Challenges of Melkite Young Adults in Melbourne:

Maintaining Religious Identity and Social Values within Australian Society

Submitted by

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Abstract

This research investigates Melkite young adults' religious identity, their social values and the multicultural contexts in which they live. It is based on research into a group of 60 Melkites: 30 Melkite young adults aged 18 to 25 years who live in Melbourne and 30 parents of Melkite young adults who were born and raised in the Middle East. This research is a case study defined as an inquiry process of understanding religious and social human problems. It is conducted within a theoretical framework that employs a Quantitative Approach. The data collection technique will be a questionnaire covering the religious identity and the social values of a group of Melkite young adults who belong to two cultures: the culture of the Australian society in which they live and the Middle Eastern traditional culture of their heritage and their parents. This thesis describes how the Melkite young adult participants build their distinctive religious identity and their social values, through investigating the roles of culture, religious institutions, land, history and society. A hybrid Australian and ethnic identity was highly valued by the participants. The research addresses theories of religious identity and their social values related to Melkite young adults in a multicultural society.
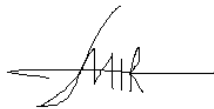
Ultimately, the purpose of this study is to determine whether the Melkite Catholic Church in Western culture, particularly in Melbourne, possesses the appropriate capacity to deal with these religious and social challenges. The responses of 60 Melkite Catholic adults will be analysed for reliable indicators that clearly reflect the lives and experiences of Melkite young adults in Victoria aged between 18 and 25 years old.

Declaration of Originality

This thesis is based upon original work by the author and a study of the relevant published works as indicated and acknowledged in the text.

Fr Samir Haddad

Signed:

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Chapter One - The Context of the Present Study

1.1   Introduction

Young Melkite Catholic adults in Melbourne, aged between 18 and 25 years, face significant challenges in maintaining both their religious identity and their social values. In order to understand the religious and social challenges faced by Melkite young adults in Melbourne, this thesis will first study the history of the Melkite Catholic Church and its emergence in Australia, and then the circumstances within the Eastern society in which parents of Melkite young adults were born and raised. It will then examine the Melkite young adults' religious identity and social values.

With regard to religious identity, this research seeks to discover whether Melkite young adults in Melbourne are aware of their unique religious identity, and evaluates their responses to the challenges that they face in maintaining that identity. Influences of personal, family, church, and society that impact upon the religious identity of Melkite young adults will be explored. According to Jayadeva (1995):

> Ethnicity and nationalism is a challenge to Churches. In other words, the Church is part of the problem because at one level Church has this universalising, universalist, homogenising identity, while at the same time church members have micro-identities. Macro-identities versus micro-identities, universalising or universalist identities versus highly fragmented identities are normal experiences of people (p. 193).

The social challenges faced by Melkite Catholics are not uniform, as some came to Australia to escape war while others were seeking greater opportunities, while others were escaping from an increasingly repressive Middle East. A frame of reference is hence provided

in this thesis for understanding the contrast with Australian society in terms of values, actions, and social pressures that Melkite young adults and their parents encounter.

The thesis provides a vision of the challenges that need to be confronted to achieve effective participation by Melkite young adults in the Melkite Church. The results of this study will provide valuable information that will inform the leadership of the Melkite Catholic Church in Melbourne to plan effectively for the benefit of Melkite young adults in the future.

Throughout the last fifteen years, the Melkite Catholic Church in Melbourne has faced significant challenges in assisting members of its community to maintain their religious and ethnic identity. Some of the issues that will be explored include how the Melkite Catholic Church best communicates with members of its community and the difficulties parishioners face as new migrants adapting to Australian society while maintaining their traditional values. Original research will allow the exploration of some key issues that will emerge for the Melkite Catholic Church in the next two decades.

This thesis considers the main challenges that the Melkite Catholic Church has faced in Australia, particularly in Melbourne. These challenges derive mainly from Western culture and its influences impacting on the upbringing of Melkite young adults at different levels: Individual, Family, Church and Society.

1.2   Motivation of the Research

The researcher has been a Parish priest in the Melkite Catholic Church in Syria since 1996. He has also been involved in pastoral work with the Melkite young adults in the Middle East for ten years prior to coming to Victoria (Australia) in 2003. Additionally, the researcher has been involved with Melkite young adults in Australia for the last eight years as Victorian coordinator. The researcher is the Melkite Episcopal Vicar for Victoria, dealing with 1500 families in Victoria. It is very important for the researcher to know what Melkite young adults

18-25 years have experienced of life within the Church, family and society. No previous research could be identified that has dealt with Melkites in Australia. It is important to note that the findings from this study will reveal a greater understanding of the lives of the Melkite community in Melbourne, Australia.

Furthermore, the academic studies on the subject of young adults in the Melkite Catholic Church in the world, and especially in the Diaspora, are very few, even in the Middle East. In the countries of emigration, for example, in the United States of America and Canada where there is a large number of Melkite Catholics, little literature exists that relates to the young adults and their problems and aspirations. The difficulty, the importance and the uniqueness of this research can shed light on the challenging realities of young Melkite adults today.

1.3   Aims and Purposes of the Present Study

The main aim of this research is to discover whether Melkite young adults in Melbourne aged between 18 and 25 years are aware of their unique religious and ethnic identity, and their responses to the challenges that they face in maintaining that identity. This research provides a way forward for the Melkite Catholic Church in Australia with young people into the future. It will highlight challenges in order to find solutions and reach a better future for Melkite young adults and how Melkite young adults are responding to the influences and interaction of Western and Eastern cultures (Darwish, 2007b). An additional objective of this research is to identify the factors which contribute to the relationship of young adults with one another and with authority figures in their lives (Mason, Singleton, & Webber, 2008).

Since Melkite young adults and their parents originate from an Eastern background, research that considers the challenges Melkite young adults face in a Western society will be examined. The influence of Christian religion and social values shape the identity and way of

life of Melkite young adults, and the research is helpful to illuminate these elements and their impact (Samra, 2003). Furthermore, the Melkite rite is an Eastern rite of the Catholic Church, and for Melkites the Church is typically an important influence. However, as it is a minority rite in Western society, it is important to review the role and influence of the Church on Melkite young adults, and whether Melkite adults are viewing the Church in a different way from their parents. Literature that investigates the religious commitment of Melkite young adults is therefore relevant. Finally, the influence of society is important and texts that discuss this aspect, particularly in a multicultural context, will allow a complete view of the areas that impact on the identity of Melkite young adults (Darwish, 2009).

Australia is one of the most culturally diverse nations in the world. 2011 Census (www.abs.com.au/census) data has revealed that almost a quarter (24.6%) of Australia's population was born overseas and 43.1% of people have at least one overseas-born parent (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). The purpose of this study is to find out how Melkite young adults are responding to the influences and interaction of Western and Eastern cultures. In Australia, there is a challenge in maintaining Melkite identity as adolescents feel they belong to two different worlds (Darwish, 2009). At Church and at home the Eastern identity is present and is especially expressed by parents and close relatives who uphold valuable traditions, whereas when young people confront Western society, be it at school, work, with friends or away from the Church, these traditions may be neglected. This study targets Melkite young adults ranging in age from 18 and 25 years and attempts to ascertain whether young people feel more closely related to their Eastern identity or to contemporary Australian identity. This age group, in theory, tends to reject any interference from authority, either from parents or Church, over their lives and choices.

1.3.1 Lost Identity or Rich Culture?

Do Melkite young adults show the same values, thoughts and principles in different aspects of life? Do they express the same personality at home, at work, at church, in society? Or do they sometimes reveal different personalities and practise different values and principles according to different environments? On the one hand, their parents and church belong to the Eastern culture and endorse the Eastern emphasis on children's upbringing. On the other hand, Melkite young adults come into daily contact with the external world, which is grounded in a western environment and culture. Hence, this study seeks to establish the extent to which Melkite young adults are leading two different ways of life, one within the home and one outside the home. Are they selecting the positives and rejecting the negatives of the two cultures and trying to create a new culture expressing their own life experience? Or are they choosing to follow entirely one culture and reject the other culture for one reason or another? Or, finally, are they feeling lost between the two cultures, not knowing where to go or from where to start?

1.3.2 Adaptation or Adjustment?

Australian society is multicultural, comprised of people of different beliefs, philosophies, and values. Young people are likely to feel confused, perhaps muddled and disorganised. In the case of a typical Eastern Catholic believer, for example, the home and the church are environments for believers, whereas university and work can sometimes be secular environments.

Australian society supports cultural diversity. It values the individual and individuals' rights. This is essential for the development of individuals and the expression of one's nature. However, this situation clashes somewhat with the Eastern way of life where the family is the basic environment for self-development, where values of parents are dominant and where the Church is supposed to direct their path. From this point, it can be identified that the difficulty

faced by adolescents caught between these two worlds: the Eastern and Western worlds. The challenge for the Melkite young adults is whether they follow what others do without questioning, in other words to be just followers, or to adapt to the society and gradually adjust their attitudes to the new environment to enable themselves to achieve creativity and leadership. Furthermore, if the parents and Melkite young adults do not fully recognise and perceive their identities and their original ethnic backgrounds, are they capable of discovering the richness of the host culture?

The objective of this research is to identify the factors that contribute to the relationship of Melkite young adults with one another and with authority figures in their lives. What are the driving forces that determine their decisions? What role do the underlying factors of Individual, Parents, Church and Society play in their major and minor life decisions? Mason et al. (2008) indicates that young people make sense of their lives, identities and experiences by putting together a story that fits an interpretive structure for their personal journey. Making up a story enables a person to order the events of their life in a coherent fashion, relate events to other events, and interpret the why and how of what occurs in their lives by assigning more importance and influence to some people, events or ideas that they have encountered, and creating a sense of biographical continuity for themselves (Mason, et al., 2008).

Therefore, this study identifies the type of life that the Melkite young adults are leading, a life of adaptation - adjustment to the new society.

1.4   The Research Problem

This thesis considers the main challenges that Melkite young adults have faced for over a decade in Australia, particularly in Melbourne. These challenges derive mainly from the dilemma between the Western and Eastern cultures and their influences on two main aspects in the Melkite young adults' lives: religious identity and ethnic social values.

1.5   Significance of the Present Study

Society has an impact on what Melkite young adults choose to take on as their beliefs and what they choose to disregard. Melkite young adults are constantly being bombarded with what they should believe and what is considered to be 'right' and what is considered 'wrong'. On the other hand, society has a beneficial impact on the development of young adults and the way in which the young may decide to contribute to society by supporting various projects and causes (Macke, 1993).

It is important to understand the factors that have an impact on what Melkite young adults choose to retain as their values and morals and to encourage them to develop their spiritual and personal life. This influence may also have a positive impact on the way Melkite young adults decide to spend their time and the contribution they choose to make in their community and society at large. Parents may wish to encourage and support their children, but unless a solid relationship is already established, it may be difficult for communication to remain open during the adolescent years. However, if the line of communication is open and parents maintain their spiritual beliefs and standards, it will most likely have a beneficial impact on the Melkite young adults.

The maturity of the individual adolescent will play a major part in what influences their decisions and actions. If adolescents are easily influenced, they may be driven in many different directions. While others may have the knowledge and personal growth to analyse any given situation, their self-esteem and character will be determined by what they choose to believe about themselves (Jason, 2007).

1.6   Limitations and Delimitations of the Present Study

This study is not without its limitations. It is limited because it involves a sample from 1500 families in Victorian Melkite parishes, young adult Melkites aged between 18 and 25 years and their parents. The results, therefore, can only be applied to a small group of 60

Melkite young adults and parents who attend the Victorian Melkite parishes. Subsequently, the research will be limited to the two groups mentioned above. Another limitation is that the results apply only to parents who are the first generation Australians of Middle Eastern background.

Similar investigations using sample groups of Australian Melkite young adults from various parishes should be conducted in order to gain a wider understanding of some of the spiritual and social values of the Australian Melkite young adults and their relationship to identity and behaviour. The limitations of the results of this research may also be applied to groups of people of other Eastern Rites in similar contexts, such as Australian born Syriac, Maronites, Coptic and Orthodox young adults, leading to a widening of the research project. Furthermore, the same limitations could also be applied to other young adults of the same age bracket who do not attend church services.

Moreover, the researcher, as parish priest, is the main limitation of this study, because of the authoritative role assumed in relation to the subjects. In order to reduce the limitation of this study, the researcher should avoid any interviews or direct supervision of the answers. Everything would have to be kept anonymous.

1.7   Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to assist the researcher:

What are the major challenges facing Melkite young adults (18-25 years) in Melbourne in maintaining their religious identity and social values within contemporary Australian society?

1.7.1   Religious Identity

1.   How do Melkite young adults identify themselves in terms of their religious identity? How do they express this religious identity?

2.   What impact/influence does the Melkite Catholic Church have on Melkite young adults' religious identity?

3.   What influence do the groups (family, peer group, school/university, work, etc.) have on Melkite young adults' religious identity? And what, if any, dilemmas are caused by the impact of these groups on their religious identity?

1.7.2   Social Values

1.   What social values do Melkite young adults hold? How do they express these social values?

2.   What impact does the Melkite Catholic Church have on Melkite young adults' social values?

3.   What influence do other groups (family, peer group, school/university, work, etc.) have on Melkite young adults' social values? What, if any, dilemmas are caused in their lives by the impact of these groups?

1.8   The Melkite Church in Australia

The history of the Melkites provides an important background to understanding Melkite adolescents, Melkite young adults, and their parents, and their heritage within the Eastern Rite.

Jerusalem has been described as the cradle of Christianity. From there the apostles and their successors received the command: 'Go to all people everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commended you. Remember, I will be with you always, to the end of the ages' (Mt 28:19).

1.8.1   Historical Background of the Melkite and Byzantine Eastern Rites

During the first 300 years of the Christian Church there were many who chose to follow the Christian faith. By the edict of Milan in 313 CE, Emperor Constantine The Great granted freedom of worship to Christians, and to the pagan religions of the Roman Empire (Descy, 1993).

The Melkite Greek Catholic Church is the modern Catholic expression of the first Christian Community established in Antioch by the Apostles Peter and Paul. According to the Acts of the Apostles, it was at Antioch that the word 'Christian' (Acts 11:26) was first coined to describe the followers of Christ who were considered by pagan citizens to belong to a despicable new religious sect. The fortunes of the Church at Antioch fluctuated during the centuries according to the economic, social and political conditions affecting the City.

From the very earliest times, the Church at Antioch was noted for its outstanding theologians and commentators, namely Ignatius the Great and John Chrysostom. When many of the faithful, especially in the East, fell away from the teachings of the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), the Church of Constantinople and the Byzantine Court remained loyal to the Council, and the Emperors regularly intervened on behalf of Christian Communities of like belief. Those who supported the Emperor, and who were supported by him, were named 'Melkites'. The Christians faithful to both the Emperor and the Council of Chalcedon were thus, disparagingly, labelled by their opponents, 'king's men' or 'imperialists' (Descy, 1993). In the Western world today, the church is called 'Melkite Catholic', and in some places 'Melkite Greek Catholic'. In the Middle East, the name for the Melkite Catholic Church is generally pronounced in the colloquial Arabic as 'Room Katuleek'. Similarly, the Antiochian Orthodox Church is known as 'Room Orthodox'.

However, the word 'Room' referred to in these titles is not the Rome of Italy, but Constantinople, which the ancients called New Rome. Those called Roman Catholics in the West are known as 'Lateen' (Latin) in the Middle East. The Melkite Church is also known by other names, such as Greek Catholic, Byzantine (affiliated to Byzantine Constantinople, which is called city of New Rome, and to its liturgies which Melkites inherited and follow today); and Chalcedonian (in acceptance of the teachings of its Council). It is also known by the names Antiochian (originating at Antioch where the followers of Christ were called

Christians for the first time (Acts11: 26); Orthodox (literally meaning 'right glorifying,' a term used to describe those who remained faithful to the true faith in the theological controversies of the early centuries); Eastern (based on Mediterranean geography as seen from a European perspective); Uniate (living in communion with the Church of Rome); and, of course, Melkite (Mondello, 2009).

The following definitions are provided to assist in clarifying the use of various terms:

Melkite (Melchite): comes from the Syriac word for king 'Melek' (Descy, 1993). The king was the Byzantine emperor who supported the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon (451). The opponents of this council called its supporters Royalists (Malakiyeen), Melkites.

Greek (Room in Arabic): This word refers to the spiritual tradition of the Greek Fathers, which the Melkite Church follows.

Catholic: This word means Universal. When the term catholic is used, it refers to the Universal Church. The Greek-speaking Christians of the Middle East were the first to be called Catholics.

The Melkite Greek Catholic Church could be described as followers of the Traditions of the Greek Fathers that are in harmony with the Chalcedonian teachings (Melkite).

The Eastern Rite was established during the fourth and fifth centuries in Antioch in the Middle East. Antioch, one of the earliest centres of Christianity, was the site of Saint Paul's first mission to the Gentiles**.**

The Melkite Greek Catholic Church practices the Byzantine rite, the most significant rite among the Eastern rites due to the large number of Christians who adhere to it and to its diffusion throughout most of the Ancient Byzantine Empire. Through Melkite and Orthodox immigrants who brought this Rite to different parts of Europe, North and South America, and Oceania, the number of Christians who follow the Byzantine rite is approximately 100 million

(Mondello, 2009), including both Orthodox and Catholics of many races, ethnicities and language.

The rite is called Byzantine because of the significance of the liturgy and rituals developed at the church of Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, Turkey. The rite is not called Greek in order to avoid confusion and to allow languages other than the Greek language itself to be used, and to focus on the elaboration of the Byzantine rite from the fourth century to the tenth century, which did not exclusively originate in the capital city of the Byzantine Empire. These Byzantine liturgical rites originated from such saints as Basil, John Chrysostom (whose liturgy is used for regular Sunday celebrations), John Damascene, Andrew of Crete and Romano's the Melodian (Hawkes-Teeples, 2008).

1.8.2 Structure of the Melkite Catholic Church

In Melbourne, under the Melkite Catholic eparchial hierarchy, there are three Melkite Catholic parishes. This study focuses on young Melkites belonging to these three churches. At the head of the hierarchy is the Melkite Catholic bishop, who is also a member of the Catholic Bishop's Council in Australia. He is a member of a specialised department concerning the Eastern churches that follow the Byzantine Eastern rites. The bishop is also a member of the Holy Synod presided over by the Patriarch of Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria and the East who, together with all Melkite Catholic Bishops, is in unity with the Pope of Rome. Every Melkite Catholic bishop is elected and appointed by the Holy Synod according to a list of candidates approved by Rome. Any Melkite bishop who is appointed by the Patriarchate to serve outside of the Middle East requires direct approval from Rome.

1.8.3 Pressure to Become Latin

Rome did not permit the Melkites to have their own Bishop until the 1966 establishment of the Melkite Exarchate. The Roman hierarchy tended to see the Melkites as another ethnic group, who wanted their own Church to be better established among other

Catholic denominations, rather than Catholics who practised another religious rite. Furthermore, Roman Catholics saw Melkite liturgical practices and the tradition of married clergy as inferior. Finally, the new immigrants wanted to be Australians and part of their assimilation process was the westernisation or Latinisation (Latin Church influence) of their worship. Many of them often had little choice but to follow the Roman Latin Rite for several reasons. Chief among these was geographical distance from local Melkite churches. Lack of transport constituted a real problem for members of the community who moved into the outer suburbs. Many found employment in rural areas and subsequently became quite isolated from their church and their community. The priest-migrants themselves were unable to speak English. Since, in Australia, Catholics are Latin and belong to the Western Roman Church, there was some confusion about the church's many names – 'Melkite Catholic', 'Melkite Greek Catholic'. In the Middle East, the Melkite Church was referred to simply as the Catholic Church (Darwish, 2007a).

Thus, the pressure to become more Latin was present both from within and outside the Melkite Church. The result was that the Melkites practised western liturgy at the expense of their own. Despite deLatinisation and restoration of more Eastern practices in the Melkite Church since Vatican II, the Melkite heritage has suffered from Rome's dominance and the Melkites' own desire for assimilation. Although Melkites received formal recognition at the Second Vatican Council, the 1.5 million Melkites worldwide are still often unknown because they constitute a minority within the Catholic Church as a whole. Currently, the Melkite Church in Australia consists of one Eparchy (Diocese), headquartered in Greenacre in NSW, which administers thirteen parishes. The majority of Melkites use an English or Arabic version (or segments from each language) of the St. John Chrysostom Liturgy for regular Sunday celebrations.

1.8.4   Melkite Migration

The following section will give an overview on the Melkite Church as a Melkite migrant community spread outside of their motherland, in order to complete the picture.

Melkite immigrants arrived in the United States as early as 1850, and by the 1880s Melkites are also recorded in Colombia and Argentina. In 1885, some settled in Uruguay and Chile, and in the same year Ibrahim Abu-Nader went to Canada. Melkite migration was broader than the New World. In 1892, immigrants travelled to Africa through Marseilles where an expatriate community already existed, served by a church built by the great Maximos Mazloom in 1818 (Darwish, 2007c).

In the nineteenth century, Father Aftimos Zakkar BSO travelled to Egypt to provide the community with spiritual guidance. Priests had also been sent to the Italian Melkite communities in the late nineteenth century. One of the major forces behind this international missionary movement was Bishop Basilios Hajjar BSO. He was sent from Rome to Brazil in 1879 and worked there among the expatriate families, raising money for charity work in the Middle East. He became an activist for the Diaspora communities, eventually convincing Patriarch Gregory Yusuf-Sayour that the Diaspora Melkite communities needed the services of Melkite priests, lest they lose their distinctive Melkite identity and become merged into the Latin Catholic Church. With this in mind, Father Clement Shami was sent to America in 1885 and remained there briefly; Father Sleiman Basha was sent to Rio de Janeiro in 1886; Father Butrus Shami went to Montreal in 1890.

The 2006 Census of Population and Housing from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that there were 1,030 Melkite Catholic Males and 955 Females; in total 1,985 Melkite Catholics in Australia. The 2011 Census indicates that the Melkite Catholic population was 2503. Whereas the 2006 Census shows that the number of Melkite Catholic in Victoria was 396, in the 2011 Census the number increased to 621. These numbers are not compatible with

the 30,000 estimated by the Australian Melkite Catholic Bishop, Issam John Darwish. One reason may be that the parishioners translate the original name of the Melkite Church in the Middle East, 'Room Catholic,' as the 'Roman Catholic' (Latin Church) denomination. The other reason is that most of the parishioners used the name 'Catholic' as shorthand to identify their religious denomination (Batrouney, 2006).

1.8.5   The Melkite Church in Australia

Melkite migration to Australia dates from the middle of the nineteenth century. The Church has been served well over a century by various priests of the Chouerite Order: Silvanos Mansour (1853-1929), Archpriest Zarzour, Nicholas Medawar, Sophronios Khoury (1872-1952), Nicholas Caba (1890-1933), Malatios Chahoud (1882-1967), Joseph Hallit (1917-1960), who were appointed Apostolic Exarch for the faithful in Australia (Darwish, 2007b).

During the period of service of Archimandrite Sophronios Khoury, the Holy See gave authorisation to establish a church in Brisbane, Queensland. Archbishop Clement Maalouf laid the first stone in 1929. Archbishop Mgr. James Duhig inaugurated this sanctuary, named St. Clement's, in 1936. Father Alexios Maalouf, of the Chouerite Basilian Order, followed Archimandrite Khoury in 1952 in the service of this church, which was established for the benefit of the different Arabic-speaking Christian and Muslim communities. The priests in charge gained the esteem and affection of all the immigrants because of their zeal and ecumenical spirit.

In New South Wales, the first Melkite Church was consecrated in 1895 in Sydney. One hundred and eleven years later, the Melkite Eparchy in Australia was estimated to number 30,000 people in New South Wales. The majority of the parishioners originated from Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Sudan (Batrouney, 2006). His Beatitude

Maximos-V and His Eminence Cardinal James Freeman inaugurated a new church with a reasonably large hall and appropriate presbytery on January 4, 1981.

In Perth, Western Australia, a Melkite community was established in 1980. Numbers increased steadily, and there was need for adequate spiritual attention. Archimandrite Awaad travelled to Perth two or three times a year from Melbourne to administer to the community's needs, and since Christmas 1983 the parish had its own priest appointed – Fr. Andrew Nahas. The Melkite faithful were first the guests of a Latin parish, but they now have their own church, St Andrew's, inaugurated on Saturday 27 July, 1985 (Darwish, 2007c) .

A most significant event for the Melkite community was when Pope John-Paul II, the Patriarch Maximos-V, and the synod, appointed the first Melkite bishop of Australia, George Riashi, who was ordained on Sunday 19 July, 1987, at St Paul, Harisa, Lebanon. The current Bishop Robert Rabbat, is the third Melkite bishop of Australia and he administers the Melkite Church in Australia and New Zealand.

There are thirteen Melkite Parishes in total in Australia and the majority of the Melkite community resides in Sydney and Melbourne. The Head of the Eparchy, located in New South Wales, consists of five Parishes and one School. The remaining three parishes are Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide, and a new parish will soon be established in Canberra.

1.8.6 History of St. Joseph Melkite Church in Melbourne

In Melbourne during the late 1960s, the Victorian Melkite-Greek Catholic congregation depended on and were served by the Maronite Catholic pastor, Monsignor Paul Khoury for their spiritual needs. In turn, they had given generous aid towards the construction of Our Lady of Lebanon church in Carlton.

Some of the Melkite Catholic families in Melbourne had already approached His Beatitude Patriarch Maximos V Hakim and expressed their wish to have Deacon Joseph Awaad from Egypt ordained Priest and sent to Melbourne for their service. Following the

arrival of a number of Egyptians after the war in the Middle East, His Beatitude not only accepted the petition but also endorsed it with His Apostolic Blessing. After arriving in 1972, Fr. Joseph Awaad visited His Eminence Cardinal James Knox, the then Roman Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, who gave strong approval for the existence of a Centre and a Church for the Melkite Catholic Congregation and their friends in Melbourne, and offered to assist in preparations for the welcoming of Father Awaad. He secured accommodation for him and a Church to perform his spiritual duties.

Father Joseph Awaad was the founder of St Joseph Church and the Melkite Catholic Parish in Melbourne. Due to the tireless efforts of Fr Awaad and his parishioners to establish a church for the community, the church of St Joseph was inaugurated by Archbishop Francis Little, Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne in 1976 (Batrouney, 2001).

At that time, Archimandrite Aftimos Haddad travelled from Sydney and took care of the necessary details. He blessed the work being done in Melbourne and introduced Melkite families to each other. He then appointed a special committee headed by Mr. Ibrahim Bacash, and set as its first duty the preparations for the welcoming of the first priest for the Melkite Catholic Congregation in Melbourne asked Mr. Ibrahim Baceash to preside over the first Parish Council for the Church in Melbourne (Batrouney, 2001).

Father Awaad served the Melkite congregation in Melbourne for seventeen years. When His Beatitude Maximos V Hakim visited Australia in 1981, he promoted him to the rank of Archimandrite in acknowledgment of the work he had achieved for the Church and for the Parish as a whole. Archimandrite Awaad served other Churches in the Eparchy in Australia, namely in Sydney and Perth from 1988 until he retired in Cairo (Egypt). He died on December 18, 2000, at the age of eighty (Darwish, 2007a).

The church of St. Joseph in Fairfield was and still is the centre of the Melkite Church's apostolic work in Melbourne. The Church has produced eight priests: Fathers André

Nahhas, Emile Konsol, Antoun Yaacoub, Wahid Riad, Laurence Cross, Henry Dabbous, Fayez Assaf, Elias Matta, and Adel Tabbaa. It has also produced Deacons, Chanters, dedicated Readers and Sacristans.

St Joseph's Church has also offered various services and apostolic works. It has helped and supervised the foundation of churches and missions in Perth and Adelaide, Hampton Park and Sunshine, and Oaklands.

1.9   Melkite Young Adults in Australia

The majority of Melkite Catholics who migrated to Australia came from several countries: predominantly Syria and Lebanon (Patriarchate of Antioch), Egypt and Sudan (Patriarchate of Alexandria), Palestine and the Holy Land (Patriarchate of Jerusalem). Not all of them migrated to Australia for the same reasons. Some came from the Holy Land and Lebanon fleeing war; others came seeking a better life for themselves and their families. In any case, their lives and their upbringing carry the reflections of their past and their hopes for the future. However, the crucial question that persistently arises is: How did the Melkite Catholic Church cope with the past challenges and how will it deal with the future ones?

The majority of parents of Melkite young adults aged between 18 and 25 were born and raised overseas, so their beliefs, values and perceptions on life have been developed entirely according to Eastern culture. Only a small proportion of parents of Melkite young adults were born and raised in Australia. Some of the Melkite young adults were born and spent part of their childhood overseas, while others were born in Australia. The 'home' notion is usually a profound concept in people's history. Some people are attracted to the place where they were born, others are attracted to where they were educated and others feel attracted to the place where they felt safe and secure and, most importantly, where their beliefs and culture are respected. The environment where Melkite young adults grow and develop and which encompasses immediate and extended families as well as friends is

influenced by the different abovementioned characteristics of the parents. This influence has a great impact on the Melkite young adults' various directions in life (Batrouney, 2006).

1.10   Summary

The story of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church begins in the first century and continues until today. It is clear in this chapter that the majority of the Melkite parents of young adults, belonging to an Eastern heritage and Middle Eastern background, practise the teachings of the Melkite church, such as the Byzantine Liturgy, pray before Melkite Icons and follow Eastern values. Furthermore, until now the majority of the Melkite churches in Australia use the Arabic language as the main language for liturgy augmented by some English in their services. It is also to be noted that the Melkite young adults may sense a gap in their lives due to the differences between Eastern and Western social values. Living in Australia, outside the Melkite practices, they find themselves torn between the Eastern and the Western traditions, trying to adapt or adjust to the spiritual Western practices and the Western social way of life. This gap may have an impact on their desires and choices.

Chapter Two - Literature Review

2.1   Introduction

This literature review analyses the major challenges that the Melkite community faces in Melbourne in the establishment of the religious identity of Melkite young adults within the Australian society. This analysis will be based on other research that has been conducted on the young adult age groups 18 to 25 years born in Australia.

In order to understand the challenges that Melkite young adults face in today's Western culture, it is important to note from previous studies conducted on young people two major domains of development: spiritual and social which have different impacts in three different contexts: family, historical and cultural/ethnic contexts. These three core contexts will be addressed individually to enable a careful and detailed consideration of how young people are affected in the early and later stages of their lives.

It is essential for the literature review to determine Melkite young adult religious identity and social values within the Australian society. The research that has been conducted on the young adults of other Middle Eastern Churches, such as the Maronites, the Coptics' and the Orthodox will help identify the impacts on young people's religious identity. It is therefore worth observing how the young adults dealt, along their journey, with the challenges and interacted with their Churches and the surrounding community.

Furthermore, social values acquired from the above mentioned groups and Australian society will be examined in order to gain insight into young adults' way of life, and for a better understanding of their needs. This study conducted on young adults belonging to other denominations will help us better understand the source of Melkite young adults' social values.

Furthermore, if groups such as family, peer group, school/university, work, in the above domains, cause any dilemmas there will be an impact on young adults' lives and their social behaviour. A group of Australian born young adults, not belonging to a Middle Eastern background, will be examined during this study to see whether or not they experienced the same challenges.

Comparatively, this study of young adults, other than Melkites, will help determine whether Melkite young adults confront the same social challenges as their parents of Middle Eastern social background. The literature review will also focus on the way of life of Melkite young adults and the potential of the migrant Churches to contribute to the needs of these young adults.

The outcome of the global examination of the literature review will be pieced together, as in a jigsaw puzzle, which will help the researcher to determine what elements contribute to identify the social values of Melkite young adults, and whether these have a background different, similar, or mixed to young adults of other denominations: Maronites, Coptic's, Orthodox.

Furthermore, the Melkite rite is an Eastern rite of the Catholic Church, and for Melkites the Church is typically an important influence. However, as it is a minority rite in Western society, it is important to review the role and influence of the Church on Melkite young adults, and whether Melkite young adults are viewing the Church in a different light from their parents. Texts that discuss the religious commitment of Melkite young adults are therefore relevant. The influence of society is important and texts that discuss this aspect, particularly in a multicultural context, will allow a complete view of the areas that impact the identity of Melkite young adult" (Batrouney, 2009, p. 53).

2.2   The Developmental Domains and Contexts of the Self

The mixture of the three influences– family, socio-history and culture/ethnicity – shapes the personalities of young people aged 18 to 25 (Refer to Figure 1). Their personalities during this period of their lives and their reactions to their decisions will also affect their future and the way they later raise their children. Simultaneously, their commitment to the Church and the way they perceive the Church's role, its importance, and limitations, will be affected. This study will also shed light upon Melkite young adults over the last 15 years and the challenges they faced during that period. Furthermore, the personal decisions that Melkite young adults make in their individual lives, even outside the Church, are affected by the education they have gained from the influences mentioned above. Sometimes, Melkite young adults lose their direction and feel hindered at making the right decisions.
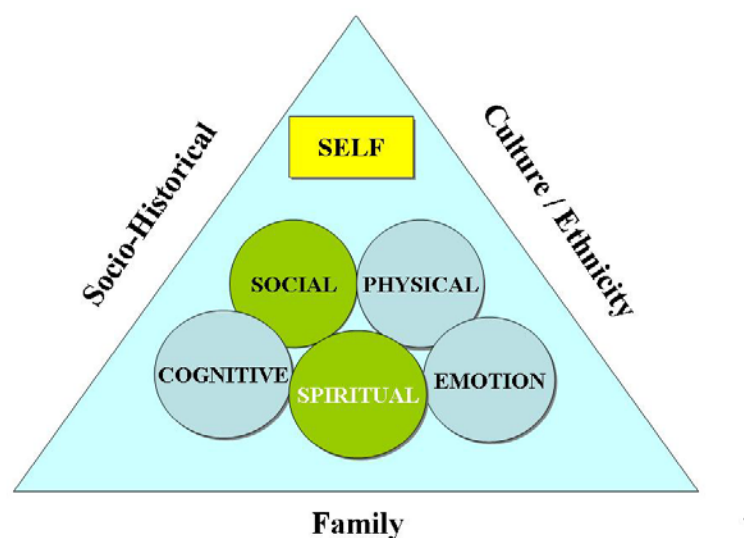
Figure 2.1:   Context and domains of the developing person

2.3   Spiritual Influences on the Development of Melkite young adults

The topic of interest that will be explored in this study involves re-establishing a link between the Melkite young adults and the Church in the future, when each person moves toward adulthood and the responsibility of starting their own family. This is consistent with a strong emphasis on familial patterns of Church involvement. If the argument is followed, it is likely that Melkite young adults who fall into this category will see their future involvement in the Church in terms of their own families, because this is the pattern that they have seen modelled in their own lives.

A three-year study (2003-2006) of young adult spirituality in Australia has found that fewer than half of Australia's Generation Y identified with a traditional religion. The Spirit of Generation Y found that these people relied on family and friends as the source of their beliefs, values and social support. Secularisation, consumer capitalism and individualism were also significant in shaping their contemporary religion and spirituality (Mason, et al., 2008 p. 148).

For Eastern Christians, the family is not merely the initial source of religious education but it acts as an instructor showing how one can live one's Christianity. The threat is that if the structure of the family is impaired, difficulty will arise in passing on the experience of family traditions (Boojamra, 1989).

It is rather unfortunate that the Melkite young adults' spiritual experience is often suppressed by critical peers, views of secular culture, and even by the church. As a result, a loss of faith in high school or tertiary institutions may be the ultimate place where spirituality died in them long before. It is therefore crucial to begin to nurture spirituality in pre-adolescence, and perhaps the result will be acceptance of the Christian way of life.

2.3.1   Spiritual Influences in Family Context

The family, and more specifically, the parents, play a central role in the lives of Melkite young adults, especially in relation to moderating the influences they may be subject to from other sources. The parents' own problems may create some concerns among Melkite young adults with regard to matters including their behaviour, their physical and psychological reserve, and their embarrassment over specific issues.

Young people base much of their lives on their personal experience and relationships with families, friends and other acquaintances. Religious faith and spiritual practices are not simply matters of individual experience and institutional involvement. Factors that may influence young people to remain active Christians include parental attendance and commitment, whether or not the family engages in spiritual discourse and the attendance of friends at church (Mason, et al., 2008 p. 148).

The family's involvement in Church activities sets an example for Melkite young adults to understand what it means to love and be part of God's Church, and provides an atmosphere in which Melkite young adults can value their fellowship with one another. This kind of influence is not limited to a specific group but rather extends to other denominations, such as Orthodox Christians. Family involvement in parish family groups helps also to develop the religious upbringing of children, as it is usually the most frequent type of contribution in the parish, and the lack of participation of parents in a religious community has a great effect on their children "While the Maronite Youth had its own committee and organised its own activities, their parents and older members of the community always supported their functions. For example, some of the mothers of the community would prepare food, some fathers would be at the door and others would drive them where necessary" (Batrouney, 2009, p. 50).

The lack of parental involvement and contribution to a religious community has an adverse effect on their children and Melkite young adults. Involvement in parish family groups would be the most frequent type of involvement within a parish. However, this may only be maintained for a certain period of time, as Melkite young adults feel that they outgrow this type of commitment designed only for younger children or even the older parents. The level of commitment and involvement of Melkite young adults is expected to decrease as a result of decreased familial interaction corresponding with a movement away from parental expectation and influence. When confronted with a similar situation the Maronite church in Victoria established "Meeting Melbourne Maronites," a group specifically for those aged 25 years and upwards (Batrouney, 1999, p. 52).

Moreover, the social and educational problems that parents face in the countries they migrated to and the way they have been brought up places their children at increased risk of experiencing a variety of psycho-social problems and engaging in risk-taking behaviour (Collins, et al., 2000 p.3). This may be projected to families of Melkite origin who, due to circumstances and because of such problems, sometimes find it hard to adopt the pattern of the country they migrated to.

Religious faith and spiritual practices are not simply matters of individual experience and institutional involvement. Nevertheless, the involvement of children may only be maintained for a certain period of time, as Melkite young adults feel they outgrow this type of commitment. The level of commitment and involvement of Melkite young adults is expected to decrease as a result of decreased familial interaction, corresponding with a move away from parental expectation and influence.

It is therefore important that, in order to develop the spiritual personality of children and expand their religious upbringing, the parents should first concern themselves with their own involvement in the Church's activities and religious life. Eastern Orthodox Christians

find themselves in a similar situation, although in a different religious setting. The problems faced by families in Eastern society infiltrate the lives of Orthodox Christians, who also have to search for ways to live a Christian life.

While the influence of the family is important for all religious groups, it may be of special importance, for instance, to Orthodox Christians, as the family is seen as the context in which a person learns, not so much about Christianity, but rather, about ways to be a Christian (Magdalen, 1995). The Orthodox family is able to utilise its spiritual and religious resources so as to confront and combat the current trends that seek to undermine and bring about the breakdown of the family. The Orthodox family not only has spiritual resources at its disposal, but also must witness and evangelise and share them with other families, as it was done in the past (John, 2006).

Orthodox communities experience family pressures that are common in Western countries, such as the difficulty of combining work and family, marriage breakdown, and declining birth rates (Bowes, 2004). If the family structure is impaired, the Orthodox Christian faces substantial challenges in attempting to pass on not just a sense of their tradition but also a lived experience of it (Magdalen, 1995). If the family comes under pressure, the result is a fracturing of the communal religious life (Francis & Katz, 2000).

"Their family of origin was their primary reference group. However, there were potential future threats to this support structure, including entry into new peer groups at university, or finding a partner who did not share their ethnicity or religion" (Mason, et al., 2008 p. 321). Hence, Orthodox families are not different from other religious groups in their search for a better life in the midst of people they are not well acquainted with and in their struggle to facilitate better upbringing for their children. Orthodox families and their neighbours have a decisive impact on the upbringing of their children and their behaviour.

The church, therefore in collaboration with parents need to identify other means and avenues which will enable their Melkite young adults to maintain their identity, and the ongoing relationship with their parish, and to encourage Melkite young adult' commitment to their faith. As with the same challenges the Maronite community has faced in recent years, "there was a concern that the young people were less closely attached to the Church than were their parents who had established the Church" (Batrouney, 2008 p.53).

Spiritual parents are of major importance in the development of young Melkites' spiritual life. Their involvement in the church's spiritual activities and their understanding of religious traditions will offer their children the truth revealed by the Holy Spirit of God. Historical traditions of the Melkite church can also have a crucial impact on the spiritual upbringing of Melkite young adults. However, a Church which identifies itself most strongly as a teacher and protector of the relationship between the individual and God is likely to retain the allegiance of Melkite young adults (lannoccone, 1994).

2.3.2   Spiritual Influences in Historical Context

This section will examine the impact of the Melkite Church through its historical traditions. For instance, how traditions are maintained through the influence of families, the Melkite young adult's own way of preserving traditions, the influence of Eastern Clergy on Melkite young adults in Western culture, and the difficulty in understanding the concepts and language of the Liturgy.

The Melkites first started to arrive in Australia in 1891 (Darwish, 2007a) and over the years they established churches, schools and organisations that took care of the elderly, families, ladies, Melkite young adult and children. All of these associations are attached to the Church, which includes members of the laity who offer their time to be of service. The main strongholds are Sydney and Melbourne, where most Melkite Catholics are located, and where Melkite adolescents find that they belong to the environment of Eastern family values

and traditions, thus retaining their essence in contemporary Australian society with special emphasis on continuity of belief and practice (Darwish, 2007a).

There is speculation that, by the thirteenth century, the Melkites, who count among the Byzantine rite Catholics of Middle Eastern origin, had abandoned their own Syrian rite and adopted the Byzantine rite of Constantinople. The union between Melkite and Roman (Latin) Catholicism was not affirmed until 1724, after a period of vacillation between Catholicism and Orthodoxy (Tawil 2001).

The Australian community survey revealed that people born overseas in non-English speaking countries are more likely to be churchgoers (31%) more than those born in Australia (19%). This is a result of the understanding that, for some ethnic groups, Church involvement forms part of their identity and sense of community (Francis & Katz, 2000). There is anecdotal evidence that the majority age group attending church is above 30 years old. Does a lack of attendance from Melkite young adults within the Church necessarily mean that there is no bond between the Melkite young adults and the Church?

Many mainstream Christian churches are struggling to establish and maintain links with young people (D'Antonio, Davidson, Hoge, & Meyer, 2001). The Melkite Catholic Church is no exception, as it represents one of the oldest continuing Christian traditions but maintaining these traditions is a challenge for Byzantine rite Catholics of Middle Eastern origin. The Melkite Church retains its essence wherever her members go through out Diaspora. For many years due to an unhappy preoccupation with things Western, many Melkite Catholics viewed their tradition as simply one of liturgical difference, rather than what it is: a unique, authentic and totally integrated interpretation of the Gospel message (National Health and Medical Research Council, 1999).

In the last fifty years, there has been a sudden decline in church attendance in Europe, particularly among those who attend on a regular basis. However, this has generally had no

impact on the level of belief of the parents of the Melkite young adults studied in this research. Their belief system has continued to be unhindered by not 'belonging' to a church (Darwish, 2007c).

With regards to Melkite Catholics in the United States, Macke (1993) stated, When asked to name the top two challenges facing the Melkite Church as it proceeds into the next century, the top three responses were: evangelization (45%), maintaining a Melkite identity (43%), and the priest shortage (26%). Evangelization as used here, means reaching out to Melkite young adults (most frequently mentioned). For example, various respondents commented that we should be taking care that our Melkite young adults don't leave the Melkite Church, because of a lack of religious or social activities up to their level of education here in the U.S. "We need to develop a plan and better assist newly established communities. To expect our people to provide everything for themselves will result in the loss of many people to more well-established churches and religions... We are challenged by the immigration problem coupled with the many people joining our church who are not canonically Melkite. Being able to keep and nourish both will require talent and zeal" (Macke, 1993, p. 417).

Religious belief or faith is understood within both the sociology of religion and its theology, not as a mere set of ideas, but as involving an intellectual, affective and moral commitment of the person, to the acceptance of the truths and prescriptions of that religion, the practice of its rituals and devotions and to the membership and involvement in its forms of social organisation – to Creed, Code, Cult and Community (Mason, et al., 2008).

All this presupposes on our part a true love of prayer, which must not be presented as a boring obligation, but rather as a natural need, like plants turning towards the sun. God is our only source of life and it is towards Him that we must turn in order to fill ourselves with Him. The daily contact we have with holy things is, after all, only contact with the Living

God who is a devouring flame-consuming sin and calling to greater holiness. Theology, liturgy and spirituality are different approaches to the same Mystery of Faith. Prayer is the glorification of Mystery, the song of humanity responding to divine love with love and manifesting its remorse for the offense against the Father's love. The prayer of repentance becomes, according to St. Isaac the Syrian, 'the trembling of the soul before the Gates of Paradise.' While waiting for the Lord, the Church prays (Tawil 2001).

The Melkite Church in Melbourne today has to deal with the current situation of Melkite young adults and their lack of participation in various religious rites. There are parishes where both families and Melkite young adults are present and active; however, other parishes experience little presence from families and Melkite young adults or little family involvement, if any. The lack of attendance and involvement of Melkite young adults at Church highlights the ongoing conflict between two different ways of perception, thoughts and aims of the Melkite young adult and of the Church. According to Bishop Darwish (2007a), "if such a problem exists within long established Christian Churches that have existed in Australia for a long period of time, what can be expected from the Melkite Diaspora Church that has only been in existence in Melbourne for 35 years".

On the other hand, lack of attendance and participation by Melkite young adults in the Church impacts on both the growth of the Church, as well as on the Melkite young adults themselves. The divergence of young adults away from the Church and their lack of attendance indicate the absence of union between young adults and the church. (Francis & Katz, 2000). As an example, the Eastern Maronite community in Melbourne has established a strong link between the Maronite young adults and the Church. It was a great celebration when the Maronite young adults re-joined their church. "Secondly over the years it established a link between hundreds of young people and the Church, which provided the Church with a new generation of leadership during the period of expansion in the 2000s.

Thirdly, Maronite Youth Melbourne: (MYM) offered the young people retreats, which fostered and strengthened their spiritual lives" (Batrouney, 2008, p. 55). Perhaps, the reason why the young adults left the Eastern Churches is due to relying on priests coming from outside Australia instead of ordaining home-grown priests who actually understand the surrounding circumstances better both spiritually and sociologically. According to Darwish, (2009:.6)"we are in need of priests who both grew up in this country, and who are immersed in the traditions of the Christian East, and especially our Melkite Church. Such priests can then become apostles to the Australian community, bringing to it the spirituality of the East". Moreover, "in our pastoral endeavours, we must concentrate on educational programs in spirituality and religious knowledge. This must be emphasized in every sector of our community, lest the present generation of Melkite children grow up knowing nothing of their faith and tradition" (Darwish, 2009, p. 5).

The challenges faced by Melkite young adults in Western countries fall under three categories. Firstly, the Melkites belong to a number of different ethnic groups and two different traditions: Western and Eastern. For example, the Melkite tradition found in Lebanon is slightly different from the one found in Syria, or in Egypt. Hence, the ability to overcome these divergences in Eastern traditions and the ability to live within Western society are evidently difficult tasks. Secondly, living or following a Western lifestyle poses difficulty for maintaining the richness of Eastern culture. Thirdly, there is the aspect associated with passing on faith in Western and Eastern theologies, which involves different theological doctrinal concepts.

The current tension between Latin and Orthodox forces in the Melkite Church has a long history. In addition, the Melkites are challenged by their dispersed presence in Australia, in contrast to the relatively dense enclaves of Melkites present in the Middle East. A lack of

clear identity on a structural level, as well as a weakening of smaller scale support structures, such as family lineages as Melkites assimilate, are also threats to the Melkite community.

The consequences that result from these challenges would be noticed when social isolation prevents individuals from mixing with those from other ethnic backgrounds, as they do not see beyond the ethnic boundaries. It may have been important to identify with a close group in the East; however, living in a Western culture is not important for the adolescents who are seeking to find themselves as part of larger communities (Donelson, 1999).

Therefore, our honesty and courage in preserving our Eastern Christian heritage and our refusal to be Latinised are invaluable contributions to the evolution of the Dialogue of Love, the ecumenical encounters between the Churches, and the progress towards Christian unity (Darwish, 2009).

On the one hand, Macedonian Orthodox young adults see themselves as part of a strictly national Church or part of a wider fraternity of Orthodox believers. The sense of being part of a much wider supranational group has important implications for personal identity. This is especially true when the boundaries between the faith community and the wider culture become less important and this is the case in many Western societies (D'Antonio, et al., 2001).

On the other hand, The Coptic Orthodox Church reports high rates of young adult affiliation to their Church membership. Part of the reason for this is that Coptic self- identity is itself based on strong religious views, which are historically based (de Souza and Rymarz 2004).

Additionally, one of the issues the church faces is the language used in the celebration of the Holy Liturgy and ritual prayers. The majority of the Melkite priests and deacons were born outside Australia and English language was often not part of their education. Unfortunately, this sometimes places them at a distance from most young people.

Melkite young adults are typically educated in Roman Catholic schools and feel more familiar with the English language and forms of worship and prayer available in these schools. On the other hand, the parents and grandparents of a very large number of our young people prefer to pray and to participate in the Liturgy celebrated in Arabic, their first language. For them, English is not the natural language of prayer. However, by insisting on Arabic as the principal language in our liturgical prayers and hymns, they do not realize that our Church might close its doors to the wider Australian community (Darwish, 2009).

Furthermore, we should affirm that the Eparchy has enjoyed many positive outcomes amongst which we might note that most of our prayers and hymns have been published in English. You can hear today Psalm 103, blessed is our Lord… chanted for the first time in English to a Byzantine melody, similar to that in Arabic. Moreover, after three years of consultation with the Melkite bishops of the United States and Canada, and our community in the United Kingdom, we have completed a common English translation of the Holy Liturgy. We can also add that most of our parishes have a Melkite young adult Committee. Sometimes the young adult participants are of a small number. However, we must say that some groups are noted for their commitment and enthusiasm. "Given the difficulties of growing up in any modern society it is for us to nurture them and support them. It is our hope to work closely with them, and, to assure them that the Church - their Church - needs them, and greatly values their contribution to our ecclesial life in this country" (Darwish, 2009, p. 7).

Therefore, the divergence of Melkite young adults from our churches today is a dilemma that the Church must face. The pertinent question is not just why the Melkite young adults stay away from church, but rather what are the issues that the Church needs to be aware of in order to take appropriate action to bring its young generation back?

In spite of these influences and the constant pressures to assimilate into the dominant Australian society, Melkite immigrants made every effort to maintain their own cultural

heritage and identity. Their off-spring have been assimilating into the dominant Australian culture generation by generation and are finding it difficult to grasp the liturgical treasure in their parents' original language.

2.3.3   Spiritual Influences in Cultural Context

The first step where the young adult learns about spiritual life outside the parents' home is the School. The curriculum of the Religious Education subject in schools has a direct effect on the young adult's life. On re-assessing the place of Religious Education in the Catholic Schools Curriculum, Rossiter (1990) suggests that given the significant moves in Western countries in recent years, where special attention has been given to the role of the whole school curriculum in promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, it is necessary to review the role of religious education within such a reconceptualised curriculum.

Spirituality can refer to the deepest values and meanings by which people live. It is the ultimate discovery of the essence of the individual's being, including meditation, prayer and spiritual consideration, to develop an individual's inner life. Such practices often lead to an experience of connectedness with a larger reality, in prayer and meditation, in religion classes and retreats, when challenged by values and morals. Particular contexts also seem to promote such experiences: when people feel secure and positive, in places of natural beauty, in art, music and dance. Involvement with significant groups such as family, friends, sports teams, church, university or work can lead to a sense of 'becoming desensitized' to spirituality, of losing connection with it' as they grew older, and they became 'more preoccupied with other things' (Mason, 2008). Mason found it is possible for someone to reject organized religion, but still speak of their spirituality. Spirituality is a journey or quest rather than a home, a place where one settles.

In contemporary society, where religious and spiritual beliefs and practices are freely available to anyone, whether or not they belong to a particular tradition or community, young people, according to a line of research pursued by church researchers Marler and Hadaway (2006), have taken possession of their own spirituality. It may borrow elements from religious traditions, but stands independent of them, and at times defines itself in opposition to organised religion. Researchers began to ask young people whether they saw themselves as religious, and also whether they saw themselves as spiritual. Few young people are likely to think of themselves explicitly as 'spiritual rather than religious'. The basic insight of these authors seems to hold true among Australian Melkite young adults.

Spirituality in this sense is the basis of the unique human cultural attributes: thought, language, and reason. Spirituality is the core reason of what it meant to be human. Now, 'spirituality' is used to refer to a very broad range of experiences, spanning both the person's inner world and that which is totally 'beyond'. Within, the spirit is often identified with the inner self, the core self, the deepest and most personal dimension of selfhood. In 2005, a group of young Australians (*Touching the sacred: spirituality inquiry*, 2006) pictured spirituality as something that gives meaning and purpose to my life, something that enlightens, that is at the heart of my beliefs and values. At the same time, the respondents conceived spirituality as beyond: God the life source directs the individual, growing, guarding, supporting, empowering and relating to the individual (Mason, et al., 2008).

Defining spirituality as a conscious way of life postulates an element of reflection, not the merely mechanical adoption of a parental or community worldview and ethos, but an element of choice, of commitment, and the capacity to compare one's day-to-day thinking and conduct with the outlook and norms one accepts. However, the degree of reflection varies greatly with maturity and should be seen as an important developmental aspect of spirituality. It "may well involve a rejection of parental values. Such a rejection is an effective way of

saying, 'See, I am not the same as you. I am a different, separate person. I can choose my own way of life.'" (D'Antonio et al., 2001, p. 5)

A person's spirituality is therefore a set of values and practices – which may be based on a traditional world religion, an alternative spiritual path (or a blend from both traditional and alternative sources), an ethical principle, or an entirely secular outlook. On the other hand, individuals assume that Life is above any meaning that humans themselves assign to it. Life's fundamental meaning and purpose is deemed to stem from the place of humanity, and of individual beings, in the mind or plan or design or purpose of God. This kind of 'need' for meaning is not psychological, but more akin to the 'need' for someone lacking vital information to be informed of it; for example: information about their true parentage or ethnic identity (Mason, et al., 2008). Often, quite a different kind of assertion of a need for meaning is also made. It is postulated that Melkite young adults must be in search of the meaning of life, that it is a basic necessity for mental health and psychological wellbeing.

On the other hand, in accordance with social learning theory, the stated religious values of individual adolescents within this group would tend to resemble those of their particular parents. That is, more traditional parents will tend to rear more traditional children, and less traditional parents less traditional children, even though both sets of children, as a group, are less traditional than their parents. We might also expect that where the mother and father are in agreement on religious values, the young adult will tend to be more traditional. As differences between the parents widen, teenagers are more likely to be closer to the less traditional of the two parents and less in agreement with the more traditional parent. The present study was designed to test this theoretical formulation (D'Antonio, et al., 2001, p. 6).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 census for religious affiliation revealed that the number of Catholics had slightly increased to 5,126,880, though as an overall percentage of a growing national population, the Catholic percentage had fallen, confirming findings that

interest in traditional religion was decreasing. According to The Melkite Bishop in Australia Issam John Darwish deepest values and meanings by which people live:

> The lack of attendance and involvement of Melkite young adults in the Church today highlights the ongoing conflicts between different ways of perception, thoughts and aims between the Melkite young adults and Church. This lack of presence has a major impact on both the church and the growth of Melkite young adult. The Melkite young adults are educated in Roman Catholic schools and feel more familiar with the English language... Our Church in this country is linked to the Australian born Melkite young adults and their future children and grandchildren... However, if I may adapt the words of St John the Baptist – We must decrease, that they might increase (Darwish, 2009, p. 6).

In other words, we must make it easy for our children to grow physically and mentally, giving them the opportunity and encouraging their initiative to think and act responsibly.

Like many young adults, Melkite young adults refer to their original culture to make life worth living. Although they are beings spiritually connected to their world, their culture influences their religion's expression of the spiritual. For them, culture is about how they think language, knowledge, beliefs, assumptions and values shape how they see the world and their place in it. Spirituality is a deeply intuitive, but not always a consciously expressed sense of connectedness to the world in which they live. However, cultural messages can create tension, conflict and confusion within young adults when they run counter to religious beliefs and teachings, making it harder to integrate religion into their lives (Eckersley 2009).

2.3.4 The Religious Identity of Young Maronite Adults

The research conducted on young Maronite adults by Margaret Ghosn (2008) shows some interesting points with regard to their religious identity and social values. The

participants belong to a Maronite parish in Sydney and participated in evening Divine Masses.   One of these points was that the Maronite Church, as a distinct cultural, social and spiritual context, became particularly important in shaping young Maronite adults' distinctive religious identity. They found meaning in life through Church teachings and friendships. As participants found themselves positioned in a western worldview characterized by individualism and secularism, the Church community reflected the collective cultural system of their parents, with which they were comfortably familiar (Ghosn, 2008). In other words, the Maronite Church was to be for young Maronite adults, a place of belonging or 'home', a place in which they could shape their religious identity and share a harmony of culture, faith and social engagement with peers. A religious community, according to Dumont, is not only the doctrine, but also a common spirit, a feeling of community. Furthermore, religion can also provide an effective compensatory status to migrants, minority groups, and individuals by offering support, protection, a moral code, self-esteem, and a positive self-image in alien surroundings. Religion can help migrants to find an identity and something to hold on to in an overwhelming flow of changing processes in a world characterised by homogenisation, fragmentation, and migration (Dumont, 2003).

One of the young Maronite participants clearly mentioned the importance of religious beliefs in his/her life: "A system of meaning that includes a way of life and a way of making sense of life which is based on a traditional world religion, Christianity, and in particular on a specific expression of Christianity, that being the Maronite Catholic Tradition. This spirituality is expressed through beliefs, rituals, religious symbols and practices. It is also lived out through relationships, activities and connection to place" (Ghosn, 2008, p. 36).

Church attendance plays an essential role in young adults' religious identity. With regard to churchgoers, the 2001 National Church Life Survey, which involved 435,000

participants from more than 7000 congregations, suggested a trend among young Christians

towards less-traditional forms of worship with 12%, 11%, and 8% respectively attending the

Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Church services. These statistics indicate a lack of interest in

church life or a reduction in the participation of worship services were regarded as boring or

unfulfilling (42%) and problems with Church beliefs and the moral stances (35%). Bad

experiences and lack of motivation, time and access also contributed. The percentage of

young attendees who stated they were very satisfied with their Church was 23% for 15 to18

year olds and for 19 to 25 year olds it was 18%. The survey showed that young adults had

less interest in traditional worship and that mainstream Churches needed to engage their

young parishioners more (Powell, 2006).

The Maronite young adult participants do not perceive the religious identity as a

personal relationship with God but as an engagement with family and friends. The beliefs of

the young Maronites had a great impact on their real life experience outside of the church.

Inspiring realities were spoken of by young Maronite adults in ways drawn from the

language, heritage and traditions of their culture, while the Australian western culture

provided religious identity differently such as heritage, tradition and culture (Ghosn, 2008).

The spirituality of the young adults was expressed in terms of relationship with God,

with oneself and with others and in particular with the Lebanese Maronite Church

community.

2.3.5   The Religious Identity of Young Orthodox Adults

The religious development of young Orthodox adults can be detected through the

history of the Orthodox Church in Melbourne. The first Orthodox wave of migrants to

Melbourne started in 1880 to 1920, the second wave was in 1947 - 1975 that marked the

beginning of the Civil War in Lebanon, and the third dates from 1976 to the present. The

Lebanese presence in Melbourne is indicated not only by Lebanese-born people but also by their descendants. The first religious organisation in Melbourne was the Antiochian Orthodox church of St Nicholas established in East Melbourne by first wave settlers and their descendants in 1932. A second Antiochian Orthodox church, St Georges, was established in Thornbury in 1971. Priests born and bred in the Middle East, mainly serve the Antiochian Orthodox community in Melbourne. Batrouney (2006) indicates that the Young Orthodox adults groups incorporated religious and welfare activities into their agenda. These included arranging religious talks, going on retreats, visiting Orthodox monasteries and churches, and supporting the needy and elderly. The availability of younger priests, who were fluent in English, contributed to this development. A third change was the establishment of a Combined Antiochian Orthodox Young Adults Group, which consisted of the young people of all the churches meeting together for a range of combined activities. This only became possible with the establishment of a number of Antiochian Orthodox churches during the 2000s (Batrouney, 2006).

It is to be noticed that there must be reasons for the Orthodox young adults to be involved in all the religious and social activities. These could either be a strict Orthodox doctrine that stresses the importance of traditions and spiritual heritage, or, being away from their own homelands; Orthodox young adults endeavour to unite as a special ethnic group. On the other hand, if these young adults did not see their parents going to church and get involved in the church life, they would not be responsive to the growth of the religious identity of the Orthodox Church. This and subsequent Sunday school camps have provided significant religious and social activities for the young people of St Nicholas. Particularly important were the religious education materials in English, which St Nicholas purchased from an American Archdiocese. These materials included a range of Orthodox education materials for use in Sunday school, the choir and young Orthodox adults groups.

As students outgrew the Sunday school, the need arose for a religious education group that served the younger young Orthodox category (aged 14-17 years). In 2001, a program of religious education was developed and implemented by Samira Hanna under the guidance of Father Geoff Harvey. The sessions were held on Sundays during the liturgy and attracted many younger as well as older young Orthodox adults. However, many of the older young Orthodox adults did not want to miss out on the Liturgy and so the sessions were moved to Monday evenings, attracting as many as 45 people ranging in age from 15 to 55. Another attempt to specifically cater for the 14-17 age groups was the 'Young Orthodox Adult Discussion Group' (YDG), which was established on March 9, 2003 by Matilda Mattar and Jean-Paul Mawal, assisted by Vivian Faraj. This group taught and discussed the perspective of the Orthodox Church regarding contemporary moral issues that face Orthodox Christian teenagers in today's society (Batrouney, 2006).

2.3.6   The Religious Identity of Young Coptic Adults

The challenges facing Orthodox young adults in Western countries can be grouped in three areas. The first is the problem of phyletism – the identification with a national group overriding religious allegiance (Batrouney 1999). For many Orthodox young adults, being Orthodox is almost synonymous with part of an ethnic group. Secondly, there is a range of issues that relate to problems of maintaining a traditional culture alongside the demands of life in a Western society. The richness of Orthodox tradition is difficult to live out and translate into a Western context that is often regulated by concepts that are quite foreign to the many Orthodox Christians. The third area relates to the challenges associated with passing on a faith tradition that involves difficult and abstract theological concepts. Orthodox young adults need to be able to integrate mystical and cognitive ways of attaining religious knowledge (Rymarz, 2006a).

De Souza (2006) mentions that the importance of inter-generational transfer of religious beliefs and practices has been commented on in a variety of studies spanning numerous faith traditions (de Souza, 2006). "For me being an Orthodox Christian is tied up with being a Greek. The two flow together. To be Greek is to be Orthodox and so when we celebrate it is as much about the land that our parents came from as stressing our Christian heritage" (Bendroth, 2002, p. 22).

Maintaining ethnic identity in a Western context with an emphasis on language and other salient features of ethnicity can be difficult (Chai, 1998). Networks of affirming believers are an important part of sustaining Christian commitment in Western cultures (Allen et al, 1983; Erickson, 1992).

2.4 Social Influences on the Development of Melkite Young Adults

Social environment refers to the way individuals and communities behave, their relationships and interactions, education and occupation, income level, working conditions and the atmosphere in which they live and which may exert some influence upon them.

From the social point of view, the teen years are a time in which young people go from the dependence of childhood to independence, or are the last step before becoming an adult (Borgen & Amundson, 1998).

At this stage, as they are unprepared for the reality of the experience, they still need to have connections with interested adults who can provide them with emotional support and stability. Their desire for independence will clash with their needs and feelings. Positive feedback from adults and peers can have a significant impact on their behavior, as they need to feel that they fit in and that other people accept them. They need to sense more responsibility, and feel they are trusted and respected (Australia. Dept. of Immigration. Survey Section & Good Neighbour Council of Victoria, 1967).

On the other hand, while religious identity is an important factor influencing answers to such tough social problems, it can be expressed powerfully in an individual's self-perception; also the Catholic identity is important as it gives the individual a sense of belonging to a wider group. The Maronite community dealt with these same issues. "The basic idea behind the MYM was to get the young people of the community together for social, sporting and religious activities"(Batrouney, 2006, p. 53).

By investigating the religious identity of the Melkite young adult, it is hoped that a better understanding will be gained of this group's relationship with mainstream belief and practice.

2.4.1   Social Influences in Family Context

Social influences can be experienced within the family, which is the Melkite young adult's small society. As Melkite young adults mature during the years from late childhood to early adulthood, they are presented with many different challenges. Even Melkite young adults who have stable families experience challenges. The plight of Melkite young adults who have no stable family connections is even more challenging.

The family and, more specifically the parents, play a central role in the lives of Melkite young adults, especially in relation to moderating the influence they may be subject to from other sources. The parents' own problems may create some concerns among the Melkite young adult with regard to matters including the behaviour of parents.

Moreover, the social and educational problems that parents face in the countries they migrated to and the way they have been brought up may impact the way their children deal with their own problems. Hence, a number of psychosocial and behavioural troubles sometimes surface and show in children's behaviours and attitudes. This may be projected onto families of Melkite origin who, due to circumstances and because of such problems, sometimes find it hard to adapt to the pattern of the country they migrated to. Many different

social and cultural factors caused Melkite families to leave their countries of origin in order to seek superior conditions in more developed countries. Often, they sought a better life or the pursuit of further studies to further their professional careers. However, because of the language barrier they could not easily adjust to their new society, which influenced the way they brought up their children.

Bishop Darwish mentioned a few factors that caused the Melkite families of Melbourne to leave their countries of origin namely: "War, study or better living" and to settle in the host Western countries where they experienced family pressures that are common in Western societies: difficulty in reconciling work with family, marriage breakdown, and declining birth rates (Bowes & Grace, 2004).

The preoccupation of families with engagement in further studies and recognition of their qualifications, as well as learning the English language, or even the kind of work they have chosen is of some concern. They started their lives with limited financial resources. Most of them obtained loans to start their new life and pay off their debts. Although the level of education in their country of origin is different from the education level in Australia, the families held on to their traditional lifestyle and upbringing. This has affected the younger generation.

"Since parents have early and abundant opportunity to model values and to apply reinforcement techniques, this theory would lead us to expect that as children mature they will be likely to form value systems quite similar to those of their parents. Of course, the correspondence is not perfect. The relationship between generations may be so unpleasant that little identification takes place, the larger social system may counteract parental influence, or weakly-constructed values may collapse under social pressure. By and large though, we ought to notice much similarity" (D'Antonio et al., 2001, p. 4).

In terms of occupations, the majority of young Melkites are professionals including general practitioners, engineers, barristers, and highly educated specialists. However, their parents were often compelled to work in a variety of small businesses in order to earn a living. The differences in education levels and occupational experiences between children and their parents can create a divergence in viewpoints. This is also what non-migrant families can experience in their family lives.

Most of the Melkite families in Victoria, originating from Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, and Jordan, who are parishioners of St. Joseph, Sts. Peter and Paul and St Elias, fled war and religious persecution in their homelands, and came to Australia in search for a better life. The above mentioned factors may have a bearing on the psychology and decision-making of Melkite young adults, and also on the methods parents adopt to bring their children up.

2.4.2   Social Influences in Historical Context

Giddens (1991) describes the formation of the self as a "reflexive project for which the individual is responsible" (1991, p.75). 'We are', he says, 'not what we are, but what we make of ourselves' through continuing 'reconstructive endeavours' (1991, p.75). He describes this process as 'all pervasive' and contributing to the primacy of the concern about 'lifestyle' (1991, p.81). This process involves choice within the plurality of options. Aspects of traditional culture are 'adopted' rather than being 'handed down' (1991, pp.80-81).

In 2005, a quarter of Australians had been born overseas and 3.6 million people in Australia are over the age of 55. The percentage of Christians is 63 percent, 27% of whom are Catholics. While 74% believe in God, only 22% of Australians say they go to church (Amazing Australian Statistic, n.d.).

The categories "nonreligious" and "atheist" rose from 0.2 percent in 1900 to 20.9 percent in 1980, the percentage of Australians identifying as "atheist" only rose from 0.0 in 1900 to 4.7 in 1970, 4.4 in 1985 and 4.2 in 2000 (Barrett, 1982).

Table 2.1

Percentage of Religious and non-Religious in Australia

Religion / Year	1900	1970	1980	1985 (est)	2000 (est)
Western Christian	26.9	30.6	30.0	29.7	29.9
Orthodox Christian	7.5	3.1	2.8	2.7	2.4
Nonreligious	0.2	15.0	16.4	16.9	17.1
Atheist	0.0	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.2

Conceivably, this could reflect a major shift away from religion. However, the proportion of Christians in Australia has stabilised and those Australians identifying as atheists has reduced, which may indicate the beginning of a religious resurgence.

This may contradict what appears to be the movement of Australian society towards what is designated as "liberation." For example, whereas in the past gambling may have been considered shameful, it is now considered just another form of entertainment, to the extent that gamblers in Melbourne recently lost $9 billion in one year at the Crown Casino – $2.46 million a day, or $102,000 every hour (Barrett, 1982). At the same time, there appear to be great challenges experienced by young people having Middle Eastern values while living in a multicultural society, particularly with regards to the matter of freedom of belief – confrontation with an Islamic reality in the Middle East, while in Australia the confrontation is at times with a non-religious reality. This process can be contrasted with the society in which the groups where one is born largely give the nature of the 'self'. In many non-Western societies today, the self is largely a product of the social class, the political and religious groups in which one grows up. The process of the development of the self involves

socialisation into these groups, absorbing their language, their symbols and their beliefs (Giddens, 1991).

How did Australians face multicultural society and how did they try to find harmony and respect for the faith and beliefs of each person? Has this impacted positively or negatively on the lifestyle of young people? This multicultural society was for the Melkite young adults a "refuge from" the conflicting thoughts of family and society, conflicting beliefs between Church and society, or even conflicting personalities, thoughts and desires. Australian society has been described as a secular society. This does not mean that it is immoral, as it is set upon a number of values, ethics and principles whose background is essentially Christian. Many non-religious Australians like scholars and humanists have high ethical principles making them manifestly better than those who are Christians by name only. Sometimes, this difference in principles and ethics plays an important role, especially in matters of absolute freedom of the individual or presumptuous freedom, or seclusion among ethnic communities for protection from all that is of different faith or thinking.

2.4.3   Social Influences in Cultural Context

The notion of 'family' is a crucial aspect in young people's lives. Strong emotional statements express a strong family bond about the importance of attending as 'a family' by the people being interviewed later in this study. Weak bonds will not tend to have this affective affiliation. Some positive aspects show through the involvement of the Melkite young adults in Church committees, setting themselves apart from other ethnic groups, and the existence of social peer networks that may help retain the religious affiliations of Melkite young adult. This gives young people a sense of belonging to a wider group who share the same beliefs and to whom they can feel accountable and where they can find affirming role models.

The literature then makes it clear that parents and families have a great influence on the direction and life of their Melkite young adults. The engagement of Eastern families,

including the Melkites and Orthodox, with the Church, and their traditional understanding of the role of the Church and their religion, influence Melkite young adults to place importance on their religion. For Eastern families, the Church is part of their lives, their thinking, and their decisions. However, as the child grows up, friends and society also exert an influence.

In a Western society, this is typically contrary to the influence of Eastern parents, and may cause the Melkite young adult to take a different understanding and move away from their Church or religion. Furthermore, Melkite families often left their countries seeking a better, new life in Western societies. Often they had to sacrifice and battle financial difficulties to achieve this goal. While parents, whose qualifications were often not recognised, typically worked in service industries to provide for their families, their children were typically educated differently and are often professionals.

This is another factor that causes parents and Melkite young adults to have different views. It is clear that while the influence of family on Melkite young adults is strong, there are also counterbalancing influences that impact the way Melkite young adults understand the Church and religion.

Therefore, there are a number of questions that can be asked when it comes to the social challenges faced by young people in an adopted society: On the one hand, we need to establish whether young people between the ages of 18 and 25 will feel different from the wider Australian community and withdraw from society or they will live according to the Church's norms and traditions amongst church groups. On the other hand, we also need to find out whether Melkite young adults during the last 15 years were found to be withdrawn and unable to become part of the Church; or whether they just lived the Australian way, helping others to confront the reality of pluralism that exists in this society. As for them, being in the church is like looking at oneself in a mirror to escape the spectre of recurrent questions: Why are we different? Why do we think differently?

Furthermore, we need to ascertain whether the Australian society has helped young people of non-English speaking origins, aged 18 to 25 to be more introverted than extroverted or vice versa either with themselves or with their families in their convictions and beliefs within the church and whether there were within these ethnic groups any young leaders with either active or passive presence.

Mentioning the main motives for such ethnic groups leads us to establish their nature whether they are social, political, or moral, bearing in mind the different affiliations to the countries they came from. Young people in the Melkite Catholic Church are of Lebanese, Egyptian, Syrian and Palestinian background from their parents' side. So, the crucial question here would be: Do they feel Australian? Or Australian-Lebanese/ Egyptian/ Syrian/ Palestinian? Or Australians of Middle Eastern descent? Or Middle Easterners living in Australia and awaiting the hour of return?

The upbringing of parents impacts on the way their children are raised, as well as on their decision-making skills. Melkite young adults in Melbourne can also face wider difficulties in a culture that, while not openly hostile to them, does not support their traditional beliefs and practices (Rymarz, 2006a). For example, most of the time, parents from Middle Eastern ethnic backgrounds think that the existence of a young man with a young woman outside their parental homes means a sexual relationship. On the other hand, this relationship would probably be, for the children purely platonic- a time to enjoy each other's company and be together simply as friends. This indirectly impacts upon and basically forms a very wide gap between how the Australian society as a community lives in 2010 and Eastern immigrants' mentality. The mentality of these parents is often strict, based on how they were raised in the East; they do not accept that young people sleep outside the parental home, lest they become subject to remarks from the ethnic community to which they belong.

As Melkite youth coordinator in Melbourne since 2003, it appeared to me that, when the idea of a Camp in 2004 for young people was proposed, despite the presence of a number of parishioners, priests and nuns, some families could hardly accept the situation where their children had to sleep outside their family homes. This was quite a reaction from parents. Whether a church or school camp, parents openly express concerns about a number of different issues: fear of an external danger; lack of trust in the people responsible for their children's safety; or simply wondering whether the children would be happy spending time outside their parental homes in the company of others.   Life for young people in the Middle East is radically different from life in Australia, Middle Eastern young people stay physically connected with their parents until marriage and sometimes even after marriage, as they often work together and share housing. There is complete subordination to the head of the family, including in decision-making.

On the other hand, we find that Australia, as a nation and a society, allocates financial assistance to parents in order to contribute to the education of their children, something that is not available in Middle Eastern countries. It also encourages financial independence at an early age and trains young people for work, requiring from them specific hours of work experience so that they may be ready to work when they reach adulthood. Of course, this is good in principle because it develops the personality of Melkite young adults, but it consolidates the spirit of independence from the family, especially in the case of alienation or rejection of the beliefs of parents, their thinking and their way of living.

Australia helps young people obtain housing outside the parental home to enjoy independence from family. In contrast, we find young people who prefer to stay in the parental house, not by conviction, but because it is financially economical, or because they are not used to taking any responsibility, or because Middle Eastern society indirectly rejects the

idea of young people leaving the parental house, which it considers shameful, before marriage.

Another example from an Eastern Church: the Coptic Orthodox church in Australia whose leaders have been quick to identify the secularism of wider Australian society, as something that is incompatible with Coptic life and must be resisted. They have not accommodated to modern life, as other Christian leaders have. For example, in Coptic schools, which are coeducational for practical rather than ideological reasons, students are not permitted to dance or to be alone in the company of a member of the opposite sex. In adult life, Copts who strive to have professional careers are often much happier in the company of other Copts. The sexual morality of the Copts is at odds with perceived Western promiscuity. A word that is often used in talks by Coptic leaders on these matters is purity. This is a virtue to be practised and should be reflected in how the Copt dresses and what entertainment they allow themselves. As one Copt put it: "I have lots of friends at work, but, I mainly go out at night with my Coptic ones. It is just that I feel more comfortable with them. We all know what we can and can't do so I am under no pressure when I am with them. A bad situation will not arise." (de Souza & Rymarz, 2004; Newton, 2007, p. 26).

An example of a bad situation could relate to something like alcohol. Copts are not complete abstainers. This is an important distinction between themselves and Muslims in Egypt. It would, nonetheless, be quite shameful for a Copt to drink to excess. "Say every Friday after work they all go to have a drink. While I might accept some of these things I find myself different from my work mates. I might have an orange juice or I might have a coke. I would never put my Christianity to shame by becoming drunk in front of the rest and doing all sorts of stuff and following their ways" (Rymarz, 2006a).

A strategy that many Copts use to avoid this situation is to socialize with other Copts where the collective group would ensure that any individual would not overstep what is accepted behaviour. Copts are able to provide a high level of peer support.

My brother can come home at 12 or 1 o'clock and that's fine, they (parents) go to sleep and are not worried. Me, I get 100 calls… I think it depends. I'm probably the most different out of the girls. I don't have a curfew but up until a certain age, I did have a curfew. I have an older brother; so it did make life a little easier, but I think generally it got to the point where after I finished all my schooling, my parents just must have thought about it and said, 'Well, she hasn't done that bad so far. She's turned out ok. She's working. She's educated. It's time she makes up her own mind and there are differences.' But then there was a certain time when my parents were very concerned about what the community was going to say (Rymarz, 2006a, p. 27).

Copts in Australia will face a number of issues in the future that are consistent with a religious tradition becoming more enmeshed in a secular Western culture. Our indisputable question here is: How has the Middle Eastern community faced these challenges at a social level? Have young people adopted the views and the traditions of their parents? Or have they adopted what is learnt, somehow even dictated by the community, newspapers and television, or even through discussions with friends? How have they spent the weekends? Young people in the Middle East generally spend holidays with their parents and friends, or even with the church/the ethnic group they belong to, while most people who are from a European background spend their weekends with friends or partners (even if it is outside marriage).

2.4.4   Social Values of Young Maronite Adults

The second point in the study on young Maronite participants was related to the way they expressed their ethnic identity through the appropriation of certain elements of their culture. The Maronite participants' morals and values were based on the degree of faith that

also determined their decision-making. Upbringing, career choices, lifestyle were influenced by Lebanese Maronite views regarding social and sexual morality and gender relations, as against the Australian critical culture and values in these respects. With regard to their social identity, most participants refused to be assimilated. Being Australian and something else, in this case Lebanese and Maronite, is a sign of cultural adaptation to different experienced realities and contexts that participants participated in.

Crawford and Rossiter (1990) proposed that people develop a sense of personal identity through a complex interplay between five centres of influence. These include popular culture; a distinctive ethnic and/or religious heritage; national identification; personal need, interests and ambitions; and family or friendship groups (Crawford & Rossiter, 1990).

When asked to explain why they attended a Maronite Church, it was striking that the participants' responses placed great importance on the cultural and social reasons. Members responded that being able to maintain social networks with other Australian-Lebanese Maronites and to maintain the Lebanese culture and language were just as important as religious or spiritual reasons for attending the Maronite Church. The desire for ethnic community and social engagement served as motivation for participating in the Church. The possibility of a truly Catholic Church, global in its extension, embracing an incredible diversity of peoples and expressions of life in Christ is that which one must aim at attaining. Yet the challenge is to maintain the proper relationship between the local and the global, the particular and the universal (Rausch, 2005, p. 181).

2.4.5   Social Values of Young Orthodox Adults

The Junior Society, which had been established as early as 1931, played an important role in St Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Church (East Melbourne) in the 1930s in that it provided social activities for young people within the framework of the Church. These

eventually lead to marriages with partners of the same ethnicity and religion that, in turn, strengthened the Church.

The Junior Society later became the St Nicholas Young Adults Group, which differed from the earlier Junior Society in a number of respects. First, its range of social activities included a Talent Quest, which provided the opportunity for members of the parish, mainly the young Orthodox adults, to demonstrate their talents: singing, dancing, drama and musical performances. Performances are judged, prizes awarded and funds raised in an atmosphere of much fun and fellowship (Batrouney, 2006). However, by 2004, the activities of the young Orthodox adults had grown and diversified with a greater focus on religious and welfare activities such as snow trip, or visits to the Royal Children's Hospital. The young Orthodox adults were becoming more and more like a large family. Religious education has played a big part in teaching us the faith and the English liturgies were like experiencing heaven on earth.

2.4.6   Social Values of Young Coptic Adults

Maintaining ethnic identity in a Western context with an emphasis on language and other salient features of ethnicity can be difficult (Chai, 1998). Networks of affirming believers are an important part of sustaining Christian commitment in Western cultures (Allen et al, 1983; Erickson, 1992).

Whereas it may have been important to identify with a close group of associates in the country of origin this is not as critical in a western country when teenagers seek to define themselves as part of larger more inclusive communities (Donelson, 1999); Dudley and Dudley, 1986; Meeus, 1996). As one young Coptic adult put it "For my parents and their generation it was really important to keep alive the traditions of their village. In a country like Australia this is not a big deal. My parents saw the village as their world. They are much clearer on who they are not than who they are. For my friends and me we see their world as

incredibly small and provincial. I would be happy being seen as part of a wider community not just a member of a small group that was thrown together because they were born in a particular place within a particular group" (Rymarz, 2006b, p. 6).

2.5   Migrant Melkite Church

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) heralded an era where the unity of the Church would be built on diversity of cultures within a communion of faith, hope and love. The Church learned early in its history to express the Christian message in the concepts and languages of different peoples. This kind of adaptation and preaching of the revealed word must ever be the law of evangelisation (Ghosn, 2008). In this way it is possible to create in every country the possibility of expressing the message of Christ in suitable terms and to foster vital contact and exchange between the church and different cultures (Council II, 1965).

One of the critical issues facing Christian Churches today is maintaining the allegiance of Melkite young adults, understood here to describe those in late adolescence, aged between approximately 15 and 20 years of age. This is a critical time as individuals move beyond parental control and seek to establish their own identity (Leslie Francis, Kay, & Campbell, Research in Religious Education).

The Eastern churches were the earliest and, for most Lebanese, are still the most significant community organisations. One of the major changes over the last ten years has been the educational and professional achievement of some of the newly arrived immigrants, and especially of second generation Lebanese. These young people now have the self-confidence to assert their culture and religion as part of their Australian identity. Their contribution to community organisations is a significant development with implications for a more self-assured community in the future (Batrouney, 1999).

2.5.1   Religious Identity of Young Adults From Middle Eastern Churches

As this study considers Melkite young adults aged between 18 and 25, it is important firstly to obtain an understanding of the personal and character changes that occur in them, leading up to and between these ages as young adults emerge into adulthood and discover their identity (Jason 2007). Secondly, the influence of the family is equally important. For the migrants that typically originate from Eastern cultures, there is often a clash between the Eastern life standard and life lived in the West (de Souza & Rymarz, 2004). In view of this, the literature that examined the influence of an Eastern upbringing on Melkite young adults in a Western society will be reviewed. Finally, the influence of society is also important and texts that discuss this aspect, particularly in a multicultural context (Rymarz, 2006a), will allow a complete view of the areas that impact the religious identity of Melkite young adults.

On the other hand, the Melkite rite is an Eastern rite of the Catholic Church, and for Melkites the influence of the Church is typically important. However, as it is a minority rite in Western society, it is essential to review the role and influence of the Church on Melkite young adults, and whether they are viewing the Church in a different light from their parents. Texts that discuss the religious commitment of Melkite young adults are therefore relevant.

The history of the Melkites provides an important background to understanding Melkite young adults, their parents, and their heritage within the Eastern Rite (Dick, 1967). The Melkite Greek Catholic Church is the modern Catholic expression of the first Christian Community established in Antioch by the Apostles Peter and Paul (Descy, 1993). The Melkite Church is also known by other names, such as Greek Catholic, Byzantine. It is also known by the names Antiochian (Nasrallah, 1959). The first large wave of Melkite immigration from the Middle East to Australia, occurred around 1880, and the first Australian Melkite Church was established in Sydney around 1895. However, Rome did not permit the

Melkites to have their own Bishop until 1966 when the Melkite Exarchate was established (Darwish, 2007a). The second wave of Melkite immigration from the Middle East to Melbourne occurred around 1950. St Joseph's Melkite Church, Melbourne was established in 1972. Melkite parishes include not only Lebanese but also considerable numbers of Egyptians and Palestinians (Batrouney, 1998).

This study focuses on young Melkites belonging to three parishes in Melbourne. These churches represent parishes that, in turn, are part of the eparchial hierarchy. At the head of the hierarchy is the bishop, currently Issam John Darwish (insert new bishop), who is also a member of the Catholic Bishop's Council in Australia. The number of Melkites in Australia is estimated to be 30,000 people (Darwish, 2007a).

The majority of parents of Melkite young adults aged between 18 and 25 were born and raised overseas, so their beliefs, values and perceptions on life have been developed entirely according to Eastern culture. Only a small proportion of parents of Melkite young adults were born and raised in Australia. The majority of Melkite Catholics who migrated to Australia came from several countries, predominantly Syria and Lebanon (Patriarchate of Antioch), Egypt and Sudan (Patriarchate of Alexandria), Palestine and the Holy Land (Patriarchate of Jerusalem) (Darwish, 2007b).

Melkite young adults, belonging to an Eastern heritage and Middle Eastern background, practise the teachings of the Melkite church, such as the Byzantine Liturgy, Melkite icons and other Eastern values and practices (Dick, 1994).

Therefore, one of the urgent priorities for the Melkite Church is to provide Melkite young adults with every opportunity to enter into the life of the Church (Rymarz, 2006a). The first step in this process is to encourage them to experience the beauty of the Byzantine liturgy in their own language and the richness of our traditions in order to help them discover their religious identity.

Melkite young adults may sense a gap in their life due to the differences between Eastern and Western social values. Living in Australia, outside the Melkite practices, they find themselves torn between the Eastern and the Western traditions, trying to adapt or adjust to the spiritual Western practices and the Western social way of life. This gap will definitely have an impact on their desires and choices (Samra, 2003).

2.5.2 Social Values of Young Adults From Middle Eastern Churches

The Australian Arabic young adults Conference 1997 put forward for discussion some important points and questions of identity and self-esteem. Today's young adults are not buffered by the certainties of employment and marriage, as were earlier generations. A Key note speaker Ms Antonios, concluded on a positive note, arguing that the family and faith community, can provide the love and security which can outweigh the negatives; that the community should support its young adults; and that they are their own best advocates, and that dignity and personal enrichment that comes from having two cultures. Mr Ghassan Hage asked the question: 'Are we guests or citizens?' His main message for Arabic young people was to look for autonomous modes of being, to reclaim the culture of honour which comes from our tradition, to hold our heads high and see ourselves as citizens not guests in this country (Batrouney, 1997, p. 2).

Mary Enkababian indicated that the transition from childhood to adulthood often involved experimenting with different behaviours that can expose young people to health risks. Joe Wakim tackled the problem of how to be Arabic and Australian from a personal perspective. He described how some people tried to resolve the issue by distancing themselves from their community and denying their cultural heritage. At the personal level this denial of culture means loss of culture; while at the community level it means that one's worst enemies are members of one's own community. He offered a challenge to Arabic young

people: 'do you want to be a spectator or a player?' And he concluded with a promise that: 'if you reclaim your culture, it will reclaim you'(Batrouney, 1997, p. 3).

Arabic young people have different experiences: some young people experience conflict with their families over many issues, while others are able to live happily in their families and in wider Australian society. Likewise, some are able to be very successful in their education and employment while others are experiencing serious problems at school and have among the highest rates of unemployment.

2.6   Summary

Adolescents and Melkite young adults between 18 and 25 years of age are faced with numerous conflicting situations due to the various challenges they encounter. This is primarily caused by the natural adolescent instinct of rebelling against what is prohibited, particularly against the authorities, both civil and ecclesiastical. During this stage of their life, they tend to keep away from their paternal home and the Church, seeking their independence elsewhere. Some even go to the extent of living in seclusion in a world that is not theirs, especially when life has appeared to be burdensome for them.

The role of the parents is hence both important and critical. Instead of telling their children how to live their lives, they should attempt to understand how they perceive life, without forgetting that they were once of their age and maybe behaved in a similar way. Another obstacle Melkite young adults are facing is the type of education members of the clergy have acquired. Most are educated outside Australia and in their homelands they speak a language other than English. Therefore, they find it difficult to level with Melkite young adults and appreciate the challenges that they are facing.

In conclusion, a chair needs four legs to stand steadily. The absence of one of the legs will result in its instability. Likewise, the absence of any of the levels of influence – individual, family, church or social – will result in an imbalance between them. In the case of

the chair, the four legs must be of the same length if it is to keep its stability. Similarly, the

four levels of influence have to maintain the same strength if Melkite adolescents and young

adults are to achieve.

Chapter Three - The Oretical and Methodological Framework of the Present Study

3.1   Introduction

In chapter one an investigation of the background of the Melkite Church in Australia and how religious teachings and values have influenced the way families have formed today was conducted, including the impact they have had especially on the Melkite young adults. Chapter two dealt with the religious affiliation of Melkite young adults and young adults with the Western Culture and how they are living within the Church, families and society, and how they adhere to their individual values. Chapter three investigates the one-hundred Melkite young adults and parents by interviewing them in order to outline the reality of their life and the difficulties they face in having an Eastern upbringing while living in a Western country. This chapter will also cover the education research methodology.

This third Chapter also establishes the framework of the experimental research component of the thesis. What are the major challenges facing Melkite young adults (18-25 year) in Melbourne in maintaining their religious identity and social values within contemporary Australian society? Here the church faces difficulties in adapting to this atmosphere. From one perspective it has to live in a way that nourishes itself and at the same time must be able to adapt to its new surroundings. The Melkite church is working on ways to attract its Melkite young adults and live as an Eastern culture. To achieve this it organizes meetings, camps and conferences to express its values, and the importance of maintaining these principles, at the same time it keeps in view the Western way. The questionnaire will show if the Melkite Church has had success in adapting to these challenges. It explains the impact of the challenges that Melkite young adults face in today's Western culture and the

theoretical perspective, methodology and methods that flow from this. It describes in detail how the research was conducted, and why, and it discusses the process by which data was generated and analysed.

3.2   Overview of the Research Design

The research carried out in this thesis is concerned primarily with pragmatic knowledge. The aim is to develop theories based on family interviews as well as questionnaires of Melkite young adults to establish the impact of the challenges that Melkite young adults face in today's Western culture. This study will investigate two main domains of development: social and spiritual where they have different impacts in three different contexts: family, historical and culture/ethnic contexts. These three main contexts are identified as core directives guiding young people's lives.

For Eastern Christians, the family is not merely the initial source of religious education but it acts as an instructor showing how one can live their Christianity. The threat is that if the structure of the family is impaired, difficulty will arise in passing on the experience of family traditions (Boojamra, 1989, p. 58). It is rather unfortunate that Melkite young adults' spiritual experiences are often suppressed by critical peers, views of secular culture, and even by the church. As a result, a loss of faith during high school or tertiary institutions may be a place where the spirituality died. It is therefore crucial to begin to nurture spirituality in pre-adolescence, and perhaps the result will be acceptance of the Christian way of life.
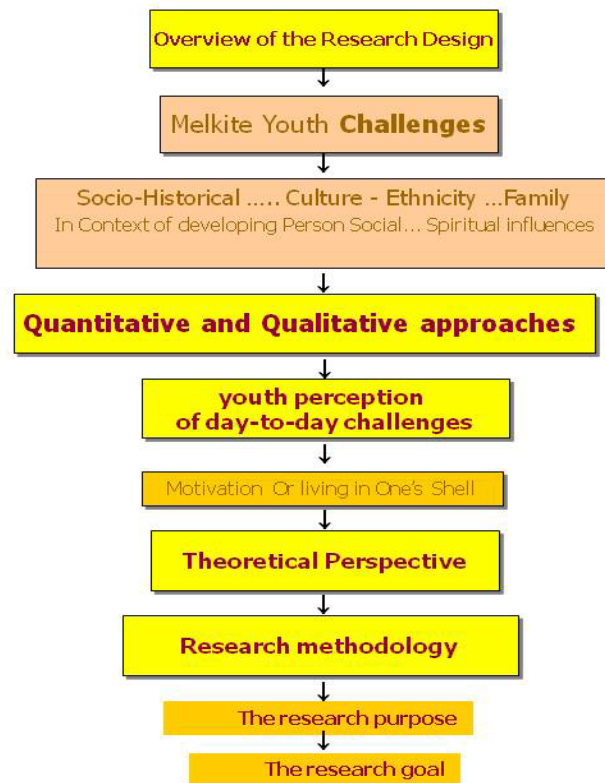
Figure 3.1   Overview of research design

3.3   Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches

This research will use a multi method approach namely qualitative and quantitative approach.

3.3.1   Qualitative Approach

A qualitative study has been defined as "an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting" (Creswell, 1994, pp. 1-2). Qualitative research generally consists of the collection of thoughts, perceptions and experiences (Everitt & Fisher, 1995, p. 7), and holds that reality is subjective and dimensional as seen by participants in a study (Creswell, 1994, p. 5). For the qualitative researcher, the only reality is that constructed by the individuals involved in the research situation. Thus, multiple realities exist in any given situation: the researcher, those individuals being investigated, and the reader or audience interpreting the study. The qualitative researcher

needs to report faithfully these realities and to rely on voices and interpretations of informants (Creswell, 1994, pp. 5-6). Nevertheless the value-laden nature of the study must be acknowledged, and values and biases reported on (Creswell, 1994, p. 6). On the other hand, objectivist epistemology (positivism) is common in quantitative research and "holds that meaning, and therefore meaningful reality, exists as such apart from the operation of any consciousness" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8).

This research is concerned with determining the social and spiritual impacts in three different contexts: family, historical and culture/ethnic. Constructivism is concerned with the ways in which individuals make meaning in their own contexts, according to Crotty (1998). Constructionism is concerned with "the collective generation [and transmission] of meaning" (p. 58). A constructionist view of the world suggests that meaning is not discovered, it is constructed, and moreover it is constructed in human interaction according to Crotty (1998), "Before there was consciousness on earth capable of interpreting the world, the world held no meaning at all" (p. 43). In order to find the precise meaning of what was mentioned above, the researcher should adopt the qualitative paradigm.

This qualitative paradigm enables shared meanings to be put into dialogue, so that new meanings are developed and held in common. Where the researcher remains distant and independent of that being researched, the constructivist researcher aims to interact with those involved in the study, and minimises the distance between the researcher and those being researched (Burns, 1997).

Qualitative research is a method of research that yields non-numeric information (e.g., words, text) generated by examining phenomenon that are not easily translated into numbers and/or are not quantifiable (Schwandt, 1997). Qualitative data is left in its narrative state in order to gather a deeper, fuller understanding of the phenomenon under study (Miller &

Dingwall, 1997). Also, most qualitative research involves direct, first-hand study of naturally occurring situations or events in their natural settings.

Intercultural researchers usually use two types of investigation processes. First: Quantitative research which employs numerical indicators to ascertain the relative size of a particular phenomenon. Second: Qualitative research, which employs symbols and words to indicate the presence or absence of phenomena or categorize them into different types. Qualitative research, broadly defined, means "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This provides researchers with insights through discovering meanings by improving our comprehension of the whole as it explores the richness, depth, and complexity of phenomena. This approach emphasizes social interaction as the basis for knowledge. The researcher uses his or her skills as a social being to try to understand how others understand their world. Knowledge, in this view, is constructed by mutual negotiation and it is specific to the situation being investigated.

Those engaged in research within the interpretive paradigm are interested in understanding the meaning behind something. This contrasts sharply with the positivist's interest in prediction and control. Quantitative and qualitative observations provide intercultural researchers with different ways of operating and measuring theoretical constructs and practical concepts. While qualitative methods provide greater depth of information about the nature of the communication process of a research setting, quantitative methods can present a high level of measurement precision and statistical power.

Qualitative methods provide results that are usually rich and detailed, offering many ideas and concepts to inform the researcher's program. These methods can tell you how people feel and what they think, but cannot tell you how many of your audience feel or think that way. Qualitative researchers are concerned in their research with attempting to accurately

describe, decode, and interpret the meanings of phenomena occurring in their normal social contexts (Fryer, 1991). The researchers operating within the framework of the interpretative paradigm are focused on investigating the complexity, authenticity, contextualization, shared subjectivity of the researcher and the researched, and minimization of illusion (Fryer, 1991).

For the qualitative researcher, the only reality is that constructed by the individuals involved in the research situation. Thus, multiple realities exist in any given situation: the researcher, those individuals being investigated, and the reader or audience interpreting the study. Nevertheless, the value-laden nature of the study must be acknowledged, and values and biases reported on (Creswell, 1994, p. 6). Constructivism is concerned with the ways in which individuals make meaning. It accepts that each individual's way of making sense of the world is valid and worthy of respect (Crotty, 1998, p. 58).

The qualitative researcher needs to report faithfully these realities and to rely on voices and interpretations of informants (Creswell, 1994, pp. 5-6).

3.3.2   Quantitative approach

As there are also other questions in this thesis that need definite answers, this thesis also takes the quantitative approach. Just like the qualitative approach, the quantitative approach is also important in academia. Quantitative research consists of studies where the data concerned can be analysed in terms of numbers. Quantitative research is based more directly on its original plans and its results are more readily analysed and interpreted. Qualitative research is more open and responsive to its subject. Both types of research are valid and useful. They are not mutually exclusive. It is possible for a single investigation to use both methods. (Best and Khan, 1989: 89-90).

3.4   Foundation of the study

According to Bowers (1989), "Who I am depends on which 'me' is experienced as most salient at the time. Who I am, therefore, depends on the "me" that is called forth by the social context" (p. 37). The interactionist views 'role' as the consequence of a dynamic, interactive process between the self and the social context (Bowers, 1989, p. 38). The meanings of the individualism for this study are the starting point in order to understand the phenomenon of these particular Melkite young adults' challenges. The study commenced with the experiences of Melkite young adults' challenges. The researcher entered into their world and theories were developed regarding how they had managed a particular curriculum change. This approach "begins in the empirical world and builds their theories from there" (Bowers, 1989, p. 36).

3.5   Theoretical Perspective

The research utilises two main disciplines, history and sociology, to examine issues related to Melkite young people maintaining religious identity and social values within Australian Society.

1. **Historical perspective**: this is used to examine the migration of Melkite young people and their lives in Australia. It is also used to describe the history of Eastern Christianity in general and the Melkite Catholic Church in particular, both in the Middle East and Australia. An historical perspective on the lives of Melkite young adults and their parents will be able to identify any developments over the course of their lives in Australia.

2. **Sociological perspective**: this will enable us to identify the impact of different groups within Australian society on Melkite young adults, to examine any dilemmas caused by these different influences and how they are resolved. The sociological perspective will also be used to examine the social values of Melkite young adults and their parents, those deriving

from Christian societies in the Middle East and those current in modern Australian multicultural society.

The theoretical perspective is based on understanding "the social world, the world as interpreted or experienced, rather than to the physical world"(Bowers, 1989, p. 38). This suggests that "interactionists begin in the empirical world and build theories from there" (Bowers, 1989, p. 36). The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. The second premise is that the meaning that such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters (Blumer, 1969, p. 2).

3.6   Research Methodology

Methodology is concerned with the strategy or plan of action underpinning the use of the selected research methods (M. Crotty, 1998, p. 7). The research methodology in this study focuses on the major challenges facing Melkite young adults in Melbourne in maintaining their religious identity and social values within contemporary Australian society, and analyses their responses to the challenges they face in maintaining that identity. The methodology of this research will lead to determine the influences that shape the religious identity and way of life of Melkite young adults. In order to recognize the challenges that Melkite young adults face in today's western culture, it is important to note that previous studies conducted on young people have found two main domains of development: social and spiritual where they have different impacts in three different contexts: family, historical and cultural/ethnic. These contexts are identified as core directives guiding young people's lives. They will be addressed individually to enable a careful and detailed consideration of how young people are affected in the early and later stages of their lives (Mason, et al., 2008).

The participants in this research were Melkite young adults residing in Australia. Their parents were of Middle-Eastern heritage and so the identity formation of these young adults was a combination of Australian and Eastern identity, which influenced their perception of their Melkite religious identity and their social values. To investigate the cultural contexts that shaped their identity and spirituality, ethnographic fieldwork methods were applied.

The case study for this research was selected as a typical Melkite group that belongs to the three parishes in Melbourne, Australia. This case study involves a group similar to all Melkite parishes in the Eparchy (diocese) in Australia. Furthermore, this case study is comparable with all the cases of young adults living in Australia of the same age bracket (18 to 25 years) and Eastern heritage. However, this case study is probably unique; at least I am unaware that it has been academically undertaken before. The participants in this case study come from around 1500 families in Melbourne. It is therefore worth knowing how they as Melkites face the challenges in Australia.

3.6.1 The Research Purpose

To discover whether Melkite young adults in Melbourne aged between 18 and 25 years are aware of their unique religious and ethnic identity, and their responses to the challenges that they face in maintaining that identity.

This research will provide a way forward for the Melkite Catholic Church in Australia's work with young people into the future. It will highlight challenges in order to find solutions and reach a better future for Melkite young adults (Darwish, 2007b) and find out how Melkite young adults are responding to the influences and interaction of Western and Eastern cultures (Mason, Singleton, & Webber, 2008). The objective of this research is to identify the major challenges facing Melkite young adults (18-25 year olds) in Melbourne in maintaining their religious identity and social values within contemporary Australian society.

Furthermore the Melkite rite is an Eastern rite of the Catholic Church, and for Melkites the Church is typically an important influence (Samra, 2003). However, as it is a minority rite in Western society, it is important to review the role and influence of the Church on Melkite young adults, and whether Melkite adults are viewing the Church in a different light from their parents. Literature that investigates the religious commitment of Melkite young adults is therefore relevant. Finally, the influence of society is important and texts that discuss this aspect, particularly in a multicultural context, will allow a complete view of the areas that impact on the identity of Melkite young adults (Darwish, 2009).

Today's Melkite young adults are quite different from past generations of Melkite young adults, regarding various issues they are facing. Unlike any other time in history, the Melkite young adults of this society face challenges of great magnitude. The pressures they are experiencing go beyond their home, school, church and social life. They now have to contend with cyber pressures, the media and its obsession with perfection and the fixation of wanting Melkite young adults to act beyond their years. How does the average Melkite young adult stand up against such pressures, as they are being bombarded with what society demands of them?

"When traditional models of what a person should be lose their authority and are no longer inculcated, individuals are left with much less guidance in the task of construction of the self, and being highly 'individualised' is then more of a fate than a choice" (Mason, Singleton et al. 2008).

Religion and spirituality still seem to influence social relationships. It is no doubt that the decline in adherence to institutionalised religious communities and the growth of individualistic spiritualities is mostly a reflection of the changed social location of the individual in post-traditional society. By this, we can see that the basic social relationships experienced by Melkite young adults today differ immensely from than of half a century ago.

3.6.2 The Research Goal

The objective of this research is to identify the major challenges facing Melkite young adults (18-25 year) in Melbourne in maintaining their religious identity and social values within contemporary Australian society. What role do the underlying factors of two main domains of development: social and spiritual, where they have different impacts in three different contexts: family, historical and cultural/ethnic, play in their major and minor life decisions? "Young people make sense of their lives, identities and experiences, by putting together a story which fits, an interpretive structure for their personal journey. Making up a story enables a person to order the events of their life in a coherent fashion, relate events to other events, interpret the why and how of what occurs in their lives by assigning more importance and influence to some people, events or ideas that they have encountered, and creating a sense of biographical continuity for themselves. Like all storytellers, they draw on the stories they have heard, seen or read, borrowing and rearranging, and also inventing, with greater or lesser creativity" (Mason, Singleton et al. 2008).

3.7 Summary

This third chapter of the research highlights the methodology and design of the questionnaire and the focus groups to be employed. Through the answers provided, a closer picture of the reality that the Melkite young adults and young Mekites live by in Victoria is represented. This chapter also demonstrates how the design of the questionnaire was achieved with each of the four sections, which helps to distinguish their real experiences, their ambitions, how they live and their expectations of the future.

The primary goal of this questionnaire is to seek ways to improve the quality of the relationships of the Melkite young adults and young Melkites first with themselves and, from this basis, to improve the quality of the relationship with the family, society and the Church.

Chapter Four - The Present Study

4.1   Introduction

The theoretical framework is an assortment of interrelated concepts, which will guide the research. The study will employ a paper questionnaire consisting of multiple choices and open and closed questions. Focus groups will also be undertaken for the committee members in church where the Laity are able to give their responses verbally.

4.2   Participants

Populations for investigation by case study are identified by the boundaries of the phenomena which distinguish between people to be studied, and those to be excluded (LeCompte, Millroy, & Preissle, 1992). In this study, the population is naturally bounded by their ethnicity and gender as well as by their educational qualifications. There will be two cohorts participating in the study.

First, the researcher will send letters to the Melkite parents in Melbourne inviting them to participate in a Parents' Focus Group and the meeting will be held at Saint Joseph Melkite Catholic Church. There will be eight Parent Focus Groups that consist of seven to ten people per group.

Second, a group of thirty or more Melkite young adults age 18-25 years old will be invited to participate in individual in-depth interviews. The researcher will send the letter to all Melkites in Melbourne inviting them to participate in Melkite young adults Group where thirty will be selected to join the group. The meeting will be held at Saint Joseph Melkite Catholic Church.

The procedure to select thirty Melkite young adults age 18-25 years old for in-depth interviews is a purposeful sampling which will be used to identify Melkite young adults identity who are likely to provide rich information about their identity development (Merriam,

1998, p. 60). This study will include the influences of church, parents and the Melkite community on their cultural background reflecting characteristics of the current Melkite young adults' identity. This will provide a broader understanding of Melkite young adults to assist in the validation of the research.

Paper questionnaires will be sent to the Melkite young adults of each Melkite parish in Melbourne. The majority of the participants are from Middle Eastern background (Darwish 2007). However, the new generation do prefer English. For this reason, it is important to have the questionnaire in English.

In today's world, confidentiality and privacy are becoming highly significant due to the increased risk of personal information being leaked over the Internet. For this reason, the parish council members should mention to the parishioners that they might wish to remain anonymous if they choose when completing the questionnaire. It is more important to have their opinion recorded in the questionnaire than their personal details. For those who choose a paper questionnaire as their option, the council members will fold and staple it so that no information may be displayed to the council members directly. This is done so that no one is able to recognise the style of writing and know who has written it. It is then handed to the organisers of the questionnaire.

Due to the nature of sensitive questions, it is recommended that the use of such questions is avoided, which may complicate the questionnaire for the participants and be demeaning. Such questions include those on drugs, alcohol, mental health issues and some very personal family issues. These questions are to be replaced with questions that may encourage the Melkite young adults to discover themselves and their reality in order to be more effective in life and in dealing with others.

4.3   Data Collecting Strategies

The data collection techniques in this study will include focus groups, in-depth interviews, and review of any comments in the questionnaire by the participants. These will cover religious identity and social factors, relating to Melkite young adults.

Focus groups and individual in-depth interviews questionnaires are the most common tools used in qualitative research. To conduct qualitative research, usually a small group of people are selected with key characteristics in common.

The Data collection will be as follows:

1.   Focus group (70 Parents of Melkite young adults) will be held to discuss issues relating to topic.

2.   Questions will be formulated from the focus group discussion.

3.   In-depth interviews with thirty Melkite young adults,

4.   Review of any documents relevant to the participants selected for in-depth study.

5.   The methodology covers the following important themes:

- Who determines the values and morals of the Melkite young adults?

- The individual aspects of the development of young Melkite adults,

- The role The Church has in the spiritual development of the Melkite young adults.

- The role parents have in the personal, educational, spiritual and social development of the Melkite young adults.

- The role different groups in society have in the development of the Melkite young adults.

- Mason states that people of different social backgrounds and circumstances approach these cultural materials in very different ways and become socially accustomed to them under different structures. He also affirms that the kind of

picture or story that results, which gives an illustration of our past and shapes our future, has a forceful impact on both the individual and the society (Mason, Singleton et al. 2008).

This design will be used to structure the research and to ensure, that the major aspects of the research project are combined to address any issues that exist between the Clergy and Laity and how these influence the service of the Church.

It is imperative that the quality of the questions be considered carefully during the development of an instrument. This is crucial, as it assists the participants to understand what is being asked of them, and then enables them to provide valuable responses when they are asked questions which are clear and unambiguous, and questions related to sensitive matters, such as gender, class, and cultural needs.

When constructing questions for a questionnaire or interview, care is taken to fit the questions to answers, include suitable response options, and avoid overlap. These strategies for constructing good questions are identified in Table 4.1. First, read the poor question. Next, determine the problem. Then, read the improved question.

There are many benefits in using questionnaires. Currently, the use of questionnaires is the fastest, most economical form of gathering information, as well as being environmentally friendly (Wiersma, 2005). Questionnaires can take many forms. They can be distributed as electronic mail messages sent to potential respondents; they can be posted as World Wide Web forms on the Internet; they can also be distributed via publicly available computers in high-traffic areas such as libraries and shopping malls. In many cases, electronic questionnaires are programmed onto laptops and respondents fill out a questionnaire on a laptop computer rather than on paper.

4.3.1   Interviews

One-on-one interviews are useful for asking sensitive questions and enabling interviewees to ask questions or provide comments that go beyond the initial questions. Interviews lead to a high response rate because researchers schedule the interviews in advance and sampled participants may potentially feel obligated to complete the interview. However, one-on-one interviews do not protect the anonymity of the participant as questionnaires do. Researchers may also prejudice participant answers, knowingly or unknowingly, through either comments or body language. Also, not all interviewees are comfortable disclosing information about themselves during the interview (Creswell, 2008).

The objective of the interviews in this research is to identify the factors that contribute to the Melkite young adults' relations with one another and with authority figures in their lives. What are the driving forces that determine their decisions? What impacts do decisions associated with the: social and spiritual domains have n three different contexts: family, historical and cultural/ethnic?

> "Young people make sense of their lives, identities and experiences, by putting together a story which fits, an interpretive structure for their personal journey. Making up a story enables a person to order the events of their life in a coherent fashion, relate events to other events, interpret the why and how of what occurs in their lives by assigning more importance and influence to some people, events or ideas that they have encountered, and creating a sense of biographical continuity for themselves. Like all storytellers, they draw on the stories they have heard, seen or read, borrowing and rearranging, and also inventing, with greater or lesser creativity"

> (Mason, et al., 2008).

Qualitative approaches are especially responsive to local situations, conditions, and to changes that occur during the study. Qualitative research provides a holistic view of the phenomena under investigation (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Patton, 1980). Researchers can conduct cross-case comparisons and analysis and provide understanding and description of peoples' personal experiences of phenomena. Qualitative research also gives the researcher the ability to interact with the research subjects in their own language and on their own terms (Kirk & Miller, 1986). A strength of this method is that it can describe in rich detail the phenomena as they are situated and embedded in local contexts and when wanting to illustrate findings you can use an important case to vividly demonstrate a phenomenon to the readers of a report (Lawrence Neuman, 2003).

The questionnaire in this research will consist of a series of seventy questions: twelve about family matters, twenty-seven about individual matters, seventeen about church matters and fourteen about social matters. Each section will conclude with provision for personal comments. From the data collected, the main concerns for the parents and Melkite young adults will be highlighted during each interview and focus group discussion. The total number of participants will be 60 Melkite adults and parents. "If you want to know how people understand their world and their life, "why not talk with them?" According to Kvale (1996) the interviews will provide beneficial information of how the Melkite young adults are experiencing life in a Western culture, while being surrounded by the Eastern culture of their family and community. In conversations, the researcher listens to what people themselves tell about their lived world, hears them express their view and opinions in their own words, learns about their views on their work situation and family life, their dreams and hopes. The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanation. (Kvale, 1996, p. 1)

4.3.2   Focus Groups

Before starting the research the participants should sign an official letter, provided by the Ethics Committee and the University, explaining the confidentiality of the questionnaire, the interviews and focus group discussions.

During the interview, participants will be interviewed in one-on-one meetings held in private rooms at the respective school sites. We will be assuring all participating students of full confidentiality. While the researcher should remain neutral and should not share opinions (e.g., "I think that budget cutting is a good idea, too"), it is also important to use a positive tone of questioning and to be neutral (Creswell 2008) during the interview, and when accessing the participants through a formal invitation, such as a letter. During the interview, the interviewer will ask questions, indicate the response options to questions, where appropriate, and record participants' answers. The pace of the interview must be comfortable for the interviewee.

The interview ends with the researcher thanking the individual for the interview and telling what the next step will be in the study. After the interview, the researcher may want to write down comments that help explain the data, such as the demeanour of the interviewee or specifics about the situation. It is also recommended to explain to the clergy and every Melkite young adults' committee in each parish of the Melkite Church the benefits of this research. Melkite young adults' committee members will help to administer the questionnaire, including its distribution and collection.

In focus groups the discussion is somewhat unstructured so participants are free to make any response without having to choose from a list of possible guidelines to shape the research. The purpose of the focus group is to enable participants to explore their perceptions, attitudes, feelings and ideas about the topic and to encourage group interaction. The emphasis is on group interaction and group dynamics is to uncover "data and insights that would be less

accessible without the interaction found in the group" (Morgan, 1988, p. 12), and to allow participants to engage in dialogue, share ideas, opinions and experiences, even debate with each other (Madriz, 2000). Indeed, it is this sharing which creates socially constructed experiences described by Denzin (1989) as "interpretive interactionism" (Madriz, 2000, p. 841) .

Focus groups involving a number of people with shared experiences or characteristics whom a researcher brings together for the purpose of obtaining ideas about a research topic, can give the researcher the ability to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic. Some of the advantages of qualitative research are: gaining in-depth and comprehensive information; using subjective information and participant observation to describe the context under consideration; seeking a wider understanding of the whole situation; and obtaining a more realistic feel of the world.

A disadvantage of focus group interviews is that they require the researcher to identify consensus on questions so one score can be marked for all individuals in the group. In addition, some individuals may dominate the conversation, leading to responses that do not reflect the consensus of the group.

4.3.3   Questionnaire

It is imperative that the quality of the questions be considered carefully during the process of selecting an instrument or the development of one's own. This is crucial, as it assists the participants to understand what is being asked of them, and then enables them to provide valuable responses, when they are asked good questions which are clear and unambiguous, and questions related to sensitive matters, such as gender, class, cultural needs etc., are taken into consideration, which in turn, helps participants to complete the instrument. When constructing questions for a questionnaire or interview, care is taken to fit the questions to answers, include suitable response options, and avoid overlap.

4.3.4   Advantages and Disadvantages of Paper questionnaires

The strengths of questionnaires by email have the distinct advantage of economy (Jaeger, 2006). There are many benefits to conducting a questionnaire online as opposed to traditional mail. It is more efficient and economical, as there is no cost involved in comparison to using postage. It is much easier to make amendments if they need to be made, or to copy or organise the data. The transfer time is much faster, as the information may be sent and received instantly for a quick response if need be. Research indicates that the responses from participants on private networks are higher with online questionnaires, as they may be more honest with their responses, than with paper questionnaires or interview. There are, however, some weaknesses in using questionnaires by email, the most apparent being that one must have access to a computer and the Internet in order to participate. Also, confidentiality may be compromised due to the open nature of most online networks. The construction of formatting the computer questionnaire may be difficult at first, as the researcher has not gained the experience required to undertake the task. Concerning the hardware and software, the possibility of a 'glitch' is greater than with an oral or written questionnaire. Also while research indicates that email responses are more numerous, (Goree 1995) warns that most studies showed responses were higher only during the initial days of distribution.

There will be an announcement to the members in each parish that there will be a questionnaire regarding the Melkite young adults. Therefore, printed permission will be obtained from the bishop to inform the parishes of the goals and benefits of conducting this questionnaire. The Lay committee will organise with the parish councils to announce, three weeks prior to the questionnaire, the goals and benefits of the questionnaire and publish a booklet with previous work results and the explanations and procedures and strengths and weaknesses of questionnaires. However, to gather more information from the parishioners, it

is necessary to print the questionnaire for those who have not acquired the knowledge to use computers or Internet, and also send it by email in order to gain higher response rates. Past experience has shown that most interview questionnaires are far more effective in securing the cooperation of respondents than are mail questionnaires. Without effective procedures to increase participation, it is not unusual to find that half the people sent questionnaires by mail fail to return useful questionnaires. Since one can never be sure that the views and characteristics of respondents are like those of people who do not respond, it is dangerous to assume that respondents form a representative sample of the target population. Mailed questionnaires work best when they are short and simple, and when the topic of the questionnaire can be addressed through a few easily understood questions (Jaeger 1997).

4.4   Analysis of data

Qualitative research allows theory to emerge from the analysis of data. The duty of the researcher is to gather data, analyse it and form concepts and theory from it. Through constant crosschecking and immersion in the data, open coded and written memos are generated, and these grow in conceptual complexity, density, clarity and accuracy (Glaser, 1967). This process leads to an incorporated theory that surfaces through sensitive and continuous comparison and verification of codes from the data. The identification of the categories and sub-categories is always refined until the final stage where the force of the data reaches certainty. Coding is a process that leads to ongoing data collection. The application of coding has been significantly opposed since the development came to be called "Grounded Theory" in the 1960s. Glaser highlighted the essence of the nature of Grounded Theory, as a method where the theory must emerge from the data. Strauss and Corbin (1990) took Grounded Theory in another direction by focussing on the mechanics of the methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). They developed multiple coding procedures such as open, axial and selective coding, as well as techniques of comparison. These procedures and techniques are

now used to advance analysis through the intentional manipulation of data (Kools, McCarthy, Durham, & Robrecht, 1996, pp. 312-330). It was argued that as Strauss and Corbin examined data they stopped at each word and asked 'what if?' Glaser kept his attention focussed on the data and would ask the question, 'what do we have here?' (pp. 601–615).

Table 4.1 provides a summary of the research design which outlines how the research questions are connected to the data, the gathering tools for collecting information and a timeline for the research process.

Table 4.1

Research Design summary

Research Questions	Purpose of question	Data required	Source of Information
Groups Questions 1. Melkite young adults as Individuals	To understand the situation Melkite young adults	Employment details	In-depth interviews Focus Groups Personal Documents Ongoing Data analysis
Groups Questions 2. Family	To understand the influences of the Family	Career histories Melkite young adults perspectives	
Groups Questions 3. Melkite Church	To understand the influences of the Church		
Groups Questions 4. Society	To understand the influences of the Society		

4.5   Verification

The way in which data is collected, analysed, interpreted, and presented should ensure trustworthiness as it will be achieved through triangulation of data, engagement in the data, member-checking and a case analysis meeting. The latter involves the researcher meeting with one or more critical friends or colleagues to discuss the progress of the case (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The concepts of soundness and trustworthiness will be used to assess the accuracy and validity of research. This means that the data or field records have to be genuine

and that the analysis of data was conducted correctly. This can be verified by establishing a 'strong chain of evidence' and making links between the research questions, data analysis, and conclusions drawn from the data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999).

In this study, the use of two or more methods of data collection will be applied through the comparison of data obtained from focus groups, individual interviews questionnaires, and personal comments. Besides, the researcher will keep reflective comments and 'Member checks' will be carried out with participants on a regular basis to confirm or elucidate stories. Furthermore, the researcher will look at coding for discrepancies and researcher bias in the case analysis meetings. The reflection of the researcher on their own role as "constructors and interpreters of social reality" is called reflexivity (Gall, et al., 1999). In fact, LeCompte and Preissle (1993) believe that the familiarity and cultural background of the researcher has value for the research project, whereas western-trained researchers may find difficulty in making sense of and asking questions about unfamiliar phenomenon (Margaret LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch 1993).

4.6   Ethical Issues

Participants are invited to take part in the study without any coercion or pressure. Obtaining the informed consent of all participants ensures this. The ethical foundation of this study is defined by "beneficence and justice" (Marczyk, DeMatteo, & Festinger, 2005).

Furthermore, this study seeks to avoid harm to participants by ensuring their anonymity is maintained, and that participants receive benefit from the research.

In light of this, the parents' focus groups and the in-depth interviews and questionnaire for the Melkite young adults must be for the benefit of the Melkite community. In this study, Melkite parents are included as participants in order to gain a better knowledge of the actual situation of Melkite young adults. It is also highly recommended that the information gathered during this study does not in any way harm the participants and their choice to either answer

or not any question during the focus group interview or the questionnaire is respected. Also, all of the information gathered in the questionnaire will be kept in a safe place and duplicated in my personal computer to ensure that the supervisor and the co-supervisor have easy access to it, making sure that all the Ethics recommendations are included. Furthermore, I will have a hard copy of the information, especially the letters signed by the participants that will comprise the information about the purpose of the research.

I submitted the Ethics application V200708-42 with the questionnaire and, after review and amendments by the supervisor; I obtained the approval on 14 January 2008. Within this approval, a letter of endorsement from Archbishop Issam John Darwish, the Melkite Catholic Eparch of Australia and New Zealand, who accepted that the researcher carries out the interviews and the questionnaire, was sent to: the Ethics Community, the Melkite Catholic Parish priests in Victoria, and the researcher. Table 8.1 below outlines the ethical considerations.

Table 4.2

Ethical Considerations for Each of the Data Gathering Strategies

Data Gathering Strategies	Ethical Considerations
Focus Groups	• Respondent codes: Each respondent is allocated a code and pseudonym in order for their responses to be anonymous. For example, Maurice H. (M.H.) denotes the respondent's participation by gender in focus group (a). • Letter of Invitation outlining the way in which a focus group is conducted. • Signed letter of consent. • In-person reiteration of the expectations of focus group interviews.
One-on-one Interview	• Letter of Invitation outlining the way in which an interview is conducted. • Signed letter of consent. • In-person reiteration of the expectations of one-on-one semi-structured interviews.
Questionnaire	• Letter of invitation outlining the way in which a questionnaire is administered. • Coding Strategies are made clear on the questionnaire. Participants are made aware that their identity is not a requirement of analysis, and that responses will be coded according to ruralty, location, socio-economic status and/or cultural background.
Documentary Analysis	• The permission of relevant authorities to scrutinize documents is sought. Signed consent to do so is obtained.

During the progress of the research and after several meetings with the supervisor, it has been agreed to modify the questionnaire and to code all the responses in order to make it easy to categorise the data. These amendments were submitted to and approved by the Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University on 25 December 2009.

To date, the researcher has conducted seventeen questionnaires "from 60 Melkites" among the Melkite young adults in Victoria and five focus groups among fifty parent participants during the 2009 Labour Day Camp. Bright light the different impacts on the two

main domains.   Namely social and spiritual, in terms of familial, historical, cultural, and ethnic context, and on the early and later stages of young people's life.

4.7   Summary

Given the lack of academic documents related to Melkite young adults, the methodology used in this case study; it is considered that interviews and focus groups are the most appropriate instruments for this research. This gives us more information so that we can really see the challenges that face the Melkite young adults in Australia. They also provide key factors to assist with the analysis of the practical situation of Melkites in general; not just young adults but also their parents and the Melkite administration at large.

Of the 30 parents that were assigned to respond to this survey, only 28 responded to this survey question, whereas 2 did not. Of the 28 that responded to this question, a majority of 43.3 percent believed that they were more religious than spiritual. 23.3 percent indicated that they were somewhat more spiritual than religious, whereas 10 percent felt that they were more spiritual than religious. 16.7 percent refused to answer this question or indicated that they were unsure as to whether they were more spiritual than religious or vice-versa.

Chapter Five - Results

5.1   Introduction

In chapter one, an examination of the history of the Australian Melkite Church and how its religious teachings and social values have influenced the way families have been formed and the impact this has had, specifically on young Melkite adults. Chapter two addressed the religious affiliation and social values of young Melkite adults within a Western cultural environment. In Chapter three, the framework for an educational research methodology aimed at educating young Melkite adults about their religious identity and social values were established. Chapter four presents participant data collection strategies and verification of the data collected.

This chapter presents the data yielded by the survey responses from young Melkite adult's aged 18 – 25, parents up to 60 years old, and parent focus groups; approximately 25% from those who attend the Melkite Church (60 Melkites). These results will help in investigating possible solutions to challenges faced by young Melkite adults in Melbourne. It includes ideas in maintaining their religious identity and social values within the larger Australian community.

5.2   Findings Design and sections

The findings will be divided into 2 sections, namely Religious Identity, and Social Values. As the Melkite Church and its adherents come from a common Middle Eastern culture, the Melkite Church faces similar difficulties that young Melkite adults currently face; namely that the Church is an Eastern Church living in a Western society and holding an apparent Eastern way of life surrounded by Western freedom. Parents of these young Melkite adults also face great difficulty in adapting to an Australian environment and way of life.

They have to live in such a way that they have to nurture themselves whilst familiarising themselves with their new surroundings.

The questions in the surveys that were responded to by the young Melkite adults and their parents will help the Melkite Church develop an awareness of the means to attract its young Melkite Adults, who come from an Eastern cultural origin, so that they may actively express their values. The importance of these responses and findings reside in the analysis of whether the Melkite Church and Melkite parents have the capabilities to adapt to these growing cultural challenges, without entirely comprising the Western way of life.

Therefore, what are the major challenges faced by the Melkite community in Melbourne, in its attempt to assist and support young Melkite adults (18-25 year olds) to maintain their religious identity and their social values within contemporary Australian society?

The results of the surveys conducted amongst young Melkite adults and parents will assist in obtaining the best answer to the main research question that targets two main areas; namely young Melkite adults' religious identity and social values. The following tables, entitled Group, displays the result of 60 Melkites both parents and young Melkite adults.

To better present the findings, the tables and its constituent commentaries will be divided into 2 areas; namely:

- Religious identity of young Melkite adults

- Social values of young Melkite adults.

For the religious identity of young Melkite adults, we will address the following concerns:

- How young Melkite adults identify and express their religious identity

- The influence and impact of the Melkite Catholic Church on the religious identity of her young adults

- The influence of Church-based groups on the religious identity of young Melkite adults and its subsequent effects

For the social values of young Melkite adults, we will address the following concerns:

- The social values held and expressed by young Melkite adults

- The impact of the Melkite Catholic Church on the social values of her young adults

Despite announcing and encouraging parishioners from all 3 Melkite parishes in Victoria, Table 5.1 shows that the participants who responded to our surveys came from only two out of threes parishes; namely St. Joseph's Parish (the oldest Melkite parish in Victoria) in Fairfield, and Sts Peter & Paul in Hampton Park.

Table 5.1

Participants According to Parish

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	Saints Peter and Paul Parish	14	46.7
	St Joseph Parish	16	53.3
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	Saints Peter and Paul Parish	11	36.7
	St Joseph Parish	19	63.3
	Total	30	100.0

The participants from Sts Peter and Paul included 14 parents and 11 young adults. From St. Joseph's parish; 16 parents and 19 young adults participated. In total, feedback was obtained from 30 young adults and 30 parents.

Table 5.2 shows that the 60 parents and young adults come from the state of Victoria.

Table 5.2

Participants from the State of Victoria

Group	Frequency	Percent
Parent	30	100.0
Youth	30	100.0

Table 5.2 shows the two participant categories; namely parent's aged 40 – 65 and young Melkite adults aged 18 – 25.

Table 5.3 shows the two participant categories; namely parents aged 40 – 65 and young Melkite adults aged 18 – 25.

The participants are 14 parents from age 41 – 50, 11 from 51 – 65; making up a total for 25. From the young Melkite adults, 10 that participated were between the ages of 18 – 20, 11 between the ages of 21 – 22. The remaining 6, which make up a total of 30 (3 were missing, come from the ages of 23 – 25.

Table 5.3

Breakdown of Participating Parents by Age

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	41-50	14	46.7
	51-65	11	36.7
	Total	25	83.3
	MISSING	5	16.7
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	18-20	10	33.3
	21-22	11	36.7
	23-25	6	20.0
	Total	27	90.0
	MISSING	3	10.0
	Total	30	100.0

5.3   Religious Identity

The following tables will be focused on the responses to the research questions about the impact of young adults of Melkite upbringing in a Western society.

5.3.1 Religious Identity Finding 1:

How young Melkite adults identify and express their religious identity

The following table (Table 5.4) refers to the attendance of both parents and young adults at Church services; namely sacramental celebrations, feast days, and the Divine Liturgy on Sundays.

Of the 30 parents that responded, 22 parents responded that they attended church once a week. 8 parents responded that they attended church only a few times a month. With a percentage of 73.3%, we find that the parents make a concerted effort to attend weekly services. On the part of the youth, we find that the experience of the young adults is slightly different. Out of the 30 young adults, 43.3% or less than half attended Church services once a week. 33.3% attend a few times a year. What is surprising in our findings is that 13.3% do not attend Church services at all.

Bishop Issam John Darwish, the Eparch of the Melkite Catholic Eparchy of Australia & New Zealand, in his opening speech at the Melkite Convention in 2009, mentioned very clearly that the main reason for the lack of young Melkite adults frequently attending Church services is the use of the Arabic language and the lack of English. Bishop Darwish's claim is proved in the table findings, as the high rate of attendance amongst the parents suggests that they understand the language better than their children do.

Table 5.4

Attendance at Melkite Church Services

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	Once a week	22	73.3
	Few times a month	8	26.7
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	Once a week	13	43.3
	Few times a month	1	3.3
	Once a month	2	6.7
	Few times a year	10	33.3
	Never	4	13.3
	Total	30	100.0

The following table refers to the religious self-identity of our parents and young Melkite adults.

Table 5.5

Religious self-identity of parents and young Melkite adults

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	Traditional Catholic	15	50.0
	Moderate Catholic	15	50.0
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	Traditional Catholic	11	36.7
	Moderate Catholic	14	46.7
	Other Catholic identity	1	3.3
	Religious but not practicing	4	13.3
	Total	30	100.0

Of the 30 parents that responded, 50% considered themselves to be traditional Catholics, whereas the other 50% considered themselves to be moderate Catholics.

However, the pattern is not the same amongst the 30 young adults that responded. Of the 30 young adult respondents, a majority of them considered themselves to be moderate Catholics, followed by 36.7 percent of traditional Catholics. The category that will be of the most interest is that 13% of young Melkite adults are religious but not practising.

The following table refers to the level of support given by the Church to Melkite families.

Table 5.6

Family Involvement in Religions/Spiritual Matters

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	Everyday	5	16.7
	A few times a week	6	20.0
	About once a week	7	23.3
	A few times a month	5	16.7
	A few times a year	5	16.7
	Never	2	6.7
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	A few times a week	8	26.7
	About once a week	7	23.3
	A few times a month	6	20.0
	A few times a year	8	26.7
	Never	1	3.3
	Total	30	100.0

Table 5.7 addresses family involvement in matters pertaining to religiosity and spirituality. Of the 30 parents that responded, a majority of 23.3 percent discussed religious issues on a weekly basis. Interestingly, 16.7 percent discussed religious or spiritual matters on a daily basis, while 6.7 percent never spoke about it at all.

From the 30 young Melkite adults that responded, the results of the survey showed that the young Melkite adults were always discussing religious or spiritual matters. 26.7 percent spoke about religious or spiritual matters a few times a week. Another 26.7 percent spoke about religious or spiritual matters a few times a year. Of the 30 that responded, only 3.3 percent indicated that they never discussed religious or spiritual matters.

5.3.2   Religious Identity Finding 2:

The influence and impact of the Melkite Catholic Church on the religious identity

of her young adults

Table 5.7

Role of Church in discussions of serious issues

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	A very good place	9	30.0
	A fairly good place	8	26.7
	An okay place	11	36.7
	Don't know/refused	2	6.7
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	A very good place	4	13.3
	A fairly good place	9	30.0
	An okay place	11	36.7
	A bad place	2	6.7
	Don't know/refused	4	13.3
	Total	30	100.0

Table 5.8 examines the perception of the parents and young adults on the role of the Church in discussing serious issues. From the responses of the survey, 36.7 percent responded that the Church was only an "okay" place to discuss serious issues. 30 percent found that the Church was a very good place to discuss serious issues. However, 6.7 percent responded that they were either unsure of whether the Church was a good place to discuss serious issues or just refused to do so.

The sentiments of the young adults echoed that of their parents, with a majority of young Melkite adults responding that the Church was a suitable place to discuss serious issues. 36.7 percent indicating that the Church was an "okay" place to discuss serious issues. However, a minority of 6.7 percent found the Church to be an unsuitable place to discuss serious issues.

Table 5.8

Frequency of Church attendance

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	More than once a week	10	33.3
	Once a week	15	50.0
	Few times a month	3	10.0
	Once a month	2	6.7
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	More than once a week	3	10.0
	Once a week	18	60.0
	Few times a month	4	13.3
	Once a month	2	6.7
	Few times a year	3	10.0
	Total	30	100.0

Table 5.9 shows the results of the frequency of Church attendance. Based on the results of the survey, it showed that most parents attended Church once a week; followed by 33.3 percent who attended Church on other days of the week. Only a small subsection of parents attended Church once to a few times every month.

Amongst the young people, only 10 percent responded that they would attend church more than once a week. Most young adults, with a majority of 60 percent, indicated that they would attend church services once a week.

5.3.3   Religious Identity Finding 3:

The influence of Church-based groups on the religious identity of young Melkite

adults and its subsequent effects

Table 5.9

Attendance of other Christian Church services

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	More than once a week	6	20.0
	Few times a month	4	13.3
	Few times a year	15	50.0
	Total	25	83.3
	MISSING	5	16.7
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	More than once a week	1	3.3
	Once a week	3	10.0
	Few times a month	6	20.0
	Once a month	3	10.0
	Few times a year	7	23.3
	Never	10	33.3
	Total	30	100.0

Table 10 shows the results of parents and young adults who attend services celebrated by other Christian Churches. From the findings, at least 20 percent of parents attend other church services more than a week, whereas most parents; with a majority of 50 percent, would only attend a few times in a year.

Amongst the young adults, only 3.3 percent responded that they would attend a different church more than once a week. 10 percent responded that they would attend at least once a week, whereas 20 percent responded that they would attend other churches a few times a month. An additional 10 percent responded that they would attend other churches at least once a month.

The attendance of parents and young Melkite adults at activities organised by Christian churches other than the Melkite church, as seen in Table 5.11, plays an important part in the religious identity of young Melkite adults.

Table 5.10

Attendance of other Christian Church activities

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	More than once a week	2	6.7
	Few times a month	3	10.0
	Few times a year	17	56.7
	Never	5	16.7
	Total	27	90.0
	MISSING	3	10.0
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	Few times a month	4	13.3
	Once a month	3	10.0
	Few times a year	13	43.3
	Never	10	33.3
	Total	30	100.0

Of the 27 parents that responded (3 were missing), a majority of 56.7 percent implied their love for their own religious tradition but still attended other church activities occasionally in the year. 10 percent indicated that they would attend other church activities occasionally in a month, whereas 6.7 percent indicated that they would attend more than once a week. 16.7 percent indicated that they wouldn't attend activities organised by other churches.

Of the 30 young Melkite adults that responded, a majority of 43.3 percent responded that they, like their parents, attended activities organised by other Christian churches a few times a year. Additionally, also like their parents, a strong amount of young Melkite adults also indicated that they never attended activities organised by other Christian churches. The minority of 10 percent indicated that they attended only once a month.

When discussing the religious identity of young Melkite adults, the frequency of personal prayer by parents and young Melkite adults, see Table 5.11, needs to be considered.

Based on the results on the survey, 93.3 percent of parents pray in their personal capacity at least once a day or more. The remaining 6.7 percent pray personally a few times a month.

Table 5.11

Frequency of Personal Prayer

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	Once a day a or more	28	93.3
	Few times a month	2	6.7
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	Once a day a or more	12	40.0
	Few times a week	8	26.7
	Once a week	4	13.3
	Few times a month	2	6.7
	Once a month	2	6.7
	Never	2	6.7
	Total	30	100.0

As expected, while greatly reduced, 40 percent of young Melkite adults still devote time for daily personal prayer, followed by 26.7 percent who pray in their personal capacity a few times a week. 13.3 percent responded that they only prayed once a week, whereas 6.7 percent indicated that they prayed personally a few times in a month. Another 6.7 percent indicated that they only prayed personally once a month, while another 6.7 percent indicated that they did not pray at all.

The following table refers to the personal reading of the Gospel on the part of the parents and young Melkite adults.

From the 27 parents that responded, with a majority of 80 percent, 24 parents responded that they read the Gospel in their own capacity. Another 3 parents indicated that they did not. 3 parents did not respond to this question.

As equally important as personal prayer frequency is gospel reading frequency as presented in Table 5.12

Table 5.12

Reading the Gospale

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	Yes	24	80.0
	No	3	10.0
	Total	27	90.0
	MISSING	3	10.0
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	Yes	18	60.0
	No	12	40.0
	Total	30	100.0

From the 30 young Melkite adults that responded, 60 percent of them responded that they read the Gospel in their personal capacity, whereas 40 percent did not.

Table 5.13, below, presents the understanding of icons, specifically in the Byzantine tradition, of young Melkite adults and parents.

Table 5.13

Understanding Icons

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	Yes	19	63.3
	No	8	26.7
	Total	27	90.0
	MISSING	3	10.0
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	Yes	5	16.7
	No	25	83.3
	Total	30	100.0

From the 27 parents that responded, 63.3 percent indicated that they understood the significance of icons in the Melkite Catholic tradition. 26.7 percent however, indicated that they did not understand its significance or its meaning.

From the 30 youth that responded, 83.3 percent did not understand the meaning or significance behind icons, whereas a minority of 16.7 percent said yes.

Associated with this topic, the attendance of a Catholic school, parents and young Melkite adults is presented in Table 5.14 below.

Table 5.14

Attendance at Catholic Schools

From the 30 parents that responded, only 40 percent indicated that they attended Catholic schools in their formative years. The remaining 60 percent responded otherwise.

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	Yes	12	40.0
	No	18	60.0
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	Yes	29	96.7
	No	1	3.3
	Total	30	100.0

Additionally, from the 30 young Melkite adults that responded to this survey, only 1 indicated that they did not attend a Catholic school. The remaining 29 responded that they did attend a Catholic school.

Attendance of Sunday school organised by the church, a factor in young Melkite adults' religious identity, is presented in Table 5.15

Table 5.15

Attendance of Sunday School at Church

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	Yes	10	33.3
	No	18	60.0
	Total	28	93.3
	MISSING	2	6.7
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	Yes	8	26.7
	No	22	73.3
	Total	30	100.0

Of the 28 parents that responded (2 did not respond), only 10 responded that they did attend Sunday school at Church. Instead, the majority of 60 percent responded that they did not attend Sunday school organised by the Church.

Of the 30 young Melkite adults that responded to the survey, 73.3 percent responded that they did not attend Sunday school, whereas only the remaining 26.7 percent responded that they did.

The use of religious media by parents and young Melkite adults, a substantial influence on young Melkite adults and their religious identity, is presented in Table 5.16

Table 5.16

Use of Religious Media

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	Yes	25	83.3
	No	5	16.7
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	Yes	11	36.7
	No	19	63.3
	Total	30	100.0

From the 30 parents that responded to this survey, 83.3 percent of parents responded that they did use a lot of religious media. The remaining 16.7 percent indicated that they did not.

From the 30 young Melkite adults that responded to this survey, 63.3 percent indicated that they did not find any use for religious media. The remaining 36.7 percent, however, did use religious media extensively.

5.4   Social Values

Social Values Finding 1:

5.4.1   The social values held and expressed by young Melkite adults

Table 5.17

Experience of speaking with an adult youth minister regarding personal problems

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	Good	14	46.7
	Mixed, good and bad	10	33.3
	Have not talked with a youth minister	3	10.0
	Total	27	90.0
	MISSING	3	10.0
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	Good	8	26.7
	Mixed, good and bad	7	23.3
	Bad	1	3.3
	Have not talked with a youth minister	14	46.7
	Total	30	100.0

Of the 27 parents that responded to this survey, a majority of 46.7 percent responded that they have had a good experience confiding in an adult youth minister. 33.3 percent responded that they have had mixed experiences in talking with a youth minister regarding their personal problems. The remaining 10 percent indicated that they did not.

On the other hand, from the 30 young Melkites that responded to this survey, one young adult responded that they have had a bad experience in relating to an adult youth minister. Only 26.7 percent responded that they have had a good experience with a youth minister, while 23.3 percent found that their experience was satisfactory. However, the majority of 46.7 have said that they have not discussed their issues with a youth minister.

Church support is extremely important for young people. Table 5.18 presents how 23-25 year olds feel the church supports them.

Table 5.18

The extent to which people feel 'Spiritual' but not necessarily 'Religious'

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	Very true	3	10.0
	Somewhat true	7	23.3
	Not true at all	13	43.3
	Don't know/refused	5	16.7
	Total	28	93.3
	MISSING	2	6.7
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	Very true	6	20.0
	Somewhat true	3	10.0
	Not true at all	7	23.3
	Don't know/refused	14	46.7
	Total	30	100.0

Of the 30 young Melkite adults that responded to this survey, 46.7 percent were either unsure or just refused to answer this question. 23.3 percent indicated that they were more religious than spiritual, whereas some 10 percent felt that they were somewhat spiritual over religious. The remaining 20 percent indicated that they were definitely more spiritual than religious.

From the 27 parents that responded to the survey, 80 percent of the parents responded that clerics played a role in their lives. The remaining 10 percent responded that clerics did not play a role in their lives.

Social Values Finding 2:

5.4.2   5.3.2. The impact of the Melkite Catholic Church on the social values of her young adults

Table 5.19

Meaning of Church for Parents and Youth

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	Place of gathering	3	10.0
	Holy place	24	80.0
	Total	27	90.0
	MISSING	3	10.0
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	Place of gathering	11	36.7
	Holy place	17	56.7
	Any place	2	6.7
	Total	30	100.0

From the 27 parents that responded to the survey, 10 percent found the church to be a place of gathering. Interestingly, the remaining 80 percent found that the church is a holy place. Another 10 percent did not respond to this survey.

From the 30 young people that responded to this survey, more young people (36.7 percent) found the church to be a place of gathering. However, a majority of the young Melkite adults found the church to be a holy place. The remaining 6.7 percent found the church to be any place and did not attach any spiritual or social meaning to it.

Of the 27 parents that responded to this survey, 80 percent of the parents responded that the Church usually does provide a welcoming atmosphere for young people. The remaining 10 percent indicated that the Church does not always provide a welcoming atmosphere for young people, but the overall consensus is that it does.

Providing a welcoming atmosphere for youth at church is essential. Table 5.20 shows its extent.

Table 5.20

The extent of the Church's Provision of a Welcoming Atmosphers for the Youth

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	Usually	24	80.0
	Sometimes	3	10.0
	Total	27	90.0
	MISSING	3	10.0
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	Usually	24	80.0
	Sometimes	6	20.0
	Total	30	100.0

Of the 30 young adults that responded to this survey, 80 percent also felt that the Church does usually provide a welcoming atmosphere for young people. The remaining 20 percent felt that the Church didn't always provide a welcoming atmosphere for young people. However, the general consensus amongst the young people and adults are the same – the Church does provide a welcoming atmosphere for young people.

Being encouraged by the Church to examine the important issues is vital for young people. Table 5.21 shows their opinion on that.

Table 5.21

The extent of the Church's Encouragement to Examine Important Issues

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	Usually	14	46.7
	Sometimes	13	43.3
	Total	27	90.0
	MISSING	3	10.0
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	Usually	8	26.7
	Sometimes	13	43.3
	Rarely	9	30.0
	Total	30	100.0

From the 27 parents that responded to this survey, 46.7 percent of the parents felt that the Church usually brought up important "hot-button" issues to be discussed. 43.3 percent of the parents that this only occurred sometimes.

Amongst the young people, however, a different pattern is observed. From the 30 that responded, a majority of 43.3 percent felt that "hot-button" issues were discussed only occasionally, whereas another 30 percent felt that these issues were rarely discussed. The remaining 26.7 percent found that the Church usually discussed these issues.

Table 5.22 displays the participation frequency of parents and young Melkite adults in alter service at Church.

Table 5.22

Frequency of Participation in Altar Service at Church

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	Yes	13	43.3
	No	14	46.7
	Total	27	90.0
	MISSING	3	10.0
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	Yes	8	26.7
	No	22	73.3
	Total	30	100.0

Of the 27 parents that responded, 46.7 percent of parents indicated that they did not serve or assist with altar service at Church services. Another 43.3 percent indicated that they provide assistance and service at the altar during Church services.

Amongst the 30 young Melkite adults that responded, a majority of 73.3 percent indicated that they did not assist at the altar during Church services. The remaining minority of 26.7 percent indicated that they did.

The Church's extent and commitment to fulfilling its pastoral role for parents and young Melkite adults is shown in Table 5.23

Table 5.23

Church Extent of the Church's commitment to its Pastoral Role

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	Yes	24	80.0
	No	3	10.0
	Total	27	90.0
	MISSING	3	10.0
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	Yes	20	66.7
	No	4	13.3
	Total	24	80.0
	MISSING	6	20.0
	Total	30	100.0

Of the 27 parents that responded to this survey, a majority of 80 percent indicated that the Church is indeed going the extra mile and trying to live up to its commitment of its pastoral role. Another 10 percent indicated that the Church was not living up to its commitment, nor making any effort to ensure that it was doing so.

Amongst the 24 young Melkite adults that participated in this survey (6 were missing), a majority of 60 percent indicated that the Church was putting in extra effort in fulfilling its pastoral commitments. The remaining 20 percent felt otherwise.

Attending Middle Eastern social activities with parents is presented in Table 5.24

Table 5.24

Attendance of Middle Eastern Social Activities with Parents

Group		Frequency	Percent
Parent	Yes	25	83.3
	No	2	6.7
	Total	27	90.0
	MISSING	3	10.0
	Total	30	100.0
Youth	Yes	22	73.3
	No	7	23.3
	Total	29	96.7
	MISSING	1	3.3
	Total	30	100.0

Of the 27 parents that responded to this survey, a majority of 83.3 percent indicated that they did attend Middle Eastern social activities with their parents. The remaining 6.7 percent indicated that they did not attend these activities with their parents.

Of the 29 young Melkite adults that responded to this survey, a majority of 73.3 percent indicated that they did attend these activities with their parents. The remaining 23.3 percent did not.

5.5   Youth Melkite adult Responses

In light of the responses given by young Melkite adult respondents to the survey, they were also asked why as to why they felt this way. The following 4 tables outline their comments and sentiments, according to 4 different categories; namely that of Family, Individual, Church, and Society.

5.6   Summary of Findings

Melkite Catholic Young Adults in Melbourne: Between the Past and the Confronting Challenges of the Future

Table 5.25 summarises the major findings concerning comments made by parents of young Melkite adults regarding the challenges of Melkite Catholic youth.

Table 5.25

Summary of Responses on the challenges faced by Melkite Catholic Youth by Parents

Percentage of Attendance at Melkite Church Services	Once a week 73.3% Few times a month 26.7%
Percentage of Religious Self-Identity	Traditional Catholic 50% Moderate Catholic 50%
Percentage of Parents that find the Melkite Church to be very supportive of families	Extremely supportive & helpful 10% Very supportive & helpful 23.3% Somewhat supportive & helpful 66.7%
Percentage of Families that get Involved in Religious & Spiritual Matters	Everyday 16.7% A few times a week 20% About once a week 23.3% A few times a month 16.7% A few times a year 16.7% Never 6.7%
Percentage of Parents who found Church to be a reasonable place for discussions of serious issues	A very good place 30% A fairly good place 26.7% An okay place 36.7% Don't know/refused 6.7%
Percentage of Parents who frequently attended Church	More than once a week 33.3% Once a week 50% Few times a month 10% Once a month 6.7%
Percentage of Parents who attend other churches services	More than once a week 20% Few times a month 13.3% Few times a year 50%
Percentage of Parents who attend other church activities	More than once a week 6.7% Few times a month 10% Few times a year 56.7%
Percentage of Parents who found religious faith to be important in major life decisions	Extremely important 60% Very important 30%
Percentage of Parents who express their faith at school and university	Usually 93.3% Sometimes 6.7%
Percentage of Parents who have feel close to God	Extremely close 63.3% Very close 36.7%

Percentage of parents who have a personal commitment to God	83.3%
Percentage of parents who pray frequently	Once a day or more 93.3% Few times a month 6.7%
Percentage of parents who read the Gospel	80%
Percentage of parents who believe in the Trinity	100%
Percentage of Parents who understand Icons	63.3%
Percentage of Parents who attended Catholic schools	40%
Percentage of parents who attended Sunday School at church	33.3%
Percentage of parents who use religious media	83.3%
Percentage of parents who find the Church supportive during teenage years	Extremely supportive and helpful 10% Very supportive and helpful 33% Somewhat supportive and helpful 56.7%
Percentage of parents' experiences of speaking with a youth minister	Good 46.7% Mixed 33.3% Have not spoken with a youth minister 10.0%
Percentage of parents who feel that the Church is supportive of people aged 23 – 25	Extremely supportive & helpful 10% Very supportive & helpful 30% Somewhat supportive & helpful 33.3% A little supportive & helpful 20% Not supportive & helpful 6.7%
Percentage of parents who feel 'spiritual' but not 'religious'	Very true 10% Somewhat true 23.3% Not true 43.3% Don't know/refused 16.7%
Percentage of parents who have had clerics play a role in their lives	80%
Meaning of Church for parents	Place of gathering 10% Holy place 80%

Percentage of parents who feel that the Church provides a welcoming atmosphere for youth	Usually 80% Sometimes 10%
Percentage of parents who feel that the Church encourages its people to examine important issues	Usually 46.7% Sometimes 43.3%
Percentage of parents who frequently participate in altar service at Church	43.3%
Percentage of parents who feel that the Church is living up to its pastoral role	80%
Percentage of parents who feel that faith is important in shaping daily life choices	Excellent 70% Satisfactory 13.3%
Percentage of parents who attend Middle Eastern social activities	83.3%

Table 5.40 summarises the major findings concerning the comments made by young

Melkite adults concerning the challenges that they faced.

Table 5.26

Comments made by young Melkite adults concerning the challenges they faced

Percentage of Attendance at Melkite Church Services Once a Week	43.3%
Religious self-identity of young Melkite adults	Traditional Catholic 36.7% Moderate Catholic 46.7% Other Catholic identity 3.3% Religious but not practising 13.3%
Percentage of young Melkite adults that find the Melkite Church to be very supportive of families	Extremely supportive and helpful 6.7% Very supportive and helpful 23.3% Somewhat supportive and helpful 30% A little supportive and helpful 10% Not supportive and helpful 6.7% Don't know/refused 23.3%
Percentage of young Melkite adults that get Involved in Religious & Spiritual Matters	A few times a week 16.7% A few times a week 20.0% About once a week 23.3% A few times a month 20% A few times a year 26.7% Never 3.3%

Percentage of young Melkite adults who found Church to be a reasonable place for discussions of serious issues	A very good place 13.3% A fairly good place 30.0% An okay place 36.7% A bad place 6.7% Don't know/refused 13.3%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who frequently attended Church	More than once a week 10% Once a week 60% Few times a month 13.3% Once a month 6.7% Few times a year 10%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who attend other church services	More than once a week 3.3% Once a week 10% Few times a month 20% Once a month 10% Few times a year 23.3% Never 33.3%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who attend other church activities	Few times a month 13.3% Once a month 10% Few times a year 43.3% Never 33.3%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who found religious faith to be important in major life decisions	Extremely important 36.7% Very important 33.3% Somewhat important 26.7% Not very important 3.3%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who usually express their faith at school and university	76.7%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who have feel close to God	Extremely close 63.3% Very close 36.7% Somewhat close 36.7% Not very close 3.3%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who have a personal commitment to God	73.3%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who pray frequently	Once a day or more 40% Few times a week 26.7% Once a week 13.3% Few times a month 6.7% Once a month 6.7% Never 6.7%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who read the Gospel	60%

Percentage of young Melkite adults who believe in the Trinity	16.7%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who understand Icons	63.3%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who attended Catholic schools	96.7%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who attended Sunday School at church	26.7%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who use religious media	36.7%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who find the Church supportive during teenage years	Extremely supportive and helpful 10% Very supportive and helpful 33% Somewhat supportive and helpful 56.7% A little supportive & helpful 16.7% Not supportive & helpful 6.7% Don't know/refused 10%
Percentage of young Melkite adults' experiences of speaking with a youth minister	Good 26.7% Mixed 23.3% Bad 3.3% Have not spoken with a youth minister 46.7%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who feel that the Church is supportive of people aged 23 - 25	Extremely supportive & helpful 3.3% Very supportive & helpful 16.7% Somewhat supportive & helpful 10.0% A little supportive & helpful 10.0% Not supportive & helpful 13.3%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who feel 'spiritual' but not 'religious'	Very true 20% Somewhat true 10% Not true 23.3% Don't know/refused 46.7%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who have had clerics play a role in their lives	66.7%
Meaning of Church for parents	Place of gathering 36.7% Holy place 56.7% Any place 6.7%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who feel that the Church provides a welcoming atmosphere for youth	Usually 80% Sometimes 20%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who feel that the Church encourages its people to examine important issues	Usually 26.7% Sometimes 43.3% Rarely 30%

Percentage of young Melkite adults who frequently participate in altar service at Church	26.7%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who feel that the Church is living up to its pastoral role	66.7%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who feel that faith is important in shaping daily life choices	Excellent 36.7% Satisfactory 30% Not applicable 6.7%
Percentage of young Melkite adults who attend Middle Eastern social activities	83.3%

All findings will now be scrutinised in the following chapter, where particular patterns and issues that emerge from these findings will be the subject of discussion and analysis.

Chapter Six - Discussion and Conclusions

6.1   Introduction

In previous chapters the researcher outlined the history of the Melkite Catholic Church in Australia and the impact of religious identity and social values on the young Melkite adults. The researcher also examined the religious affiliation of young adults living in a Western culture and how they live within the church, the family and society. A methodology and theoretical framework to answer the research questions that revolve around young Melkite adults' religious identity have been outlined.

What follows will highlight important issues and impacts resulting from young Melkite adults' survey and families' focus group as aspects of young Melkites' life. Families' concerns about young Melkite adults' religious identity have their importance because they show how much parents care about their children's spiritual well-being and their behaviour within a society. A change within the tradition of the Melkite Church and its liturgy is needed.

The following chapter shows the impact the church has on young Melkite adults' religious identity: it has to promote the development of their religious identity and help them grow in value in an ethical environment. Besides the impact on young Melkite adults' religious identity, the church and society also shape their social values. On the one hand, almost all the survey findings indicate that the church's traditional services are found to be outdated; therefore, they need to be restructured. On the other hand, the results of the young Melkite adults' survey and families' focus group show that society does not offer the young Melkite adults the opportunity to critically evaluate unethical behaviour and unorthodox belief.

6.2   Summary of Findings

The following themes emerged from the data collection, highlighting outcomes of young Melkite adults and parents' surveys as well as themes from Parent's focus groups. The theme of these study results is to enrich the topic "Challenges of Young Melkite Adults in Melbourne" in maintaining their religious identity and social values within the Australian society. These results of 60 Melkites, both parents and young Melkite adults, explore the major challenges that the Melkite community in Melbourne faces in its attempt to assist and support young Melkite adults (18-25 year) to maintain their religious identity and their social ethnic values within the Australian society.

The list of themes coming from surveys and focus groups that will be discussed here are:

1. Communication between youth and parents

1. Language as a barrier.

2. Direct Relationship between parents' religious belief and youth beliefs.

3. Relationship between parents' church attendance and youth church attendance.

4. The way youth see each other and adults at church.

2. Hybrid identity

1. Personality - Approximately 33% of youth behave differently in social life than they do at home or church.

2. Relationship between faith and life choices.

3. List of dilemmas.

3. Spiritual Concerns

1. Impact of the Church on youth.

2. Clergy influence on youth.

4. Modernisation of liturgy

1. Effect of Church prayers on young peoples' relationship with God.

6.3   Communication Between Young Melkite Adults and Parents

The Melkite Church faces similar difficulties that the young Melkite adults are presently facing. The Church is an Eastern Catholic Church living in a Western society, holding an apparent Eastern way of life surrounded by Western freedom. This chapter analyses whether the Melkite Church and the parents have the capabilities to adapt to these growing challenges.

The parents also confront difficulties in adapting to the Australian environment. They have to live in such a way that they have to nurture themselves and their children whilst familiarizing themselves with their new surroundings.

6.3.1   Language as a Barrier

The Melkite Catholic Church worships according to the Byzantine Rite, and uses Arabic as its primary liturgical language. However, due to the continued migration of Melkite Catholics, alongside many other Middle Eastern Christians, to the West since the late 19th century, the Melkite Catholic Church has finally realised the need to adapt itself to its new "mission land".

One of the key things that needed to be achieved was to adapt to a new language for worship: English. The Melkite Catholic Church has realised that it needed to be able to adapt and express its patrimony, spiritual heritage, and liturgical worship in the English language.

In terms of young Melkite adults' religious identity, their comments about the challenges they face underscore a number of issues, one of which is that they believe that a drastic change within the Melkite Catholic Church is needed. Some of the youth propose that that the Divine Liturgy must be celebrated in a language young adults can understand in order to enrich their spirituality, regular Bible studies must be conducted with a weekly or

fortnightly Divine Liturgy in English. Some of them insist that traditional Liturgy must be abandoned. Furthermore, there has been insufficient teaching in English for young Melkite adults by the Melkite Catholic Church; most religious knowledge has been acquired from personal study, using English resources offered by the Roman Catholic Church (Latin Church). Young Melkite (R. F.) states that "there is a high level of ignorance of Church teaching in English by the clergy; even the priests can be confused or unsure because of the impact of science and a lack of knowledge of the English language." He also denotes that the Church must use its knowledge of psychology in order to better communicate with youth.

6.3.2   Direct Relationship Between Parents' Religious Belief and Youths' Belief

After several focus group sessions with parents of young Melkite adults, the following comments highlight the various challenges both parents and young Melkite adults face, due to the parents' impact on their religious identity. This phenomenon also highlights a number of suspicions and subsequent solutions that might be considered.

One young Melkite adult (C. A.) expressed his concern about his spiritual life because for him everything will pass away and only the spirit will live on. Even as this reflective statement may only appear to have spiritual connotations, it can eventually become a frightening issue for those who seek to live by the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. Additionally, as parents are of the opinion that young adults tend to spend more time with their friends than with their families, coupled with the growing surge of social media, the foundation of a familial entity will therefore no longer exist. A parent (H. M.) stated that this goes back to a former age where communication between parents and children was regrettably not established. The reason for this is that the parents do not possess enough religious knowledge, which they can transmit to their children in order to better communicate with them.

Given the current context that young Melkite adults live in, it is difficult to communicate with particular members of the family, specifically if some members of the family are raised in one culture with a certain religious faith, and another portion of the family is raised in another culture, with a completely different conviction. This is certainly very true of our young Melkite adults, most of who were born and raised in Australia, by parents who were born and raised in the Middle East.

Sadly enough, young people find it difficult to express their religious opinion if it is different to what is accepted by one of their parents. Hence, when someone in the family tries to speak out or act in an independent manner, he/she is immediately silenced. Parent (J. B.) observes that there are not enough discussions in the homes about children's faith and its significance. This means that if communication in religious matters is not established, communication in general will be affected. Furthermore, from the youth's comments, it is apparent that families spend most of the time pressuring their children to believe in something they themselves do not believe. Alternatively, parents might exhibit low commitment to Christian faith, or they may give their children a hard time for being very involved in youth events and activities. Yet again parents may give too much emphasis to work activities and career movements of their children and not encourage them to go to Church.

6.3.3   Parents' and Young Melkite Adults' Church Attendance

From the summary of findings in Chapter 5, it may also be noticed that some of the parents' comments were favourable to youth, especially when it came to relationships between members of the same family entity.

On the other hand families believe that time spent on the Internet and the computer is replacing the interpersonal relationships and family atmosphere and togetherness.

Parents are also concerned about the spiritual welfare of their children and believe that they are in real danger with the new wave of global interaction through the electronic media.

It is regrettable to see that parents and children do not follow the same beliefs and tradition. One may, hence, wonder what the church is doing to strengthen communication between parents and children and incorporate Christian values throughout the family as a whole. It is also of some concern that parents do not have time or do not make time to bring their children closer to Church as they try to catch up with family duties.

As for the parents' comments concerning the same topic, they show a strong belief in the mutual faith among Church members that allows for a better opportunity to express personal belief in the one common language and culture. Homilies should target the faith of the people in order to keep the families strong and consolidate their belief, which will help to bring them closer to the Church and to each other. Finally, the families believe that the Melkite Catholic Church should interact more with the Roman Catholic Church to form a joint community between Western families and Eastern families.

In summary, one may draw an overall picture about the parents' impact on young Melkite adults' religious identity from both the youth and the parents' comments. One of the Melkite adults (Adult B) stresses the fact that "the parents' do not encourage their children to go to church and that there is not enough discussion in the homes about their children's faith and its meaning." Thus, religion becomes a choice and its practice becomes a burden on the children. We may also conclude that there are two categories of families: adults who put pressure on their children to believe in something they themselves do not believe in and the others who give their children a hard time for being too involved in youth events. Over half of the families are committed to the church as 58.3% of total number of Melkite parents participate once a week in Sunday services, whereas 6.7% never go to church.

On the other hand, and from the parents' point of view, the Church is in a critical situation and needs greater wisdom to cope with the errors of society. It needs to reconsider its philosophy in order for the people to stand up for it. Parents also believe that the more youth

meet people of diverse belief, the greater chance there is of drifting away from the Church and its beliefs.

In brief, society includes both Church and friends, and one must choose companionship that includes the Church and Christian families. One's choice will help one draw the outline for one's relationships. Moreover, in society youth must grow in religious values, as they become the leaders of future generations. This can be achieved by offering them guidelines for moral principles and encouragement to faithfully resolve their social problems. The young will then become stronger and more competent in facing the various issues of their time. By neglecting and confronting the Christian faith and its values, society has already deteriorated. And because of this, the young Melkite adults are in the same predicament that faces young adults who were raised in other migrant families; for whom religion formed a significant part of their lives. However, at the end of the day, this is only partially to blame for the decline of the youth in the Church as there are other crucial factors that foster such decline.

From the parents' point of view, the Church is in a critical situation and needs more wisdom to cope with the misdeeds of society. It needs to reconsider its philosophy in order for the people to stand up for it. Families also believe that the more people from different beliefs the youth meet, the greater the chance they have of drifting away from the Church and its beliefs.

6.4   Hybrid identity

The young Melkite adults are searching for their identity within the context of Australian diversity. By virtue of being born and raised in Australia, this does not clearly give young Melkite adults a clear identity. While they belong to Australia, and while they have the same basic rights as every other Australian citizen, the young Melkite adults; like every other young Australian, hold a hybrid identity.

By observation, it is suggested that the first definition of the term "hybrid" refers to Australians raised by migrant parents. In other words, this refers to a mix of religious identity, cultural, and social values. The second suggested definition is the introduction to new norms and its subsequent adoption by young Melkite adults in this diverse country. For example, young Melkite adults interact with Australians from other cultural backgrounds within their university, schools, clubs, and even workplaces and learn something new from them. The third definition will highlight the places that young Melkite adults frequent and their actions, values, morals, and how they adjust to changes and conditions according to the time and place that they occupy. This means that inside of every young adult, there is a "hybrid" of personalities that show; depending on the time or place that they are at. It is confusing not just for themselves, but also for the people that they deal with. In general, a young adult at work, club, or university etc. can be a different person when they are at home, at church, or around their parents' or friends. This should not be taken in a solely negative light.

There is confusion within the findings and the researcher, between society, the Church, parents, and the young people. On one hand, while Australian society promotes multiculturalism, it seems as if it is becoming a harmful influence on young adults by taking them away from the Church's values and beliefs; thinking outside of the box with a judgment that the young or the Church beliefs are old-fashioned. On the other hand, the Church will lose its identity and its integrity if it becomes fully modernised according to the terms of the young.

This section explored some of the various aspects of "hybrid identity" that young Melkite adults face within the context of Western culture, and the Catholic Church.

6.4.1   The Behaviours of Young Melkite Adults in Different Places

Society constantly changes and evolves. Australia is a secular–nation that allows for the freedom of religion and unprejudiced expression of belief. However, society excludes God

and leaves faith and religion encapsulated within the Church. According to Parent B, society is becoming more detached and distant from religion, as religion plays a lesser part in society. Moreover, society can also dictate its own terms and views of morality and spirituality. For example, the growing apathy towards religion amongst people, dissent amongst Christians on certain fundamental hot-button topics such as euthanasia, abortion, contraception, and homosexuality etc., and the growing interest in alternative spiritualities like Buddhism. It would seem that the popularly held view of Christianity by society is that it is archaic, and shouldn't be seen as the only "way". Given that Australia is a multi-religious society, many other religions with the Australian context provide different views on the same issues that concern all Australian young people. While this has proven to contribute greatly to Australia, this has also led to confusion amongst young Melkite adults as to what is right, or the truth.

Approximately 33% of youth behave differently in social life than they do at home or at church. For a lot of young people, based on the comments of the survey, they view the word "religion" as taboo and a list of "don't do's". To them, religion is seen to require an attitude of obedience and submission as a way of life. However, as young people in Western society they are more accustomed to freedom of expression, freedom of speech, and freedom of lifestyle; religion can be seen as potentially restricting them rather than enhancing their lives.

For the many young Melkite adults that have held on to their Christian faith, they can easily observe the clash between this postmodern idea of freedom and the Christian values as they know them best. For them, coming from an Eastern background and a Christianity that most Westerners still see as "strange" and "exotic", the idea of leaving religion and spirituality to the confines of the church and home is something strange. In their experience, Christianity has made a lot of positive contributions to the development and wellbeing of society. Therefore, in the reasoning of young Melkite adults, if this is the case, then why are

more and more people in contemporary society distant from the Christian faith and its values? The potential response lies in the fact that religion does not hold "cultural" weight, as do other Australian cultural and societal norms, such as Australian Rules football. Because religion does not hold weight in Australian society, the sentiment towards religion is apathetic or relative.

Because most young Melkite adults are born and raised in Australia by parents raised outside Australia, we have observed two main categories of young Melkite adults; the first being those who choose to stand by their Christian beliefs and are active. These young Melkite adults are generally firm in their Christian beliefs and will hold that the Christian way is the only way to face a lot of contemporary issues that play out in modern society.

There is also a second category of young Melkite adults who are generally nominal Christians who stand by their Christian faith, but are generally passive. They do not necessarily have a firm Christian attitude, way of life, or approach to contemporary societal issues. Living between the way that their parents, the Church, and the norms of contemporary society have raised them generally confuses young Melkite adults. These young Melkite adults are those who let the society dictate what they should believe and how they should behave. Hence, there is the potential for the Church to be significantly influenced by society and consequently to lose its values and spiritual depth, since society is always changing and evolving.

In general, these young Melkite adults share something in common: They are both born and raised in Australia, are first generation Australians, and they have picked up Australian cultural norms which coexist, but occasionally clash with the Middle Eastern cultural values handed down to them by their parents. Additionally, for both categories of young Melkite adults, they are still journeying to adapt both worlds; Australian and Middle Eastern, into their lives.

6.4.2   List of Dilemmas

According to responses to the survey made by young Melkite adults regarding society's impact on their social values, young people are supposed to have an important role in the critical evaluation of the behaviours and wrong beliefs in society but they do not fulfil this role. As a paradigm shift now takes place, moving from a more conservative and objective morality to a more relativist and secular understanding of what morality should be, the Church believes that society is experiencing a deep moral decline. From the perspective of the Church, while it is careful to "propose, not to impose", it sees society subscribing to a distorted form of morality; where it conveniently twists the articles of Natural Law to suit the nuances of society and challenges traditional morality as found in Holy Scripture. This is pertinently evident in the Church's interaction with society on issues such as euthanasia, contraception, abortion, and homosexual marriage. While the Church's stand on these issues is deeply rooted in Holy Scripture and in the moral tradition of the Church, some Christians; including Catholics and subsequently, young Melkite adults find the Church's stand on these pressing moral issues to be "old-fashioned" or even "archaic".

With the way that the young Melkite adults view the Church, most young Melkite adults do not see the reason to actively live out the Church's ideal vision of morality; and are looking at other "alternate" forms of morality that the Church disagrees with. Given that the young Melkite adults now live in a postmodern Australian society, they are continually influenced by an attitude that is driven by being "carefree" and selfish. Moreover, with the mentality and the idea that one must be materially rich or career-driven to be seen as "successful", the Christian ideal of "laying down one's life for one's friends (c.f. John 15)" does not come close to being identified with young people. This unfortunately, even extends to their religious values. As mentioned earlier, while it is obvious that Australia is a secular country that allows for the freedom of religious beliefs and expression, we must also note that

Australia's culture also does not encourage religion or any form of religious values. Therefore, the young Melkite adults are at a crossroads as they try to bridge the best of being Australian and of being a committed member of a Christian Church with its roots in the Ancient East. Young Melkite adults are caught in a "tug- of-war" between what is perceived to be true Australian values, and Christianity. In other words, young Melkite adults are not exempted from a moral decline that has not spared young people, irrespective of ethnic, cultural, or religious background.

In light of this situation, as the Church depends on its young Melkite adults to be groomed as the future leaders of the Church, the moral decline will not help the cause of the Church into progressing further in the 21st century. Additionally, with the world becoming increasingly secular and turning against Christian foundations in Western civilisation, the population of Christians in the Western world runs the risk of a continual decrease. As we speak about the continued secular influence on young Melkite adults, a young Melkite adult JT claims that young people are constantly bombarded by what they should believe, what they should have, what they should see and listen to on the media. As these influences are imposed on them, they also become exponentially desensitized to it.

By the same token, Melkite parents also echo this view that the world is becoming too secular and materialistic, and is experiencing a moral and ethical decline. As it cannot be ignored, and while every Christian has a duty and obligation to follow the laws of the land, safety, morals, ethics, and education will continue to be major points of concern for families. Notions that are accepted in modern society stand against their belief and tradition. Society is the foundation of every spiritual, social and moral interaction in life and it progresses at a very accelerated pace, which leads to imbalance in many sectors, especially in moral values. Society has its good and its bad aspects and influences. It depends on the individual to either follow the good and reject the bad or decline the good and accept the bad. Morally

compromising acts or thoughts are assimilated into the children's thoughts and beliefs and this leads them to challenge the moral beliefs held and taught by the Church.

Therefore, parents must help them strengthen their integrity that they may not be swayed by the misdeeds of the society regardless of the pressure. If the children are brought up in a society that is close to the Church, they will be attached to it and will love its precepts and will respect their parents' tradition.

If parents keep away from the church, it is obvious that their children will feel embarrassed and will not appreciate their tradition. While society plays a role in attracting youth, the Church has failed to arm them with appropriate values to shield them against society and to inform them that they are not the outcasts of society but part of it, and as such their values are part of it.

Last but not least, technology and the media have a negative effect on the social behaviour of families. However, distance is shortened because of the Internet and satellite communication. It feels like families are living inside a circle and this is setting them apart as they cannot build a healthy relationship with society. But, overall, the power of love is and should be the only motivator in our society and not envy and jealousy.

6.5   Spiritual Concerns

Rooted in history, the Melkite Catholic Church is a spiritual descendant of the early Church of Antioch, mentioned in Acts 11:26. While it has its roots in the Antiochian tradition of Syria, the Melkite Catholic Church started using the Byzantine Rite or the Rite of Constantinople in the 8th century. One point that should be of interest here is that the Byzantine Rite is itself a derivative of the Antiochian tradition amongst other influences.

Based on the tradition and the rubrics of the Byzantine Rite with regards to the various Eucharistic liturgies, Divine Offices and Devotions, one would say that the Melkites, like other Byzantine Catholics and Orthodox; have a very deep and beautiful heritage of

spirituality and worship. However, this has proven to be insufficient, as most of the young Melkite adults have not been fully exposed to the rich and intricate heritage that the Melkite Catholic Church possesses.

As young Catholics growing up in the West, and with most of them having been reared in the Australian Catholic education system, the young Melkite adults are more attuned to Western forms of worship and devotion like the Mass of Paul VI (which has been celebrated in popular languages such as English for the last forty years); the Rosary, the Divine Mercy chaplet, and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament etc. For a distinctive Christian community such as the Melkite Church the question of identity emerges in roughly this form: How does the Melkite Church hand down to the next generation of young Melkite adults the traditions and ritual life of their ancestors?

While it is true that many young Melkite adults (both committed and not-so-committed) still belong to their local Melkite parishes and that they still participate in the Divine Liturgy, many questions are asked as to why their Melkite parishes are "different". For example, in the mind of the young Melkite adults, they wonder why the Melkite Church cannot be 'different' in the same vein as the Latin Church is; which uses contemporary and charismatic forms of liturgical expression such as contemporary music and vibrant youth group programs such as "Lifeteen" to keep young people grounded and attracted to parish life?

These questions are enough to spark an interesting discussion, but herein lies the bigger obstacle that young Melkite adults face with their Church today - young Melkite adults believe that the people they encounter in Church are too conservative and old-fashioned. The young Melkite adults also believe that the Melkite Church should be open to changes in liturgical worship. This is in order for the Church to exist in the future it should be open to

changes. On another note, the youth also seek out the use of contemporary Christian music as used in most Latin parishes to blend with the Melkite Liturgy.

6.5.1   Impact of the Church on Young Melkite Adults

The comments of young Melkite adults concerning the challenges they face highlight a view in which the Church is found to be old-fashioned, out-dated, out of touch and has not yet discovered the right formula to support the 23-25 years old. Religion seems like a choice and its practice a yoke upon the shoulders of the youth who are not being understood as the seniors do not realise that they too are experiencing stress and problems in life. The Church is considered by youth as a place of "seriousness" and/or of "sadness," while they need to drive the message of "joy" and "praise," rather than that of "mourning" and "depression".

The youths' comments also revealed that, as youth are an "immediate generation" that expects things to be done straight away with direct and straight forward answers, but the Church does not always answer their vital questions. They subsequently turn to other sources such as peers and the media to obtain answers. Parent C states that it is time for the Church to get in tune with today's generation, starting with the youth that have drifted away. The Church has become more of a social outing and not a place of spiritual worship.

According to the responses to the survey made by the young Melkite adults, faith is considered to be a crucial asset with regards to the spiritual life of Church members. However, the young Melkite adults are also of the view that the Church sometimes sets itself apart from its parishioners, and in doing so, falls short of fully understanding and relating to their problems and needs. As they see it, they find that the Church does not always address the needs of its parishioners, especially the families that belong to the parish. The young Melkite adults are of the impression that the parish depends solely on the various spiritual gatherings such as biblical discussions, social topics amongst prayer groups, the Confraternity

of Families, annual family camps, and also Sunday homilies to address the needs of the parishioners.

The parents also expressed concern that their young people spent more time with friends rather than with their families and the church. This has been attributed to the lack of young people that associate with the youth groups established by the Church. Additionally, with the growing surge of social media (internet, phone, friends), interpersonal relationships and the familial entity that is an integral part of Middle Eastern culture is being severely threatened. In his feedback, Parent A stated that the cause of this decline goes back to a younger age where communication between parents and children was regrettably not established. This lack of communication in turn, has been caused partially by the cultural clash between parents and their children. Therefore, while it may be otherwise in some cases, it is believed that most young Melkite adults find it difficult to communicate with extended members of the family, specifically those who have very little English or those who still live in the Middle East. Because of this lack of communication, many young people cannot express themselves or their opinions if they differ from what is approved or believed by their parents. When someone in the family tries to speak out or act in an independent manner, he/she is immediately silenced. Given this lack of communication, Parent A also observes that discussions about their children's faith and its significance rarely occur, if not at all. This would mean that if communication on religious matters (an issue common to all family members is not established); communication in social matters will be affected.

Furthermore, from the responses given by the young Melkite adults, it seems as that the more religious and faith-committed families within the community are spending a lot of their time to pressure their children to believe in something that they do not believe in. Additionally, in the mind of the young Melkite adults, there are also some parents who are not active in the practice of their faith, and regularly chide their children for being too involved in

youth-centred church activities and events. Therefore, work activities and chasing career goals are given more emphasis.

Young Melkite Adult A shows the impact of the Church on young Melkite adults, mentioning what may be perceived as guidelines. It is about time for the Church to dust off some of the out-of-date attitudes and to start afresh and in a new fashion with youth, lest it loses them. The Church is letting youth slip away and unfortunately, the parents are not doing enough to help avoid this. Additionally, the church does not have enough resources to help the young Melkite adults or to attract more of them. So, unless the Melkite Church starts thinking about progress; moving forward, reaching out to young people, changing its mentality, and upgrading its traditions, youth will be vulnerable and always in a state of constant struggle.

The Church is a beautiful place of worship and gathering on Sundays, but there is not enough teaching on spiritual growth and self-development. Furthermore, young Melkite adults believe that more resources and space are required for youth to develop and express themselves. Additionally, they also feel that the clergy also need to be more focused on youth. One priest preaching to the whole parish is not enough as the time spent for spiritual learning is not sufficient..

Furthermore, until the Church starts thinking about progress, moves forward and upgrades its traditions and mentality, youth will always find themselves in a constant struggle. It is not progressive enough and also complacent in its approach when dealing with youth, hence the reason the Church does not attract more youth.

6.5.2 Clergy Influence on Young Melkite Adults

In the paragraphs above, the youth commented on the impact of the Church on their lives. The following comments will underscore the parents' perspective concerning the

Church's work nowadays, as a few of their comments go well together with the youth's criticism of today's Church and clergy.

In the Eastern Christian tradition, the priest is seen, in a literal sense, as the spiritual father of the parish community. However, because of the overly demanding role of the priest, more and more people are calling out for the priest to spend more time with his growing flock, which is seeking to grow more in faith.

From the responses to the survey conducted, some people feel that the priest has to spend more time with his parishioners to be able to empathise, understand, and subsequently address the concerns of generations X and Y. From the analysis of their spiritual and pastoral needs, he should try to anticipate their needs and offer pastoral assistance in order to equip them spiritually.

To begin, while the Church needs finances like any social unit to run effectively, families believe that the Church should be less concerned with financial issues and focus on pastoral care; to ensure that everyone's needs are catered for and addressed in the house of God. According to the family responses of this survey, this is care should be extended to everyone, and not just to those who help or are working with the Church at any particular time. Additionally, priority should be given to those who show real love and humility, and are in need of assistance; and not those who pledge more donations or voluntary services/social work.

The Church needs to focus on Christianity, the Christian message, Christian beliefs and give more emphasis to spirituality. The Church must focus on its core mission, instead of being a corporation that is overly concerned with financial advancement and profit. As its voice is deemed to be more and more irrelevant in the midst of today's postmodern world full of questionable morality, the Church should become more aware of the challenges of living in today's world and counter-proposing the principles of genuine faith for its faithful to live by.

Families also see that the Church's commitment to the work of Jesus Christ is wavering and that it needs to live by the Gospel more than before. Additionally, instead of being viewed as administrators, the Church needs to see their priests as spiritual refuge for the members of the Church who have needs.

Additionally, there has not been much teaching from the Melkite Catholic Church, as most of the knowledge gained by the young Melkite adults has been acquired through personal study or involvement in other Catholic parishes, both within the Ukrainian and Latin Rites, using resources offered by the Roman Catholic Church (Latin Church) and the Eastern Orthodox Churches. According to Young Adult B, making such a move was necessary as he stated that a high level of ignorance of Church dogma prevailed within the clergy; as even the priests can be confused or unsure on various matters of "pressing importance". In a veiled attack on priestly formation, he also notes that the Church must also expose itself to the study of psychology in order to improve ways and means of engaging young people within the community.

6.6   Modernisation of liturgy - Effect of Church Prayers on the Relationship with God

For some of the young Melkite adults, the Melkite Divine Liturgy is a beautifully rich form of worship, but because of its majestic form, they are of the belief that it is boring, not engaging enough, and it does not "speak to them" as it should. Furthermore, young Melkite adults are looking for the Melkite Divine Liturgy to be tailored to accommodate contemporary Christian music, based on their exposure to Western Christian forms of worship and devotions like the contemporary Roman Catholic Mass and Evangelical Protestant worship services, all of which allow for the use of contemporary music in their services. In other words, because of the "external" influence of new concepts of spirituality and worship within Western Christianity, more people call out for a spirituality & worship that is driven by contemporary

music; a concept totally foreign in churches of the Byzantine Rite both Catholic and Orthodox.

This demand on the part of the young Melkite adults is a move in the opposite direction to the Byzantine tradition of tones and chants. On the other hand there are youth in Latin Catholic circles who are strongly advocating a return to the Traditional form of the Roman Rite Mass (Extraordinary Form), and a return to devotional practices like the Divine Mercy chaplet, the Rosary, and Adoration. It is here that the challenge of maintaining orthodoxy within modern worship forms, dismissed by liturgical purists as fads, arises. This is a genuine problem as priests who try to remain true to the traditional Liturgy are faced with more and more young people who ask for more charismatic forms of worship and regular Bible studies.

While Divine Liturgies in English are already being celebrated in some Melkite parishes in Australia, with some concessions made specifically for the Communion hymn and also at the end of the Divine Liturgy, where contemporary Christian hymns relevant to the space within the Liturgy are sung. After all, amongst some young Melkite adults, they believe that all the traditional church Liturgies must be abandoned wholesale and replaced.

The view above is only held by some young Melkite adults, as there are also other young Melkite adults who feel that the liturgies and traditions of the Melkite Catholic Church are beautiful, significant, and meaningful. It is this group of young people also believe that more needs to be done and achieved in ensuring that young people are always aware of its significance and meaning.

6.7   Conclusions

The survey concludes with the Church's deficiency in giving the answers to the questions posed by the young Melkite adults. As a result, they turn to the Internet or other

forms of media like books written by Latin Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, other Christians, and also non-Christian sources (which may contradict the Christian faith) to satisfy their hunger.

The survey also ends with the statement that the Church should also be open to more change within the Liturgy, and more spiritual activities associated with music, as is practiced by youth groups in the Latin Churches. It is found that the church may potentially be influenced by society; it may therefore lose its values or spiritual aspects. The clergy equally shows a lot of ignorance about Church dogma; even the priests can be confused or uncertain because of the impact of science.

As for the parents' comments concerning the same topic, they show a strong belief in the mutual faith among Church members that allows for a better opportunity to express personal belief in the one common language and culture. In their view, faith is a good asset with regard the spiritual life of Church members from whom the Church sometimes sets itself apart and falls short in understanding their problems.

More importantly, the general consensus amongst the respondents of the survey is that the Church must remain true to the teachings she holds and that the Church must be cautious about being influenced by society. Instead, it must allow the reverse to happen instead. The Church has to be very aware of the changes within society, and readily address them as she sees fit; according to the Gospel. In responding to the call to fulfil the Gospel and to "put aside all earthly cares", the Church will get its' priorities right, and like the words of Jesus to St. Peter in the Gospel of Matthew, "the gates of Hades shall not prevail" (Matthew 16:18).

Chapter Seven - Future Research, Recommendations and Conclusions

7.1   Introduction

The story of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church begins in the first century and continues until today. As seen in chapter one, the majority of the parents of young Melkite adults, belonging to an Eastern heritage and Middle Eastern background, practise the teachings of the Melkite church, including the Byzantine Liturgy, pray before Melkite Icons and follow Eastern values. Most of the Melkite churches in Australia use the Arabic language as the main language for liturgy, augmented by some English in their services. Due to the differences between Eastern and Western social values, many Melkite young adults sense a gap in their lives. Living in Australia, outside the Melkite practices, they find themselves torn between Eastern and Western traditions, trying to adapt and or adjust to Western spiritual practices and society. This gap may have an impact on their desires and choices. Consequently, the Melkite Church needs to provide young Melkite adults with more opportunities to enter into the life of the Church, and help them overcome the many challenges they face. Encouraging them to experience the beauty of the liturgy and the richness of tradition this begins that process. It is vital for the church to create a nurturing environment for spiritual growth and the opportunity to live the beauty of the Eastern Melkite tradition and adopt it and practise it in their lives.

Between the ages of 18 and 25, Melkite young adults are faced with countless challenges and various conflicts, principally driven by a natural adolescent instinct to rebel against what is prohibited by authorities, civil and ecclesiastical. During this stage of life, independence is sought, staying away from home and the church, even to the extent of living in isolation. A parent's role in this stage of their child's life is critical. The time for telling

their children how to live their lives is over and they need to start attempting to understand how their child perceives life. Parents also need to keep in mind they were once the same age and possibly, behaved in a similar way. The type of education members of the Melkite clergy have acquired is another obstacle facing young Melkite adults. Most Melkite clergy are educated outside Australia and speak a language other than English learned in their country of origin. This makes it hard for them to relate to young adults and the challenges they are facing. Like a chair needing four legs to stand, Melkite young adults also need four legs of influences – individual, familial, church, society – to stand steady on.

7.2   Suggestions for Further Research

Qualitative research into a wider and more diverse group of young Melkite adults would be required to enrich and extend these quantitative findings into the area of young Melkite adults' religious identity and social values. It would also be interesting to investigate other Melkite churches in Australia – outside the Melbourne group examined in this research project. Further comparative research into the religious identity and social values of the Melkites other parts of the world, including the USA, Canada, Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina and Mexico, where there are a significant proportion of Melkites and established Melkite Eparchies, could lead to a broader strategy base from which to tackle the problem of low youth participation with the church. Targeting the same age groups, longitudinal research could be continued over numerous years, and extended to examine how religious identity and social values change over time, to explore the identity of second and third generations of Australian born Melkites.

The questionnaires used in this research helped to provide a clearer picture of the lives of young Melkite adults and the challenges they face daily. The results are relevant for Melkites in general; not just young adults but also their parents and the Melkite administration at large. This information was sought to improve the relationships of Melkite young adults

amongst themselves and amongst family, society and the church. Experiences, ambitions, and expectations of the future were also distinguished.

7.3 Recommendations That Flow From the Research Findings

The Church should do more to engage the young Melkite adults and consequently there is a lack of understanding of the Melkite religious identity and social values in the Melkite church. There is a lack of connection between young adults and the Church, between young adults and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Clearly there is a need for an English or part English liturgy to help young adults understand and benefit from the Church's teachings. There is also a need for more explanation of the Byzantine Liturgy and spirituality in order that young Melkite adults may understand better their religious heritage.

7.3.1 Recommendation for the Clergy

Given the loss of interest in the Church, it is important that the clergy do more to adapt to present needs. It is further necessary to observe that the community does not come together when its support is needed. The clergy must comply with current Church law and must adapt to contemporary society. It is therefore recommended that the clergy conduct further studies that will focus on the different ways that will engage the youth more in the life of the church, such as bible studies, social clubs, camps, activities. Nevertheless, a question remains: is this an appropriate and acceptable method to adopt to bring the youth closer to church?

The Church should become more than a place to congregate; it should also be a place to pray. In order that young Melkite adults may deepen their experience of life, the clergy must encourage study groups.

7.3.2 Recommendations for Parents

Melkite young adults can, with the help of their parents, and if given the opportunity, have a major impact on their Church and a tremendous amount to offer the Australian society.

It is beneficial to conduct a study on parents who are not of Middle Eastern background, in order to examine if they face the same challenges as their Middle Eastern counterparts.

It would be beneficial for Melkite young adults' parent to provide their children with an elementary education about the Christian religion and about the history of the Church. It would also be of further interest to carry out a study to determine if young adults have a unique identity or a hybrid identity that may be caused by multiculturalism and rapidly changing technology in the Australian society.

The family should function as one and it should be a body, similar to the body of Christ. It should be together and the family should attend the Church together. Family can help bring Melkite adults back to the Church. Parents might put effort to encourage children to come to the Church years after the time when it is appropriate to do so. They should try to understand them and help them find ways to overcome this attitude.

7.3.3   Recommendations for youth

There is a lack of appreciation from Melkite young adults all round. They should value what the church and those around them are trying to do. This may change their attitude to life altogether.

Melkite young adults are the future of the Church. Hence, they have to make their presence felt in the Church, because if there is no present there is no future. They must play an active role within the Church in order to make it strong in the future.

7.4   Contribution to the Field by this Research

Before conducting this study, the problems faced by the young Melkite adults were visible but the areas of their existence were slightly unclear and could not be determined. Now that this study has conducted, it can discerned that Melkite young adults are focused on their religious identity and their social values, and if parents, the Church and the society do not work hand in hand, they will be facing even more difficulties.

It can be seen that many Melkite young adults experience a certain affinity for the Byzantine Rite, so much so that, although they cannot understand the language, they prefer to participate in the Arabic Liturgy, showing tremendous interest in it.

The research shows the need for parental involvement to deal with Melkite young adult's issues, be they religious or social, and the importance of support for young people from their families and religious communities when things get difficult. The research also suggests there is an opening for parents and the Church to invite Melkite young adults not to be afraid to get more involved and participate in essential activities, and provide guidance when it is needed.

7.5   Conclusion

Australia is one of the most multicultural nations in the world. Added to this is the Melkite Catholic Rite, which has for centuries been the focus of Christianity in the Middle East. It has developed a religious identity of ecumenism and interfaith dialogue. Here lies the opportunity for the Melkite Catholic Church outside of the Middle East to not only maintain its tradition and culture, but also to respond to the wider call of the spirit of dialogue with young adults in Australia from diverse backgrounds, as well as other Christian denominations who struggle to attract young adults to their parish. There is a call to engage in a spirituality of openness and acceptance, as is true of any universal faith. Society is letting go of religious values, as it builds barriers and dismisses morals and beliefs. Society should support religious values in order to help the people restore and strengthen their faith. Young Melkite adults don't get together when called for.

Melkite young adults for their part might expect age appropriate guidance from their Church. Melkite adults' spirituality should be fostered alongside the typical activities of the groups of Melkite adults. In addition, to state the obvious, more activities such as dances and outings for teens aged 13-18 are needed to keep our Melkite adults satisfied. Church should

be a place you can rely on when you are in need of help. It should actualize itself as a Holy environment. It ought to provide social conversation in a more open forum.

The Church's deficiency in answering questions posed by young Melkite adults' results in them turning to other sources such as, the Internet and books. However, as Latin Catholic, Eastern Orthodox or non-Christian authors may write these books, they may contradict their faith and belief. The Church should also be open to more changes within the Liturgy, and more spiritual activities associated with music, as is practiced by youth groups in Latin Churches. The church can be influenced by society and hence, lose its values and spiritual aspects. The clergy are often ignorant about Melkite Church dogma; and priests can be confused or uncertain about of the impact of science. The parents of young Melkite adults show a strong belief in the mutual faith among Church members. They believe this allows for a better opportunity to express personal belief in one common language and culture. They also consider faith as a good asset in regard to the spiritual lives of Church members from whom the Church sometimes sets itself apart and falls short in understanding their problems. Most importantly, the general consensus among survey respondents is that the Church needs to remain true to its teachings and be cautious about being influenced by society. Instead, it must strive for the opposite; the Church has to be extremely aware of the changes within society and readily address them as they see fit according to the Gospel. In responding to the call to fulfil the Gospel and to "put aside all earthly cares", the Church will get its priorities right, and like the words of Jesus to St. Peter in the Gospel of Matthew, "the gates of Hades shall not prevail" (Matthew 16:18).

There is much to learn and do in the Melkite Catholic Church in Australia, but at the same time it has much to offer to other communities. Then will a truly unique Melkite spirituality emerge, that is open and embracing to the many possibilities Australian life has to offer.

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Appendix 1: Questions survey

Questions relate to the adolescents and young Melkite of Australia, Victoria.

within the ages of 18 – 25 yrs. (as a percentage)

Parish Name: …………………State: ……….…… Age group ☐ 18-20   ☐20-22   ☐23-25

Section 1 Relate to Family
Questions relate to parents of the adolescents and young Melkite

1- Are your parents practicing Melkite parishioners?
☐ Yes
☐ No

2- Which of the following best describes your Religious self identity as a parent?
☐ Traditional Catholic
☐ Moderate Catholic
☐ Other Catholic identity
☐ Religious but not practicing

3- Do your parents attend a Melkite Church service?
☐ Once a week
☐ Few times a month
☐ Once a month
☐ Few times a year
☐   Never

4- What is your parent's involvement in Church?
☐ Laity pastoral works
☐ Committee meeting attendees
☐ Once a month
☐ Few times a year
☐   Never

5- Would you attend Church if not accompanied by your parent/sibling or is it because you want to?
☐ Yes I want to
☐ No I accompanied my parent

6- Do you share the same Religious beliefs with your parents?
☐ Yes
☐ No

7- Your Religious belief is similar to your Father or Mother?
- ☐ father☐
- ☐ Mother

8-What is your mother's religious identity?
- ☐ Traditional Melkite
- ☐ Moderate Catholic
- ☐ Other Catholic identity
    - ☐ Religious but not practicing

9- Do you feel that the Church is mindful of your family?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

10- Do you see that your family may be a small Church under the varying factors of this age and the pressure of the daily life?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

11- Do you find that the Church is supportive in regards to helping your family?
- ☐ Extremely supportive and helpful
- ☐ Very supportive and helpful
- ☐ Somewhat supportive and helpful
- ☐ A little supportive and helpful
- ☐ Not supportive and helpful
- ☐ Don't know/refused
- ☐

12- Does your family discuss God, scripture, prayer or other Religious / Spiritual matters together?
- ☐ Everyday
- ☐ A few times a week
- ☐ About once a week
- ☐ A few times a month
- ☐ A few times a year
- ☐ Never

13 -Is your Church encouraging to you, to discuss serious issues and family difficulties?
- ☐ A very good place
- ☐ A fairly good place
- ☐ An okay place
- ☐ Not a good place
- ☐ A bad place
- ☐ Don't know/refused

14- Do you feel that the varying factors of our time compelled members of the family to live in estrangement?

☐ Yes
☐ No

15- Do you feel that your family's behaviour and attitude differs with people who are not from the Church?

☐ Extremely different
☐ Very different
☐ Somewhat different
☐ Not very different

16- What are your concerns with regards to the family?

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……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Section 2 Individual

17- How often would you attend a Religious service?

☐ More than once a week
☐ Once a week
☐ Few times a month
☐ Once a month
☐ Few times a year
☐ Never

18- Do you attend another Christian Church service?

☐ More than once a week
☐ Once a week
☐ Few times a month
☐ Once a month
☐ Few times a year
☐ Never

19- Do you attend other Christian Church activities?

☐ More than once a week
☐ Once a week
☐ Few times a month
☐ Once a month
☐ Few times a year
☐ Never

20- How important is your Religious Faith in shaping major life decisions?

☐ Extremely important
☐ Very important
☐ Somewhat important
☐ Not very important

☐ Not important at all

21- What determines both your daily and major life decisions?

☐ Extremely important
☐ Very important
☐ Somewhat important
☐ Not very important
☐ Not important at all

22-Are you comfortable to express your Faith at school / university?

☐ Usually
☐ Sometimes
☐ Rarely
☐ Never

23- How close do feel to God?

☐ Extremely close
☐ Very close
☐ Somewhat close
☐ Not very close
☐ Never close

24- Do you have an intimate relationship with Him?

☐ Yes
☐ No

25- Have you made a personal commitment to God to live for Him?

☐ Yes
☐ No

26- How often do you pray alone?

☐ Once a day or more
☐ Few times a week
☐ Once a week
☐ Few times a month
☐ Once a month
☐ Never

27- Do you read the Gospel?

☐ Yes
☐ No

28- Do you believe in the Trinity?

☐ Yes
☐ No

29- Do you understand the icons, in order to explain them?
☐ Yes
☐ No

30- What is your level of knowledge regarding the Gospel, Trinity, Icons?
☐ Extremely high
☐ General
☐ None

31- Do you talk with other youth of similar ages about God, Church and Faith?
☐ Yes
☐ No

32- Did you attend a Catholic school?
☐ Yes
☐ No

33- Did you attend Sunday school in your Church?
☐ Yes
☐ No

34- Do you listen to Religious radio programs, or CDs containing Religious music?
☐ Yes
☐ No

35-Do you find that the Church is supportive in regards to helping you raise your teenagers?
☐ Extremely supportive and helpful
☐ Very supportive and helpful
☐ Somewhat supportive and helpful
☐ A little supportive and helpful
☐ Not supportive and helpful
☐ Don't know/refused

36- How has your experience been with speaking to an adult youth minister regarding a personal question or problem?
☐ Good
☐ Mixed, good and bad
☐ Bad
☐ Have not talked with a youth minister

37- Has the Church been supportive, in helping to better understand ones own sexuality and sexual morality?

☐ Extremely supportive and helpful
☐ Very supportive and helpful
☐ Somewhat supportive and helpful
☐ A little supportive and helpful
☐ Not supportive and helpful
☐ Don't know/refused

38- Has the Church been supportive once you reach the age of 25 years?

☐ Extremely supportive and helpful
☐ Very supportive and helpful
☐ Somewhat supportive and helpful
☐ A little supportive and helpful
☐ Not supportive and helpful
☐ Don't know/refused

39- Do you feel pressured or are you insulted for your Religious beliefs?

☐ A lot
☐ Some
☐ A little
☐ None

40- Do you believe you are 'Spiritual' but not necessarily 'Religious'?

☐ Very true
☐ Somewhat true
☐ Not true at all
☐ Don't know/refused

41- Do the clerics have any role in your life?

☐ Yes
☐ No

42- Are you prepared to go against the wind in order to achieve a noble cause or a sublime goal or a project that has positive impact?

☐ Yes
☐ No

43- Are you prepared to develop your self's spiritually?

☐ Yes
☐ No

44- Do you feel you behave in a very different manner outside of your home or Church than you do in your home or Church "work, school, society"?

☐ Extremely different
☐ Very different
☐ Somewhat different
☐ Not very different

45- What are your concerns with regards to helping to be better understood?

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Section 3 Relate to Church

46- What does the Church mean to you?

☐ Place of gathering
☐ Holy place
☐ Any place

47- Do you find that your Church is a boring place to you?

☐ Usually
☐ Sometimes
☐ Rarely
☐ Never

48- Does your Church have a warm and welcoming atmosphere towards the youth?

☐ Usually
☐ Sometimes
☐ Rarely
☐ Never

49- Do you find that your Church encourages you to consider important issues?

☐ Usually
☐ Sometimes
☐ Rarely
☐ Never

50- Have you participated in any alter service in your Church?

☐ Yes
☐ No

51- Do you believe there are youth in your Church who may be hypocritical?
☐ All
☐ Most
☐ A few
☐ None
☐ Don't know

52- Do you believe there are adults in your Church who may be hypocritical?
☐ All
☐ Most
☐ A few
☐ None
☐ Don't know/ refused

53- How often is there 'Sunday school' offered at your Church?
☐ More than once a week
☐ Once a week
☐ Almost every week
☐ A few times a month
☐ Once a month
☐ A few times a year
☐ Never

54- How long have you been involved in your Church youth group?
☐ 8-10
☐ 5-7
☐ 2-4
☐ 1
☐ Zero

55- During prior years, have you been involved in personal Religious practices? Such as: Spiritual meditation, prayer group, Bible study etc.
☐ Yes
☐ No

56- When you pray in your Church, do you feel that you are growing in your relationship with God?
☐ Yes
☐ No

57- In your Spiritual life at Church, have you experienced worship that is powerful and moving?

☐ Yes
☐ No

58- Do you feel that the Church is close to you and takes concern in your problems?

☐ Extremely close
☐ Very close
☐ Somewhat close
☐ Not very close
☐ Never close

59- Do you feel that the Church is committed to the pastoral role?

☐ Yes
☐ No

60- Do you see it necessary for the Church to renew the pastoral ways?

☐ Yes
☐ No

61- Has the Church taught youth what they are interested in learning about their Religion?

☐ Extremely supportive and helpful
☐ Very supportive and helpful
☐ Somewhat supportive and helpful
☐ A little supportive and helpful
☐ Not supportive and helpful
☐ Don't know/refused

62- Is your Church encouraging to you, to discuss serious issues and difficulties?

☐ A very good place
☐ A fairly good place
☐ An okay place
☐ Not a good place
☐ A bad place
☐ Don't know/refused

63- What are your concerns with regards to the Church?

……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………

Section 4 Relate to Society

64- What are your thoughts about Religion in Australia?

- ☐ Very positive
- ☐ Somewhat positive
- ☐ Neither positive nor negative
- ☐ Very negative
- ☐ Don't know/refused

65- Do you believe in the importance of setting a good example in your life?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

66- Do you agree that for believers to be truly Religious and Spiritual, they need to be involved in a Religious congregation?
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Don't know/refused

67- How important is Religious Faith in shaping daily life choices?
- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Satisfactory
- ☐ Unsatisfactory
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Not applicable
- ☐ Not interested

68- Do the varying factors of the world make you justify some of the wrong behaviours in order to reach the sought after goal?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

69 - Do you share your own Religious Faith with someone not of the same Faith?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

70- Do you speak publicly about your Faith in a Religious service or meeting?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

71- Do you find that youth who do not follow a Faith, openly speak out against other youth who do?

    ☐ A lot
    ☐ Some
    ☐ A little
    ☐ None

72- Do you suppose that the varying factors of our time had an impact on the alteration of social values?

    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No

73- Do you feel that the challenges of the contemporary world and its enticements play a role in estranging the youth from Church?

    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No

74- Do you suppose that today's changes had an impact on the important role of the Church?

    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No

75- Do you attend Middle Eastern social activities with your parents?

    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No

76- Do you sense the fruits of the Spirit in those who are committed in ecclesial work?

    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No

77- Do you have Faith in the important role of the youth in evaluating the behaviours and the wrong beliefs in the society?

    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No

78- What are your concerns with regards to society?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
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Thank you for the time you have put into this survey. Each one of your answers and comments will be taken into account when establishing a framework for the on-going success of our youth.

Appendix 2: Youth Questionnaire Results

PARISH

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Saints Peter and Paul Parish	14	46.7	46.7	46.7
	St Joseph Parish	16	53.3	53.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Saints Peter and Paul Parish	11	36.7	36.7	36.7
	St Joseph Parish	19	63.3	63.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

STATE

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	VIC	30	100.0	100.0	100.0
Youth	VIC	30	100.0	100.0	100.0

AGE

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	41-50	14	46.7	56.0	56.0
	51-65	11	36.7	44.0	100.0
	Total	25	83.3	100.0	
	MISSING	5	16.7		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	18-20	10	33.3	37.0	37.0
	21-22	11	36.7	40.7	77.8
	23-25	6	20.0	22.2	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		

Q1 Do you attend a Melkite Church service?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Once a week	22	73.3	73.3	73.3
	Few times a month	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Once a week	13	43.3	43.3	43.3
	Few times a month	1	3.3	3.3	46.7
	Once a month	2	6.7	6.7	53.3
	Few times a year	10	33.3	33.3	86.7
	Never	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q2 Which of the following best describes your religious self-identity?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Traditional Catholic	15	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Moderate Catholic	15	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Traditional Catholic	11	36.7	36.7	36.7
	Moderate Catholic	14	46.7	46.7	83.3
	Other Catholic identity	1	3.3	3.3	86.7
	Religious but not practicing	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q3 What is your involvement in Church?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Laity pastoral works	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
	Committee meeting attendees	14	46.7	46.7	73.3
	Few times a year	5	16.7	16.7	90.0
	Never	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Laity pastoral works	3	10.0	10.3	10.3
	Committee meeting attendees	4	13.3	13.8	24.1
	Once a month	4	13.3	13.8	37.9
	Few times a year	6	20.0	20.7	58.6
	Never	12	40.0	41.4	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
	MISSING	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Q4 Would you attend Church if not accompanied by your family or is it because you want to?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes I want to	21	70.0	100.0	100.0
	MISSING	9	30.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes I want to	26	86.7	86.7	86.7
	No I accompanied my parent	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q5 Is your religious belief similar to your Father or Mother?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Father	17	56.7	68.0	68.0
	Mother	8	26.7	32.0	100.0
	Total	25	83.3	100.0	
	MISSING	5	16.7		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Father	11	36.7	37.9	37.9
	Mother	15	50.0	51.7	89.7
	Both	3	10.0	10.3	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
	MISSING	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Q6 Do you see that your family may be a small Church under the varying factors of this age and the pressure of the daily life?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	23	76.7	82.1	82.1
	No	5	16.7	17.9	100.0
	Total	28	93.3	100.0	
	MISSING	2	6.7		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	19	63.3	63.3	63.3
	No	11	36.7	36.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q7 Do you find that the Church is supportive in regards to helping your family?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Extremely supportive and helpful	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Very supportive and helpful	7	23.3	23.3	33.3
	Somewhat supportive and helpful	20	66.7	66.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Extremely supportive and helpful	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	Very supportive and helpful	7	23.3	23.3	30.0
	Somewhat supportive and helpful	9	30.0	30.0	60.0
	A little supportive and helpful	3	10.0	10.0	70.0
	Not supportive and helpful	2	6.7	6.7	76.7
	Don't know/refused	7	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q8 Does your family discuss God, scripture, prayer or other religious/spiritual matters together?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Everyday	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	A few times a week	6	20.0	20.0	36.7
	About once a week	7	23.3	23.3	60.0
	A few times a month	5	16.7	16.7	76.7
	A few times a year	5	16.7	16.7	93.3
	Never	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	A few times a week	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
	About once a week	7	23.3	23.3	50.0
	A few times a month	6	20.0	20.0	70.0
	A few times a year	8	26.7	26.7	96.7
	Never	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q9 Is your Church encouraging to you, to discuss serious issues and family difficulties?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	A very good place	9	30.0	30.0	30.0
	A fairly good place	8	26.7	26.7	56.7
	An okay place	11	36.7	36.7	93.3
	Don't know/refused	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	A very good place	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	A fairly good place	9	30.0	30.0	43.3
	An okay place	11	36.7	36.7	80.0
	A bad place	2	6.7	6.7	86.7
	Don't know/refused	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q10 Do you feel that the varying factors of our time compelled members of the family to live in estrangement?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	9	30.0	30.0	30.0
	No	21	70.0	70.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Yes	18	60.0	62.1	62.1
	No	11	36.7	37.9	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
	MISSING	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Q11 Do you feel that your family's behaviour and attitude differs with people who are not from the Church?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Extremely different	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	Very different	3	10.0	10.0	16.7
	Somewhat different	9	30.0	30.0	46.7
	Not very different	16	53.3	53.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Very different	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	Somewhat different	14	46.7	46.7	60.0
	Not very different	12	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q13 How often would you attend a religious service?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	More than once a week	10	33.3	33.3	33.3
	Once a week	15	50.0	50.0	83.3
	Few times a month	3	10.0	10.0	93.3
	Once a month	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	More than once a week	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Once a week	18	60.0	60.0	70.0
	Few times a month	4	13.3	13.3	83.3
	Once a month	2	6.7	6.7	90.0
	Few times a year	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q14 Do you attend another Christian church service?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	More than once a week	6	20.0	24.0	24.0
	Few times a month	4	13.3	16.0	40.0
	Few times a year	15	50.0	60.0	100.0
	Total	25	83.3	100.0	
	MISSING	5	16.7		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	More than once a week	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Once a week	3	10.0	10.0	13.3
	Few times a month	6	20.0	20.0	33.3
	Once a month	3	10.0	10.0	43.3
	Few times a year	7	23.3	23.3	66.7
	Never	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q15 Do you attend other Christian church activities?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	More than once a week	2	6.7	7.4	7.4
	Few times a month	3	10.0	11.1	18.5
	Few times a year	17	56.7	63.0	81.5
	Never	5	16.7	18.5	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Few times a month	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	Once a month	3	10.0	10.0	23.3
	Few times a year	13	43.3	43.3	66.7
	Never	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q16 How important is your religious faith in shaping major life decisions?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Extremely important	18	60.0	66.7	66.7
	Very important	9	30.0	33.3	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Extremely important	11	36.7	36.7	36.7
	Very important	10	33.3	33.3	70.0
	Somewhat important	8	26.7	26.7	96.7
	Not very important	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q17 Are you comfortable to express your faith at school/university?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Usually	28	93.3	93.3	93.3
	Sometimes	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Usually	23	76.7	76.7	76.7
	Sometimes	6	20.0	20.0	96.7
	Rarely	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q18 How close do feel to God?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Extremely close	19	63.3	63.3	63.3
	Very close	11	36.7	36.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Extremely close	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Very close	15	50.0	50.0	60.0
	Somewhat close	11	36.7	36.7	96.7
	Not very close	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q19 Have you made a personal commitment to God to live for Him?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	25	83.3	83.3	83.3
	No	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Yes	22	73.3	73.3	73.3
	No	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q20 How often do you pray alone?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Once a day a or more	28	93.3	93.3	93.3
	Few times a month	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Once a day a or more	12	40.0	40.0	40.0
	Few times a week	8	26.7	26.7	66.7
	Once a week	4	13.3	13.3	80.0
	Few times a month	2	6.7	6.7	86.7
	Once a month	2	6.7	6.7	93.3
	Never	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q21 Do you read the Gospel?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	24	80.0	88.9	88.9
	No	3	10.0	11.1	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	18	60.0	60.0	60.0
	No	12	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q22 Do you believe in the Trinity?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	30	100.0	100.0	100.0
Youth	Yes	30	100.0	100.0	100.0

Q23 Do you understand the icons, in order to explain them?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	19	63.3	70.4	70.4
	No	8	26.7	29.6	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	No	25	83.3	83.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q24 What is your level of knowledge regarding the Gospel, Trinity, Icons?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Extremely high	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	General	23	76.7	76.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Extremely high	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	General	27	90.0	90.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q25 Do you talk with other youth of similar ages about God, church, and faith?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	22	73.3	73.3	73.3
	No	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Yes	28	93.3	93.3	93.3
	No	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q26 Did you attend a Catholic school?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	12	40.0	40.0	40.0
	No	18	60.0	60.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Yes	29	96.7	96.7	96.7
	No	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q27 Did you attend Sunday school in your church?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	10	33.3	35.7	35.7
	No	18	60.0	64.3	100.0
	Total	28	93.3	100.0	
	MISSING	2	6.7		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
	No	22	73.3	73.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q28 Do you listen to religious radio programs, or CDs containing religious music?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	25	83.3	83.3	83.3
	No	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Yes	11	36.7	36.7	36.7
	No	19	63.3	63.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q29 Do you find that the church is supportive in regards to helping you through your life?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Extremely supportive and helpful	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Very supportive and helpful	10	33.3	33.3	43.3
	Somewhat supportive and helpful	17	56.7	56.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Extremely supportive and helpful	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Very supportive and helpful	11	36.7	36.7	40.0
	Somewhat supportive and helpful	8	26.7	26.7	66.7
	A little supportive and helpful	5	16.7	16.7	83.3
	Not supportive and helpful	2	6.7	6.7	90.0
	Don't know/refused	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q30 How has your experience been with speaking to an adult youth minister regarding a personal question or problem?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Good	14	46.7	51.9	51.9
	Mixed, good and bad	10	33.3	37.0	88.9
	Have not talked with a youth minister	3	10.0	11.1	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Good	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
	Mixed, good and bad	7	23.3	23.3	50.0
	Bad	1	3.3	3.3	53.3
	Have not talked with a youth minister	14	46.7	46.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q31 Has the Church been supportive, in helping to better understand youth's own sexuality and sexual morality?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Extremely supportive and helpful	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Very supportive and helpful	2	6.7	6.7	16.7
	Somewhat supportive and helpful	9	30.0	30.0	46.7
	A little supportive and helpful	8	26.7	26.7	73.3
	Not supportive and helpful	3	10.0	10.0	83.3
	Don't know/refused	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Extremely supportive and helpful	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	Very supportive and helpful	2	6.7	6.7	20.0
	Somewhat supportive and helpful	8	26.7	26.7	46.7
	A little supportive and helpful	1	3.3	3.3	50.0
	Not supportive and helpful	5	16.7	16.7	66.7
	Don't know/refused	10	33.3	33.3	100.0

Q31 Has the Church been supportive, in helping to better understand youth's own sexuality and sexual morality?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Extremely supportive and helpful	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Very supportive and helpful	2	6.7	6.7	16.7
	Somewhat supportive and helpful	9	30.0	30.0	46.7
	A little supportive and helpful	8	26.7	26.7	73.3
	Not supportive and helpful	3	10.0	10.0	83.3
	Don't know/refused	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Extremely supportive and helpful	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	Very supportive and helpful	2	6.7	6.7	20.0
	Somewhat supportive and helpful	8	26.7	26.7	46.7
	A little supportive and helpful	1	3.3	3.3	50.0
	Not supportive and helpful	5	16.7	16.7	66.7
	Don't know/refused	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q32 Do you believe the Church is supportive to age of 23-25 years?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Extremely supportive and helpful	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Very supportive and helpful	9	30.0	30.0	40.0
	Somewhat supportive and helpful	10	33.3	33.3	73.3
	A little supportive and helpful	6	20.0	20.0	93.3
	Not supportive and helpful	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	
Youth	Extremely supportive and helpful	1	3.3	3.6	3.6
	Very supportive and helpful	5	16.7	17.9	21.4
	Somewhat supportive and helpful	3	10.0	10.7	32.1
	A little supportive and helpful	3	10.0	10.7	42.9
	Not supportive and helpful	4	13.3	14.3	57.1
	Don't know/refused	12	40.0	42.9	100.0
	Total	28	93.3	100.0	
	MISSING	2	6.7		
Total		30	100.0		

Q33 Do you feel pressured or are you insulted for your religious beliefs?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	some	2	6.7	7.4	7.4
	A little	4	13.3	14.8	22.2
	None	19	63.3	70.4	92.6
	42	2	6.7	7.4	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	some	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	A little	8	26.7	26.7	40.0
	None	18	60.0	60.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q34 Do you believe you are 'spiritual' but not necessarily 'religious'?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Very true	3	10.0	10.7	10.7
	Somewhat true	7	23.3	25.0	35.7
	Not true at all	13	43.3	46.4	82.1
	Don't know/refused	5	16.7	17.9	100.0
	Total	28	93.3	100.0	
	MISSING	2	6.7		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Very true	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Somewhat true	3	10.0	10.0	30.0
	Not true at all	7	23.3	23.3	53.3
	Don't know/refused	14	46.7	46.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q35 Do the clerics have any role in your life?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	24	80.0	88.9	88.9
	No	3	10.0	11.1	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	20	66.7	74.1	74.1
	No	7	23.3	25.9	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		

Q36 Are you prepared to go against the wind in order to achieve a noble cause or a sublime goal or a project that has positive impact?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	28	93.3	100.0	100.0
	MISSING	2	6.7		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	21	70.0	70.0	70.0
	No	9	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q37 Are you prepared to develop yourself spiritually?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	27	90.0	100.0	100.0
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	26	86.7	86.7	86.7
	No	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q38 Do you feel you behave in a very different manner outside of your home or Church than you do in your home or Church 'work, school, society'?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Very different	2	6.7	7.4	7.4
	Somewhat different	4	13.3	14.8	22.2
	Not very different	21	70.0	77.8	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Extremely different	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	Very different	5	16.7	16.7	23.3
	Somewhat different	6	20.0	20.0	43.3
	Not very different	17	56.7	56.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q40 What does the Church mean to you?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Place of gathering	3	10.0	11.1	11.1
	Holy place	24	80.0	88.9	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Place of gathering	11	36.7	36.7	36.7
	Holy place	17	56.7	56.7	93.3
	Any place	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q41 Do you find that your Church is a boring place to you?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Rarely	5	16.7	18.5	18.5
	Never	22	73.3	81.5	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Usually	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Sometimes	12	40.0	40.0	43.3
	Rarely	11	36.7	36.7	80.0
	Never	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q42 Does your Church have a warm and welcoming atmosphere towards the youth?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Usually	24	80.0	88.9	88.9
	Sometimes	3	10.0	11.1	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Usually	24	80.0	80.0	80.0
	Sometimes	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q43 Do you find that your Church encourages you to consider important issues?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Usually	14	46.7	51.9	51.9
	Sometimes	13	43.3	48.1	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Usually	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
	Sometimes	13	43.3	43.3	70.0
	Rarely	9	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q44 Have you participated in any alter service in your Church?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	13	43.3	48.1	48.1
	No	14	46.7	51.9	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
	No	22	73.3	73.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q45 Do you believe there are youth in your Church who may be hypocritical?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Most	3	10.0	11.1	11.1
	A few	14	46.7	51.9	63.0
	Don't know	10	33.3	37.0	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Most	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	A few	13	43.3	43.3	60.0
	None	3	10.0	10.0	70.0
	Don't know	9	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q46 Do you believe there are adults in your Church who may be hypocritical?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Most	3	10.0	11.1	11.1
	A few	14	46.7	51.9	63.0
	Don't know/ refused	10	33.3	37.0	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Most	8	26.7	34.8	34.8
	A few	9	30.0	39.1	73.9
	Don't know/ refused	6	20.0	26.1	100.0
	Total	23	76.7	100.0	
	MISSING	7	23.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Q47 How often is 'Sunday school' offered at your Church?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	More than once a week	8	26.7	29.6	29.6
	Once a week	14	46.7	51.9	81.5
	Almost every week	2	6.7	7.4	88.9
	A few times a month	3	10.0	11.1	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Once a week	12	40.0	42.9	42.9
	Almost every week	1	3.3	3.6	46.4
	A few times a month	2	6.7	7.1	53.6
	Never	13	43.3	46.4	100.0
	Total	28	93.3	100.0	
	MISSING	2	6.7		
Total		30	100.0		

Q48 How long have you been involved in your Church youth group?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	8-10	14	46.7	51.9	51.9
	5-7	5	16.7	18.5	70.4
	2-4	5	16.7	18.5	88.9
	Zero	3	10.0	11.1	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	8-10	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	5-7	2	6.7	6.7	20.0
	2-4	17	56.7	56.7	76.7
	1	2	6.7	6.7	83.3
	Zero	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q49 During prior years, have you been involved in personal Religious practices? Such as: Spiritual meditation, prayer group, Bible study etc.

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	20	66.7	74.1	74.1
	No	7	23.3	25.9	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	22	73.3	73.3	73.3
	No	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q50 When you pray in your Church, do you feel that you are growing in your relationship with God?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	27	90.0	100.0	100.0
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	21	70.0	75.0	75.0
	No	7	23.3	25.0	100.0
	Total	28	93.3	100.0	
	MISSING	2	6.7		
Total		30	100.0		

Q51 In your spiritual life at Church, have you experienced worship that is powerful and moving?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	27	90.0	100.0	100.0
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	22	73.3	84.6	84.6
	No	4	13.3	15.4	100.0
	Total	26	86.7	100.0	
	MISSING	4	13.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Q52 Do you feel that the Church is close to you and takes concern in your problems?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Extremely close	2	6.7	7.4	7.4
	Very close	8	26.7	29.6	37.0
	Somewhat close	15	50.0	55.6	92.6
	Not very close	2	6.7	7.4	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Very close	14	46.7	46.7	46.7
	Somewhat close	12	40.0	40.0	86.7
	Not very close	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q53 Do you feel that the Church is committed to the pastoral role?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	24	80.0	88.9	88.9
	No	3	10.0	11.1	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	20	66.7	83.3	83.3
	No	4	13.3	16.7	100.0
	Total	24	80.0	100.0	
	MISSING	6	20.0		
Total		30	100.0		

Q54 Has the Church taught you what you are interested in learning about your religion?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Very supportive and helpful	14	46.7	51.9	51.9
	Somewhat supportive and helpful	5	16.7	18.5	70.4
	A little supportive and helpful	6	20.0	22.2	92.6
	Don't know/refused	2	6.7	7.4	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Extremely supportive and helpful	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Very supportive and helpful	4	13.3	13.3	16.7
	Somewhat supportive and helpful	12	40.0	40.0	56.7
	A little supportive and helpful	2	6.7	6.7	63.3
	Not supportive and helpful	2	6.7	6.7	70.0
	Don't know/refused	9	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q55 Is your Church encouraging to you, to discuss serious issues and difficulties?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	A very good place	10	33.3	37.0	37.0
	A fairly good place	5	16.7	18.5	55.6
	An okay place	12	40.0	44.4	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	A very good place	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	A fairly good place	12	40.0	40.0	46.7
	An okay place	12	40.0	40.0	86.7
	Not a good place	1	3.3	3.3	90.0
	Don't know/refused	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q57 What are your thoughts about religion in Australia?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Somewhat positive	11	36.7	40.7	40.7
	Neither positive nor negative	10	33.3	37.0	77.8
	Very negative	6	20.0	22.2	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Very positive	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Somewhat positive	9	30.0	30.0	33.3
	Neither positive nor negative	9	30.0	30.0	63.3
	Very negative	6	20.0	20.0	83.3
	Don't know/refused	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q58 Do you believe in the importance of setting a good example in your life?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	27	90.0	100.0	100.0
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	30	100.0	100.0	100.0

Q59 Do you agree that for believers to be truly religious and spiritual, they need to be involved in a religious congregation?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Agree	15	50.0	55.6	55.6
	Disagree	8	26.7	29.6	85.2
	Don't know/refused	4	13.3	14.8	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Agree	14	46.7	46.7	46.7
	Disagree	11	36.7	36.7	83.3
	Don't know/refused	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q60 How important is religious faith in shaping daily life choices?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Excellent	21	70.0	84.0	84.0
	Satisfactory	4	13.3	16.0	100.0
	Total	25	83.3	100.0	
	MISSING	5	16.7		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Excellent	11	36.7	50.0	50.0
	Satisfactory	9	30.0	40.9	90.9
	Not applicable	2	6.7	9.1	100.0
	Total	22	73.3	100.0	
	MISSING	8	26.7		
Total		30	100.0		

Q61 Do the varying factors of the world make you justify some of the wrong behaviours in order to reach the sought after goal?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	9	30.0	33.3	33.3
	No	18	60.0	66.7	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	15	50.0	53.6	53.6
	No	13	43.3	46.4	100.0
	Total	28	93.3	100.0	
	MISSING	2	6.7		
Total		30	100.0		

Q62 Do you share your own religious faith with someone not of the same faith?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	17	56.7	63.0	63.0
	No	10	33.3	37.0	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	19	63.3	65.5	65.5
	No	10	33.3	34.5	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
	MISSING	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Q63 Do you speak publicly about your faith in a religious service or meeting?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	22	73.3	81.5	81.5
	No	5	16.7	18.5	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	23	76.7	76.7	76.7
	No	7	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q64 Do you find that youth who do not follow a faith, openly speak out against other youth who do?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	A lot	4	13.3	16.0	16.0
	some	14	46.7	56.0	72.0
	A little	7	23.3	28.0	100.0
	Total	25	83.3	100.0	
	MISSING	5	16.7		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	some	23	76.7	76.7	76.7
	A little	5	16.7	16.7	93.3
	None	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q65 Do you suppose that the varying factors of our time had an impact on the alteration
   of social values?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	24	80.0	88.9	88.9
	No	3	10.0	11.1	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	30	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Q66 Do you feel that the challenges of the contemporary world and its
   enticements play a role in estranging the youth from Church?**

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	27	90.0	100.0	100.0
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	28	93.3	93.3	93.3
	No	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Q67 Do you attend Middle Eastern social activities with your family/friends?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	25	83.3	92.6	92.6
	No	2	6.7	7.4	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
	MISSING	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	22	73.3	75.9	75.9
	No	7	23.3	24.1	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
	MISSING	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Q68 Do you sense the fruits of the Spirit in those who are committed in ecclesial work?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	22	73.3	88.0	88.0
	No	3	10.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	25	83.3	100.0	
	MISSING	5	16.7		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	19	63.3	100.0	100.0
	MISSING	11	36.7		
Total		30	100.0		

Q69 Do you have Faith in the important role of the youth in evaluating the behaviours and the wrong beliefs in the society?

GROUP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parent	Yes	21	70.0	87.5	87.5
	No	3	10.0	12.5	100.0
	Total	24	80.0	100.0	
	MISSING	6	20.0		
Total		30	100.0		
Youth	Yes	23	76.7	79.3	79.3
	No	6	20.0	20.7	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
	MISSING	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Appendix 3: Ethics Approval

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne

✛ACU National

Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

Principal Investigator/Supervisor: Dr Peta Goldberg   Melbourne Campus

Co-Investigators: Rev Dr Brian Kelty   Melbourne Campus

Student Researcher: Samir Haddad   Melbourne Campus

Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:
Melkite Catholic Youth in Melbourne between the past and confronting the challenges of the future.

for the period: 19.02.2008 to 31.07.2008

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number: V200708 42

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: ....   Date: ....
                (Research Services Officer, Melbourne Campus)