

DIOCESE OF  SALFORD

*Catholic Certificate  
in  
Religious Studies*

*Specialist Module 1  
School Based  
Religious Education*

## Salford Diocese Religious Education Centre

The Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS) is managed and awarded by the Board of Religious Studies on behalf of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. It is offered through accredited centres such as the Religious Education Centre.

The Certificate is awarded when participants have completed six core modules and two specialist modules. Participants can take between two and five years to complete it.

The core modules are:

C1	The Bible: Old Testament	C4	The Church
C2	The Bible: New Testament	C5	Sacraments
C3	Jesus Christ	C6	Christian Morality

The specialist modules offered by the Religious Education Centre are:

S1	Catholic Education	S2	<b>School-Based Religious Education</b>
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These notes and worksheets are for those participating in the CCRS and are not for commercial sale. They are to be used in conjunction with the input provided by the tutors and the participant's own reading. They are not intended to stand alone or to be taken as a complete presentation of the Catholic faith on this topic. They are often intended to provoke discussion or further reading.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious Education in our schools should have pride of place in the curriculum. It is the core of the core curriculum. As such it takes priority.

The Bishops of England and Wales state that “it requires 10% of the taught week for each Key Stage of education. This is what we reaffirm and expect.”\* In Years 12 and 13 General Religious Education for all must be provided as part of the Core Curriculum. The Sixth Form General Religious Education provided in conjunction with NOCN is a particular way of linking our schools and colleges in this work and provides the structure to be used in our diocese.

Secondary schools will also provide courses leading to GCSE, A and AS level in Religious Studies. These should be promoted with great vigour as the academic rigour of such courses will allow our young people to develop theologically as well as being educated religiously. Our schools are privileged institutions for the promotion of theological study at all levels but especially to stimulate young Catholics to proceed to tertiary studies in theology and allied sciences.

In Key Stage 3 the diocese will inspect schools in the light of the approved Framework. Schools will build on this base using the talent, experience, and resources they have. By sharing a common basis with all the schools of the diocese, and with the vast majority of Catholic schools in England and Wales, we are establishing a commonality that can only serve to bond us together in this important endeavour in the Church’s mission.

To achieve the necessary excellence in our religious education there will be many essential demands made on our resources. The diocese will offer professional support to teachers in this task. In turn schools must release staff for necessary in service training. Resources must be provided in terms of equipment, books and accommodation to achieve the necessary standards. Bibles and other scripture texts hold a pre-eminent place in the Christian tradition. Catholic schools must ensure that our young people can see the value that we place on the Word of God by the way we make the scriptures readily available to them. All who co-ordinate the work of religious education in any school must be appropriately trained and remunerated accordingly. Consequently the appointment of staff to these posts must be seen to be a major priority for all Governors. It is also expected that the Head of/Co-ordinator for RE is usually part of senior management by right, or is involved in all major decisions that touch in any way the religious nature of the school. They are also released on a regular basis for deanery/diocesan meetings. It is expected that any teacher delivering religious education holds the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or its equivalent, and accepts that s/he will participate in RE professional development.

A Religious Education policy is a necessary requirement for all schools. It must respect curriculum guidelines of the school and the diocese. It should include all other professional requirements in accordance with the best of educational practice : management, teaching and learning, assessment, recording and reporting. An annual review of the work of religious education in the school each year is essential. It should be presented personally to Governors and a copy lodged with the Department.

Essential for background to all religious education in our schools at the present time is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, *Curriculum Directory for Religious Education (BCEW 1996)*, *General Directory for Catechesis (Rome 1997)* *Classroom Religious Education (BCEW 2000)*\*

## Religious Education and Child Development

Modern research has brought to light some aspects of the development of the child unknown in former ages. This new knowledge has been applied to education resulting in a restructuring of curriculum so that the needs of children as they develop are more readily met. School is not a recognisable place to many parents and other adults. The changes provoked by child psychology and other educational developments have had far reaching consequences.

Until fairly recently these developments in educational method were not applied to Religious Education, and some would still resist their application. However, the *General Catechetical Directory* (1971) states that 'There are many methods and plans by which the Christian message is made to meet the various needs of men.' (paragraph 77). The document goes on to spell out methods which meet individual needs. It makes it clear that Religious Education must be adapted to meet the needs of those being taught.

Very simply, the religious needs of school children can be summed up as follows:

### *Infant Level*

As children enter a wider world, they need to be brought not just into the school society, but also into the family of the Church in a fuller sense than hitherto. Each child needs to have many human aspects to his or her personality developed more fully on which later religious aspects can be built. Intelligence develops only gradually and so ideas must be very simple. We must not allow ourselves to be deceived into thinking that because they can learn, retain and recite ideas, that they have made them their own in any real sense.

### *Junior Level*

Here the children need to have the very simple ideas and prayers of the infant years further developed. Their growing moral sense has to be assisted by an objective teaching of right and wrong. They should be helped to understand the religious life of adults to the degree that they can grasp, and be encouraged in that direction. Religious Education should be striving all the time to evoke a response from the heart and a feel for prayer.

### *Adolescence*

This is the time when an individual begins to appreciate his or her personal worth. Young adults develop the ability to reason and to think abstractly, to criticise and evaluate. They need to test their early religious ideas and teaching and make them their own. They need support during this turbulent period, along with firm standards and beliefs against which to test their growing appreciation of who they are as individuals. Above all, the adolescent needs to see how religion fits into life.

Obviously this very sketchy summary of general religious needs of children could be spelt out in more detail, but it provides the basic framework which needs to be taken into consideration when structuring Religious Education. In the more recent past, the structure of Religious Education has been determined by the content of knowledge of the faith. This has been imparted to children irrespective of their needs or aptitudes. This is unsound educationally and does not promote the activation of the faith of the individual. Instead we must base our curriculum firmly on the needs of the children, whilst giving some attention to the deposit of faith.

## **CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 1940's - 1960's - Out of the ghetto and into the world**

**In the memory of the majority of Catholics in middle age and over, it is the 'Penny Catechism' that stands out most strongly when they remember their Primary school.**

**Maybe it is remembered so well because it had to be learnt off by heart -**

' Who made you?

God made me.

Why did God make you?

God made me to know Him, love Him and serve Him in this world and to be happy with him forever in the next.' <sup>1</sup>

While young Catholics were still busily learning their catechisms off by heart in order to prepare for First Holy Communion or Confirmation, an Austrian Jesuit called Josef Jungmann had already published a small but significant book which directly challenged the whole content and methodology of the existing catechisms. The book was called 'The Good News and Our Proclamation of the Faith.'<sup>2</sup>

Jungmann was concerned about the serious lack of appreciation and understanding of Christian revelation amongst Catholics. He claimed that, although there was a strong adherence to doctrines and moral precepts, there was little appreciation of 'the dynamism unity and joy which should characterise Christian faith.'<sup>3</sup>

He was also concerned about the fact that the new pedagogical approach 'was having the rather unexpected effect of teaching so many truths so effectively that their inner coherence was often lost sight of.'<sup>4</sup>

For Jungmann it was not the methodology of catechetics that mattered so much as the content, and this content was more than the narrow 'faith-truths' recited by Catholics from their catechisms. The content was firmly centered on Christ, and the Christ-centered nature of the gospel message. The problem had been, for a long time, that, for Catholics religious knowledge had been, in effect, 'a collection of bits and pieces without unity coherence or hierarchical structure.'<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine* (1971 edition) p. 3, Catholic Truth Society, London

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that this was not published in English (and only then in an abbreviated form) until 1962 under the title, *The Good News Yesterday and Today* (1962) Sadlier, New York

<sup>3</sup> Moran G. (1967) *God Still Speaks*, Burns Oats, London

<sup>4</sup> Devitt P.M. (1992) *That You May Believe - A Brief History of R.E.* p. 79 Dominican Publications, Dublin where he describes the 'Munich Method' of J.F. Herbert (1770 - 1841) as the 'new pedagogy.'

<sup>5</sup> Moran G. (1967) *op. cit.* p. 27

Nowadays, the expression 'Christocentric' sounds odd because we can no longer conceive of Catholic Christianity as being anything other than Christ-centered.<sup>6</sup> But for many of us, in our youth, scripture in general and the gospels in particular had been so marginalised that our religion had been reduced to a number of unrelated 'truths' that centered on the Catholic religion as an end in itself. Catholics neither read nor studied the Bible. Nor were they encouraged to understand scripture except through the English translations of the Latin missals they used at mass on Sunday.<sup>7</sup> Roman Catholicism was about not sinning, trying to save one's soul and get it to heaven. It had very little to do with trying to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth. The insistence on the label 'Catholic' rather than 'Christian' did little to help matters and only served to de-emphasise Christ as the centre of the whole enterprise.

**It wasn't until the Second Vatican Council that such ideas took on the status of common sense and it is worth emphasising that, although Jungmann's book was first published in 1936, it was not translated into English until 1962, the very year that the Second Vatican Council opened. Up until this time, it is certainly true to say, that, in the presentation of religious instruction or religious knowledge (as it was then termed) there was no hierarchy of truths and no real centre apart from the Catholic Church and the Pope as Head of the Church.**

**Note - What about the different names for RE – Knowledge, Instruction, Education – what is implied here?**

Jungmann was quite right to point out this fatal flaw that, with the marginalising of scripture studies, the average Catholic had no real concept of what was to be called 'Salvation History'; no understanding of the central message of Christianity; and no way of putting the disparate 'truths' learnt from the catechism into some kind of coherent whole, either as a child or as an adult (has much changed??)

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<sup>6</sup> 'From a theological viewpoint, the Christocentric emphasis of the kerygmatic approach also led to a wider Trinitarian emphasis because it was impossible to treat of the history of salvation without recognising the different functions of each of the Divine Persons.- Rummery R.M. (1975) *Catechesis and Religious Education in a Pluralist Society* p. 9 E.J. Dwyer (Australia).

<sup>7</sup> 'Q. Would it not be well to make translations of the Bible into the vulgar tongue so that it might be put into the hands of all, even of the laity?

A. The Church forbids that the Bible, literally translated into the vulgar tongue should be given to be read by all persons indifferently. She even forbids absolution of sins to be given to those who choose to read it, or retain possession of it without permission.- *The Dogmatic Catechism* (1871) Quoted in Rummery R.M. (1975) *op.cit.* p. 6

‘ It was the genius of Jungmann to realise that, if creed, code and cult are integrated in a catechesis which is Christocentric, sacramental and biblico-historical, then this requires to be done not just in schools but at every level of Church life.....It is due to this man, more than anyone else that catechetics shatters the childish bounds of little catechisms and springs to the forefront of the life of the Church.’<sup>8</sup>

This new way of presenting the faith was, for Jungmann, really a return to the old original ways contained in the Acts of the Apostles. Christ was proclaimed as the centre of the message (the Kerygma). Hence this form of religious education came to be called ‘kerygmatic.’ One of the notions central to the kerygmatic approach is that of ‘Salvation History.’

As previously mentioned, the publication of Jungmann’s book into English took place at the same time as the opening of the Second Vatican Council. Although this impetus to a more thorough and deeper understanding and study of scripture and the history of salvation had already taken place under the direction of Pope Pius XII in 1943<sup>9</sup> , it was the Second Vatican Council that blended together the advances in liturgy, scripture and religious education in a way that Jungmann had said much earlier was necessary in order to present the Christian message properly in its totality. One of the fruits of the new theology emanating from this Council was a small and unpretentious book by Derek Lance entitled ‘*Till Christ Be Formed*’ –

‘These biblical and liturgical developments have begun to show us again the essential content of Christian doctrine, and the renewal in catechetics aims to make our pupils aware of all this. These three movements, biblical, liturgical and Catechetical are complementary and are all primarily pastoral. Their object is to renew the Christian life of Catholic people...Thus, the central core of our message is Christ’<sup>10</sup>

For those of us who had been brought up on the catechism, the revelation that the disparate truths we had learnt could actually be understood as part of an overall plan of salvation history, came as nothing less than a bombshell.

**Catholics did not have a coherent biblically based picture of the history of salvation with Christ at the centre and events of the Old Testament as ‘types’ and ‘pictures’ of what was to come. This little**

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<sup>8</sup> Devitt P.M. (1992) *op. cit.* p. 82

<sup>9</sup> Pius XII (1943) *Divino Afflante Spiritu*

<sup>10</sup> Lance D. (1964) *Till Christ Be Formed* p.16-18 Darton Longman and Todd Ltd., London

**book was a distillation of all that was best in Vatican 2 theology in terms of teaching the essential core of Christianity. It is difficult to believe now that there was a time when Roman Catholicism amounted to a set of doctrines, beliefs and (guilt-ridden) moral codes that had little biblical base or coherence -**

‘For too long, the Bible was a closed book to Catholics. At most it was a source of texts that were useful to refute the arguments of non-Catholics. Now, since the encyclical of Pius 12th on biblical studies and the growing number of books on the Scriptures, there can be no excuse for Catholics neglecting the Bible. If we turn again to the Bible, we cannot escape this fact of God’s plan for us, centred in Christ.’<sup>11</sup>

Although Derek Lance later went on to produce a complete curriculum for RE from 11 to 16,<sup>12</sup> the book was never generally adopted as a basic text for Catholic schools. Most Heads of RE were still composing their own syllabuses for the simple reason that there was, as yet, no central direction as to what to cover in RE in Catholic primary or secondary schools.

This was the period of ‘laissez-faire’ RE where the permissiveness of the 1960’s slowly began to infiltrate Catholic schools. The vacuum made by the rejection of the Penny Catechism had not effectively been replaced by anything else. The modern world and Vatican 2 were beginning to impinge on Catholic schools but, apart from books like those of Lance, there was very little in the way of resources and very few Heads of Department and hardly any departmental staff had formal qualifications in RE.<sup>13</sup>

### **CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - 1960’s - 1970’s - From ‘Kerygmatic’ to ‘Anthropological’**

**As County schools were moving away from the Bible and bible stories, Catholics, as we have seen, were rediscovering the Bible as ‘salvation history.’ (Are we clear what salvation history is?)**

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<sup>11</sup> Lance D. (1964) *op. cit.* p. 113

<sup>12</sup> Lance D. (1967) *A Complete Course for Religious Education at the Secondary School Level* Darton Longman and Todd Ltd., London

<sup>13</sup> Hanlon K. (1989) *A Survey on Religious Education in Roman Catholic Secondary Schools in England and Wales*, *B.J.R.E.* Volume 11 No 3 pp 154 - 162 . Hanlon speaks of the ‘disturbing lack of qualifications among religious education specialists’ (p. 161). If this was the case in the 1980’s when he did his research then it is highly likely that staff were even less qualified in earlier years.

**An important bridge between the traditional catechetical method of the catechism and the kerygmatic approach was the publication of a number of national catechisms written in a kerygmatic style.**

In 1957 the German Catechism was translated into English<sup>14</sup> and in 1963 the Australian Catechism<sup>15</sup> became available and was adopted as a textbook by some Catholic schools. The Dutch Catechism was to follow in 1967 but this was a catechism aimed at adults and very much in the revolutionary spirit of Vatican 2.<sup>16</sup>

As we have seen, the early 1960's were marked by the blossoming of the new kerygmatic approach to catechetics. The work of Jungmann was popularised after the Second World War through the efforts of writers like Joseph Colomb<sup>17</sup> and Johannes Hofinger.<sup>18</sup> Although the kerygmatic approach was typically more content-based than method-based, it marked the beginnings of a different type of relationship between teacher and pupils. It also had other far-reaching effects -

‘ Emphasis on the kerygma of salvation in Christ was the basis for a less formal relationship, less authoritarian also if only because it stressed our *salvation* in Christ, and gave an evangelical fervour to the role of the catechist who could not restrict himself simply to a teaching role in an exchange in which he was as involved as his students. Where the kerygmatic produced its most noticeable change.... was in the model of teaching it implied. First of all it undoubtedly produced a ‘proclamation’ model which, distinct from the teaching *that* and learning *that already* noted, did concentrate on a more profound understanding of the history of salvation with Christ at its centre. Moreover, with its broader approach and wider attention to the Christian ideal, it looked beyond a school-orientated view of catechesis...But the major

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<sup>14</sup> *A Catholic Catechism* (1957) Burns and Oates. London Originally issued in 1955 in Germany it was the first great example of a kerygmatic catechism. It was divided into three parts - God and Redemption; Church and Sacraments; and Commandments and Life. It was written for ten to thirteen year-olds and involved a three year cycle of school work which tried to present the Christian message or *kerygma* as an organic whole.

<sup>15</sup> *A Catholic Catechism* (1963) E.J. Dwyer. Sydney

<sup>16</sup> *A New Catechism - Catholic Faith for Adults* (1970) To say that the book was controversial is an understatement. First published in 1967, the authors were forced to print an appendix of amendments by a group of Cardinals who examined it for doctrinal orthodoxy in 1968 and found it wanting. The Dutch bishops refused to add the amendments as a part of a revision of the original text and published them as a separate appendix at the back where you will find them in the 1970 edition.

<sup>17</sup> Head of the catechetical institute in Strasbourg and the author of many influential works in catechesis. See bibliography in Rummery R.M. (1975) *op. cit.*

<sup>18</sup> See bibliographies in Devitt P.M (1972) *op. cit.* and Lance D. (1964) *op. cit.* It was Hofinger who was at the forefront of catechetical renewal in this period. He made certain the the official silencing of Jungmann before the war could not prevent the growth of his revolutionary ideas. It was Hofinger who organised all the major catechetical conferences from Bangkok in 1962 to Medellin in 1968

change and indeed the main thrust of the kerygmatic movement was what might be called the 'rediscovery' of the Bible.'<sup>19</sup>

Rummery cites four long-term effects of the kerygmatic approach to catechetics which, despite the criticisms that this approach was about to be subjected to in the late 1960's, have remained a strong and positive influence within religious education even up to the present day.

The **first** is the re-discovery of the Bible for Catholics and the kind of ecumenical approaches this opened up towards non-Catholic Christians.

The **second** is the expansion in understanding of catechesis as more than just limited to instruction for the sacraments in a school setting.<sup>20</sup>

**Thirdly**, there has been a deepening appreciation of the spiritual life of the individual and of the Church as part of the broader context of Salvation history. Helped by the theology of Vatican 2, salvation is seen as part of being a 'people of God' and part of an historical salvific process.

**Fourthly** there has been the importance of German, Australian and other national Catechisms.<sup>21</sup>

The late 1960's were marked by an increasing criticism of and turning away from kerygmatic catechesis as such. The seeds of this criticism had been sown earlier by Ližgž who was concerned that most types of religious education and catechesis did not take account of the actual life-stance, conditions and environment of the pupils. They were moulded and shaped by a culture that was, at best partially, and at worst totally, non-Christian. If school catechesis was to have any real success it should take account of this fact.<sup>22</sup>

Colomb, who had originally been a great supporter of the kerygmatic approach, became increasingly self-critical. Catechesis, for him, is a matter of trying to be faithful both to God (as the kerygmatic approach stressed) and to humankind. Colomb coined a phrase for this. He called it 'the double fidelity.' The catechist must, besides being faithful to God and his revelation, take account of the growth, development and maturation of the recipient.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Rummery R.M. (1975) *op. cit.* p. 11

<sup>20</sup> Many modern Catholic parishes run preparation programmes for the sacraments of Christian Initiation and catechesis and religious education for adults such as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

<sup>21</sup> Rummery R.M. (1975) *op. cit.* pp 16-17

<sup>22</sup> Ližgž P.A. (1965) *Consider Christian Maturity* Chicago Press

<sup>23</sup> Colomb J. *Catechesis Contested* (1970) quoted in Rummery R.M. (1975) *op. cit.* p.103

The criticisms by Alfonso Nebrada, Pierre Babin, Gabriel Moran and Joseph Colomb<sup>24</sup> of kerygmatic catechesis went hand in hand with the experiences of those who had tried to implement such methods in mission territories with far-reaching and radical effect -

‘When one begins to take seriously the culture of people who are hearing the kerygma then the human or anthropological or experiential or life-centred approach to catechesis is being born. Incidentally, school as the privileged locus of catechesis is now under question.’<sup>25</sup>

**So, the latter half of the 1960’s ushered in, for Catholic RE, a more anthropological or child-centred approach that tried to make more central their life-experiences. It also began to take account of a catechesis that is life-long and therefore has to include, in the long-term, the life-experiences and social situations of adults.**

As Moran says,

‘I mention that a theology of revelation demands that the history which the teaching of revelation begins with, is always the student’s own history.’<sup>26</sup>

This person-centered approach is sometimes known as the ‘Anthropological Approach’ or ‘Experience-based catechesis.’<sup>27</sup>

To actually start from the student’s concerns and problems marked, for many Catholics who had grown up in such an authoritarian Church, a radical departure from all that had been known and trusted.’<sup>28</sup>

Needless to say the theoretical discussions that featured in learned and academic journals, took place a long time before such ideas were to filter down into the actual practice of RE in many Catholic schools. There is a strong evidence that the sudden growth in Catechetical writing and journals emanated from the relatively new phenomenon of what are now known as ‘Catechetical Centres’ - the most famous of which was the one in Brussels. It produced an international RE review called ‘*Lumen Vitae*.’ In England, the establishment of the Catechetical Centre in London,

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He seems to have taken into account Goldman’s insights and to have anticipated Fowler.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Rummery R.M. (1975) *op. cit.* p 17 and pp 98-105

<sup>25</sup> Devitt P.M. (1992) *op. cit.* p. 72

<sup>26</sup> Moran G. (1967) *op. cit.* p. 54

<sup>27</sup> Devitt P.M. (1992) *op. cit.* p. 84

<sup>28</sup> This philosophy of radical change in liturgy, scripture and models of the Church did emanate from Vatican 2 itself. Nevertheless many traditional Catholics could not cope with these changes. As for person-centred RE, it was seen as a betrayal of ‘how we learnt RE’ and of the solid basis of the ‘Penny Catechism.’ It was all summed up by the teacher who said, on sight of the new RE syllabus drawn up by the present author in the 1980’s, ‘Well this looks more like Social Studies to me!!-’

gave rise to *'The Sower'* also a quarterly magazine dealing with the practicalities of teaching religion.<sup>29</sup>

Besides articles which dealt with the new 'experiential catechesis'<sup>30</sup> books were written dealing with what came to be called 'life-centred' teaching.<sup>31</sup> Some criticised it as being just a gimmick to make students interested in RE but it should be seen (As Goldman, Acland, Loukes and others had done) as a genuine attempt to reach the students where they are on their particular 'faith-journey.'<sup>32</sup>

Just as County school RE swung from deductive (confessional) to inductive (neo-confessional) and then back to deductive (phenomenological) approaches, so too, Catholic RE swung between content and method, deductive and inductive -

'The kerygmatic approach tends to emphasise God's initiative in making faith possible. Then, in the light of these emphases, the swing, in the 1960's was back towards the human element once again. Hence, the phrase 'anthropological approach' and the constellation of words that it dragged along with it: experience, existence, meaning of life, relevance, pupil-centred.'<sup>33</sup>

As far as the Catholic Church is concerned, it was the Second Vatican Council that actually gave permission at the highest level to approach the teaching of RE in a more radical way. This was not because it made any really radical declarations about the teaching of RE. It was rather that these insights were present in other documents.<sup>34</sup> More than anything else Vatican 2 legitimised these modern approaches by giving them the theological underpinning they needed at an official level. Needless to say, those who rejected the modern ways of teaching RE were often those who saw Vatican 2 a betrayal of the Church.

The decade of Vatican 2 (1960-1970) was also the decade of Catechetical congresses from Bangkok (1962) and Katigondo(1964) to Manila (1966) and Medellin (1968). While Moran, Babin, Colomb, Nebraska and others were becoming increasingly critical of a kerygmatic approach that seemed to be a blanket solution

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<sup>29</sup> Lance D. (1964) *op. cit.* p. 132

<sup>30</sup> Devitt P.M. (1992) *op. cit.* cites a number of articles that deal with experience-based catechesis. See footnote 32, p. 131

<sup>31</sup> Van Caster and Le Du (1969) *Experiential Catechetics* translated by D.Barrett, Newman Press, New York

<sup>32</sup> A phrase later to be popularised by Paddy Purnell in *Our Faith Story* (1985) Collins

<sup>33</sup> Devitt P.M. (1992) *op. cit.* p. 85

<sup>34</sup> See especially *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World ; Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation; Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy; Declaration on Christian Education* in Abbot S.J. W.M. Ed (1966) *The Documents of Vatican 2* - Geoffrey Chapman - London

for all catechetical problems, the various catechetical congresses organised by Hofinger, led the organisers to an increasing awareness of the different cultures, social and political backgrounds of its participants from other countries.

No longer would catechesis be seen as one kind of content transmitted in one kind of (western theological) language to recipients whose life conditions and situations had nothing to do with how the 'message' was passed on

'In other words, the decade which began with catechesis as the kerygma and its stress on God's saving plan in man's history, ended with a firm anthropocentric emphasis, requiring the discovery of God in man and the improvement of man's condition as the first priority inseparable from catechesis. In all this, it is probably important to realise that the real impact of Vatican 2 which took part in the first part of the decade was felt more, particularly in under-developed countries in the later years when the documents were readily available in translation and when the practical implications of much of the theology were being worked out, so that there is much more of Vatican 2 at Manila and Medellin than elsewhere.'<sup>35</sup>

The emphasis then, began to shift from kerygmatic catechesis to one that was person-centered and society-centered. It reflected not just the person-centred culture of the age and the real-life political and social conditions of people in the developing world but, more significantly, the theology of Vatican 2. Human life and social conditions in society were not to be merely illustrative of religion but were themselves central to religion – they are the stuff of religious faith.<sup>36</sup> The shift in emphasis was from God to man or, from a God that reveals himself apart from us through revelation to a God who reveals himself through and in us, and the ordinary events of our lives, as well as through revelation.<sup>37</sup> In this way, the 'content' of religious education or catechesis should not be seen just as part of a syllabus of set of 'facts' to be learned but also as part of the life-situation of the group to whom it is

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<sup>35</sup> Rummery R.M. (1975) *op. cit.* p. 106

<sup>36</sup> 'The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men (sic) of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men (sic).- para 1 of *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* in Abbot S.J. W.M. Ed (1966) *op. cit.* p. 199

<sup>37</sup> See Grimmit M. (1973) *op. cit.* and O'Leary/Sallnow (1982) *Love and Meaning in Religious Education - an Incarnational Approach to Teaching Christianity* which has a chapter entitled 'Experience as Content in Education- Chapter 4.

directed. Thus, the living of the gospel is part of life and not something separate from it.

The importance of putting the experiential at the centre of Catechetics even found official recognition in the General Catechetical Directory –

‘ ...Catechesis should be concerned with making people attentive to their more significant experiences, both personal and social; it also has the duty of placing under the light of the Gospel the questions which arise from these experiences, so that they may be stimulated within men (sic) a right desire to transform their ways of life.’<sup>38</sup>

This, in fact, is the heart of the person-centered approach, the recognition that God is to found by attention to human reality, that one cannot by-pass the human on the road to God. Even Pope John Paul 2 points out that there need be no ultimate opposition between a catechesis taking life as its starting point and a traditional doctrinal and systematic catechesis.<sup>39</sup>

How possible it is actually to combine the two without giving undue weight to either is of course another matter. As we shall see later, most of the controversy surrounding modern Catholic RE is around this very point. Again, as we shall see later, the most vociferous opponents of *Weaving the Web* cited the pope and tradition in their own defence and in their attack on this teaching scheme. They obviously did not know about the pope’s stance mentioned above.

## **CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - THE 1970’s - The decade of the ‘Directories.’**

Although 1970 marked the end of the era of the Second Vatican Council, it did not necessarily signify the beginning of the implementation of its philosophy or theology.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, as we have stated, the official philosophical and theological basis for many of the changes that have taken place and are still taking place in catechesis and religious education are to be found there. By 1970 the Second Vatican Council had come and gone and for the Church, despite all the changes, it was still business as usual. So what was happening from 1970 to 1980?

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<sup>38</sup> *General Catechetical Directory* (GCD) ¶ 74 - Quoted in Devitt M.P. (1992) *op. cit.* p. 86

<sup>39</sup> *Catechesi Tradendae* John Paul 2 ¶ 22 - Quoted in Devitt M.P. (1992) *op. cit.* p. 86

<sup>40</sup> Some would say that the teachings of Vatican 2 have still not been addressed because they have, even yet, not been properly understood or implemented in the Catholic Church. Others would say that it is ‘convenient’ for those in power in the Catholic Church to choose to either forget or ‘put on the back burner’ some of the more radical elements of Vatican 2 like those on religious freedom.

Rummery refers to this period as 'The Decade of the Directories.'<sup>41</sup> He does this because it was typified by a number of episcopal conferences whose main task was to set some kind of national or international guidelines for the construction of catechetical programmes.

Here is a chronology of events from 1970 to 1980 outlining the major catechetical conferences but also including other significant dates and publications.<sup>42</sup>

1970 - The Italian Bishops Conference issue *I rinnovamento della catechesi*. This was translated into English as *The Renewal of the Education of Faith* by the Australian Episcopal Conference.

1971 - *The General Catechetical Directory* is published by the Sacred Congregation for the clergy. In the same year, Gutierrez publishes the first and most important book of its type, called *A Theology of Liberation*. With this book, the new liberation theology of the developing world became 'known' in the West. As a result, not only theology, but also catechesis and religious education can be seen as 'political activity.'

1972 - A pastoral message on Catholic Education is issued by the national conference of Catholic bishops of the United States.

1973 - The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales publish a document called *Teaching the Faith the New Way*. This was actually the Australian translation of the 1970 Italian document but it had nine pages added to the front, describing the peculiar conditions of England and Wales.<sup>43</sup>

1974 - The New Zealand Hierarchy publish a basic catechetical document called *We Live and Teach Christ Jesus*.

1975 - R.M. Rummery publishes *Catechesis and Religious Education in a Pluralist Society*. This is a key-note text, describing, as no one had before, the chronology of

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<sup>41</sup> Rummery R. *1970 - 1980 The Decade of the Directories* in Nichols K. Ed *Voice of the Hidden Waterfall - Essays on Religious Education* (1980) St Paul Publications. Slough

<sup>42</sup> I have relied on Rummery R. (1980) *op. cit.* pp 13-14 for the dates and details which follow but I have altered the text and added my own details of other publications.

<sup>43</sup> Our bishops had yet to prove that they could be both inventive and original

religious education and catechesis in recent years and setting it within the context of modern pluralist industrial society.

1977 - The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Pope Paul VI is published. This document sets out the importance and necessity of the evangelisation of the entire world. This evangelisation is aimed not only at those who have never heard the good news but also at those who have but who are subject to the many de-christianising elements of the world today. The necessity of a proper catechumenate and catechetical instruction for Catholic adolescents is strongly proposed. The document looks inwards but also outwards to the world. The Church's task is to try to find ways of offering the gospel to all.<sup>44</sup> In the same year *We Preach Jesus Christ as Lord* is issued by the Education Committee of the Australia Bishops Conference. Some controversy is indicated by the fact that it is issued by the committee but not by the conference. Also in the same year the Holy See publishes *The Catholic School*. This letter sets out very clearly the value and purpose of the Catholic school in a secular society.

1978 - *Cornerstone* by Monsignor Kevin Nichols is published with the authority of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. It is a key-note book and marks a watershed in Catholic religious education in this country.

1979 - The National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the USA publish, with Rome's final approval, their own national catechetical directory, *Sharing the Light of Faith*. In the same year, the pope issues *Catechesi Tradendae* or *catechesis in our time*. Again, in the same year the first 'modern' complete course for religious education for Catholic Secondary schools is published by the Liverpool Archdiocese.

Apparently, in the early months of the Second Vatican Council an attempt was made to produce a uniform and definitive catechism for the Church.<sup>45</sup>

However, this was successfully resisted and eventually, instead, in 1971, the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy produced the *Directorium Catechisticum Generale* or General Catechetical Directory.

There were some on the more traditional side of the Catholic Church who wanted to give even this document juridical status<sup>46</sup> but this too was resisted and, although

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<sup>44</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1977) paraphrased in Rummery R. 1970 - 1980 *The Decade of the Directories* in Nichols K. Ed *Voice of the Hidden Waterfall - Essays on Religious Education* (1980) p. 21 - St Paul Publications. Slough

<sup>45</sup> Rummery R.M. (1975) *op. cit.* p. 78. It is interesting to note that many years later, Pope John Paul 2 succeeded where others had failed in producing a Catechism for the Catholic Church.

<sup>46</sup> Rummery R.M. (1975) *op. cit.* p. 79

there was some regret that there was not wider consultation sought in the preparation of this document and the particular cultures of different countries taken into account, nevertheless, it was clearly stated in the foreword,

‘ Moreover, the specific task of applying the principles and declarations contained in this *Directory* to concrete situations properly belongs to the various episcopates, and they do this by means of national and regional directories, and by means of catechisms and the other aids which are suitable for effectively promoting the work of the ministry of the word.....The *Directory* is chiefly intended for bishops, Conferences of Bishops, and in general all who under their leadership and direction have responsibility in the catechetical field. The immediate purpose of this *Directory* is to provide assistance in the production of catechetical directories and catechisms. Since the *Directory* is intended for countries which differ greatly in their conditions and pastoral needs, it is obvious that only common or average conditions would be considered in it.’<sup>47</sup>

Despite the rhetoric of taking account of national and cultural differences in this document, when ‘push came to shove’ Rome tended to frown unkindly when it felt that idiosyncrasies and pluralism were being taken too far. (This is still the case – note the furore about translations into English). If 1970 - 1980 marked the decade of the directories, it was also the decade of political battles between Rome and various national Bishops’ Conferences culminating in the disagreement between the American Bishops and the Congregation for the Clergy in Rome who demanded that certain key changes be made to a final text <sup>48</sup> that had already been through hundreds of revisions as part of a nationwide consultation at all levels throughout the United States of America.

As Rummery states,

‘I have cited this one instance at some length because it highlights again the continuing tension between the catechists, the theologians and the decisions of an Episcopal conference and a Roman congregation. In his particular instance, I suggest there very special circumstance touching the nature of religious pluralism in the United States, the contributions of Christian theologians other than those of the Catholic Church as well as of those who are not Christian, and, in the final analysis, the locus of authority. There are also the kind of questions which arise when it is realised that the major

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<sup>47</sup> *General Catechetical Directory* (1971) issued by the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy pp 10-11  
The Catholic Truth Society London

<sup>48</sup> *Sharing the Light of Faith - The National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States*  
1979. Catholic Truth Society London

emphasis of the United States directory is towards the continuing catechesis of adults and not simply about what is to be taught to children.<sup>49</sup>

The Bishops of England and Wales chose to 'play safe' and merely adopt the Italian Bishops document in 1973 but in 1978 the first book<sup>50</sup> in a proposed series of nine, written by Monsignor Kevin Nichols, appeared. It had been commissioned and published with the authority of the Bishops Conference of England and Wales. This is not a catechetical directory as such although it does follow the kind of pattern of other directories even if it is written in more of a 'book' style.

It sets out its contents as follows -

- 'Chapter One - Words and Meanings
- Chapter Two - Settings
- Chapter Three - How do we become believers
- Chapter Four - catechesis in our present society
- Chapter Five - Theology and Education
- Chapter Six - Substance and process
- Chapter Seven - The Content of catechesis
  - Scripture
  - Doctrine
  - Liturgy
  - Experience
  - Morality
- Chapter Eight - The way ahead<sup>51</sup>

Of particular interest is the section on 'Experience' which, besides dealing with overtly religious experience, also considers 'life-experience as both exemplifying and constituting religious truth and....human experience as part of the content of the religious lesson'<sup>52</sup> Here we see Nichols struggling to walk the tight-rope between orthodoxy and modernism, desperately trying to take account of modern developments in catechetics while at the same time trying to avoid 'radical' excesses.

Rummery is not certain how helpful this book is because, on one hand, it does at least offer a really good overview and analysis of the particular catechetical situation and problems in England and Wales but, on the other hand, he wonders whether its

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<sup>49</sup> Rummery R. (1980) *op. cit.* p 21

<sup>50</sup> Nichols K. (1978) *Cornerstone* St Paul Publications Slough

<sup>51</sup> Nichols K. *ibid.* pp 5-6

<sup>52</sup> Nichols K. *ibid.* p. 6

style of presentation and intricately argued theological points would really make it user-friendly and thus widely read. It almost needs interpreters to make it digestible to those who would most benefit from its use.<sup>53</sup>

Less sympathetic are O'Leary and Sallnow<sup>54</sup> who criticise Nichols on the grounds that he is afraid that the experiential approach will make the role of scripture and doctrine subsidiary and make human experience paramount. Nichols is also said to make a false dichotomy between human experience and the truths of the faith.

According to O'Leary and Sallnow, quoting Moran,

'Revelation is what happens between persons and exists only as a personal reality. If there is revelation anywhere in the Church today, it can only be in the conscious experience of the people.'<sup>55</sup>

It is interesting to note in this connection that the document issued by the American Bishop states,

'The experiential approach is not easy but it can be of considerable value to catechesis. Catechists should encourage people to reflect on their significant experiences and respond to God's presence there. Sometimes they will provide appropriate experiences. They should seek to reach the whole person using both cognitive (intellectual) and affective (emotional) techniques.'<sup>56</sup>

As we saw earlier,<sup>57</sup> not only the General Catechetical Directory but even the present pope, saw no contradiction between a catechesis that was both doctrinal, traditional and scriptural and one that was also experience-based.

However, the huge balancing-act that we see in the writing of Kevin Nichols and the increasing tensions between the Congregation for the Clergy in Rome and local and national hierarchies, only serve to point up the contradictions and strains of the late 1970's and early 1980's as all those concerned in religious education and catechesis, tried desperately hard to hold the balance between passing on the faith

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<sup>53</sup> Rummery R. (1980) *op. cit.* p 25

<sup>54</sup> O'Leary D.J. and Sallnow T. (1982) *op. cit.*

<sup>55</sup> Moran G. (1967) *op. cit.* p. 20 quoted in O'Leary D.J. and Sallnow T. (1982) *op. cit.* p. 76

<sup>56</sup> *Sharing the Light of Faith - The National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States* 1979. p 108 Catholic Truth Society London

<sup>57</sup> See footnotes 52 and 53 in this study

and, at the same time, taking into account the actual life-positions and situations of Catholics living in an increasingly materialistic and secular society.

In this sense, Catholic religious education faced the same problems as any other religious education, both denominational and County - the problems of a materialistic and secular hegemony<sup>58</sup> outside of which, even those brought up in a faith tradition, found difficulty placing themselves or their thought processes.

It is very like the notion of 'indoctrination into secularism' referred to by Brenda Watson.<sup>59</sup>

In 1977, those in power and authority in the Catholic Church decided that it was time to assess the progress in catechesis that had been made since the Second Vatican Council and the publication of the General Catechetical Directory, so the Synod of Bishops in the autumn of that year was devoted to 'catechesis in our time with special reference to the catechesis of children and young people.'<sup>60</sup> While pointing out the importance of passing on a 'deep knowledge of the person and saving message of our Lord Jesus Christ....through an ordered and progressive education in the faith,'<sup>61</sup> the Synod Fathers explained that careful attention had to be given to 'the conditions in which today's children and young people find themselves. It is they who in the future will have the burden of building a new world.'<sup>62</sup>

This was how the Synod Fathers summed up the problem,

'A catechesis corresponding to the needs of our times requires that the renewal already begun be continued: but it must be carefully developed. There is a danger both in a routine manner of proceeding, which becomes mere habit and rejects all change, and in ill-considered initiatives which plunge forward rashly. Problems which are caused or occur in catechesis often stem from this lack of sense of realism. Since it is catechesis in our time which is at issue, this failing is also a form of infidelity to the mission to preach the gospel to mankind. Therefore, the Synod calls upon Christian communities to renew their catechesis, which is essentially the proclamation of the Gospel, the Good News. One must keep this realism always in mind. It fosters the fidelity and authentic richness of catechesis in all its aspects.'<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> The notion of 'hegemony' is derived from the Italian Philosopher and Political theorist Gramsci (1891 - 1937). It means an over-arching system of ideas that is so strong and pervasive that we cannot think ourselves outside it because we don't really know anything different. See *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* Lawrence and Wishart, London (1971)

<sup>59</sup> Watson B. (1993) *op. cit.* p. 21 Longman

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in *An R.E. Scheme For Secondary Schools - Year 1* (1979) - p. v St Paul's. London

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.* p. v

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.* p. vi

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.* p. vi

All the above quotations are taken from the introduction to *An R.E. Scheme for Secondary Schools* - the first truly 'modern' RE scheme for Catholic Secondary Schools in England and Wales since the Second Vatican Council - which uses them to validate its own approach - an attempt to balance content and method, doctrine and experience. As it later stated,

'The doctrinal content of the scheme is what is appropriate for and intelligible to secondary school pupils, rather than fully mature adults'<sup>64</sup>

**Although developed under the direction of the Christian education Centre of the Archdiocese of Liverpool, the scheme came to be adopted by a number of Catholic schools because, as stated, it was the first truly 'modern' RE scheme and also because it came as a complete package - with teachers' books and pupil work cards. For the first time, an RE scheme actually took account of the 'experiential' dimension in the teaching of RE.**

At the time it seemed very modern (and it was) and, as with all schemes, it contained some excellent materials. However, although it takes into some account the importance of experience, it is very 'religious' in its content and maybe reflects the quite strong Catholicity of an area like Liverpool.

Certainly translating it into use for London children became, for RE teachers, problematical because, as quickly became apparent, one of the major flaws in it was that it presumed a level and depth of Catholicity that London children (and perhaps others outside Liverpool) just do not have. For these and other reasons it was gradually abandoned in the late 1980's.<sup>65</sup>

## **CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 1980 – 1985**

### **From Fowler and Groome to Paddy Purnell**

1979 and the publication of the '*Liverpool Scheme*' and '*Catechesis In Our Time*'<sup>66</sup> marked the end of one era and the beginning of another. In the five years that

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<sup>64</sup> *ibid.* p. vi

<sup>65</sup> 'In 1986, we were asked by the Director of the Christian Education Centre in Liverpool to research the possibility of developing a new programme of religious education for Archdiocesan Secondary School. This request reflected a concern that the syllabus currently in use was based on assumptions that were no longer tenable, and did not enable teachers and pupils to respond to a changed and changing situation with inherently new demands.- Lohan R. and McClure M. *Weaving the Web - Teacher's Book* (1988) p. 3 Collins

<sup>66</sup> John Paul 2 (1979) *Catechesi Tradendae* CTS London

elapsed between 1980 and the publication of *'Our Faith Story'*<sup>67</sup> a number of key things happened, all of which were to have a bearing on the subsequent development of catechesis and religious education in the Catholic sector -

1980 - The publication of *Christian Religious Education* by Thomas H. Groome<sup>68</sup> is generally regarded as a seminal text in religious education. As it states on the front cover, it is... 'likely to be the most significant single book in the field of Christian education for the next twenty years.' - James W. Fowler. I shall return to this and the following book below.

1981 - In this, the following year, another seminal text was published by James Fowler entitled *Stages of Faith*.<sup>69</sup> As Groome says on the cover, 'A vital resource. What Piaget and Kohlberg did for cognitive and moral development respectively, Fowler has done for faith development. His work on the journey toward maturity of faith has itself matured and can be found fully developed here.'<sup>70</sup>

1982 - O'Leary D.J. and Sallnow T. publish *Love and Meaning in Religious Education - An Incarnational Approach to Teaching Christianity* a work already referred to above. This book is significant in that it is an attempt by two writers in England (rather than Europe or America) to blend theology and religious education together in such a way as to produce a basis and a validation for an Incarnational approach to religious education. Drawing heavily on the theology of authors like Karl Rahner and Gabriel Moran among others, O'Leary and Sallnow reject the kind of 'two-tier' model of man somehow redeemed by an extrinsic God. The whole point of the incarnation is that God, in Christ, becomes part of our humanity and everyday life. As they say,

'A message that comes to man wholly from the outside, without an inner and intrinsic relationship to his inmost life, must appear to him as irrelevant, unworthy of attention, unassimilable by the mind and non-believable.'<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Purnell A.P. (1985) *Our Faith Story* Collins, London

<sup>68</sup> Groome Thomas H. (1980) *Christian Religious Education* Harper and Row, San Francisco

<sup>69</sup> Fowler J.W. (1981) *Stages of Faith* Harper and Row, San Francisco

<sup>70</sup> *Signposts and Homecomings - The Educative Task of the Catholic Community* was also published this year. It was a report to the Bishops of England and Wales. It was concerned with the wider context of Catholic Education rather than just RE and, while it didn't really add anything to what Nichols had already stated, it did emphasise the '**life-long**' nature of Catholic religious education as well as re-stating the importance of the concept of '**readiness**' (although Goldman is not acknowledged and Piaget is) and the notion of '**critical openness**'

<sup>71</sup> O'Leary D.J. and Sallnow T. (1982) *op. cit.* p. 49

Again they reject the dichotomy that would see revelation as the once and for all intervention by God in our lives through what we call 'Sacred Scripture.' And incarnation, in the same way, is not used to describe just 'the Word made flesh' at a particular point in time. Rather,

'Incarnation would then be the term to describe what is happening in everyone's life.'<sup>72</sup>

It is impossible to attempt to summarise the book here but one further quote gives the flavour of the whole tenor of their argument –

'The Incarnational approach is concerned with presenting to pupils a view of revelation as that which contributes in a specific and singular way to each person's self-understanding. Christian revelation is seen in terms of its unprecedented contribution to a pupil's personal discovery as he searches for a meaning to his life. This contribution, optimistic yet realistic, is a truth that has become evident in Christ. It established the fact for the Christian that God has so made the universe that he can only be encountered by man in all his experiences within that universe.'<sup>73</sup>

In a chapter entitled 'Experience as 'Content' in Education, O'Leary and Sallnow state,

'The business of education should first and foremost concern itself with encouraging in young people the sensitive apprehension of the truly mysterious character of their experience. It cannot be the case, as Kevin Nichols might argue, that this experience is a distinctive 'point of entry' towards the mysteries of faith, alongside the other 'points of entry' - namely Scripture, doctrine and liturgy. Experience should not be considered an additional 'content-area' for R.E. in this manner. Rather, it constitutes the existential condition for all content whatsoever...'<sup>74</sup>

One can only imagine what the Sacred Congregation of the Clergy in Rome, might make of such a statement. While acknowledging the importance of experience in religious education, they would say that revelation must shed light on this. They would not only preserve the dichotomy that O'Leary and Sallnow eschew but make

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<sup>72</sup> *ibid* p. 50

<sup>73</sup> *ibid* p. 5

<sup>74</sup> *ibid* p. 80

scriptural revelation a priority. It is this approach that makes the book such a radical text in the teaching of religious education

‘The Incarnational approach holds that Christian revelation tells us as much about man as it does about God; the curriculum therefore, should deal with the human predicament and the activity of God within it, in a manner which is living and meaningful for the young human beings.’<sup>75</sup>

In a style and model that is reminiscent of both Fowler and Groome, the authors refer to a ‘threefold dialectic.’ By this they mean that the curriculum should take as its starting point the actual life-experiences of the child. The end point is the ‘living Christian significance of that same experience in terms of the child’s own understanding of his humanity and its immense possibilities for love, growth and ever-deeper meaning.’ Mediating between the child’s life-experiences and the ultimate meaning of these, ‘lies the essential mediating area which includes Scripture, doctrine, liturgy and so on.’<sup>76</sup>

1983 - *Educational Guidance In Human Love* is published.<sup>77</sup> The ‘positive and prudent sexual education’ recommended by Vatican 2<sup>78</sup> is here fleshed out in such a way as to provide the validation and rationale for much of the personal, social and health education that was and is already going on in many Catholic schools. It also means that those Catholic schools that are not addressing the issue of sex-education have to now do something about it. In conjunction with the later legal requirements of the Education Reform Act, it means that Catholic schools and county schools move closer together in their understanding of educating the whole person. It gives an added dimension to the ‘fully human side’ of religious education.

1985 - The publication of *Our Faith Story* marks the end of these seminal publications of the five years from 1980 to 1985 and heralds the beginning of the published works of the National Project in Religious Education in England and Wales.

Groome’s and Fowler’s works that appear at the beginning of these significant five years, in many ways set the scene for what is to follow in the years 1985 - 1996. So

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<sup>75</sup> *ibid* p. 86

<sup>76</sup> *ibid* p. 86

<sup>77</sup> *Educational Guidance in Human Love* (1983) CTS London

<sup>78</sup> *Declaration on Christian Education* (1965) ¶ 1 in Abbott *op. cit.* p. 139

it is worthwhile spending some time in assessing the significance of these two texts without, at the same time, attempting to give a superficial summary of them.

As we have seen, they are landmark texts in Christian religious education because, once again, they try, as before but in a deeper way, to place, as a central concern, the life-position and faith-stage of the clients to be educated. This is a concern that runs right through Christian religious education but, in many ways, harks back to the anthropological and child-centred approaches we have referred to earlier on in this study. Groome's description of his 'Damascus experience' or in trying to educate boys in a Catholic high school in 1966 and realising that, instead of imposing religion on them in the shape of formal lectures, he had first to listen to them and dialogue with them, reminds us of the concerns spoken about by Goldman, Loukes and Acland above.<sup>79</sup>

Groome does not underestimate the difficulty of the task of the RE teacher and, although there are certain foundational questions which underpin everything we do as RE teachers, we must continually and consciously (both as individual teachers, clients and faith communities) ask these questions and answer them for ourselves because,

'.....the degree of critical consciousness and intentionality we have about them will shape our praxis of religious education.'<sup>80</sup>

**For Groome, it is all about consciously, intentionally and self-reflectively asking ourselves over and over again, 'What are we doing? Why are we doing it? Where are we doing it? How are we doing it? When are we doing it? and Who are doing it?'**

'Each of us must come consciously to realise and intend what we are doing as Christian religious educators, why we are doing it, the social context in which our educating takes place, the 'readiness'<sup>81</sup> of our co-partners for our educational approach, and their and our identity in that partnership.'<sup>82</sup>

So, what is it we are educating for, in religion? It is to do with bringing about a new future out of the present and its past. Therefore, following the ideas of liberation theology, religious education is a political activity because it is a deliberate intervention in the lives of others to influence how they will live their

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<sup>79</sup> See footnotes 10, 11 and 12 above

<sup>80</sup> Groome Thomas H. (1980) *op. cit.* p. xiii

<sup>81</sup> Goldman's actual phrase is used here but curiously nowhere in the text or bibliography is he acknowledged

<sup>82</sup> Groome Thomas H. (1980) *op. cit.* p. xiv

lives -

‘As a political activity with pilgrims in time, education should empower them to critically reclaim their past so that they can work creatively through their present into their future.’<sup>83</sup>

Why are we doing it? What is the purpose of Christian religious education?

There are three reasons as outlined in chapters three, four and five of the book. We are educating for the Kingdom; for Christian Faith; and for Human Freedom.

In each case, Groome spells out very clearly the pragmatics of what we are doing. Hence his continual use of the word, ‘praxis.’ Praxis is about theory and practice coming together. They flow out of each other. There is no dichotomy between them because the ‘...praxis way of knowing for Christian religious education...involves a critical reflection, within a community context, on lived experience.’<sup>84</sup>

In this way, Kingdom, Faith and Freedom are to do with ultimate salvation, yes, but they are also to do with the here and now - man in his social, cultural and political context. There are very strong echoes of liberation theology here. Not that Groome should be labelled as a ‘Marxist’ Christian. Indeed, as he points out, the concept of praxis has a long and very respectable heritage, beginning with Aristotle.<sup>85</sup> How are we to educate religiously. There are five movements in shared praxis as follows

‘1. The participants are invited to name their own activity concerning the topic for attention (present action)

2. They are invited to reflect on why they do what they do and what the likely or intended consequences of their actions are (critical reflection)

3. The educator makes present to the group the Christian community Story concerning the topic at hand and the faith response it invites (Story and its Vision)

4. The participants are invited to appropriate the Story to their lives in a dialectic with their own stories (dialectic between Story and stories)

5. There is an opportunity to choose a personal faith response for the future (dialectic between Vision and visions).<sup>86</sup>

For some reason or other, Fowler’s work is better known than Groome’s perhaps because it is, once again, the stuff of academic debate about whether ‘stages’ are

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<sup>83</sup> *ibid.* p. 21

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.* p. 152

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.* p. 153

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.* p. 208

the appropriate way to look at things. Criticisms of both Piaget's stages and (based on them) Goldman's stages abound and Fowler too is not without his critics.<sup>87</sup> However, despite the niceties of academic debate and to what extent his model exactly fits human experience, the general premise of his thought that we go through different stages of faith as we grow up and that these stages have, with reservations,<sup>88</sup> certain common patterns to them, makes a lot of sense and has certainly been the very fruitful basis not just of Primary and Secondary RE teaching in this country but also the foundation of many of our Roman Catholic RCIA<sup>89</sup> programmes.

A lot of the controversy surrounding Fowler's ideas centre around his definition of faith. For those who are not religious at all, it is too religious and for those of an evangelical persuasion, it is too liberal and not religious enough. The other controversial area of his thought is, as we have seen, the manner in which it is based on Piaget and whether (like Piaget) the stages are as definite and universal as Fowler is believed to make them out to be. As we have seen Fowler is less dogmatic than some of his critics although he does say that the stages are such that you cannot pass to the next stage without going through the prior one.

However, the usefulness of Fowler's ideas for the religious education teacher are unquestionable. They are worth outlining here if only to demonstrate their contribution to religious education.

Fowler says that we can pass through a maximum of six stages of faith in our lives. Following Kohlberg and Piaget, his stages become less concrete and more abstract; less particular and more universal, as they progress. Some of us get stuck at certain stages. Most of us do not make it to the final stage of Universalising Faith.

It is not necessary to name or explain these stages here - as has been done so many times before. The comments above suffice. It is worth noting however why his ideas are useful for the development of religious education.

In the first place, it takes a life span perspective. This is the idea that the whole of our life is a journey in faith. As stated, many of the RCIA programmes in Catholic parishes for adults are actually called 'The journey in faith' programme. We have noted earlier on in this special study on several occasions, the notion that catechesis has to take place in several settings and that RE/catechesis itself is a lifetime process. We no longer try to 'teach it all at once' in school. There is a general

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<sup>87</sup> Craig Dykstra and Sharon Parks, in a series of essays, take issue with Fowler's definition of faith.

<sup>88</sup> 'Fowler himself advises such caution and is carefully nuanced and tentative in his claims- *ibid.* p66

<sup>89</sup> The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

recognition in all areas of life that faith is an on-going process of forming and reforming our ways of being in the world. Some of the most powerful faith-transitions take place only in adult life. At the same time the secondary school teacher must know that the teenage faith of idealism is something to be tapped and used, even if it is not the same as mature faith.

The second point is that at the end of each interview, respondents all said how much they had enjoyed being interviewed and how this was the first time that people had asked them about their faith. It is therefore very important for the catechist and RE teacher to realise that people may actually enjoy talking about their stage of faith and to provide opportunities for them to do so. Also, by the act of articulating their faith, they are enabled to see the contradictions, paradoxes, anomalies and weaknesses in their own faith. This will help them to be more intentional and responsive in their faith growth.

Thirdly, each stage is valid in its own right and necessary. There is therefore no need for the RE teacher to rush to the next stage. This is especially helpful for the RE teacher who begins to get frustrated by her clients apparent lack of faith or interest when in fact, it is just a phase they are going through.

The fourth 'good practice' that emerges from his thought is the importance of making stories and language and liturgy meaningful to young people. It is very important not just to use the right methodology but also to use the right materials that are consonant with the stage of faith that the young person is at. RE needs to be located within the particular life and faith stage of the person by using concrete stories and examples that are appropriate to that life and faith stage.

Fifthly, respecting the place that someone is at in their life-journey of faith will mean that the teacher will not try to resolve the tensions and conflicts that the client has to go through and resolve them themselves. Preempting such conflict and tension is actually damaging and not helpful. In this sense, the catechism approach of providing all the answers before the questions have even been asked is particularly unhelpful.

The sixth useful contribution of faith development theory is that it helps us to avoid the mistake of seeing faith as separate from everyday life. Faith is more than religion and more than just belief. Fowler avoids the dysfunctional dichotomy between life and religion. RE teachers must also do the same if they are to have

credibility and if their message is to 'ring true' in the lives of their pupils. In order to do this, it must 'ring true' in their own lives.

Finally, faith development theory helps us to recognise that there are times in faith and life when growth involves pain, when God approaches us as Nothingness or as Slayer rather than as Creator. We do not make the transition from one stage to another without some sense of disruption, pain, confusion and loss. There is redemption in suffering both in the Buddhist and Christian senses of the word.

1985 marks the end of this very significant five-year period with the publication, as we have seen, of *Our Faith Story* by Paddy Purnell. In a way, this is a bridge between past and present. It marks the end of the five years and the beginning of the next ten up 1996. With this book, the National Project in RE is well and truly launched and with it, all the ideas and concepts and theories that come from the publications reviewed above, are put into concrete form, not only in the matter of guidelines for catechesis and RE but also in the form of a brand-new teaching scheme for secondary schools.

1986 to 1996 are to be significant years for Catholic secondary school RE because they are the years that mark the final 'battle' between content and methodology; between the old and the new; or perhaps one should say, between the new and the new/old. The era begins with *Weaving the Web* and it ends with *The Curriculum Directory*. Along the way, the *Education Reform Act* and Ofsted, and *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, have a part to play in how and why we are where we are today, in our own particular 'journey in faith.'

### ***CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 1986-2010***

In the bibliography to his book Paddy Purnell acknowledges a number of sources of inspiration. The first is Thomas Groome about whose book Fr Purnell says 'I have personally found this most helpful among recent books as summing up many facets of my own thinking.'<sup>90</sup> He also mentions another source that I have relied on - the book by Rummery.<sup>91</sup> Finally, when he 'reflects back to the beginnings of my introduction to this whole field of faith-sharing, names like Fathers Jungman, Hofinger and Van Caster come back to my mind; I am well aware of my debt to them.'<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Purnell A.P. (1985) *op. cit.* p. 151

<sup>91</sup> Rummery R. (1980) *op. cit.*

<sup>92</sup> Purnell A.P. (1985) *op. cit.* p. 151

This study began with Jungman and it finished in the last section with Groome and, in many ways Fr Purnell's book is the fruit of this whole journey of faith that we have travelled so far. All the themes that are central to RE and catechesis, that we have dwelt on above are present here –

‘Part One - Telling our Faith Story  
Part Two - Sharing our Faith Story  
Part Three - Settings (for catechesis)’<sup>93</sup>

Its success as a book is its ability to popularise the sense of what religious education and catechesis are all about. It is the popularised distilled wisdom of everything that has been written from Jungman to Groome.

The book's style is very different from those that have been written before. Its message is delivered in a very personal way. The author talks about his own faith and life-journey. He talks a lot about ‘Journey.’ Indeed he devotes two whole chapters to it.<sup>94</sup>

He speaks of ‘Church’ in terms of ‘community’ and a ‘celebrating community.’ God is spoken of in the context of the struggles and searches of everyday life. *Revelation* (following Moran) is, besides biblical/historical, also about the God who speaks to me now -

‘Revelation is, therefore, not something which belongs simply to the past, but it is part of people's present experiences of life...’<sup>95</sup>

**In Part Two, Fr Purnell talks of the different ways of sharing our faith story, not just through scripture, prophecy, liturgy, witness and doctrine (notice that doctrine is placed last) but also through catechesis, evangelisation and religious education.**

**Catechesis** is the nurture of faith already present so ‘it takes place among believers when they share their faith with the object of deepening and enriching it from one another's experience.’<sup>96</sup> It therefore takes place in the community. It helps us to develop our gospel vision of life. It is a sharing of beliefs, values and ideas. It certainly has a prayerful element to it. And it is a life-long process.

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<sup>93</sup> *ibid.* Contents

<sup>94</sup> In chapter 2 he talks at length about Journey in terms of our journey in faith and in chapter 7 he deals with journey in relation to the stages of our life and our life-long search for meaning.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.* p. 59

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.* p.70

**Evangelisation** although directed primarily to non-believers, 'also has a place in the lives of believers' because 'conversion is a life-long process.'<sup>97</sup> We need to undergo conversion over and over again throughout our lives.

Finally, there is *Religious Education* - and it has to be both 'religious' and 'educational.' To be educational it must take account of 'the freedom and dignity of the pupil.'<sup>98</sup> Education is not about knowing things but about the development of the whole persona in their growth to becoming fully human –

'It is not the handing on of read-made beliefs, ideas, images, values etc. but the learning to see, to listen, to discern, to feel, to imagine, to hope, to love, to choose, to wish, to believes.... and to make sense of oneself and the world.'<sup>99</sup>

**Religious education is concerned with meaning - with ultimate meaning. It is about the need to discover answers for ourselves to basic questions of life. RE should not give categorical answers to these questions.**

In doing so, it will consider how other faiths make sense of the meaning of life. Therefore it will help students to empathise with other faiths.

Because of its multi-faceted nature RE can be perceived by those receiving it as either catechesis, or evangelisation or simply RE. RE is not the same as catechesis but it may contain it.

Finally, in the Third part of the book, the author talks about the different setting for catechesis and RE - **the community, the home, the school and the parish.**

The chapter on the school is particularly interesting because it does not try to place any of the difficulties to one side. The Catholic school of today is so different to the Catholic school of thirty to forty years ago because the society and the world we live in is so very different. Only a small proportion of children in our school can be said to come from a fully committed Catholic background. Practice of the faith has

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<sup>97</sup> *ibid.* p.72

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.* p.73 Fr Purnell here follows closely the teaching of the Second Vatican Council especially as contained in the document *Declaration on Religious Freedom* (1965) in Abbot W.M. *op. cit.* p. 679 where it states, 'It is in accordance with their dignity as persons....that all men should be at once impelled by nature and also bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth....However, men cannot discharge these obligations in a manner in keeping with their own nature unless they enjoy immunity from external coercion as well as psychological freedom.- ¶ 2

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.* p.73

lessened alarmingly. The materialism and competitiveness of society invades our parishes and schools. Catholic schools have to compete in the market place. There are tensions between the gospel values of 'the last shall be first' and 'the Church's preferential option for the poor,' and league tables of examination results and the culture of success. The success of some pupils necessarily involves the failure of others.

The author lists a number of difficult and self-critical questions that Catholic schools should ask themselves.<sup>100</sup>

In 1986, following the debut of the National Project of Catechesis and Religious Education with the publication of *Our Faith Story*, Fr Jim Gallagher published *Guidelines* 'to inform the Catholic community of England and Wales about the work of the National Project; to set out some of the basic principles on which the work of the project is based; to outline some concrete plans and priorities for the future work of the project; and to invite interested parties to participate in the consultation that will facilitate the production of practical helps and resources for those who work in different settings with people of different ages and at different stages of their faith journey.'<sup>101</sup>

The Project, led (then) by Fr P. Purnell S.J. (as National Adviser for religious education) is called, 'Living and Sharing our Faith.' It is a huge project with many experts and writers of religious education who, between them, have produced over twenty major publications, among which are, not just parish materials, but also complete RE schemes for both Primary and Secondary schools.

The aim is to produce resources for Catechesis and RE at every life-stage and for every setting. The philosophy is to consult and to pilot as much as possible in order to get it right.

*Guidelines* presents the vision of the Project and indicates its scope and how it will develop. The author, as stated, invites people to become involved in the Project.

Fr Gallagher analyses the present situation of the Roman Catholic community in England and Wales. He then goes on, following Paddy Purnell to re-emphasise the

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<sup>100</sup> In 1987 Catholic Education Service published a document entitled *Evaluating the Distinctive Nature of a Catholic School*. Issued in loose-leaf format for adaptability, it encourages the school to ask 'awkward' questions of itself about the extent to which it was pursuing gospel values and to ask these questions over and over again in order to stay faithful to the teaching of the gospel. Not all Catholic school use this document. Maybe it is too threatening to be self-critical to that extent.

<sup>101</sup> Gallagher J. (1986) *Guidelines* p. 46 Collins. London

distinct but overlapping nature of catechesis, evangelisation and religious education. The purpose of catechesis is to nurture an already existing Christian faith whereas evangelisation begins when the individual is first challenged by the gospel. Religious education, on the other hand is not

‘primarily concerned with maturing and developing Christian faith but rather with helping people to be aware of and appreciate the religious dimension of life and how this has been expressed in religious traditions...It should...encourage people to examine their own religious attitude and to respect the convictions of others.’<sup>102</sup>

Although they are distinct, catechesis, religious education and evangelisation overlap because, for example, not everyone in our schools and parishes has been evangelised or challenged by the gospel even though they have been brought up as Catholics. And catechesis, although not finding its natural setting in a Catholic classroom, may take place there as part of religious education. And religious education itself, although it does not presume Christian faith, may well lead to the deepening in faith of those who take part in it.

In this way, the secondary Catholic RE teacher is doing a number of things all at the same time depending on the particular faith and life-journey stage of the pupils and the way in which they individually receive what he or she is offering.

Again, following Fr Purnell, Fr Gallagher outlines the changes that have taken place in the focus and emphasis of catechesis and religious education from an almost exclusive concern with the catechism and instruction, with children as the main recipients of religious instruction and classrooms and schools as the setting for religious instruction, to a broader understanding of catechesis as a process of education in faith that embraces several dimensions; catechesis as a life-long process of growth in faith; and catechesis as a community process. There is great emphasis on the proper links between parish, home and school.<sup>103</sup>

The author then goes on to look at the needs of various people at the various stages of their faith journey from infancy to old age.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Gallagher J. (1986) *op. cit.* p. 12

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.* pp 17 - 25

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.* pp 26 - 37

Finally, he describes and explains the various settings in which catechesis and religious education takes place - the Parish, the Home and the School. It is a direct legacy of the writings of Paddy Purnell, Jim Gallagher and others who have written for the National Project that most modern Catholic parishes that are genuinely trying to serve their own communities now offer programmes for those seeking to have their babies baptised; for those about to receive the sacraments of communion, reconciliation and confirmation; for those who are getting married and for those who are seeking to join the Catholic community through the RCIA or 'Journey in Faith' programmes. Many parishes also offer to existing Catholic parishioners of all ages, further opportunities to strengthen and deepen their faith-knowledge either by joining and being part of the RCIA or by offering other programmes specifically designed for them.

In a similar way, many modern Catholic schools (both primary and secondary) will seek to build bridges between the parish, home and school by involving local clergy from 'feeder' parishes in liturgies, chaplaincy work and religious education.

By inviting parents to school liturgies and involving them more closely in the religious instruction of their children by offering classes to parents after school or by seeking to explain to parents what is taking place in the RE or PSHE programmes (particularly Sex-Education) in the school. All of these things are the legacy of the philosophy emanating from the National Project.

1988 was a very significant year for Catholic secondary religious education. Firstly it was the year of the Education Reform Act (ERA) which placed RE very firmly as part of the basic rather than the National Curriculum and also required all schools to promote 'the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils...and of society.'<sup>105</sup> In their statement of guidance, which the Bishops of England and Wales issued during the consultation preceding the Education Reform Act, they stated,

'Catholics believe that religious education is not one subject among many but the foundation of the entire educational process. The beliefs and values it communicates should inspire and unify every aspect of school life. It should provide the context for, and substantially shape the School Curriculum, and offer living experience of the life of faith in its practical expression. Religious

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<sup>105</sup> *Education Reform Act* (1988) part 1. Ch 1.

education is not simply a body of knowledge co-terminous with religious studies, not merely to be 'fitted in' after time and resources have been allotted to the ten Core and Foundation subjects prescribed in the Bill. Rather it stamps the Catholic school in every aspect of its operations with its distinctive Catholic character.<sup>106</sup>

**The central importance of religious education, properly delivered, was becoming more and more expressly and explicitly stated not only in the directives emanating from the Bishops but also from Rome itself.**

In this same year, the Congregation for Catholic Education issued 'guidelines for reflection and renewal in Catholic schools.'<sup>107</sup>

*The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* re-emphasises 'the importance of the religious freedom and personal conscience of individual students and their families (which) must be respected'<sup>108</sup> At the same time, the Catholic school is also to be free to 'proclaim the gospel and offer a formation based on the values to be found in Christian education.'<sup>109</sup>

The document goes on to describe the real-life situation of young people today and the kind of world they grow up in as well as their typical psychological characteristics. The religious dimension of the school climate and its importance as a witness to the gospel is analysed. The fruit of this today is that Catholic schools are far more self-conscious, self-analytical and (if they are honest) self-critical about what they call 'Catholic Ethos.' The whole curriculum is examined with regards to its contribution to the Christian dimension of the school. Finally 'religious instruction' (sic) in the classroom is examined.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *The Education Reform Bill - a Commentary for Catholics* (CES) - February 1988

<sup>107</sup> *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988) C.T.S. London

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.* ¶6

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.* ¶6

<sup>110</sup> 'Recent Church teaching has added an essential note: the basic principle which must guide us in our commitment to this sensitive area of pastoral activity is that **religious instruction and catechesis are at the same time distinct and complementary**. A school has as its purpose the students' integral formation. Religious instruction, therefore, should be integrated into the objectives and criteria which characterise a modern school. School directors should keep this directive of the Magisterium in mind, and they should respect the distinctive characteristics of religious instruction. It should have a place in the weekly order alongside the other classes, for example, it should have its own syllabus, approved by those in authority; it should seek appropriate interdisciplinary links with other course material so that there is a coordination between human learning and religious awareness. Like other coursework, it should promote culture and it should make use of the best educational methods available to schools today. In some countries, the results of examinations in religious knowledge are included within the overall measure of student progress. **Finally religious instruction in the school needs to be coordinated with the catechesis offered in parishes, in the family and in youth associations.**- *ibid.* ¶70

While this key document on the religious dimension of the Catholic school was being published in Rome, Jim Gallagher launched the first of a series of pamphlets designed to help the development of catechesis and RE in various settings. The first of these is entitled *Our Schools and Our Faith*. In this booklet the author considers the pastoral concern and challenge that our Catholic school face in the modern world. We have to face the fact for example, that there is a great diversity of backgrounds and degrees of religious commitment among our pupils. There are creative tensions and balances in this variety of practices and of backgrounds of our students. We also have, on one hand, to uphold the Catholic character of our schools but, at the same time, not treat all students as if they are fully committed Catholics. We must respect the faith-journey of parents and students.<sup>111</sup>

Furthermore, catechesis, evangelisation and religious education all have a place in the Catholic classroom. What is presented as RE may be experienced as catechesis, evangelisation or just RE depending on how the student receives it.<sup>112</sup>

The booklet speaks a lot about the respect for persons that must obtain in a Catholic school if it is to remain faithful to the intentions of Christ. Quality of relationships is a priority in a Catholic school and is part and parcel of its Catholic ethos. Our faith should be proclaimed and presented but not imposed; lived out and celebrated but not forced on those who are not ready for it.<sup>113</sup>

And school is only one influence among many others. We must take account of the social environment of our schools and the different social circumstances of our pupils.<sup>114</sup> Our schools should be concerned with the real world in which our pupils live. The way we structure and manage our schools should proclaim the message of the gospel.<sup>115</sup> Particular mention is made of 'the example of Jesus in the way he related to and accepted all people particularly the poor, the sinners and the outcasts of society.'<sup>116</sup> The booklet emphasises that the Catholic school is only one partner among several and only one influence among many. That parish, home and school should work together to produce between them a life-long catechesis and religious education.<sup>117</sup> And teachers have to realise that there is a limit to what they can do.

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<sup>111</sup> Gallagher J. (1988) *Our Schools and Our Faith*. pp12 - 13. Collins

<sup>112</sup> *ibid.* pp14 -15

<sup>113</sup> *ibid.* pp18 -19

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.* pp 20 -21

<sup>115</sup> *ibid.* pp 22-23

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.* p 22

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.* pp 24-25

Schools are only part of the life-long journey in faith. The last part of the booklet deals with the distinctive nature of the Catholic school and is based on many of the materials developed to help schools consider their Catholic ethos.

In the same year 1988 a teaching scheme for RE was launched which was to prove both exciting and controversial. It was called *Weaving the Web* and, although written by two Catholic authors, it was not designed exclusively for Catholic schools.

It was never intended to be a complete RE syllabus for Catholic schools, as stated in the Teachers' Manual<sup>118</sup> but unfortunately it was adopted in its entirety by a number of Catholic schools because teachers were only too grateful to have instant lessons and solutions to their busy problems. There is neither time nor space here to enter into the furious debate that then ensued but the arguments between 'right' and 'left' between progressives and traditionalists in the Catholic Church raged, not just in the Catholic press but also in the national press too. Piers Paul Reid, the well-known Catholic author was only one of several who added their voice to the debate on the side of the traditionalists.

The good news about this teaching scheme was that it was modern; that it had been extensively piloted; that it was based on the reality that most schools have to face in the RE situation; that it was modular and spiral in its deepening approach;<sup>119</sup> that it took account of differentiation; that it dealt with the whole issue of departmental documentation, curriculum development, assessment and profiling. Maybe, most important of all, for the first time ever, a Catholic RE scheme placed world religions as intrinsic to the work rather than just an 'add-on.'<sup>120</sup>

The bad news was that, having asked teachers to develop and supplement the scheme with either own resources and materials and not to rely exclusively on the scheme, many teachers in Catholic schools used it as it was. This was not surprising as it presented as a 'complete package.' The doctrinal Catholic content of the scheme is actually quite thin and the criticisms that were made (unfairly) were of the scheme itself instead of as the way some Catholic schools had used it.

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<sup>118</sup> Lohan R. and McClure M. (1988) *Teacher's Book* p. 22 Collins

<sup>119</sup> It takes seriously Bruner's assertion that 'any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development' (See Bruner J.S. (1960) *The Process of Education* p33 . Cambridge. Mass. This later came to be known as 'the spiral curriculum.-

<sup>120</sup> Critics said it produced a syncretism a mishmash of world faiths and gave no special priority to Christianity which was treated as just one other world religion among many.

Using the methodology of *Weaving the Web* and then supplementing it or even using the basic framework and ideas and then adapting it was actually the solution but what happened is that, because the modules passed from the life-experience approach through to the religious part (only reaching the explicitly Catholic or religious bit at the end of the module) some non-specialists who were not able to pace the work properly, probably did a lot of work on life experiences and very little on religious education. In the sole hands of non-specialists of RE and/or lazy Heads of Departments, it was a potential disaster. Also some modules are actually better than others and more explicitly religious, Catholic or logical than others.

Many of those who are actually at the 'coal-face' of RE teaching in difficult urban situations welcomed the methodology and approach of the '*Web*' particularly its experiential approach but it did need a lot of work doing on it to make it an acceptable teaching scheme in a Catholic schools. That was not always done.

For this reason (and probably for other political ones) it was decided not to attempt to revise this teaching scheme.<sup>121</sup> In 1996 something completely different was to happen. More of this later.

The 1980's ended with the controversy still going on between 'left' and 'right' among English Catholics. One particular vociferous body on the 'right' known as *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*. wrote letters to the press. Letters were also sent by other individuals and groups. They were convinced that *Weaving the Web* was damaging to young Catholics and probably heretical.<sup>122</sup> They were not alone. The Archbishop of Birmingham, Bishop Couve de Murville, completely banned it from his diocese.

The 1990's began with a series of interesting 'markers' for Catholic Education. Many Catholic school began to take advantage of the offer from central government and

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<sup>121</sup> Below the official reason will be given as to why Richard Lohan and Mary McClure could not do the promised re-write

<sup>122</sup> Whether connected to *Pro Ecclesia* or not, *Parents' Concern* is another group that has openly attacked *Weaving the Web* in pamphlet, leaflet and audio tape. *Weaving a Web of Confusion* was issued by *Parents' Concern* in 1991. Written by Fr Francis Marsden M. A., Ph.d., S.T.L. (sic) it is a vicious attack on the scheme from a 'right-wing' Catholic point of view. There is neither time nor space to deal with its contents here but a flavour of its style might be gleaned from the sentence, 'Written by **ex-priest** Richard Lohan and Sister Mary McClure.....- (p 8). The tape also issued by *Parents Concern* is entitled *Putting Weaving the Web into Perspective* and is narrated by Bert Harrington who is described as 'a Catholic layman.....a teacher, a lecturer in a Catholic college of education and as education correspondent for the 'Universe.- Apparently he wrote it because of a number of priests' disquiet about the 'programme's **tendency to place human experience before divine revelation**.- (Quotation from accompanying pamphlet) (My stresses in bold)

went 'Grant Maintained.' Again, Catholics were divided on this issue. Some saw it as a collaboration with a Conservative government that favoured elitism and was out to destroy the political power of local authorities (especially those on the 'left') and their hold over education.

1992/3 marked the beginning of 'Ofsted' and, for denominational schools and schools of other faiths, independent inspection under Section 23. This had to be done by inspection teams that were trained by the religious denomination or faith.

There were those among the Catholic community who regarded Section 23 as part of a new 'thought police' to reinforce the 'right-wing' backlash, against modern Catholic teaching in Secondary schools that many felt was about to take place.

However, other Catholics saw Section 23 as one of the best things to happen to Catholic schools. RE departments could no longer be expected to be somehow 'a law unto themselves' on the grounds that 'everyone knows what should be being taught in RE.' Properly qualified staff and good leadership are looked for. Lessons are judged and graded in the same manner as in any other 'Ofsted' inspection.<sup>123</sup>

RE departments are expected to be properly resourced, professionally run, and have all the necessary documentation in place. This will include, among other things, an up to date departmental handbook, schemes of work, programmes of study, budget details, staffing details, information about differentiation and students whose first language is not English and so on. RE departments can no longer get away with being shoddily run. Neither can Catholic headteachers avoid properly resourcing their RE departments in terms of accommodation, financial provision and time on the timetable because the Section 23 inspector will mention such things in a report that is made public to the Catholic community in general and to the Bishop in particular.

1994 was marked by another series of significant events - the publications of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, *Broad Areas of Attainment in Religious Education* and *What Are We To Teach?* At last the Catechism which had been so studiously avoided around the Second Vatican Council was published. The Catholic Community received it with mixed feelings. Again, English Catholics were divided into those on the 'right' who saw it as a triumph of orthodoxy over 'trendy' RE and

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<sup>123</sup> Invariably the Section 10 and Section 23 inspectors work closely together. They share information and treat one another in a professional manner.

those on the 'left' who saw it as the re-entrenchment of traditional Roman Catholicism by an aging and very conservative pope, anxious to leave behind a solid and reliable legacy before he died or retired.

All Catholic schools in England and Wales were sent the document *What Are We To Teach* which is a handy summary of the Catechism for RE teachers.<sup>124</sup>

Whereas *What Are We To Teach* was issued by the Bishops Conference of England and Wales, the document *Broad Areas of Attainment* emanated from the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA) It is said to be

'a response to the desire expressed by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales for a clear statement of the broad areas of RE at the four Key Stages.'<sup>125</sup>

*Broad Areas of Attainment* is in itself a landmark in the sense that it is the first time ever that any 'body' has attempted to set out what should be taught in Catholic Schools from KS1 to KS 4 and beyond.<sup>126</sup> Covering the four areas (rather than the six of The Web) of Revelation, Community, Way of Life and Celebration, it refers throughout, by cross-referencing to the Catechism and to *What are We To Teach* .

For each of the four areas it stipulates what should be taught; what the students should know by the end; what skills are to be achieved. In each case the purpose of studying each of the four areas is explained and methodology as well as both transferable and subject-specific skills suggested.

Again, some Catholic RE teachers saw this as an increasing trend towards centralisation. Others saw it as a necessary feature of schools which, while having a National Curriculum in everything else, had no National Curriculum in RE. The rationale for the publication was offered as follows –

'This *Broad Areas* document is offered as a valuable tool in the continuing development, assessment and appreciation of Catholic Religious Education.'<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> 'Every Catholic school should have a copy of the Catechism. It is the hope and expectation of the bishops that every Catholic teacher will also acquire a copy. It will be a copy that should be much used.- (p 5)

<sup>125</sup> The National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (1994) *Broad Areas of Attainment* p5 Rejoice Publications

<sup>126</sup> National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (1995) *Broad Areas of Attainment in Religious Education, Sixth Form* Rejoice Publications 1995

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.* p 5

The document aims to present the broad contents of Catholic RE setting them out as they arise from the Catechism and linking them to *What Are We To Teach*. The aim of the working party that produced it was to create a framework which was clear and precise enough to be of practical use, but sufficiently broad to allow for implementation in a variety of ways to meet local and individual needs.<sup>128</sup>

Besides referring to both Church documents mentioned above, it is primarily based on the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

The *Revelation* module - Story, Scripture, Memory and Tradition of the Church - is based on the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* (1965). Besides the study of the Bible and Salvation History, it considers Images of God; the Mystery and Person of Christ and his Paschal Mystery; Mary; the early Christian Church; and sacred writings of Other World Faiths.

The *Community* module - Church, Community of Believers, Pilgrim People of God - is based on the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (1964) and looks at Images and models of the Church; the Vocation of the Church; rights and responsibilities; authority; ecumenism; Mary and the Saints; Church history; the Creeds; and other Faith communities.

The *Way of Life* module - Lifestyle, Morality, Values, Attitudes - is based on the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (1965) and considers Jesus as the Model of the Christian Way of Life; Sources and Principles of Moral Judgement (everything from the Decalogue and Beatitudes through to gospel values and economic, social and environmental issues); the Call to Personal Holiness; and respect for Other Faith Traditions.

The *Celebration* module - Sacrament, Ritual, Prayer, Worship, Liturgy - is based on the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (1963) and looks at the Church Worship in all its dimensions; the Way the Church Prays; different Types of Prayer; the Sacramental Life of the Catholic Church, especially the Eucharist; and the Ways in which Other People Worship and Pray.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> *ibid.* p 6

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.* p 13

While Catholic Heads of Religious Education and their departments were busily mapping their schemes of work and cross-referencing them to this document in preparation for altering their schemes to 'be in line' with it, as instructed by their own Religious Education Advisers, all of a sudden appeared *The Curriculum Directory*.<sup>130</sup> This document emanated from the Bishop's Conference of England and Wales. In the Introduction it is stated that it 'builds on our earlier document *What Are We To Teach* and recognises (my stress) the work done by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers in the *Broad Areas of Attainment* .....

In the Preface, Cardinal Basil Hume says that 'all those involved in religious education **must** (my stress) follow this Directory.'<sup>132</sup>

A much longer and both more detailed and prescriptive document than the one issued by the Advisers and Inspectors, it came as a surprise to most RE teachers and, it has to be said, to the Advisers themselves. Although there is much talk of flexibility and time allowed to phase it in, the phrases emphasised and highlighted above are curious. What is meant by the word 'recognises.' It means everything and nothing. It is like saying, 'I recognise what you have done and here is something completely different.' For, while the Directory keeps the four areas there are not so subtle changes in language and emphasis. Instead of offering the document as a broad help and guide, it is stated that it must be followed.

The module on *Revelation* does not start from the experiential approach of 'story' but rather with The Trinity. It then goes on to deal with Creation, The Scriptures, Jesus Christ, Son of God and The Holy Spirit.

The module on *Church* drops the broader descriptor of Community used by NBRIA and goes on to look at The Church, One and Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and The Church's Mission.

*Celebration* is kept in name but it considers, Liturgy and every one of the seven sacraments as well a prayer.

*Way of Life* of NBRIA is replaced by *Life in Christ* and deals with The Dignity of the Human Person, Freedom responsibility and conscience, law, grace and sin, the human community, Love of God and Love of Neighbour.

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<sup>130</sup> Bishops Conference of England and Wales *Religious Education, Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools* (December 1996) CES London

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.* p 6

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.* p 5

There are certain other omissions, which are worrying. For example, BAA mentions 'social and structural sin.'<sup>133</sup> There is no mention of 'social and structural sin' in the Bishops' document. Neither is the Religious Life dealt with. There is neither time nor space to analyse every detail and there is no need to do this. It is however, fairly obvious from even a cursory reading of both documents that one was compiled by teachers or ex-teachers (still in contact with classroom RE) and one was compiled with doctrinal rather than educational and pastoral needs in mind. There are also no levels in the work, just bald statements and no attempts to break down what the children should know at the end of each Key Stage into educationally achievable aims and objectives.

All those who have expounded on the document and sought to explain it to teachers have stressed that it is a distortion to merely read 'Part Two: Programme of Study.' You need to read 'Part One: General Principles,' where it sets out the aims and context of RE; the methodology and way forward.

Although this 'softens' the document, it does not take away from the fact that it is a highly doctrinal, Catholic and centrally directed document which is not offered as a guideline but as something that, again, must be done.

For many years a debate has gone on in Catholic schools about whether there should be a centrally determined and laid-down syllabus in RE. With the coming of the National Curriculum and RE's place as part of the 'basic' curriculum, this debate became more sharply focussed. It is true in one way to say that RE, to retain its standing among other subjects on the curriculum should have its own kind of 'national curriculum.' It is also true that, leaving teachers to import the doctrine back into *Weaving the Web* was maybe not a realistic idea. When writing their text for schools, the authors must have been conscious that they would not sell as many copies as if they marketed it to other schools as well. Having said all of this, the methodology of this scheme is still a great strength and the logic of starting with the experiential is also good RE. The 'World Religions' parts are very good and woven into the themes rather than as 'stand-alones.' Catholic pupils actually enjoy learning about other faiths and become suspicious when this is not done. World Faiths features considerably in *Broad Areas of Attainment*. It does not feature much at all in the *Curriculum Directory*. In fact, it is almost an afterthought. It is therefore true to say that it is very Catholic, very doctrinal and very content-orientated. It is expected that teachers themselves will 'humanise' the scheme and put in their own methodology. One of the problems is how much the time-scale will allow this. There

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<sup>133</sup> BAA p 24

is a lot of content to be covered at KS3 and KS4 and it is difficult to see how there will be time to begin with the experiential element as done in *Weaving the Web*. Since it has not been written by teachers but rather, by the bishops, attention has also not been paid to the 'pacing' of the work. There is a lot to do in a very short period of time. Because of this, it is highly likely that, despite the encouragement to adapt it there will only be time to teach it as it is.

As we have seen above, exactly the same debate has been going on in the County sector over the SCAA model syllabuses and the debate is really between 'religion' and 'education.' Should religion dictate what takes place educationally as SCAA and the Catholic Bishops seem to maintain? Or should religion always be taught by starting with the concerns and questions of young people themselves.

The experience of many highly-skilled classroom practitioners of RE would state that the latter approach is not just educationally desirable but essential to the proper and effective teaching of religious education.

### *CONCLUSION*

Our journey has now ended. We began around the 1940's and we have reached the present day. On our own 'journey of faith' in RE we have passed various landmarks and events. We have seen the ebb and flow, the debates for and against certain contents and methodologies in both the Catholic and County sectors. It seems disappointing to end the journey in this way. As stated earlier, Catholic schools did need more direction over what should be taught at all the Key Stages in Catholic RE. The NBRIA document provided this in a more gentle and 'user-friendly' way. What heads and teachers of RE really didn't need was so much central control and so little room for manoeuvre. County schools also had to have RE that was of equal standing to the other subjects being offered as part of the National Curriculum. Whether the SCAA model syllabuses provide intellectual rigour rather than interesting and 'experiential' RE is what the present debate is all about.

So, as we have seen, the tension between 'religion' and 'education' is taking place both in Catholic RE and in the most recent history of County school RE. Is it a case of religion dictating to education rather than education setting the agenda? Is it the case that both Catholic and County school RE is moving in a 'religious' rather than 'educational' direction?

The problem, as we have seen is that it is not the school's task (whether Denominational or County) to teach religion. It is the task of the school, amongst other things, to educate *about* religion and not *into* religion. And, as stated at the beginning of this special study, getting the balance right in teaching RE as the study of God and RE as the study of man, to the kind of teenagers we now have in our schools, whether Catholic or not, is not the easiest of tasks. We should therefore seriously question the usefulness of both the SCAA model syllabuses and the *Curriculum Directory* in terms of dealing with this problem.

Our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, met people on the road and on their journey. Rarely did he meet them in a 'religious' way and he brought healing and forgiveness and help to people 'where they were at' and not from where they were thought to be or where they should be. In the teaching of religious education, it is hearts and not just minds that we are trying to engage and we are not going to achieve this by feeding them Roman Catholic doctrine oblivious of their mind-set.

### ***Postscript***

- ❑ The development and publication of ICONS
- ❑ The publication of THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE
- ❑ The NBRIA production of Levels of Attainment in RE
- ❑ Catholics adopt LEARNING ABOUT AND LEARNING FROM
- ❑ The debate begins – how far can we go measuring RE?
- ❑ Developments at GCSE level – trying to tie in the Curriculum Directory in courses in Catholic schools
- ❑ Review of 'Here I Am' ('Come and See') & of ICONS in 2010

### *Reviewing Your Learning...*

*Before going on to do the written work for this module, please take a few moments to reflect on what you have been studying and try to analyse what you have understood in terms of the 'Learning Outcomes' (from the module descriptor on page 1). How has this module helped you to:*

1. recognise that both Church and State have expectations and requirements with regard to religious education
2. understand the specific role of religious education within the school curriculum
3. be familiar with modern approaches to religious education
4. appreciate the links between religious education and the wider issues of school life and personal faith development
5. be able to communicate what they have learned from an adult stance.

*If you would like to share any of your reflections with the tutors, please write them on a separate piece of paper and enclose them with your written assignment. Thank you.*

## Written Assignment

- *You should write 1500 words (within 50 words either side) on ONE of the following questions.*
  - *Before beginning your assignment, please familiarise yourself with the requirements and guidelines on page 15 of the Course Handbook (and the assessment sheet opposite).*
  - *Please submit your assignment in a multi-punched plastic pocket (rather than a folder or file) and without stapling the pages together.*
1. Outline the Aims and Objectives, teaching styles and resources that are necessary if religious Education is to be taken seriously as a distinct curriculum area.
  2. How should awareness of diversity of backgrounds, family relationships and faith experience of pupils be reflected in the teacher's approach to Religious Education?
  3. Show how one particular aspect of Church teaching can be developed throughout a pupil's school career.
  4. Describe how the effectiveness of Curriculum Religious Education can be measured both in regard to the individual pupil (through assessment and profiling) and in the academic life of the school (through inspection).

*You should try to complete the assignment within six weeks of attending the module. You may either email it, or post it directly to the Director.*

*If you have a problem meeting the deadline, please contact the Course Director  
Bernard Stuart*