefits they received at school because of the prayers which were said in their Catholic school. Kate acknowledged that Catholic schools were not perfect but said "God was there as opposed to God not being there". This may have been how she envisaged the difference between Catholic schools and State public schools.

Many young people discussed the benefits of times of reflection they were given at school, which they believed enabled them to grow into fully rounded individuals in their mind, spirit and emotions. James, the young priest, appreciated the times of reflection he was offered in years ten, eleven and twelve. (James) "They definitely created that space to encourage reflection" (*Highly Religious type*). Joanna also spoke positively about the prayer, morals and the nourishment to her faith she received in Catholic schools. (Johanna) "I think being educated in the Catholic system you got that daily nourishment probably of prayer of a morning and the morals taught, going to Mass as a school" (*Strongly Religious type*).

Schools reinforced Catholic traditions and religious ceremonies. Most of the participants who had attended Catholic primary schools were instructed and duly presented for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation and First Communion through the school. Fred made his First Communion and Reconciliation through his school. (Fred) "Preparation for the sacraments was done through the school. ... We went to Church once a week for six weeks, got through all the stuff and got dressed up for the big occasion and had a party" (*Moderately Religious type*). Preparing for and receiving the sacraments with classmates was an important rite of passage for participants in this study. It was a great event in their lives to get all dressed up for the occasion and have a party. What is becoming evident from the data is the complex nature of faith development. It is a long process.

The Catholic influence of Catholic Schools on students went beyond what was taught in the classroom. Some participants spoke of the network of Catholic friends they made at school which helped their faith. Johanna experienced the support networking which is so important for faith development.

.. having people with you that shared a common faith, I think that was important. Knowing, when I went to school my friends were Catholic and we shared the same thing. I think that's really important and I think that has helped since you left school. It gives you a bit of the grounding for you as a Catholic, going to a Catholic school and that's what I want for my kids (*Strongly religious type*).

Attending a Catholic school Joanna met other Catholics her own age with whom she was able to share her faith. Joanna was also taught morals at her Catholic school which was the basis of the caring culture which she learned at school. Participants appreciated the caring culture in Catholic schools which was revealed in the data. They said their Catholic schools imparted good values and an ethos of caring for others. It was acknowledged as a great legacy by several participants. The Catholic schools had tried to instil moral values, based on the gospels, into their students by teaching them to respect themselves, other people and the world in which they lived. James, who is now a Catholic priest, received a good lesson at school about caring for others.

.. you knew you were in a Catholic school. ... The Catholic ethos was part of it ... Living and being in a community really where the expectation ... you would look after each other. I remember one time a teacher had a kid who had joined our school, had joined our class in particular and he left after three or four weeks. He was getting teased and that type of stuff. We had this beautiful teacher she was very quiet. She came down on us for that, big time, in a good sense. We all listened. She said the reality was that this guy had not been made feel welcome. ... You realize that yeah you are in a community here (*Highly Religious type*).

The expectation by teachers for their students to care for fellow students became evident at James' Catholic school after students gave a fellow student a rough time.

Schools also influenced young people's choice of career and level of community involvement. Often participants decided upon their career choice from what they had imbibed at school. Elouise, who is the subject of Case Study 4, is classified as *Half-heartedly Religious*. She is studying to be a Social Worker. She has a very strong desire to help make the world a better place by contributing to society.

My schooling, I have been to both a primary and a high school that were both Catholic, just maintaining that sort of culture and being able to go to school where there is a similar view of morality taught where you need to respect people (*Half heartedly Religious Type*).

Even though she only attends Mass rarely Elouise is very strong in her practise of the Catholic ethos of love of neighbour, which she believes she learnt at the Catholic schools she attended. It may be that religious values are held onto for longer than religious practices.

The research of others (Fleming, 2007) indicates that sometimes teachers themselves have not been socialised into the Catholic Faith and their views on many moral issues do not conform to Catholic teaching. Half of the participants spoke of negative experiences at Catholic schools. Some of the participants experienced teachers who were not as dedicated as the committed Catholic teachers. As the research showed sometimes schools employ staff without a religious commitment (Crawford & Rossiter, 2003). Elijah who now teaches Religious education to senior secondary students experienced teachers who were not committed to Catholic doctrine. When there were discrepancies between Church teaching and what they were being taught in school Elijah discussed the differences with his family.

The teacher was flying in the face of maybe what was church teaching at the time so having those intense debates with the teacher. Mum and Dad talked about faith all the time. We'd have discussions about stuff that was happening at school; what you were learning at school, you might have challenges, perhaps the teacher who taught RE, wasn't a Catholic or didn't believe. You would be taught something and you would think hey that didn't marry up with what we had heard. So I remember plenty of family discussions

with different siblings at home over dinner, we'd talk about it (*Highly Religious type*).

Like the other eight participants who had similar experiences Elijah's parents were able to counteract negative influences through family discussion. Despite his negative experiences in year eleven and twelve Elijah's faith was not affected by the experience because he is now a very dedicated religious education teacher in a Catholic school.

Approaches to education change over time. Educators endeavour to respond to the environment which they face. Teachers today are educating students who live in a vastly different socio-political and multi-cultural context from the one in which they themselves grew up. Crawford & Rossiter (2003) explain that teachers need to train students in recognising and responding to change. Teachers themselves need to adapt to the concerns and interests of their students in respect to the teaching of religious education as any other subject. Unfortunately students often have a negative slant on learning about religion because they are unable to equate religion as having any tangible or future employment prospects. In the 1970's the participants in this study were being educated in Catholic primary schools by the Life Experience approach. The Life Experience approach encouraged students "to use their own experiences to try to make religious meaning in their lives" (Crawford & Rossiter, 2003; Hyde & Rymarz, 2009, pp. 7-8). The 1970's "coincided with significant changes in society and in the Church. Religious practices and observance among Catholics began to diminish" and Vatican Council II had renewed interest in the idea that God is revealed in the natural world and in the daily lives of ordinary people (Hyde & Rymarz, 2009, p. 7). Unfortunately

there were often huge gaps in the content knowledge being taught, as many RE¹³ teachers did not really understand the theory and the intention of the life experience approach. This may also account for some of the negative experiences of some of the participants in relation to religious education (Hyde, 2010).

¹³ Religious Education

Jeremiah was educated in both Catholic and government schools. He found a lot of negativity against religion in students at the Catholic schools, whereas he believed the children educated in the State school system were much more tolerant of his beliefs.

Half the schools I went to were Catholic. ... Catholic schools seem to be hypocritical to me ... I am not having a go at the teachers but ... what the kids got up to behind the scenes I didn't see Catholic schools as being important for faith. ... But I found that as far as influence and peer pressure was concerned, it was much worse in the Catholic schools than it was in the State schools (*Moderately Religious type*).

Jeremiah's experience of negativity and intolerance at Catholic schools compares unfavourably with his experience at a state public school where he met greater tolerance of his Catholic beliefs and faith practice. Negativity in Catholic schools by some students against Catholic beliefs demonstrates the importance of children receiving the basic grounding in faith at home from their parents.

Some participants spoke of their religious education classes being watered down because there were non Catholics in their class. It was reported by some participants that Catholic schools often educate non Catholic children. Having non Catholic students in her class was a bad experience for Miriam. Her teacher said the lessons must be watered down to avoid offence to non Catholic students. Miriam was given this as the reason, at her Catholic secondary school, for not studying a Catholic curriculum. She suggested that the faith of Catholic students can be eroded when their beliefs are questioned by the non Catholic students. However, it did not have that effect on her religious faith because the faith had been firmly instilled into her by her parents.

I went to a Catholic high school and I remember saying to my RE teacher when I was in year 12 how come we don't do stuff on the Catholic Church and her response was we don't want to alienate the non-Catholic's in the group. I just thought this is ... I was sooooo upset because I was Catholic and I wanted to know about the Catholic Church (*Highly Religious type*).

In trying not to alienate the non Catholic students by teaching a non Catholic curriculum the teacher alienated Miriam, the Catholic student. Miriam claimed that the teaching of a non Catholic curriculum, employing non practising teachers and the negativity of some students towards Catholic doctrine undermined the good work of dedicated teachers. While this may have deterred her peers, it did not interfere with Miriam's faith development.

The data revealed that Catholic schools are able to build on the foundations of faith instilled in children by their parents. Miriam, Elijah, Jeremiah and eight other participants in the study had negative experiences at Catholic schools. The young people overall gave very little credit to their Catholic school for the current level of their faith. Catholic schools are only one of many factors in faith development, none of which are mutually exclusive. Faith communities may also play a role in what the research indicates is a lifelong complex process.

FAITH COMMUNITIES

The local parish was generally the faith community experienced by participants although four participants had experienced living in a covenanted community¹⁴. Four out of twenty-three participants would be extraordinarily high for the national average. Some participants experienced the parish as a place of belonging where they could be with people who shared a similar philosophy to themselves. In their local parish participants felt welcomed and comfortable. The most important aspect of their local parish community is the local church where they celebrate the Eucharist. At Mass "lay people come together to share the Bread of the Word and Eucharist for their growth in holiness and communion" ("Pontificium Consillium pro Laicis," 1967 n.6.6). Samuel sees receiving the Eucharist as an important aspect of being a Catholic. "I think an important part of being Catholic is communion". Grace believes the Eucharist gives her sustenance to serve others "the most important thing would be

¹⁴ A Covenanted Community is a Christian community where people have made a spiritual covenant with each other to live a fully Christian life and to support each other in this endeavour.

the Eucharist. For me it's what keeps you moving, keeps you doing what you do ... so that means going to Mass regularly". Elijah said that he believes the sacraments are what makes being a Catholic different from other churches.

I'm not Catholic because of the structure, or the priests, or the brothers or whatever it was, but because of the gift of the sacraments. I think that is what defines, that is what separates the Catholic faith to some extent from other faiths (Highly Religious type).

To fully understand what happens at Mass may require a lot of prayer and reflection as Solomon who had studied for the priesthood discovered. (Solomon) "the Thirty Day retreat, switched me so much more into what happens at Eucharist" (Highly Religious type). At Mass Catholics are united through reception of the Eucharist and by listening to the Word of God ("*Dei Verbum. Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*," 1965).

Donovan (1997) speaks of the socialising role of the parish, through the rhythm of the liturgical year and the celebration of births, deaths and marriages. It also provides moral engagement with the non-church world (Moran, 1991, p. 251). The parish or faith community provides a place to belong which is similar to belonging to a sporting or social group like Lions because it provides a place where participants can mix with others who share similar interests and values. Parish was the spiritual base where the participant became involved in service activities such as choir, youth group, and St Vincent de Paul. This was not true for two of the participants who said they rarely saw another young person of their own age in the local parish. Lack of young people attending a parish has been found to be a catalyst for declining attendance (Mason, et al., 2007). In the past parishes had many social events; dances, sporting groups, clubs etc. Today they have been replaced by secular activities. Probably the reason why Elijah, Solomon and Grace do not experience these problems is because they have both experienced the wider church outside their own parish. They had both attended World Youth Day.

Covenant communities were another place where participants experienced faith communities, although none of the participants are currently members of a

Covenanted Community today. These Communities gave the participants who were involved an opportunity to live out their faith in mission work. Elijah describes the Disciples of Jesus Covenant Community as a Catholic lay organisation which has Statutes in Rome. Disciples of Jesus has a youth outreach called Youth Mission Team (YMT) where young men and women devote one or two years living a celibate lifestyle and going out into Catholic schools to give retreats under the authority of the local Bishop or Archbishop. Elijah and Chiara, participants in this study, each spent two years doing this work. Miriam did similar work with the National Evangelisation Team, which deepened her faith. The National Evangelisation Team is under the wing of Emmanuel Covenant Community in Brisbane. Emmanuel Covenant Community is similar to the Disciples of Jesus. Miriam gave a year of her life in mission on the National Evangelisation Team. Faith communities are part of exosystem in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Here events occur that affect the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

SPIRITUAL MENTORS & FRIENDS

Friends can confirm one's faith as several participants experienced. NCLS Research (Bellamy et. al 2004) and Roehlkepartain et. al's (2008) research found that only 19% of young people in Australia spoke about faith to their friends. Although the National Church Life Survey Research team reported local church workers had a 60% influence on the faith development of young people (Bellamy, et al., 2004). So perhaps while the influence of friends may not be great, spiritual mentors who often come in the guise of church workers have three times the influence. It is difficult to determine a percentage of the influence of friends or spiritual mentors in this research because it was a direct focus at interview. Some of the participants spoke of their friends and other religious groups as being instrumental in keeping them connected to their faith. An important point for these young adults was that their friendship network was made up of like-minded Catholic people. Three of Joanna's friends from the school community became Catholic in the last couple of years. Kate's experience was of faithful friends walking beside her and showing her how to pray and read the Bible. Joshua's experience of coming to faith is unusual. He had no faith background from his family, but came to faith through the witness of a friend.

He was received into the Catholic Church through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).

I met a fellow. He told me he was Catholic and he went to Church. At that stage I had no idea of the difference. ... he never encouraged me to go to Mass. I didn't know what Mass was. He never put any pressure; So one day we were coming back from the Prom and he needed to go to Mass. ... He didn't have time to drop me off. He said he had to go to Mass do you want to come with me? It didn't bother me. It was just convenient to go (*Highly Religious Type*).

Joshua's friend walked beside him in his faith journey, not pushing, possibly not even consciously evangelising, but through this friend's faithful witness Joshua came to faith. Joshua's friend was like a spiritual mentor to him. Joshua has become a very devout Catholic. As Hadaway & Marler (2003) found in their studies those that do convert as a result of their friends witness "...go a little more, give a little more, and pray a little more."

Many of the others also confirmed that peers were spiritual mentors who assisted in their faith development and kept them faithful. Spiritual mentors had a special and quite unique place in leading participants to deepen their faith and to bring their faith to maturity. Generally speaking their role was ineffectual until the participant had begun to walk along a spiritual path desiring to deepen his/her faith. Solomon spent a number of years studying as a Jesuit and he has had a number of mentors in his spiritual journey.

There was a Dominican Sister who ... encouraged me to study music, ... she got me playing the organ at Mass... the Parish Priest that we had encouraged me; I always saw him and the other priests as very human and very positive people. ... there was a Christian Brother, who was very influential. ... He would ask questions and we would go for long walks together. He really challenged me to own my faith, perhaps at a time when I was marginal in the Church (*Highly Religious Type*).

Rarely can one spiritual mentor fulfil all the needs of a spiritual seeker and it is not uncommon for people to access different mentors for different issues and at different points in their life. Solomon recognises the many mentors who have contributed to his faith formation and development.

RELIGIOUS EVENTS

The data showed that organised religious events are the third sphere of influence in the evangelisation process of young people. Under the heading of organised spiritual events are; voluntarily attended Spiritual Retreats, Camps, Faith Education, and World Youth Day.

RETREATS AND CAMPS

“Spiritual” retreats, camps, and courses were very important for the faith development of these young people. During retreats and camps they went away from home with like minded people of their own age. The retreats built on the faith already existing in the young person; faith which developed and grew through their family and maybe built upon at a Catholic school. There seemed to be as many different types of retreats or courses as there were participants in the study. All retreats attended by these young adults were voluntarily attended. This seems to multiply their benefit because the young person wants to be there and is therefore more willing to be open to the opportunities for faith development that are available. The reported retreats were conducted by inspiring leaders who were committed and passionate about their faith. Catechesis¹⁵ presented in this environment in an interesting and exciting way was readily accepted by the young people. During the timeout of a retreat or camp those participants who had attended were provided an opportunity for reflection that their busy lives normally did not afford. They put aside time in their life for God and looked at their relationship with him. The majority of these participants had completed some form of tertiary education, so these retreats were undertaken during breaks from college or university. The retreats met an emotional need for quiet in a prayerful atmosphere where they had time to reflect

¹⁵ “Catechesis is an *education in the faith* of children, young people, and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life” (“Catechism of the Catholic Church,” 1994 n.5).

upon where they were going in their life. It was also a time to make a personal faith decision. Making an adult faith commitment is a vital aspect in the development of a strong faith. When these participants said 'yes I believe all the Catholic Church teaches', 'I want to follow Jesus as my personal Lord and Saviour' their faith changed. It became a living faith which began to affect every aspect of their lives. They wanted to pray and read scripture, to be involved in parish and to share their faith with other young people.

Participants went on many different types of retreats, some in Australia, some overseas. These retreats were designed to build faith in young people, as many of the participants attested; these retreats were an important ingredient in their spiritual development. For instance Samuel, together with his wife and family migrated to Australia from a predominately Catholic, Spanish, speaking country about three years ago. In his home country he attended and later assisted in organising weekend retreats called Jornadas de vida Cristiana, (Journey) for young people. He attributes these retreats to strengthening his faith in the Catholic Church, that the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus.

We spend a couple of days with some people and talk about Jesus and in that time I was convinced that the Catholic Church is the Church. There is no other way to go or no other religion or other Christian Church I think that the church that Jesus founded was the Catholic Church and that's why I am Catholic.

(Highly Religious Type)

The experience of Journey for Samuel convinced him that the Catholic faith taught and witnessed to him by his family and later Catholic education at Catholic schools was the Church founded by Christ. There comes a point in one's spiritual development when the individual accepts or rejects what he has been taught particularly in relation to spiritual matters. The data reveals that retreats and camps greatly assist in acceptance of faith. This retreat was the point at which Samuel's faith matured and he accepted the Catholic Church's teaching as an adult. In Australia, Summer School is very similar to Journey. Summer School is organised by the Disciples of Jesus Covenant Community. The Disciples of Jesus is a Catholic community with branches all over Australia. Summer Schools are conducted in several Australian states usually in January each year. It is open to young Catholics

between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five and is generally attended by young people who have a firm interest in developing their faith because as well as the fun, it is a school. A series of catechesis and faith development classes are held every day and all attendants at the school are expected to participate in the classes. Elijah spoke of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which he experienced at Summer School which made his faith "more tangible and real". (Elijah) "...amidst being a participant in that I experienced an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that kicked my faith along and made my faith more tangible and real" (*Highly Religious Type*). Three of the young adults in this study had attended Summer Schools in their youth. They reported receiving great spiritual benefits from the experience. It also gave them a network of like minded Catholic friends with whom to share their faith. Each Summer School is attended by several hundred young Catholics. It uses charismatic hymns similar to Hillsong. Over a week many young people became truly aware of God's mighty love for them and made a personal commitment to him. Rose was brought up in a very strong Catholic family. Somehow along the way she had developed some misconceptions about her faith. Rose claimed that Summer School, corrected these misconceptions during the structured teaching sessions.

That was my big conversion that was the turning point the start of that I realised that God was a bit different than what I thought He was and how I had been taught, so I was more open to him, more interested. (*Highly Religious Type*)

Rose's experience of Summer School was a conversion experience for her where she came to experience a loving God. After Summer School Rose began to spend time every day in prayer, she read spiritual books and sought the advice of spiritually mature people. Summer School changed her life.

Sometimes young Catholics trying to discern their vocation in life often spend time on retreat. Four participants had attended retreats of this nature. James was one such participant who felt a stirring in his soul as a possible calling to the priesthood. He attended a retreat in the summer between year twelve and university where he was able to talk to a priest about this possibility.

.. in between year 12 and University, the Marists ran a retreat, a Social Justice retreat. ... I went to that and in quiet time you could go and speak to a priest

and I quietly spoke to a priest and I said I think this is what I want (*Highly Religious Type*).

Retreats are a common tool in the discernment process of young men and women trying to decide whether they should enter religious life. At these retreats the participant was given the opportunity to speak to a priest who invariably advised them to continue praying about the matter and to come back and discuss their decision further at a later date. Three participants attended Thirty Day Retreats¹⁶. Solomon spent a number of years studying as a Jesuit, before he finally discerned the priesthood was not his true vocation. During his studies he undertook a Thirty Day silent retreat. During the retreat he came to a fuller understanding of Jesus and Jesus' role in the world.

In the Society of Jesus to do a Thirty Day retreat, the great strength of which is that it is all Christ centred and there is a sense of being claimed by Christ and the desire in me to say 'yes, I want that relationship'. ... the Thirty Day retreat, switched me so much more into what happens at Eucharist (*Highly Religious Type*).

Retreats played an important role in faith development of thirteen of the participants who had attended one. All twelve of the participants who were classified as Highly Religious Type had attended at least one retreat, some had attended two or more retreats. It was quite apparent from the data that time out at courses and retreats had deeply affected their spiritual development and brought them to an adult faith commitment. All participants in the Highly Religious group had also undertaken some form of adult faith education.

¹⁶ 30 day retreats are deeper and more serious than the other types of retreats because they are totally silent except for time spent with a Spiritual Director. The time of silence includes mealtime. A Thirty Day Retreat entails considerable personal discipline and maturity. The days are spent reflecting and meditating as directed by the Spiritual Director.

ADULT FAITH EDUCATION

Faith Education was sought by participants who were serious about their faith commitment and desired to know more. It took the shape of a course covering several weeks, a minor study in a tertiary qualification or a complete theology degree. Thirteen of the participants had undertaken some form of faith education, three of whom had theology degrees, four had undertaken minor studies in theology as part of their education degrees and two others had done Alpha. From the interviews it was obvious that these people were very committed to Catholic faith and practice. They were also quite eloquent in expressing their beliefs. It is the opinion of this researcher that post secondary levels of faith education are an intrinsic aspect of the factors which led these young Catholics to practise their faith more deeply. Solomon speaks about how his theological studies have influenced and deepened his faith. These studies helped him to marry practice with theory into one package.

.. the experience of studying theology has been very influential. It has been a way to depth my faith, to make those connections between the intellectual and the practical and somehow bring the two together has been very significant for me (*Highly Religious Type*).

Alpha is a twelve week course based on the Bible, culminating in a weekend centring on the Holy Spirit. Two participants did Alpha, which talked on the benefit to their spiritual life. For example even though Genevieve had a Catholic upbringing and had received a Catholic secondary education she believed much of what she had previously been taught 'made sense' as a result of Alpha. It would be incorrect to say that Alpha completed her spiritual development because one's spiritual journey is a lifelong process. But Alpha made a huge difference to the way she now approaches her spiritual life because as a result of the course she developed a personal relationship with Jesus.

A personal relationship with Jesus] probably came about with Alpha when we did that Alpha program. ... Then you did a weekend and that was on the Holy Spirit and Jesus and stuff, and it was like yeah this makes sense. (*Highly Religious Type*)

Alpha built on the faith taught by, practised by and witnessed to by Genevieve's parents. Faith education seminars were a feature of the World Youth Day program.

WORLD YOUTH DAY

In order to continue on their faith journey, reinforcement and renewal was an important part of this journey. World Youth Day was central to the consolidation of this process. Ten of the Twenty-three participants attended World Youth Day 2008 in Australia. They come from three of the classifications for Types of Catholics; *High*, *Strong* and *Moderate*. Four of those who attended were interviewed before this great event in the history of the Catholic Church in Australia, so it is difficult to determine the impact on their faith that World Youth Day had on them. Marie, an 'older' participant said World Youth Day really enriched her faith. (Marie) It enriched my faith so much and has given me so much hope. I can't begin to tell you how wonderful it was (*Strongly Religious Type*). Marie found the whole experience deepened her faith. World Youth Day had a big impact on the participants who attended. Of the people interviewed by Research Project Team 42.3% said they felt more confident in their belief in God, 42.1% said they now had a closer relationship with Jesus, 33.0% believe more strongly that Jesus loves them and 31.9% said that they now had a better understanding of the Holy Spirit (Mason, et al., 2009, p. 24). Many of the participants who attended World Youth Day believed the biggest impact was that they were more determined to be more Christ-like (Mason, et al., 2009). All participants who attended were delighted to be able to witness to their Catholic faith to the people of Sydney. Two participants had felt isolated in their parish where they did not see or meet other young people their own age. They had felt they are a minority and are swimming against the tide of popular opinion. Kate shared the story of a young Sudanese man she met at World Youth Day. He had migrated to Australia but felt all alone in his faith.

World Youth Day has changed that completely because he said I am not alone, you are all out there, you are just the minority, but you are all out there and during the World Youth Day experience he felt united with them. It was really beautiful. Listening to him I am going yeah that is exactly how I felt when I went to the first World Youth Day, So he can go away now and realize that I

am practicing in my parish and there is someone else practicing at another parish and there is someone else there (*Highly Religious Type*).

Kate experienced healing at World Youth Day. Before World Youth Day she had felt sad but she said God touched her and gave her back peace and joy.

He took the sadness away and put the joy back in. So now I'm just at peace and at ease again. God's intervention and He has touched me and changed ... something inside which sets me on a new path and that is the important thing. I think it changes you from within, your whole outlook (*Highly Religious Type*).

This type of experience is difficult to measure but it has a profound effect on the way one lives and practises faith. These religious events affected participants in three ways: firstly it strengthened and expanded faith, secondly it put young people in contact with other young people who also were sincere in their faith, and thirdly it introduced young people to the action of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Other important factors which help young people in their faith journey are religious and life experiences. World Youth Day was a watershed in their faith for the majority of those who attended. It was also a leap forward in international understanding in the Australian calendar.

OTHER FACTORS

Religious and life experiences include music, prayer, vocation, miracles, birth, death, divorce and major disruptions. Several of these events affected the faith of all participants and some affected only a few of the participants.

MUSIC

As Eder & Nenga (2003) claim "listening to music affects teenagers emotions, and in turn, adolescents use these emotions to imagine identities they might adopt". Music can enter the soul and become a deeply religious experience. This occurred for participants through many different religious music genres; classical, charismatic, pop, and meditation. Elijah said he "always had a Christian CD playing in the car, modern sort of Christian music". Christian music is the fastest growing music genre

in Australia (McIntyre, 2007). James said he liked classical and contemporary music and found that music assisted him with prayer. A number of participants said “I love praise and worship”, they found it really uplifting. Joanna has many stories connected with the development of her faith about how music inspires and touches her soul. She and her cousin, who died, talked about the inspiration of music; how it could touch your soul. Joanna’s father loves to sing in Mass and he taught his children that as St. Augustine said ‘When you sing you pray twice’ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994). Solomon loves Bach who believed he was fulfilling his vocation when he composed.

I love music um both sacred music and liturgical music and secular music. It’s a language, probably of the soul; stories that come from that human struggle and suffering and striving to be better... it can be a source of prayer..... the yearning for something more and yearning for God’s grace (*Highly Religious Type*).

Music lifts worship and drew participants into prayer. Solomon sees music as communal; it connects him back to the Body of Christ. Solomon plays and sings at Mass in his parish. Music is a language of the soul which expresses our human longing for God and can move us to worship. Miriam said music is able to express “what we feel but may be unable to say”. She says she has had many wonderful experiences with a great variety of spiritual music. One time at Taizé in France she felt lifted to a “level of prayer that just makes you want to cry, like you feel the power of the Holy Spirit”. Music is also used for prayer and contemplation. Johanna spoke of her Mother’s use of music when she got cancer.

Dad and Mum will go to bed with this music on and I think that’s ... well the music happened when she got the cancer and I think they meditated a lot. I think that has helped her spiritually.

Joanna also said

I love singing too in church and my Father always said that is praying too, so we always sang, I always sang quite a lot ... and my Dad always used to say to us as kids sitting next to him in Mass he used to sing really loudly and he still does and I used to cringe and think ‘how embarrassing’. That was his prayer. I probably do it now, I sing, not as loud as he does but I notice my kids do too,

they like it too and I say to them it is praying. Music is beautiful I think music is really important

The Catholic Church has always advocated music as a form of worshipping and connecting with God.

PRAYER

Prayer for all the participants was their connection to God. They talked to him about their concerns, joys and needs. Learning to pray was an important key in their spiritual growth and faith journey. A new young Mum spoke of the “constant struggle” she had “to maintain good solid prayer” because of her busy life. She said her “ideal would be to pray every day in a real, personal, and individual way”. Learning to pray is a process which takes time. Solomon said it took him three or four years to learn to pray. He said he takes a bit of scripture and prays with it using the *Lectio Divina*¹⁷. When Solomon is struggling about something his prayer is “what is the invitation here; what am I being invited to”. The priest, James gave many examples of how he prays, apart from the Office¹⁸, and the *Lectio Divina*. A prime example he gave was he said he has to stop amongst all the busyness of his pastoral work and allow God’s light to reflect about God’s presence in every situation. Prayer can take many different forms, some people sing and dance their prayer others are more serious in their approach to God. Some participants pray directly to God the Father, Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Others ask the Virgin Mary or the Saints in heaven to pray with them. Grace places her trust in God through prayer, she prays formally and informally and she sings.

¹⁷ *Lectio Divina* is a way of praying with [Scripture](#) that calls one to study, ponder, listen and, finally, pray and even sing and rejoice from God’s Word, within the soul.(Wikipedia).

¹⁸ The Office or Divine Office is the Prayer of the Church. It must be prayed by the clergy, but lay people sometimes pray it. The Office is based mainly on the Psalms and may be said seven times a day, however, the Office of Readings, morning, evening and night prayer are the most important. It has a four weekly cycle with special readings for Feast Days and Holy Days. The Office of Readings differs. It is based on Psalms, scripture and sermons of saints.

“I put in your hands this or that , You know what to do.” So I don’t have to worry. Prayers, you say Our Father or the Rosary. Rosary as well. I enjoy singing as a way of praying but only in Spanish. God talks me in Spanish still (*Highly Religious Type*).

Grace has a very close relationship with God. She uses many forms of prayer to connect with God. Prayer took many forms. In Fred’s home the Angelus would come on either channel of the television every night at 6.00 o’clock. Dad was home from work and all the family would stop and pray.

At 6.00o’clock there would be a Catholic picture on the TV and a minute’s silence and we would do the Angelus prayer that minute. Just say it out, one of us would say it out ..., at 6.00 o’clock every day (*Moderately Religious Type*).

Clare used prayer to help her before she married to avoid pre-marital sex.

I believe I have heard some messages. When my husband and I first started dating we didn’t want to have sex. You don’t do that sort of thing. And I remember being in Church one day and praying really, really hard praying, for the strength to be strong about this issue and it was like there was a voice in my ear saying well don’t tease him, it is just not fair (laughs). And it ... I think sometimes I hear Him and those moments are very very precious (*Strongly Religious type*).

Clare understood that she heard God speak to her when she was praying about a difficult issue.

One participant uses the suffering she experiences as a form of intercessory prayer. Rose, aged 28 said it gave her a feeling of having a purpose in life and a sense of self worth, that she wasn’t “an animal on earth, just consuming and dying”. She said just hanging out with her friends did not fulfil her.

I offer up all my sufferings for my intentions, so I feel that, I have always been searching for my vocation in life I suppose, feeling that ...I wasn’t contributing to society ... and I just realised that prayer is my thing and I can pray. By praying I can alleviate someone’s suffering somewhere else, even if I am offering up my own suffering ...I feel more fulfilled by the knowledge that I am helping

someone by the prayers and suffering. So with the Pro Life offering up for someone (*Highly Religious Type*).

Rose believes she has discovered her vocation in life by offering her suffering to God as a form of intercessory prayer. She also prays for those women who are considering having an abortion.

VOCATION

To discover one's vocation is to give one's life direction and meaning. All members of the Catholic Church "whatever their condition or state – though each in his own way – are called by the Lord to that perfection of sanctity by which the Father himself is perfect" ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.1694) This is the 'vocation' of all Catholics. Many young people talked about how going to church, partaking of the sacraments and being part of a community of believers gave their life meaning. Grace is an example of such a person; she believes that a Catholic life is total and gives the whole of her life a deep and meaningful purpose. To live her life as a dedicated Catholic serving others, Grace sees this as her vocation. She said it makes her want to try to live out her life in love as Jesus did. Grace endeavours to live her life as an expression of this love.

.. for me being Catholic, its being able to express the love, someone who expressed love for me in this case God or Jesus, it is a way to express it back not only to Jesus but for other people in the world (*Highly Religious Type*).

Although 'vocation' is an often misunderstood concept it was one that was endorsed by some of the young people. To seek one's vocation does not mean to determine whether one is being called to religious life. Seeking out or following a vocation meant that they felt a need to be attached to the church in a deeply meaningful way. Four participants spoke of trying to seek out their vocation in religious life; which for them was to ascertain God's will; they tried to discover if they should live their life celibate as a priest or religious. One continued and became a priest. The three who left religious life described leaving as a difficult and sometimes painful process because they believed they had initially made the correct decision. After leaving they found their vocations as lay people, two as married men and one as a celibate single person. Some, like Kate have really struggled during their life to discover their

vocation. She believed she was called to be a religious sister and on two occasions joined different religious orders only to discover that this was not right for her. She is now living her life as a single person but is open to marriage if that should happen. She hopes that by being attached to the church she will find that vocation. For others simply being an active member of the Church is a vocation in itself – the service they do others is symbolic of this vocation.

I had a good job, but not totally satisfied with life at that age. Thinking that there should be something more deeper meaning. I had also thought for some time whether I would enter religious life, ... I think there is a point in your life where you are thinking 'do I marry or religious life or whatever?' (*Highly Religious Type*).

To discern one's vocation and life direction gave many of the young people a sense of purpose; it gave meaning to their life because it caused them to focus on their life through prayer and meditation and then to make a positive decision about how they were going to live in the future. Solomon spoke of vocation as the way "he would like to be in the Church."

MIRACLES

Belief in miracles has been part of the Catholic belief system since the time of Jesus. Jesus himself was a miracle worker. He performed many miracles that were beyond the law of nature and difficult to explain in human terms. One participant described a miracle which changed his life. A few years prior to the interview Moses was not practising his Catholic faith. He was living in Melbourne, enjoying the nightlife and into the drug scene. One night Moses and his girlfriend accepted a lift in a car, from a stranger. They were to travel from one nightclub to another. They had travelled only a few hundred meters when they were involved in a horrific car accident. Moses was severely injured and he is still suffering from the injuries. His girlfriend died later in hospital. While lying in the hospital bed he was continually worried about his girlfriend but was unable to visit her. About the time of her death he sensed her sitting beside him at the hospital. They talked together and she said to him that she was OK and not to worry about her. He saw this as a miracle because she was on

life support in a different hospital at the time and there was no way she could have come to visit him. The experience was very real to him and it has changed his life.

... she (girlfriend) was sitting there in the chair and basically we just talked...
So, I see it kind of, as though she had passed away and before leaving she came by to see me. I didn't know she had died, just that she was on life support was all I was told. (*Moderately Religious Type*)

As a result of this extraordinary experience of the death of his girlfriend Moses has returned to the practise of his faith. Moses understood this event as God connecting with his life in a miraculous manner.

BIRTH & DEATH

Several of the participants who were parents had expressed awe of God when they gave birth or witnessed the birth of their children. They believed they had witnessed a miracle, even though it is miracle that occurs every minute of every day. (Ben) "the birth of your children makes a difference to your life" (*Strongly Religious Type*).

Death proved to be a trigger to examine one's faith and in some instances it was the trigger to a deeper faith. The relationship between the experience of death and faith development was not always straight forward. The data showed that the experience of a loved one dying did not lead to faith but rather added to the multiple factors that brought participants to faith. Joanna learnt a lot from her cousin who died from a brain tumour. Her cousin found peace writing to Jesus. Her written word was used at her funeral and it still inspires Joanna today. From her cousin Joanna learned the value of stillness and the importance of acceptance as the road to peace, happiness and true joy. (Joanna) "If there is one thing I have learnt from her life - you have to take time to sit and just be and you don't have to say things" (*Strongly Religious Type*). Through this experience Joanna discovered the value of silence. The death of Joanna's cousin and how her cousin faced her imminent death taught Joanna a great deal about living and dying with faith. Joanna discovered the source of true peace is not to go hankering after material things but to appreciate the simple things of life particularly family. Another life experience which can affect faith development is the disintegration of one's family through divorce. Genevieve as a nurse spoke of the deaths of many people she had witnessed.

In nursing even seeing people die and things and you just go you know there has to be something else out there and you just saw those people who had a faith or whatever and they used to die in peace and had a comfort. Those who didn't, whether they didn't have a good life or something or something didn't connect, you just felt for them because, you didn't know whether they were going to rest in peace. So you just think, there is something else out there and yeah it seems right for me. (*Highly Religious type*)

Through reflection on death Genevieve's faith was strengthened.

CONCLUSION

Coming to faith or "What factors led each of these participants to practise Catholicism?" is a complex matter. The faith journey of each of these twenty-three participants is unique. No two faith journeys are the same. Even the final faith decision of siblings who are each exposed to very similar factors can vary considerably; one could become an atheist and another devout Catholic. There are key people influencing these people; family, friends, and teachers may all play a role in varying degrees. Seven factors stand out as the main spheres of influence in faith development; a) faith based family, b) well run retreats and events like World Youth Day, c) faithful and welcoming parish, d) regular prayer, e) music in services and youth events, f) relevant and accessible faith education, and g) spiritual mentors.. None of them are mutually exclusive. The research indicates that each of these factors interact with each other and build upon each other. Generally speaking, particularly for the twenty-two participants who were born into a Catholic family, the family has been the major foundation for faith development. Other events have only built upon that foundation. The obvious exception is Joshua who was gently evangelised by his friend and his friend's family. There was no indication that his birth family played any role at all in his faith development.

This research found that the outstanding influence in the faith development of their children is parents. Without this influence children rarely come to faith. These young adults experienced a living faith in their parents. Their families had practised faith together by attending Mass and sharing regular family prayer. The parents talked to

their children about matters of faith and taught them how to pray. Most of the parents of the participants in this study were deeply committed and involved in the life of their parish. Each of the parents was united and true to the teachings of the Catholic Church in all areas of their life. Twenty-one of the twenty-three participants in this study were brought up in a happy family with a warm functioning relationship and strong ties to one another. These parents were the prime educators of their children *Gravissimum Educationis* 3. So the families who provided strong examples of living out their faith provided the best education for their children. The family network of extended family living out the same Catholic faith that the parents wished to instil in their family and the role of grandparents were both very important for passing on the faith from one generation to another. Family prayer, religious discussion and the faithful witness of parents practising what they believe all provided a happy safe environment for the participants in this study to absorb and later want to practise the Catholic faith. The Catholic home needs to be able to counteract the negative influences young people encounter outside the home environment, even from school.

There are a number of Catholic Systems and other subsystems which affected participants in coming to faith. These included parish, faith communities, and spiritual mentors. An important Catholic system was belonging to a faith filled community, the local Catholic parish. This is where young people are able to attend Mass in their local community and to receive the sacraments. The Parish or Faith Community provided a place to belong which is similar to other clubs because it provided a place where participants can mix with others who share similar interests and values. In their parish the largest majority of participants felt comfortable and welcome. However, two participants found their parish a lonely place where they did not meet other young faith filled people. Finding support elsewhere compensated for this lack, for example World Youth Day assisted in this process. Three of the participants had experienced living in a live-in situation for a year or two while they evangelised their peers. The support they experienced from a faith filled community enabled them to effectively do this. The influence of peers and mentors was an important subsystem. Participants who experienced someone walking beside them in their faith journey were enriched in their faith practise.

This research also found there was great value in voluntarily attending a course or retreat. Most of these retreats drew out an adult faith commitment to the Catholic Church. The individual said an adult 'yes I will accept these teachings for my own'. There were a great variety of retreats and courses ranging from talks over a three month period to a silent thirty day retreat to a weeklong charismatic Summer School to World Youth Day. All participants in the *Highly Religious Type* category had attended at least one retreat of this type. Retreats seemed to be the 'icing on the cake' for many of the young adults who had already been well instructed in faith by their parents. Faith building is a process of many experiences impacting upon the individual which leads to a decision to commit one's life to Christ. Events such as retreats and World Youth Day are but a brief moment in one's life but the data showed they can affect every aspect of the rest of the lives of participants.

Religious and life experiences caused participants to reflect on their beliefs and deepen commitment. The research showed that music and prayer were the most important of these experiences in building faith. Music in all its many forms, from classical to charismatic uplifted, taught and brought participants to faith, prayer and worship at a deeper level. Prayer as a form of connection with the God they have decided to follow is absolutely vital for faith formation and continued development. Most of the participants were raised on the family Rosary but today they choose to talk to God informally.

The research indicated that faith education as an adult level has a huge influence on bringing young Catholics to practise and deepen their faith. These studies may have been voluntarily undertaken at university as part of the participant's training for a career. Parishes and dioceses also offer adult faith education.

The seventh factor is spiritual mentors who assisted the young person's independence in faith development. They helped the young person to grow and find their spiritual direction.

Catholic schools are not included in the seven most important factors because they did not greatly assist the faith education or development of these young people. The research shows that the work of the schools was most effective when the parents instilled faith into their children and gave them the example of living out the practice of their faith. Some participants reported discrepancies between what they were taught at home and what was being taught in school. Recent research indicates that going to a Catholic school is no longer an indicator of future religiosity and in fact many young people are ignorant about their faith (Mason, Singleton & Webber 2007). Catholic schools provided a support network of friends for young Catholics and they taught good moral values. The research showed that although there are many dedicated, committed teachers in Catholic schools, their good work can be undone when teachers are employed who do not share the Catholic ethos. Most of the participants reported they did not receive much catechetical instruction in secondary school. It is outside the scope of this paper to establish how widespread this occurrence is. It should be noted that parents are considered by the Church to be the primary educators of their children *Gravissimum Educationis* 3. Schools organise retreats for students in the later years of their schooling. The day-to-day living out of faith is usually done with the local parish or a faith community of some kind.

The journey of faith, which leads to practising Catholic faith, is a lifelong process which is continually evolving and changing according to the individual's daily experiences. It is, however, almost certainly built upon the foundation established by parents in the individual's younger life.

CHAPTER 6: IDENTITY AND CATHOLIC CHURCH ATTENDANCE

The last chapter examined the factors which assist faith development. This chapter extends those findings to explore why these young adults continue to practise their faith as adults. It explores the link between regular church attendance and Catholic identity. It looks at how Catholic identity is behind these young adults' decision to attend Mass every Sunday and to be highly involved in Catholic religious practices. In the Literature Review 'Catholic identity' was defined as "a baptised Catholic living one's life as a follower of Jesus Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit according to the Catholic tradition". To practise the Christian faith in the Catholic tradition is intrinsically different from practising other Christian faiths. Catholicism has been called a "sacramental religion, that the importance it gives to the sacramental principle is one of its most distinctive features" (Donovan, 1997, pp. 90-91). The Petrine doctrine which was explored in the literature review is another distinguishing feature of Catholicism (Arbuckle, 2007).

Arbuckle (2007) defined identity as 'self in context'. The analysis revealed several salient points that described the participant's Catholicity as being intrinsic to their identity. It defined who they were; it gave them a sense of belonging in a community and a sense of purpose in everything they did. They had been born Catholic and they have no desire to change their allegiance, it is the glue keeping their life together, it is inseparable from their view of themselves. Adele's Catholicity is the essence of how she views herself.

... being Catholic is just as much a part of my life and growing up as waking up or as breathing. It is just as much a part of me as my name. It is part of me. Part of who I am (*Strongly Religious Type*).

Expressing one's *identity* as a Catholic explained where, how and why participants belonged to the Catholic Church. This identity gave participants a sense of permanency and emotional security. While to some extent participants attended Mass out of a sense of duty and to meet their religious obligation, they all appeared to receive personal benefit from attending church and being connected to the Catholic Church. These benefits were related to their sense of self and to their world

view which are key aspects of identity. It is the 'self in context' (Arbuckle, 2007, p. 12). Identity', defines who they are, and how they view themselves in relation to the world and other people. Participants valued their Catholic religious, spiritual, cultural/social and institutional identity as an important aspect of their upbringing and family life. They talked about being part of the Body of Christ and part of a worldwide organisation of people who believed the same things and shared a two thousand year old tradition.

'In analysing the transcripts, four key aspects of Catholic identity were identified; *Catholic Religious Identity*, *Catholic Spiritual Identity*, *Catholic Cultural/Social Identity* and *Catholic Institutional Identity*. Each helped to explain in part, why participants adhered to the requirements of the Catholic Church regarding the obligations associated with the sacraments as well as why they stayed connected to the Catholic Church. While some participants put greater emphasis on one aspect of identity, all four aspects were mentioned in some way by each of the participants.

CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

Catholic religious identity has an element of compulsion. It embraces; attendance at Mass and reception of the Eucharist, living a sacramental life, obedience to Christ and the Catholic Church, and helping in Christ's work. A sign of the authenticity of *Catholic Religious Identity* for the *Highly Religious and Strongly Religious Types* (Table 4.3) of Catholic is a strong belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.1365).. It is a teaching of the Catholic Church that Jesus Christ is fully present in the consecrated bread and wine, which is also known as Eucharist ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994 n.1365). Attendance at Mass and receiving the Eucharist thus assumed paramount importance. Samuel describes his desire to attend Mass and receive the Eucharist not as compunction but as a loving response to the invitation of a loving God. For Samuel it is more important to accept Christ's invitation to join him at the Eucharistic table than accepting an invitation from the President of his country.

We go because we want to go. I am convinced Jesus is there in the bread and wine and it is like he is inviting us to have a meal with him so that is why we

want to go. And there is no more important invitation, so we go. (*Strongly Religious Type*)

Canon 1247 states that it is obligatory for all baptised Catholics to attend Mass on Sundays and certain Holy days ("The Code of Canon Law," 1983). Thus Mass attendance becomes a hallmark of the devoted Catholic's Catholic faith. Receiving the sacraments for some of the participants is essential for them to consider themselves to be good Catholics. Not to go to Mass and receive the sacraments was tantamount to denying their faith. It was so intrinsically connected to their spiritual life that to miss going would be distressing for them. Belief in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is axiomatic to practise of the Catholic faith for both the *Highly Religious* and *Strongly Religious* types.

By attending Mass and the Rite of Reconciliation and availing themselves of the sacraments they remained connected to the Church. This they believe is the truest way to stay constant in their desire to be a disciple of Christ. Elijah is an example of how a sacramental life is lived out. He describes the living out of his relationship with God within the Catholic Church as discipleship in a sacramental way. To enable him to do this he employs the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation to strengthen and assist him because it defines him.

(Elijah) I think its discipleship, in a sacramental way. ... The biggest pools of grace are the sacraments. When I'm praying, and when I am going to Mass and getting to reconciliation then I find I can live that love out. (*Highly Religious Type*)

Participants believe the Catholic Church offers them a unique style of faith practice through the reception of the sacraments. They believe this enables them to live their life as disciples of Christ.

Reception of the sacraments is important for many of these Catholics because it gives them spiritual nourishment and strength to go out into the world to try to follow the teachings of Christ in their everyday lives, at home, at work and at play. A number of participants believed that in order to live out the teachings of Christ, to be loving, generous, and kind; as one of the participants expressed it; to be transparent

so that Christ's light might shine through them, requires the spiritual renewal that comes from church attendance. Participants discussed how going to Mass helped them to live out this love with the help of prayer and the sacraments. Endeavouring to obey Christ's commands, translates for many of these Catholics into the desire to seek a direction in life which is consistent with these commands. Joanna finds that attending Mass each week, receiving the Eucharist and listening to the Word of God nourishes her and helps her in her resolve to be a better person and to live a better life.

(Johanna) I feel like sharing the Eucharist and being nourished with His Body and His Blood I feel like I then can start that week, ... You know, I am going to be better this week. ... I think when I don't go I am not as good (*Strongly Religious Type*)

To fully embrace Jesus Christ and his teachings is not an easy path to follow, participants said. They understand Jesus command to his followers to take up their cross and follow him (Lk.9:23, NRSV) as an invitation to share in Christ's work. Grace pointed to the fact that to be a follower of Christ often meant doing things against your personal wishes. (Grace) "I think you need to put Jesus, what Jesus taught us first. It doesn't matter if you like it or not" (*Highly Religious Type*). Grace believes to be obedient to Christ is to put the needs of others before your own and to be a servant of others which goes against one's natural desires. To be able to live this way, Grace believes requires prayer and to be in a state of grace. This is Grace's vocation in life.

Catholic Religious Identity is not mutually exclusive from *Catholic Spiritual Identity*, there is some overlap because religious practice has two components; a push-pull factor. They were drawn by their desire or need to comply with the teachings of the Church. Yet they were pulled by their own desire or need for the succour they received as a result of being part of these religious events especially Mass attendance

CATHOLIC SPIRITUAL IDENTITY

Catholic Spiritual Identity is about one's relationship with God. It provides many benefits for participants; nurture, nourishment, hope, comfort, love, meaning for their life, peace and friendship with Jesus through a personal relationship with him. The Eucharist provided them with spiritual as well as religious benefits; participants reported that it nurtured them in many ways including their daily life. This motivation was subtly different from attending Mass because it is a requirement of the church. For these people, attending and receiving the sacraments is important for their emotional and spiritual wellbeing and provides 'nourishment' for the week ahead. Hugh is an example of those who recognise the importance of the Eucharist for nourishment and renewal to be able to go out and live life fully. (Hugh) "Again that sense of coming together ... for renewal and a bit of solidarity and obviously the Eucharist as the nourishment for us to go out and live our lives again as we do for the next week," (*Highly Religious Type*). He regarded the importance of the Church community for his own wellbeing.

In contrast other participants expressed the spiritual benefits of their faith because it gave them hope and so enabled them to carry on with their daily lives. The belief that they were not alone, that God was watching over them and that there were other people who believed the same things as they did, gave them great comfort and optimism. Miriam, who was the subject of Case Study 1, is typical of the participants who expressed the view that church attendance and belonging to a community of faith offers her hope and love and an enriching of her *Catholic Spiritual Identity*. Miriam's Catholicity gives meaning to her life and the life of her children. (Miriam) "It is a place that offers hope and ... a Spiritual, Religious and Social Motivation that I feel enriches me as a person ... God gives ... a love that we can never feel anywhere else" (*Highly religious type*). The gaining of meaning in life, of a sense of hope for the future and that God was watching and caring for them, was a powerful driver for attending church for some participants.

Another compelling reason for most of these participants to remain connected to the Catholic Church was to have a "personal relationship" with Jesus. The participants in this category have made an adult commitment to God and are regarded for the

purposes of this study to have a personal relationship with Jesus. At the heart of St Paul's teaching was the challenge and call to personal conversion and commitment to Christ. He explained how Christ loved them and died for them and was now calling them into a "personal relationship" with him (Donovan, 1997, pp. 16-17). This commitment determines most actions in their lives as they desired to obey God's will in all matters. For participants who had this "personal relationship" with Jesus, it deepened their belief in the teachings of the Catholic Church. They then felt there was no alternative for them but to remain connected to the Church. All but one of the participants categorised as *Highly Religious Type* (Table 4.3) and the majority of participants classified as *Strongly Religious Type* (Table 4.3) had a personal relationship with Jesus. James, the young Catholic priest's relationship with God would be described as more Trinitarian. Most participants believed it energised their faith; Miriam said she could not have maintained her faith if she did not have a "personal relationship" with Christ. A "personal relationship" with Christ usually developed over many years. Solomon said for him it began at Baptism and then developed slowly over many years with the help of many people until, (Solomon) ... "at probably about the age of 25 I started to actively seek time to pray and sought a relationship with Jesus" (*Highly Religious Type*). To have a "personal relationship" with Jesus is to have made an adult commitment to God as discussed in Chapter 3; the Literature review. This commitment determined most actions in their lives as they desired to obey God's will in all matters. Such awareness extended to trying to live a sacramental life. This means that in order to live out their faith they felt that they were compelled to do so in ways that allowed them the greatest opportunity for a meaningful relationship with God. The sacraments were the path they chose. Developing a "personal relationship" with Jesus was for these participants the culmination of a long line of spiritual events. To have a personal relationship with Jesus was not an intellectual process for them but a movement of their heart in response to a loving God. Once participants made that decision to follow Christ and to live in an intimate relationship with him, the whole focus of their life changed. Living in an intimate "personal relationship" with Jesus made participants deeply aware of God's all embracing love and care for them. Being a friend of Jesus then became part of their *Catholic Spiritual Identity*. Participants who had a "personal relationship" with Jesus and experienced God's tender care for them expressed this quite beautifully. Their response to this love was to connect with him as often as possible through prayer, Mass attendance and reception of the Eucharist. In this way

they were able to demonstrate their ultimate faith in this love. Tonnie is an example of one who experiences God's unconditional love in the quiet places of her heart and talks to him constantly about her cares and concerns as if talking to a counsellor. (Tonnie) "It is like a counselling service I can talk to God. ... It is significant to have someone who just accepts you for what you are ..." (*Strongly Religious Type*). Participants who were aware of God's merciful love and care responded to him by spending time talking to him about all their cares and worries and the events in their daily life.

For those participants who entered into the spirit of the Mass it gave them a unique kind of peace or calm and that is why they continued to attend. Eliza is typical of one for whom the Mass gives peace. She finds attending Mass a calming influence on her hectic life. So for Eliza there is a personal benefit. "I suppose it is a calming influence on the rest of your life" (*Strongly Religious Type*). Eliza finds peace through the various parts of the Mass even though she has five young children whom she takes with her each week, sometimes on her own if her husband is away for work. Eliza's spiritual identification with the Catholic Church is very important for her Catholic faith but she also has a strong *Cultural/Social Identity* with the Church because of her family and the society in which she lives.

CULTURAL/SOCIAL IDENTITY

The third major aspect of identity is *Cultural/Social Identity*. *Cultural/Social Identity* could be said to be the living out of faith. Many expressed their Catholic *identity* as being an important part of their family tradition and culture. Religion was a vital part of this tradition which was closely entwined with all aspects of their family life and culture. Belonging to a long tradition of people who were connected to Catholicism and its associated beliefs and religious practices gave many participants comfort. This was true not only of those from a first generation ethnic background but also those participants who, are fifth generation Australians and are very conscious of their Irish heritage. James the priest is very conscious of his Irish ancestry. His Celtic spirituality affects how he experiences God's presence in his life. "I think too because my spirituality is particularly Anglo-Irish, a deep sense of the sacred in that

sort of whole Celtic sense of being still with God, that contemplative aspect of our being" (*Highly religious type*). James is typical of many other participants, in that while his Catholicity may be the dominant aspect of identity to him, he also refers to his Irish heritage. He links his Celtic spirituality with the way he conducts his religious life, which he says is contemplative and aware of God's presence in the stillness. He said God is with us wherever we are and we experience the joy He give us especially when with friends and family.

The young practising Catholic participants, i.e. those who attend Mass, felt as if wherever they went in the world there was a group of people to whom they could identify. One participant said to be Catholic is to belong to a worldwide organisation that has millions of members who all believe the same things. He enjoyed having brothers and sisters all over the world because there are Catholics in every country in the world. Chiara, who comes from a Croatian family, is another example of someone else who feels this way. She understands her Catholic, *cultural/social identity* as a vital aspect of her personal history, upbringing and family traditions with which she is very comfortable.

... one thing I really love is the Catholic *identity* I've come to appreciate the unique Catholic expression of faith and really loving that and appreciating that as part of my history and upbringing. (*Highly religious type*)

During an earlier stage of her life Chiara was happy to refer to herself as a Christian but now is fully aware and proud to refer to herself as a Catholic. Her appreciation of her religious cultural heritage developed and grew as she got older. This was true for many young Catholics who discovered that their Catholic faith gave them a sense of belonging within a long tradition and they began to appreciate Catholicism as a unique expression of their faith. Another aspect of this cultural aspect of Catholicism is about the universality of the Church.

Several of the participants from ethnic backgrounds and born overseas identified with Catholicism as part of their *cultural identity*. These participants indicate that the habit of being Catholic is also closely connected to how they view themselves as people. It is part of their personal identity. While this is closely aligned to the first point on

Catholic Spiritual Identity, it is subtly different in the context of *Cultural/Social Identity*. In Marie's case her *Catholic Spiritual Identity* is so closely connected to her *Cultural/Social Identity* that she could not imagine being anything but Catholic. She has no desire to be anything else. Marie was raised by a devout Catholic mother after her father died. She was born in Malta which is a Catholic country. Her grandfather was almost eccentric in his Catholicity. He expected his grandchildren to kiss his hand and ask for a blessing when they arrived at his home. As a child Marie was sent to Mass every day. In Malta there were Masses every hour even on weekdays. Her experience of the church she says has always been positive and beautiful. She has never felt the need to question her faith. (Marie) "My *identity* is being a Catholic" (*Strongly Religious Type*). Marie has remained within the Catholic community generally because it was comfortable and convenient for her and it is intrinsic to her Maltese upbringing. For Marie and other participants like her they have not made a decision to stay, they have just remained. Their motivation could stem from family affiliation or perhaps they married another Catholic. Church attendance can also be habitual because of *cultural and social identity*.

Children from a family which has been Catholic for generations sometimes accept their Catholic faith without ever making a personal decision to remain Catholic. Adele is one such person. She was raised in a Catholic family where the practise of the Catholic faith was paramount. Her family has always been Catholic. She has never questioned, nor felt the need to question the teachings of her childhood. The Catholic faith was instilled into her by devout parents who were deeply involved in the life of the Church. "There was never any question about being Catholic. I would say basically I was born into a Catholic family. We were all Catholic" (*Strongly Religious Type*). Adele's family were deeply involved in the music ministry at their local church. This gave her family a common goal which helped to cement their relationship with the Catholic Church so that being Catholic became part of how they viewed themselves as people. It was part of their *cultural identity*. As a result Adele has never questioned for herself her Catholic faith. Family influences including marriage sometimes determined whether or not the participant remained Catholic in their adult life.

Marriage can be the social driver behind a person remaining a practising Catholic. Jeremiah remains a practising Catholic not through conviction but rather because it is expected by his wife. His early life was dominated by a very dysfunctional mother whose faith practice was eccentric. While Jeremiah is happy to be a Christian he is rather disillusioned by many aspects of Catholicism. Marriage and family are of paramount importance to him. He is married to a Catholic so he is prepared to remain within the Catholic Church because before everything else he wants to make his wife happy.

... it's about Christianity. It's not about Catholicism for me I still go to Mass in a Catholic Church. ... I was happy to get married and start a family and I haven't looked back. She is very encouraging with my faith without being forceful or trying to tell me what to do. (*Moderately Religious Type*)

Jeremiah 'happily participates' for the sake of his marriage not for any altruistic reasons. In a similar vein some Catholics continue to attend Mass because it is comfortable and convenient.

The data revealed that some Catholics continue to attend because it is comfortable and convenient to their way of life. The events of their life brought them into the Catholic Church as children and as adults they find it comfortable and familiar to be Catholic. The Catholic community is the social arena in which they function as adults. They were baptised as babies, went to Catholic school and did their sacraments of reconciliation, first communion and confirmation, usually through the school. Their parents took them to Mass each Sunday. Two of the boys in this category were also altar boys. The day to day Catholic aspects of their upbringing have been subject to habitualization and now comprise the supporting pillars that help them to survive in the world (Berger & Luckmann, 1972). Fred is an Irish Catholic. He has no desire to be anything else. When he was a child it was ritual that he became an altar boy after he made his First Communion. His six brothers followed suit. His whole environment revolved around the Catholic Community. He married an Australian Catholic girl and her family are also involved in the Catholic community. So since coming to Australia his life and the life of his family are still orientated around the Catholic community.

Just that's my life. That is what I was born into, that's me. I don't know what it's like not being Catholic. That's what I am. I am a follower of God and I don't know any different and I don't want to know any different. (*Moderately Religious Type*)

For Fred it is habitual to be Catholic, there has never been any conscious effort to be anything else. It is both comfortable and convenient. Fred states "I am Catholic". It is his *cultural and social identity*.

Being connected to the local Church and the other members is another aspect of some participant's *cultural and social identity*. When asked about their place in the community their first response was 'I am a member of the Catholic Church'. They could not envisage a situation when this connection would be broken. The local Catholic parish is where the majority of the participants in this study encountered the Catholic Church. Here they met not only for spiritual nourishment but also for social and sporting events. James, the young Catholic priest played both tennis and golf with other Catholics. Kate is typical of a young country person who moved from the country to the big city to study. Through the local parish in her new location she was able to meet other young Catholics with whom she could meet weekly for fellowship and support. "I didn't have a support structure. So what I had to do ... was become involved in the Parish ... Catholic groups in the city where we could come together weekly or more often" (*Highly Religious Type*). The Catholic community also provided participants with a network of individuals to enable them to obey Christ's command to love one another. They belong to a group of people who believe that 'one Catholic is no Catholic'. Catholic friends provided Kate with a support network which enabled her to practise her Catholic faith. The manner in which each Catholic practises their faith affects other Catholics. As Kate experienced it is difficult, probably impossible to practise religion on one's own. All of the participants found the church community essential to support them in living a Catholic way of life which in turn was an additional motivation for attending. It is salient to note that even Elouise who was classified as *Half Heartedly Religious* recognised and had experienced the value and importance of church community, and which could for her only be realised through meeting others at church services and activities. "It is community group and you can go there to practise the same beliefs that you hold with similar sort of people" (*Half Heartedly Religious*). Elouise is an example of those

who experienced the intrinsic value of community when involved in the local parish when she was younger. She like many others experienced the importance of community because it was able to connect her with the Church at a local level and in so doing meet some of her needs for support in her faith and everyday life. It also provides a comfortable environment where the social norms and religious culture facilitate ease.

Belonging to a parish while for some it enriched their life with a wide network of friends and acquaintances, it was also a strong motivation for attending the local church. Moreover, they found that the parish community connects the body of believers at the local level. The need for connection as a driver for attending meant that for some there was not the imperative to attend every week as it was for those for whom it was an essential part of being a Catholic. For example, although community is very important to Tonnie she does not attend Mass every Sunday. Tonnie strongly expressed the importance of the Church at the local level which she had personally experienced through prayer and assistance when she was very ill. She experienced the reciprocal nature of communal support, the giving and receiving in times of trouble. This notion of having a group of people, who will assist each other, almost without question, was an important factor in keeping at least a minimal connection by attending irregularly. "It is nice to know there is a wider community out there in difficult times or when someone else is having difficult times. The people I have come across in the Church community are not judgemental" (*Strongly Religious Type*). Many of the participants commented upon how in the local Church members try to live out Christ's commandment to love one another and this has mutual benefits for all. They had discovered that the church community could be relied upon to provide backup and support.

The data revealed that attending a Catholic Church was not just about going to Mass on Sunday. Participants had discovered that it was about connecting to a wider Catholic network and there are many social and emotional advantages in having interconnecting networks (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). A Catholic parish would have links to a parish school, to Catholic welfare agencies, to Catholic social groups and so on. This was very attractive to some young people in the study. All except one

participant had attended Catholic schools. They made Catholic friends at school and played sport with other Catholics. James, who was ordained as a Catholic priest two years ago speaks of this type of networking when he was growing up. "I went to the local Catholic Primary School...we had great friends through the Parish family. ... We were also involved in the tennis club and the golf club" (*Highly Religious Type*). Connecting with the wider Catholic network of parish, school, social and welfare groups provided a complete community for participants. This community shared the same beliefs, values and tradition as they themselves did and so provided them with safety in which to practise their Catholic faith. Family and social connections within the Catholic Church defined for participants their *cultural and social identity*. This differs substantially from *institutional identity* which is how the participant views themselves in the wider context of being Catholic in the world.

INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY

When participants talked about their membership of the Catholic Church as a way of viewing themselves in relation to the world and other people, they referred to how their faith drove their actions within the wider world and how this influenced their behaviour in their daily life as well as in a wider context. *Institutional Identity* is about belonging. Seeing oneself within the context of the Catholic Church addresses the individuals need for connection to something or someone, in this case the Catholic Church. For the purposes of this study this is referred to as *institutional identity*. For example, James, a young Catholic priest views his Catholic identity as the manner in which he understands his relationship to the world. This enables James to recognise God in the daily events of life. He expresses this by caring for the needy.

I think definitely to be Catholic is to have a sense of justice and outreach too I think is definitely part of our *identity* as a Catholic too; to sort of love one's neighbour, in terms of particularly if they are struggling. (*Highly religious type*)

A core part of their *identity* was expressed by some as belonging to the Body of Christ. Participants who understood the reality and meaning of belonging to the Body of Christ (i.e., worldwide group of believers) found this was a compelling reason to continue attending Mass every week. Catholics through celebrating Mass together and participating in the Eucharist strengthen each other (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

Fifteen participants said attending the Eucharist unified them with other Catholics as the Body of Christ, because Mass is a communal celebration. Being connected to the local Catholic community and part of the Body of Christ was for many of the participants the essence of their being.

One participant saw the Body of Christ as not limited by time or space, but rather limitless. He believed it is to be united to billions of people throughout history, and connected to people from all over the world who all believe the same things. Another participant Hugh is typical of how many young Catholic men view their *identity* in the Body of Christ. Hugh views his Catholic faith as an intrinsic aspect of how he views himself as a Catholic man belonging to the Body of Christ.

That's my *identity*; it is part of my *identity*. ... belonging to the Body of Christ, being part of the Body of Christ, being part of this world wide group of people who believe in the same things, by and large. But ultimately we are all part of the Body of Christ. (*Highly religious type*)

Recognition by participants that they are part of the Body of Christ links closely with their religious commitment, their personal life as a Christian and their commitment to attend Mass at least weekly. The Body of Christ has been a core teaching of the Catholic Church's tradition during its long history ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994).

Belief in the teachings of the Catholic Church was a compelling reason for the participants to remain connected to the Catholic Church. Because of their belief that the Catholic Church was established by Jesus Christ himself, together with papal succession, the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and the Virgin Mary they feel compelled to attend Mass. Joshua is an example of one who believes the Catholic Church is the one true church which was established by Jesus.

For me to be Catholic means, ... I practise in the Church, the one, true original church. We believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist ...We still belong to the Pope. We have got the history, the founding, and the strength of the Vatican (*Highly Religious Type*)

To believe all these things was for participants to want to remain connected to the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church has a system of beliefs which Catholics all over the world are expected to believe ("Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1994). This consistency is reassuring for many of the participants.

An appreciation by participants of the universality of the Church is part of their *institutional identity*. Adele is typical of young Catholics who have travelled around the world and find great assurance that millions of people all over the world share the same beliefs; wherever they go, the Mass is the same liturgical celebration. World travel or experiences such as World Youth Day enable young people to see the Catholic Church as a truly universal church; wherever they have travelled in the world they have been able to attend and understand the same Mass as that which is being celebrated at home, albeit in a different language. They also enjoy the unity it gives them with other Catholics. Adele has lived in four different countries, Jamaica, Canada, Saudi Arabia and Australia. (Adele) "I like that anywhere in the world you go to a Mass, it's the same, the teachings and the beliefs, and the prayers. We all believe the same thing" (*Strongly Religious Type*). Half of the participants had experienced the feeling of family wherever they travelled overseas. They felt it energised their faith to have brothers and sisters all over the world who are sons and daughters of the same Father, and have the same beliefs and doctrines.

The long history and tradition of the Catholic Church is salient to the *institutional identity* of most of the participants. It took away any sense of 'being alone' and made them feel they are part of something bigger. It gave them a place in the history of the world. Furthermore for them it is a reason to remain connected to the Church because it provided them with continuity, security and a sense of stability. This stability provided them an anchor in a fast changing world. Solomon is typical of participants in this study who express their connection to the Church as a timeless, limitless experience that is deeply meaningful and all encompassing. Solomon believes that when all else has come and gone, the Church will still exist.

OK, for me to be Catholic means to be part of a living tradition that binds together the faith of the living and of the dead. ... I am connected to something

that is beyond space and time, to be bound to something that is profoundly meaningful and universal (*Highly Religious Type*).

The Church's living tradition unites Solomon with both the living and the dead which gives him stability and an understanding of his own place and role in the world both today and in an historical context. He envisages himself as a piece in the jigsaw puzzle of believers throughout history.

Several of the participants expressed an understanding of the Catholic Church as being a unique style of faith practice because of its long historical tradition and its teaching and practise of the seven sacraments. Solomon eloquently describes his understanding of the uniqueness of the Catholic Church. He believes his Catholic faith entails a great responsibility to live out a full Catholic life in the world. Solomon has made this choice which he takes very seriously. Consequently it affects every aspect of his life as it makes him responsible for the way in which he lives out his faith. Solomon understands his role as a Christian man is to be Christ in the world in which he lives. Solomon's Catholic faith is bound up with his belief in eternal life and the traditions of the Catholic faith. As an educated Catholic man he believes he is called to witness to Christ in the world by living a fully human life.

It raises the stakes because I say we take this stuff seriously so therefore our lives need to be lived true to this call; to make Christ present, to be witness to Christ by living a fully human life, by being fully alive ... that light might shine out from within.... To be Catholic is deep and meaningful for me (*Highly Religious Type*).

Solomon's broad understanding of the Catholic Church provides him with a unique style of faith practice which is solidly founded in his Catholic faith, but as Solomon explains it must be a balanced life which can only be achieved with the assistance of family and the wider church.

Belonging to the Church is a further expression of participant's *institutional identity*. The motivation for some participants' attendance at church was tied up in their belief that in order to fully belong to the Catholic Church and to be a 'good' Christian they need to believe in the doctrines of the Catholic Church and to follow its teachings,

one of which is to attend Mass weekly. To do this was extremely important for them, not because it was a demand of the Church but rather because this was where they made their connection to God. This was for them perhaps the major way they could respond to their loving God. For them, to be a good Catholic they believed they needed to belong to the Church in the fullest sense. It therefore means that in order to live out their faith some participants believed that they needed to be part of the organisational and sacramental life of the Church both locally and in the wider community. Their relationship with God required them to meet this obligation.

To me it really means for me to be Catholic is that I am involved in the life of the Church and I partake in the sacraments. ... the fundamental, foundational aspect of it is my belief and relationship with God (*Highly Religious Type*).

Kate's identifies with the Church as an institution which is expressed by living her life within the organisational structure of the Church and the wider church community. She says she belongs to the Church with all that implies. For her and for others, this position cannot be compromised. Church attendance is for Kate closely connected with her belief and relationship with God. Being connected to the church means embracing all of its religious practices and for Kate and others like her, it is essential to partake of the sacraments and to be involved in the life of the Church. For them, this is not an option, because of their love of God and desire to fulfil what they believe are His desires, they feel compelled to meet their obligations.

CONCLUSION

The data shows that because many young people identify themselves as Catholic and to state this defined who they were, was for many a salient factor in continuing to attend Mass each week. They said it was intrinsic to the real essence of their being. The link between religious intensity and the participant's sense of self has been examined under four different aspects of identity; *Catholic Religious Identity*, *Catholic Spiritual Identity*, *Catholic Cultural/Social Identity* and *Catholic Institutional Identity*. It may be summed up as follows: *Catholic Religious Identity* is the doing of one's faith, *Catholic Spiritual Identity* is feeling one's faith, *Catholic Cultural/Social Identity* is living one's faith, and *Catholic Institutional Identity* is belonging to one's faith. For the participants, each of these aspects of identity formed part of their sense of self and their world view. For

some, one aspect had greater meaning than another but all four were observed in each participant to some degree. For this group, the four aspects of identity noted here were all influential factors in explaining their Catholicity and their religious intensity.

CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS

The overall aim of the study was to gain a contemporary understanding of what it means to be a young committed Catholic between the ages of 21 and 41 years in Australia today and to ascertain why young people practise their faith and the factors which brought them to faith. The study also examined how these young people understand their identity as Catholics

THE SEVEN FACTORS

Similar to previous studies (Smith & Snell, 2009, p. 226), this qualitative study revealed a complex set of factors that influenced faith development among this group of young people. These included a) faith based family, b) regular prayer c) faithful and welcoming parish, d) music in services and youth events, e) well run retreats and events like World Youth Day, f) spiritual mentors and g) relevant and accessible faith education. One factor alone was insufficient; these seven areas were interconnecting and underpinned faith development, which in turn led these young people to making an adult faith commitment. It is very difficult to rank the last six of the influences; however, the influence of a faith based family stood out as the influence of primary importance. Each one had some discrete aspects that contributed to the young person's faith journey and religious commitment. Making an adult faith commitment is a vital aspect in the development of a strong faith. When these participants said 'yes I believe all the Catholic Church teaches', 'I want to follow Jesus as my personal Lord and Saviour' their faith changed. It became a living faith which began to affect every aspect of their lives. They wanted to pray and read scripture, to be involved in parish and to share their faith with other young people.

Family. The family was the most important factor in faith development. It was the component of the family-faith link that was the key to the young person adopting the faith for themselves. The parents socialised their children into the Catholic faith and taught their children to "think, feel, believe, and act like serious religious believers" (Smith & Snell, 2009, p. 232). How did they do this? The level and type of faith of both parents was consistent; they did not give their children mixed messages about faith. They were Catholic in all aspects of family life. There were regular family prayers; the children were taught how to pray, not just rote prayer, but real

conversation with God. Parents also taught their children about the Catholic faith by talking to them about faith right from the beginning of their life. They played Christian music in the home or car when travelling. The whole family attended Mass regularly, at least weekly, children did not have the option of opting out. Another important feature of family religious life was that parents and extended family members all gave the same message and church attendance was a time when the wider family also got together. This sense of family history was important to the young people in this study. The findings on the role of families demonstrate for this population that without a solid faith foundation from parents there was little chance that children would have inherited or 'caught' the faith. It was insufficient for a child to come from a Catholic family; family faith development was a necessary part of passing on the Catholic religious tradition. Parents needed to model the Catholic faith to their children. It was not enough for the parents to do these things on their own; they talked to their children about why they went to Mass and they promoted the Catholic faith to their children. In this way the children experienced the faith for themselves. Another important aspect of modelling faith to these participants when they were children was the importance parents placed on the local parish community; they were involved in the parish. When the children saw their parents placing time, money and energy in parish affairs they began to realise the importance of the parish. Perhaps the most important and significant factor was that the children witnessed their parents doing their best, trying to live by the faith and moral teachings of the Church. It was also important for the children to learn and understand that faith was connected with the history of the family; this helped them to establish their own identity. They also became aware that the extended family was Catholic and that they too attended Mass and the sacraments, not just the Eucharist but Reconciliation also. Apart from the indigenous people most Australians have an ethnic background and links with their Catholic ethnic history helped the young people in establishing their own identity. The families of the young people in this study promoted all these things as norms for their family life. Family alone was not sufficient, the faith implanted so carefully by these types of parents needed to be reinforced in the wider world.

Prayer. Prayer, the second factor, kept the young people connected to God in their busy lives. The study revealed that young people use many forms of prayer; they listen to music, they pray with the scriptures using the Lectio Divina, they worship him

and spend time in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, they talk to him as a friend, they ask for their needs and the needs of their family, they pray formally and they offer him their suffering. It was their time out with God when they gave him time. Prayer enabled them to keep in touch with the important things in their life which gave their life meaning. Most of the participants had a “personal relationship” with God which automatically implied spending time with the God who loves them and they in turn showed their love and need for him. Participants discovered prayer as an action of the Holy Spirit who revealed God’s love to them.

Music. Music is the third factor. Results indicate that good music is very important to young people’s faith; they use it for prayer, contemplation, relaxation and learning. The power of music to draw young people to worship should not be underestimated. Similar in a way to prayer, music has many genres and young people relate to a great variety of music. However, it needs to be music of an excellent standard and appealing to youth. The study showed that many young people prefer modern hymns, although two participants revealed a preference for the classical genre of religious music.

Religious events. The fourth important factor in faith development that was revealed in this study was attendance at religious events such as well run spiritual retreats and World Youth Day. Retreats organised by inspiring leaders who were committed and passionate about their faith were found to have a huge impact on the faith commitment and maintenance of faith in young people. Young people love good music, and being with young people their own age who share the same values, enthusiasm, and joy. These things make them feel good. When faith teachings were presented accurately and completely in this environment they were accepted enthusiastically. The young people were found to attend not out of a sense of obligation but because they are both enjoyable and spiritually uplifting. At World Youth Day the young people met like-minded Catholics, they enjoyed good music, and they received excellent catechesis which was related to their everyday lives. Those who attended found it a joyful, well organised event. For many, one of the highlights was proclaiming their Catholic faith to the world. World Youth Day allowed young Australians to see the wider Church and experience a sense of joy while they

celebrated their Catholic faith. The results indicated that catechesis presented in an interesting way and related to their everyday lives was found to be attractive to young Catholics. These environments had assisted all twelve of the participants in the *Highly Religious Type* category and two in the *Strongly Religious Type* category to make a faith commitment.

Faith community. The fifth factor that emerged from the study was that a faith community such as the local parish nourished faith because here most participants attend Mass and receive the Eucharist. Reception of the Eucharist was an essential criterion for the religious identity of these young Catholics. Most of the participants felt welcome and at home in their local parish. They experienced a sense of belonging and community. For some young people in the study, the local parish failed to gain their interest, was adult focussed and the music uninspiring. Despite this, they still attended Mass regularly. Previous research had indicated that this is a factor contributing to young people ceasing to attend Mass (Dixon, et al., 2007; Hughes, Bellamy, Black, & Kaldor, 2000; Smith & Denton, 2005). Another form of faith community which was relevant to this study was the Catholic Covenant Communities. Four participants had been ministered to by these communities through evangelisation and outreach activities, such as Summer School, Youth Mission Team, National Evangelisation Team and Young Men of God.

Spiritual mentors. The sixth factor to emerge from the study was that those spiritual mentors who walk beside the individual; teaching, encouraging and helping the individual to grow were found to be of great value in helping young people's faith development. They taught the participants; deeper elements of faith, how to pray, how to understand the teaching of the church, and scripture. They were also important for the individual in helping to move from the influence of the family into the wider world.

Faith Education. Faith Education is the seventh factor. Faith Education is a very important aspect of faith development. When faith education is voluntarily engaged in beyond the school environment it produces young people with strong faith. The

events of World Youth Day show that young people are not afraid of catechesis. In fact they hunger for good faith education which is relevant to their everyday lives. Based on the results from this study, young people want to be taught about scripture and how to pray the scriptures. This confirms the results of the official researchers for WYD who reported that 54% of Pilgrims said that the catechesis was the most helpful or very helpful for their spiritual development (Mason, et al., 2009, p. 15). The faith education at WYD was relevant, lively and presented by excellent facilitators. Under these conditions young people will embrace faith education.

Summary. While the participants did not demonstrate having all seven factors, the participants in the *Highly Religious* Group had at least five and all but one had a strong religious family background. The one who did not come from a religious family spent a great deal of time with a *Highly Religious* family. Participants in the *Strongly Religious* Group had at least four of these factors present in their faith development and those in the *Moderately Religious* group had at least three factors present in their spiritual development. Family seemed to be the most single important factor to continued faith development and religious commitment.

OTHER INFLUENCES

Catholic education, The Catholic schools can be effective in educating, and impacting on young people's faith development, particularly if the religious education program is challenging and relevant. A Catholic school education was of greater assistance in faith development if parents had already instilled faith into their children and if parents themselves were highly religious. Not all the participants attended Catholic schools, so attendance did not prove to be an essential factor in faith development and in some instances was a hindrance. Schools can and did facilitate faith education, but in several cases in this study it was not effective because either teachers watered down religious education curriculum or they did not believe the teachings themselves and so were unable to portray a positive message about Catholic faith and morals. Another factor that impeded the impact of the religious education program was that these participants who were from strong Catholic families found few peers who had a similar background and commitment. Based on

the findings from this study, if Catholic schools are going to have an impact, Catholic schools need to employ more staff who believe and practise the teachings of the Catholic Church on faith and morals. These findings are consistent with the Spirit of Generation Y study which found that many of those who attended church-based schools had little, or in some cases no religious background and “students views of religious education could be a reflection of how seriously religion was treated in the school” (Mason, et al., 2006, p. 199). A teacher who does not believe what they are teaching will fail to convince young people the truths of the Catholic Church. If non Catholic or non-believing teachers are employed to fill the shortfall, they should not teach religious education.

A serious life event has the potential to shatter the world of young people. These times were a great opportunity for faith development when handled in a sensitive way and where there was an opportunity to explore one’s faith and a mentor able to assist. There are critical moments in young people’s life when they are open to faith commitment, for example World Youth Day had a big effect on participants. Personal issues such as sudden and tragic death of a friend are times for reflection and can result in a young person turning to God and seeking answers from Catholic teaching. While young people turn to faith in these situations it is more likely to happen when a spiritual mentor is able to assist the young person during and after serious life events and place the event into a faith context and gently help the person to heal through use of the sacraments. The final aspect in this study was the findings on identity.

IDENTITY

One feature which arose from this study was Catholic identity. Many young Catholics said that being Catholic explained their identity. It helped young people to understand themselves in relation to God, the Church and the wider world. They said it was intrinsic to their understanding of themselves. Establishing one’s identity as a Catholic is strong motivation for attending and continuing to attend Mass on Sundays. It reveals both a high level of importance of faith for the individual and the individual having no doubts about their faith. Catholic identity is defined as a baptised Catholic living one’s life as a follower of Jesus Christ under the guidance of

the Holy Spirit according to the Catholic tradition. There were four aspects established for identity; *Religious Identity*, *Spiritual Identity*, *Cultural/Social Identity*, and *Institutional Identity*. *Religious Identity* contains an element of compulsion, for example the individual “must” attend Mass on Sunday. *Spiritual Identity* is about one’s relationship with God, how the individual understands themselves in relationship with God. *Cultural/Social Identity* is about living out one’s faith within the context of family and the individual’s social milieu. *Institutional Identity* may be understood as belonging to the Catholic Church.

Although the data findings from this study cannot be transferred to a wider population, never-the-less they do provide some interesting insights that add to the existing body of knowledge about faith development among Australian youth. Based on this data, there are a number of areas to which church leaders might turn their attention in order to foster faith development in young people. They could focus attention on ways to:

1. Encourage and train religious families to engage in religious practices in the home.
2. Plan and organise retreats and religious events that are fun, well organised, with good music, and relevant and appealing catechesis, and
3. Encourage and foster spiritual mentors for young people in parishes and other religious setting,
4. Present faith education in schools and other settings that is relevant to the issues facing young people,
5. Develop and provide opportunities of a critical mass of committed young people to meet and share their faith,
6. Develop a sense of pride in the Catholic tradition and its worldwide community and find ways to link Australian young Catholics with those from other countries.
7. Ensure that all of the above points are done with joy and enthusiasm and Dioceses who genuinely desire to develop the faith on young people will need to consider large investment in the training and employment of faith filled youth workers. Previous research had confirmed that parishes need have access to well paid and well

trained youth ministers (Singleton, Webber, Joyce, & Dorissa, 2010). Research has shown that youth workers who are poorly paid and have no discernable career path are unlikely to stay in the position for long due to economic reasons. Today's youth are tomorrow's Church.

Each of the seven major factors which contributed to the faith development of these young people have been individually noted in previous studies (Bouma, 2006; Mason, et al., 2007; Smith & Snell, 2009; Wuthnow, 2007). This study examined each of them and the ways in which they contribute to the faith development of young Catholics. It also was able to detail what each of these factors contained and was significant in the faith development of the participants. This rich data set provides flesh on the bones of other studies that have taken a quantitative approach. However, it should also be noted that research in this area is still vastly under researched and would benefit from further research. Future directions could include further research on Catholic schools or parish life or the extent of the religious influence of parents and family.

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APPENDIX A ETHICS CLEARANCE

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

Principal Investigator/Supervisor: Prof Ruth Webber Melbourne Campus Co-Investigators: Melbourne Campus Student Researcher: Diana McKinley Melbourne Campus
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Ethics approval has been granted for the following project: A study of the reasons why young Catholics in Australia practice their faith. for the period: 02.05.2008 to 31.12.2008 Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number: V200708 59

The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (2007)* apply:

- (i) that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
 - security of records
 - compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
 - compliance with special conditions, and
- (ii) that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
 - proposed changes to the protocol
 - unforeseen circumstances or events
 - adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than low risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of negligible risk and low risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.

Signed: 
(Research Services Officer, Melbourne Campus)

Date: 2.5.08

APPENDIX B INVITATION LETTER

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS
(INTERVIEW GROUP)

TITLE OF PROJECT: An analysis of Catholic expressions of faith action amongst
Generation X and Generation Y members of several rural dioceses in Australia

SUPERVISOR: Professor Ruth Webber

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Diana McKinley

NAME OF PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: Master of Philosophy

22nd May 2008

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project into a study of young adult Catholics who practise their faith. The research is being conducted to fulfil the requirements of a Master of Philosophy at the Australian Catholic University.

The idea of the study is:-

Firstly to develop an understanding of the faith history, development and practise of young people aged between 22 and 41 years of age; and

Secondly to build upon this information to help other young Catholics to practise their faith.

We need to find fifteen Catholics who are willing to be interviewed. The interview will take approximately sixty minutes. It is not expected you'll find anything stressful about being interviewed.

The interviews will be audio taped. Nothing that could identify you will be communicated to anyone outside the research team, including the Parish Priest or Assistant Priests.

In papers and reports from the study, no real names will be used, and anything else that could identify you will be removed or altered. Only the research team will have access to the original data.

Even if you agree to participate, you can change your mind at any time without giving a reason. That won't affect the way we treat you. Just tell the researcher you don't want to continue.

If at any time you require further information or have any questions about the project, please contact :-

Supervisor: Professor Ruth Webber
Australian Catholic University
115 Victoria Parade
Fitzroy, Victoria. 3065
Phone (03) 9953 3221
Fax (03) 9495 6118
Ruth.Webber@acu.edu.au

We will be happy to provide appropriate feedback to participants on the results of the project when completed.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University.

In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Supervisor and Student Researcher have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Unit.

VIC:Chair, HREC
C/ o Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Melbourne Campus
Locked Bag 4115
FITZROY VIC 3065
Tel: 03 9953 3158
Fax: 03 9953 3315

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the Consent Form; retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Principal Investigator or Student Researcher.

Thank you for your help

Supervisor: Professor Ruth Webber Student Researcher: Diana McKinley

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



CONSENT FORM

Copy for Participant to Keep
(INTERVIEW GROUP)

TITLE OF PROJECT: An analysis of Catholic expressions of faith action amongst
Generation X and Generation Y members of several rural dioceses in Australia

SUPERVISOR: Professor Ruth Webber

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Diana McKinley

NAME OF PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: Master of Philosophy

27th July 2008

I (*the participant*) have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this interview of approximately 60 minutes realizing that I can withdraw my consent at any time without affecting my future relationship with the researcher. I understand the interview will be audio taped and I agree to this recording. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

I agree that the interview will be held at:-

Signature DATE

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR..... DATE
(and, if applicable)

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:..... DATE